



Richland Public Facilities District

Strategic Plan 2026-2027

The Richland Public Facilities District (RPFD) held a visioning workshop for the Richland portion of Columbia Park West (CPW) on October 12, 2024, and a strategic planning workshop on June 7, 2025. This 2026-2027 strategic plan is the outcome of those meetings. Overall, there was strong support for the original goal of the RPFD to develop a campus of cultural facilities in Richland next to the Columbia River (the “Riverplace” concept). This concept was further developed in the CPW master plan by Kennewick and Richland presented in 2010 and approved by the City of Richland. Only phase one of the REACH Museum has been completed to date.

The strategic plan lays out the process the RPFD will use to update the CPW master plan to include public facilities and outdoor infrastructure that will expand the arts, entertainment and cultural opportunities in Richland. This plan was also informed by a SWOT and DRIVE analysis that was part of the strategic planning workshop (see Appendix A).

Mission

The RPFD’s mission is to design, build and operate a cluster of public facilities in Columbia Park West that will enrich the cultural life of Richland and the Mid-Columbia region as well as stimulate tourism and enhance local economic development.

Vision

Imagine an entertainment district in the Tri-Cities that becomes the ultimate destination for arts, culture and world-class performances. Columbia Park West will serve as the region’s vibrant hub by co-locating multiple performing arts venues and museum and cultural facilities within a stunning natural setting that honors the rich history and ecology of the Mid-Columbia. This dynamic area will attract visitors of all ages throughout the day and evening with a diverse mix of entertainment and educational experiences — from touring shows and national entertainers to concerts and cultural festivals. By drawing audiences from across the region and beyond, it will stimulate economic development, support local businesses and help business recruitment by elevating the cultural life of our community.

Goals & Objectives

The vision for the RPFD is expected to unfold over several decades and will need strong involvement and backing from Richland residents—both to shape the overall project and to help fund it. This strategic plan’s goals and objectives are critical first steps to begin this process, and they can be achieved with the RPFD’s current financial resources.

The list of specific goals and objectives is followed by a set of action items that can be assigned to specific individuals or teams.

1. Reorganize the RPFD to support its new mission

Currently, the organizational structure of the RPFD is focused on supporting the REACH Museum rather than identifying and building other public facilities and developing park infrastructure. To support the mission of building a cluster of public facilities in CPW (i.e., a STEAM park), it is essential that the RPFD be reorganized to focus on that goal and to manage multiple projects and the park itself. The near-term focus should be on identifying appropriate

staffing, enabling new ways to engage in professional expertise and building community partnerships.

Based on the experience of the Spokane PFD in successfully building and operating multiple facilities, the RPFD will eventually have core staff that provide common support for all the facilities, such as marketing and communications. Each facility, however, should have staff focused on its day-to-day operations. Because we will be managing an integrated campus, there are also likely to be functions that span multiple facilities. These most likely will be overseen by the RPFD Executive Director and managed by the core staff.

2. Build a financial foundation for CPW expansion

Currently, the financial structure and policies of the RPFD are only designed to support the operations of the REACH Museum, with most reserves held by the City of Richland and governed by an interlocal agreement. To properly manage RPFD funds and maintain financial transparency, it is essential that the REACH Museum and the RPFD have separate accounts. Financial planning and budgeting for the two entities should also be separate.

It will also be necessary to increase our financial resources. The first step is to refinance our current bonds to take advantage of the extension in the sales tax rebate that has been made available to PFDs. This will not only increase our net cash flow by reducing our debt payment but will free up the associated encumbered reserve funds. It will also be necessary to identify local, state, and federal sources of funds that can be used to support our goals.

3. Partner with community organizations that are aligned with our mission and vision

The success of all museums and cultural facilities depends on the deep engagement and support of the local community. The more ownership a community feels in a facility, the more likely they will be to attend events and provide financial support. Non-profit organizations are the key mechanisms for engagement in the arts and culture sectors.

Because the vision of the RPFD is to operate multiple performing arts and museum and cultural facilities in CPW, we must identify community partners and non-profits who will oversee the public engagement and fundraising that will be essential for their long-term success. Thus, it will be necessary to set up a formal mechanism of engagement and how we will contract with partners to operate the different facilities.

It is essential to collaborate with the business community to advance the economic development objectives that are central to the mission of the RPFD. This effort will involve partnership with landowners and businesses in proximity to CPW, as well as engagement with local business organizations such as the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Visit Tri-Cities.

Each set of facilities could also be supported by multiple additional partners, such as the U.S. Park Service, the National Audubon Society or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Such partnerships are typically associated with services offered by the facilities. A mechanism is needed to manage these types of organization/facility partnerships.

4. Clearly communicate RPFD goals and actions

Successfully executing our mission and vision will require clear, effective, and timely communication and engagement with our key stakeholders to gain strong support. This includes our community partners, city officials, and the general public.

Our redevelopment plans for CPW are ambitious and anticipated to evolve through ongoing community engagement. Therefore, communication should be bidirectional. It is essential to establish effective methods both to convey our vision and to actively solicit constructive input from stakeholders. Additionally, we will ensure transparency regarding how public feedback continuously informs and refines our objectives.

Because of the diversity of our stakeholders, we need to develop a variety of different communication mechanisms. These should include emails, websites, newsletters, social media, podcasts, traditional media, personal appearances, and events. An active and aggressive media campaign will be required to move the project forward.

5. Develop a comprehensive plan for CPW development

Effective communication requires a clear delineation of what is being proposed, how long it will take, and how much it will cost. The original CPW master plan lacked specific details, so it is not currently possible to make these estimates. Thus, it will be necessary to develop a far more detailed plan. Feedback from the visioning workshop strongly supported a planning process that directly engages the public and other key stakeholders, such as the City of Richland, using a process such as the charrette used by the Port of Kennewick in developing its Vista Field plan.

Preliminary plans should be developed for presentations to the City of Richland and the public. These should encompass proposals for the expansion of museum and performing arts facilities, as well as enhancements to the overall park infrastructure. Each set of plans should present multiple alternatives to assess public support for various park configurations. Additionally, it is recommended that cost and timeline differences are clearly outlined for each option.

Action Items

Reorganize the RPFDD to support its new mission

1. *Create a staffing plan* – Planning and operations activities of the RPFDD are currently restricted by the lack of dedicated staff. Because all current personnel funded by the RPFDD have operational responsibilities for the REACH Museum, job priorities are frequently changed and realigned. We need to define the staff needed for current and future work, define the number of hours per week needed for each and if shared with the REACH Museum (or other organizations), create job descriptions that clearly distinguish the work being done for the RPFDD from that being performed for other employers.
2. *Hire an Executive Director* – The most urgent need for the RPFDD is to develop a comprehensive plan for CPW that will guide actions and investments over the next several years. These planning and engagement activities will require the project management and strategic planning expertise of a dedicated leader who reports directly to the RPFDD and who manages the part- or full-time staff. This leader is expected to be the public face of the RPFDD.
3. *Reorganize monthly RPFDD meetings* – Because of the Open Meetings laws of Washington State, the monthly RPFDD meetings are the only mechanism in which important matters can be discussed and decisions made. Currently, the meetings are organized around discussing the state of the REACH Museum rather than RPFDD matters. The meetings should be reorganized to focus on RPFDD business items rather than REACH Museum updates.

4. *Create RPFD committees focused on current goals and objectives* – State law prevents more than two RPFD Board members from meeting without public disclosure and opportunities to attend. Thus, having committees composed only of Board members will significantly slow down planning activities because of the logistics of running open meetings. To accelerate progress, committees should be formed that are focused on current goals and objectives, chaired by a RPFD Board member, but consisting mostly of non-RPFD supporters.

Build a financial foundation for CPW expansion

1. *Establish a separate bank account for RPFD-specific operations funds* – Open an account that is designated to pay RPFD-specific expenses. This account should support transfer of funds to REACH Museum accounts and be able to be inspected-at-will by the RPFD President, Treasurer and designated accountant.
2. *Refinance the current REACH Museum bonds* – Hire a financial advisor and a Bond Attorney to refinance the current bonds that were used to build the REACH Museum. This action will also require establishing new interlocal agreements with the City of Richland on how tax funds from the 0.033% sales tax rebate are handled.
3. *Identify local, state and federal sources of funds* – Build relationships with state and federal legislators that are supportive of the RPFD mission and explore mechanisms by which state and federal funds can be obtained. Build relationships with local and state lobbying organizations, such as the Tri-Cities Legislative Council and the Association of Washington State Public Facilities Districts (AWSPFD), to promote funding for CPW redevelopment.

Partner with community organizations aligned with our mission and vision

1. *Identify community non-profit and business organizations that support our vision* – Our community partners need to support the broader vision of CPW, not just a facility specific to their mission. As currently envisioned, we need partners that will help us plan for one or more museums, performing arts facilities and park infrastructure. These organizations need to be willing to work collaboratively to achieve the goals of the RPFD. We also need to cultivate relationships with organizations such as the Regional Chamber of Commerce and Visit Tri-Cities.
2. *Establish MOUs with community partners* – Formal agreements need to be signed with our community partners that clearly lay out our expectations for them and the commitments that the RPFD is willing to make to further their organizational missions and goals.
3. *Develop guidelines for establishing relationships with non-partner organizations* – To accomplish their institutional goals, RPFD partners are likely to develop relationships with other organizations, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is important that agreements made between our partners and these types of organization do not conflict with the rules and regulations governing Washington State Public Facility Districts. Thus, guidelines need to be developed to clearly delineate commitments that can and cannot be made with respect to work related to the CPW redevelopment process.

Clearly communicate RPFD goals and actions

1. *Establish a unique RPFD brand and identity* – The successful development of CPW will require the public to clearly understand which organization is behind the effort and its motivations. Currently, the RPFD is poorly understood by the public and is mostly seen as the organization behind the REACH Museum. To be seen in a new light, we need an identity different from the REACH Museum or the City of Richland. This means creating a unique RPFD brand that will consistently communicate our mission and goals and consistent messaging regarding our identity and our vision. We need a logo, name tags and business cards.
2. *Create a dedicated RPFD website* – The central repository of all information related to the RPFD will be its website. All other media efforts should direct people to the website. It needs to be compelling, complete and capable of hosting video and audio files.
3. *Create a comprehensive marketing plan for the CPW project* – Determine the key stakeholders and their priorities. Create the appropriate message for each group of stakeholders and a strategy for communicating that message. Define mechanisms for communications and the resources needed to accomplish it. Determine the best ways to get feedback from key stakeholders.

Develop a comprehensive plan for CPW development

1. *Establish planning teams for the three aspects of CPW development* – We need to create three teams that are focused separately on: 1) museums, 2) performing arts and 3) park infrastructure. These teams will be responsible for identifying practical options for creating facilities and infrastructure to meet their initial visions.
2. *Generate multi-option initial planning documents for each CPW aspect* – Each team should provide at least 3 different options for achieving their overall vision. Each option should include a general cost estimate and timeline.
3. *Hold a public “charrette” to gather input on CPW plans* – The different options should be presented to the public at a professionally mediated charrette process. This charrette should be widely publicized and open to the public. Participants should be actively recruited from Richland citizens, but the RPFD should be able to invite participants with specialized knowledge from outside of Richland. The outcome of the charrette will be presented to the public and disseminated through a media campaign.
4. *Sign interlocal agreement with City of Richland to develop CPW* – Plans created from the charrette process will be submitted to the City of Richland for their approval. This should be implemented in the form of an interlocal agreement between the City of Richland and the RPFD.

Appendix A

SWOT analysis

1. *Strengths*

- Have a stable income stream from WA State tax rebate
- Significant financial resources
- Centrally located with easy access
- Easy-to-build location on the river
- City of Richland is the leaseholder of the property
- Near the expanding Three Rivers Campus in Kennewick
- Already have the REACH Museum and Foundation as a core capability
- Oversee the only major museum in the Tri-Cities
- Highly accomplished PFD Board
- Support of the City of Richland staff
- Support of Federal, State and local officials
- Excellent relationship with community leaders
- Support of ACTF and its advocates

2. *Weaknesses*

- Low public awareness
- No dedicated staff for the PFD
- Relatively low engagement of public leaders
- Projects require significant up-front capital
- Dependence on approval of sales tax measure
- Cannot directly campaign for sales tax
- Negative perception of past performance
- Ambivalent support of the Richland City Council
- Need to work with US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- Nebulous plans

3. *Opportunities*

- Potential for up to a 0.2% sales tax revenue
- State and federal grants
- Economic redevelopment of the Island View area
- Provides a legacy for supporters and community leaders
- Public support for additional arts and entertainment in the area
- Can create a unique STEAM park for the area

4. *Threats*

- Reconveyance from the USACE could be delayed
- Objections from the local tribes
- Potential economic downturn
- Resistance to new taxes
- Richland creates alternate plans for CPW
- Other cities in area support competing projects
- High building costs
- Local backlash over developing a currently natural park

D.R.I.V.E. (Do, Restrictions, Investments, Values, Expected outcomes)

Do

- Take the next step – the public is wondering what is taking so long
- Find a way to sell the concept to all demographics
- Make it accessible, affordable
- Assess why February 2025 ballot measure failed
- Have a listening campaign, such as a public charrette
- Determine the market for each venue
- Target the right audience. Look at social media for their opinions and to figure out how to reach various audiences (sports, etc.). TELL THE STORY! Target the younger generation in the way they talk and get information.
- Do a competitive analysis. Casinos, universities, etc.
- Form a broad coalition of local arts groups. Also work with perceived competitors (Toyota Center, schools, churches)
- Create an advisory group

Restrictions

- Don't ask public to vote on a single facility
- Don't provide specifics before they are finalized
- Don't assume public understands
- Don't repeat same mistakes
- Don't be dry. Tug at heartstrings, have an elevator pitch
- Lack of sufficient revenue for construction
- Current organizational structure
- Don't "attack" the community that exists (perception that either/or for PAC and REACH)
- PFD can't campaign for vote

Investments

- Fund community engagement (communications, etc.) focusing on impact
- Fund an Executive Director for the RPF
- Fund coalition that does the groundwork, SWOT, etc. An advisory group
- Create a mechanism to fund planning documents for future facilities
- Develop value proposition
 - Reduce pain for partners, provide gain, determine services and requirements to inform design of facilities
- Invest in relationships with experts
- Invest in Richland community
 - Users, partners, stakeholders
- Invest in subcommittee of partners

Values

- Truth and integrity
- Collaboration and colocation strategy
- Community engagement
- Open and transparent
- Beneficial to community

- Cost efficient (time and money)
- STEAM
- Inclusiveness, accessibility and affordability
- Honor family, history and legacy
- Hospitality

Essential Outcomes

- A repeatable process for building facilities
- Buildings
- Collaboration
- Gathering places
- Education
- Quality of life
- Economic development
- Financially sustainable
- Broad participation
- Legacy for future generations
- Become a model for other PFDs
- Win!