

## **Elizabeth River Project's Resilience Lab to be Named for Pru and Louis Ryan** *\$2.1 Million Gift is Largest in Organization's History*

NORFOLK, Va. – March 18, 2021– The Elizabeth River Project's Next Wave capital campaign has received the largest donation in the organization's history with a major naming gift in the amount of \$2.1 million from long-time supporters Pru and Louis Ryan of Norfolk.

The gift will attach the Ryans' names to the Elizabeth River Project's Resilience Lab to be built along the Elizabeth River at 4610 Colley Avenue in Norfolk. The official name will be the Elizabeth River Project's Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab, or Ryan Resilience Lab for short. It will be the first urban redevelopment project in Virginia intentionally built in the floodplain to demonstrate environmental resilience to sea level rise, and it will serve as a national resilience model.

The three-story green facility also includes a waterfront park. The elevated building will have solar panels, a green roof and living walls. The Elizabeth River Project will share practical resilience approaches with businesses, citizens and students about how to live and work on the waterfront. The location is ideal since Norfolk has one of the most accelerated rates of sea level rise in the world. A research dock will provide a platform for ongoing study and solutions to address climate change issues. The waterfront Learning Park will be open to the public for a changing demonstration of emerging practices in resilience and waterfront access along Knitting Mill Creek.

"We decided to support the Elizabeth River Project because it is the leading organization focused on the environment in Hampton Roads and in particular the Elizabeth River," said Louis Ryan. "We had decided a number of years ago to support our primary areas of interest – the environment and education, and the Elizabeth River Project touches both. The legacy created by the Elizabeth River Project's Resilience Lab is a cleaner and healthier environment for the citizens of our region. We are proud to put our names on such a prestigious facility that will be on the frontline of regional and national efforts to combat sea level rise and changing climate conditions."

The Elizabeth River Project's Ryan Resilience Lab also will be the northern cornerstone of Norfolk's Innovation Corridor. Research partners include Old Dominion University Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience, which is co-locating its resilience efforts across the street, and Norfolk State University, that is planning projects ranging from art to science at the facility. These partnerships with other research leaders give the Elizabeth River Project the ability to bring these entities to work together and promote the efforts nationally.

Louis Ryan is the retired general counsel of Landmark Communications and has served on the Elizabeth River Project's board of directors since 2006. He is also the co-chair of the Next Wave campaign long with Bruce Bradley, former publisher of *The Virginian-Pilot*.

"The Ryan family's generous gift as well as Louis' leadership on the campaign will enable the Elizabeth River Project to fight sea level rise and benefit countless Hampton Roads residents and businesses," said Josh Harris, the board president.

Aimee and Frank Batten of Norfolk helped launch the Next Wave capital campaign last summer with an initial gift of \$1 million and a challenge to the community to match each additional dollar with another dollar, up to \$1 million. The challenge was quickly met, and the campaign's original goal of \$8 million was exceeded. The Next Wave campaign has achieved more than 90% of its new goal of \$13 million. The campaign's cabinet will reach out to the community for broader support to complete the funding needed.

The campaign achieves many more projects than just the construction of the Ryan Resilience Lab in Norfolk. The goal is to expand Elizabeth River Project's impact throughout the region. In Portsmouth, the campaign will double the size of the Elizabeth River Project's education headquarters at Paradise Creek Nature Park. In Chesapeake, funds will go to construct a new home port for the Elizabeth River Project's Dominion Energy Learning Barge, America's greenest vessel, currently docked in Norfolk. And the campaign will provide critical funding for Elizabeth River Project's extensive education and restoration programs.

"Restoring an urban river once presumed dead requires an enormous amount of heavy lifting," said Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, executive director. "The Elizabeth River Project forever will be indebted to the Ryans as the lead investors in a campaign that will do more to set our mission up for success than anything in our nearly 30-year history."

Hampton University School of Architecture, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia and multiple community stakeholders contributed to initial concepts for the Resilience Lab, and the final design is being completed by Work Program Architects in Norfolk.

The Elizabeth River Project was founded around a kitchen table in 1991 to restore the Elizabeth River to the highest level of environmental quality through government, business and community partnerships. The organization is one of the first environmental groups to use a social impact model that encourages collaboration to achieve success. The Elizabeth River was considered to be one of the most polluted rivers on the Chesapeake Bay. Elizabeth River Project's programs have been a catalyst for reducing contamination in the river by hundreds of millions of pounds and restoring and conserving thousands of acres of wetlands, oysters and other wildlife habitat. More than one billion pounds of other materials have been recycled, reduced, or reused since 1997. For more information, visit [elizabethriver.org](http://elizabethriver.org).

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Link to video

Rendering of Ryan Resilience Lab

Photo of Pru and Louis Ryan

Fact sheet on the Ryan Resilience Lab