



ELIZABETH RIVER PROJECT

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ELIZABETH RIVER PROJECT BREAKS GROUND ON PRU AND LOUIS RYAN RESILIENCE LAB

\$8 Million Facility, Park Designed to Respond to Sea-Level Rise and Urban Flooding

Photo Opportunity: Release of rehabilitated Elizabeth River waterbirds (3 pm).

Norfolk, VA, May 18, 2022 – The non-profit Elizabeth River Project is breaking ground on Wednesday, May 18th at 2:30pm on an \$8 million living laboratory and learning park designed to help urban coastal communities adapt to climate change and rising seas.

Engineered to withstand flooding and respond to sea-level rise, the Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab and Learning Park will be the catalyst for resurgence of Norfolk's North Colley Avenue business corridor along Knitting Mill Creek, an important Elizabeth River tributary. The Lab will feature everything from environmentally sustainable construction practices to changing research displays to a waterside learning park for the public to explore how to live and work in the urban flood plain as seas rise.

"Today's groundbreaking is a huge milestone for our organization, and a huge step into the future for our entire region," said Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, Executive Director of the Elizabeth River Project. "The Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab will serve as a global model for urban communities everywhere to wrestle with the growing impacts of climate change and sea level rise."

"This is one of the most promising projects to come about in my lifetime for a healthy Elizabeth River," said Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander, to be among speakers at the **invite-only groundbreaking, 4610 Colley Avenue, Norfolk. The release of rehabilitated water birds will replace the traditional gold-shovels photo opportunity at about 3 pm.** Tidewater Rehabilitation and Environmental Education will release the birds to symbolize new hope for the Elizabeth River, also launching a branding campaign that includes a new logo with a refresh of Elizabeth River Project's longtime symbol, the Brown Pelican - once almost extinct. The presidents of Old Dominion University and Virginia Wesleyan University will be among university leaders speaking on research collaboration with Elizabeth River Project at the Lab.

Designed by Norfolk architectural firm Work Program Architects, the innovative, 6,500 square foot, solar-equipped Ryan Resilience Lab is being intentionally built inside a flood zone to demonstrate environmentally sustainable construction. The building has an intentional life span of 30 to 50 years to match sea level predictions. The Elizabeth River Project plans to place the property in long-term

conservation using the nation's first "rolling conservation easement," pledging to remove the building once water levels reach a trigger point.

The lab is being funded through the generous philanthropy of its namesakes, Pru and Louis Ryan, a Norfolk couple, along with hundreds of public and private donations made through the Elizabeth River Project's "Next Wave" campaign – the most successful fundraising campaign in the Elizabeth River Project's history.

Unlike some green buildings where approaches are far out of reach for the average resident or business, "We're using environmentally sustainable techniques and off-the-shelf materials that any builder or homeowner has access to: water saving irrigation methods, rain barrels, solar panels and gray water reuse methods," said lead architect Sam Bowling of Work Program Architects. The Brock River Room will host ongoing workshops and events with many partners including Old Dominion University's Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience, co-locating across the street to collaborate.

Fronting busy Colley Avenue, the Goode Family Entry Pavilion will be built as a floating dock to provide refuge during flooding, with artwork depicting Norfolk's temperature rising with global warming. The Lab's Learning Park, sponsored by TowneBank, will include a "living shoreline," demonstrating how to hold off erosion while restoring oyster and wetland habitat. The Perry Family Boardwalk Observatory will offer visitors a unique perspective of the living shoreline. The HRSD Research Dock will host research by the Elizabeth River Project and higher education partners, including Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences, which already has established a live monitoring station reporting data every few minutes.

Construction by Hourigan will hit full speed in June and will continue for eight to twelve months.

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The non-profit Elizabeth River Project has worked since 1993 to restore the environmental health of the urban Elizabeth River, once presumed dead. Today most major industries on the port river along with the cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Virginia Beach and tens of thousands of school children and residents collaborate with Elizabeth River Project in the success story that is the river's revival. Pelicans, eagles, river otters, seahorses and dolphins are now a common site.

Along with Paradise Creek Nature Park, signature programs of the Elizabeth River Project include the Dominion Energy Learning Barge, River Star Homes, River Star Businesses and the Youth Resilience Expo. Landmark projects include restoring oyster habitat in the Lafayette and Eastern branches and cleaning up some of the world's highest levels of contamination at Money Point in Chesapeake, resulting in a six-fold reduction in fish cancer. Do something beautiful. Join us today: ElizabethRiver.org.