



MEETING SUMMARY

Date: Thursday, January 27, 2022

Time of Meeting: 4:00 – 5:30 PM

Subject: Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting

Project: Reconnect Jackson Ward Feasibility Study

Project UPC: 114874

Contract Number: 49401-009

MEETING ATTENDEES:

Name	Affiliation/Role	Email
Reconnect Jackson Ward Steering Committee		
Adam Bond	Ebenezer Baptist Church	adam.bond@ebenezerrva.org
Aria Kirkland-Harris	Ebenezer Baptist Church	aria.kirkland-harris@ebenezerrva.org
Billy McMullen	Community Member	billymacspeaks@gmail.com
Charlene Pitchford	Gilpin Court Tenants Council	crprhatenantcommissioner@gmail.com
David Lambert	Eye Que Optical	eyequeoptical@gmail.com
Desi Wynter	Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority	desi.wynter@rrha.com
Donté McCutchen	Moriah Baptist Church	donte.mccutchen@gmail.com
Janis Allen	Historic Jackson Ward Civic Association	janisaa55@yahoo.com
Jerome Legions	Carver Area Civic League	jeromelegions1@gmail.com
Jim Hill	Carver Area Civic League	jaschrhill@gmail.com
Leighton Powell	Community Member	leighton.powell@scenicvirginia.org
Marland Buckner	The Black History Museum	mbuckner@mbsq.net
Max Hepp-Buchanan	Venture Richmond	mhbuchanan@venturerichmond.com
Mecca Harris	ART 180	mecca@art180.org
Nate Goodenow	Walter Parks	nate@wparks.com
Ron Stallings	Hippodrome	rastallings@walkerrow.com
Zarina Fazaldin	Z&L Historic LLC	landzhistoric@msn.com
Office of the Secretary of Transportation – Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment		
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Virginia Department of Transportation		
Ben Mannell	TMPD Assist. Division Administrator	ben.mannell@vdot.virginia.gov
City of Richmond		
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Yessenia Revilla	PDR-OED Planner	yessenia.revilla@rva.gov
DeAndrae Spradley	Planner	deandrae.spradley@rva.gov
Kelli Rowan	Program Manger	kelli.rowan@rva.gov

MEETING ATTENDEES (CONT.):

Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP		
Caleb Parks	Project Manager	cparks@wrallp.com
Ebony Walden Consulting/Storefront for Community Design		
Ebony Walden	Community Engagement and Coordination	ebony@ebonywalden.com
Shawn Balon	Community Engagement and Coordination	shawn@storefrontrichmond.org
OnPoint Transportation Public Relations		
Mike Carosi	Community Engagement and Coordination	mike@communicateonpoint.com
Windy Campbell	Community Engagement and Coordination	Windy.campbell@communicateonpoint.com

Note: A list of additional attendees is enclosed with this meeting summary

1. Introductions/Icebreaker

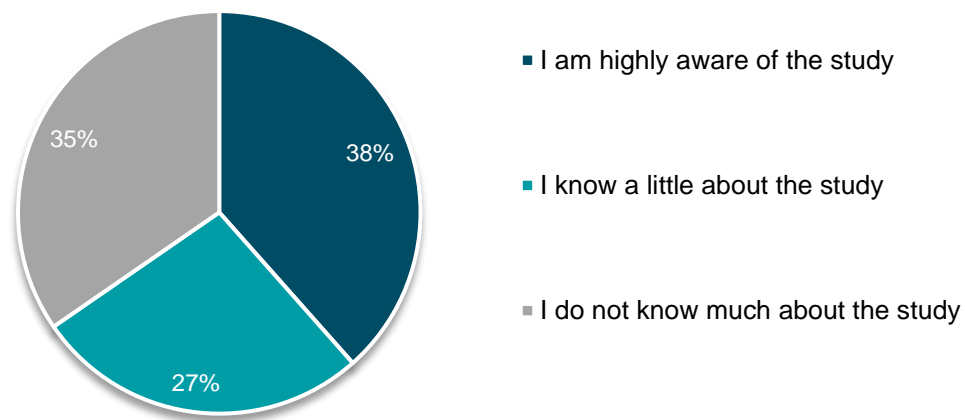
After reviewing the meeting agenda Steering Committee Members introduced themselves, their affiliation, and were asked what excites them about the Reconnect Jackson Ward study.

- Rev. Dr. Adam Bond, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church – *What excites me is the opportunity to connect with steering committee members on the big-picture; what it means to ‘renew community’ within Jackson Ward in addition to what the land and space might look like for the people who are residents of this area.*
- Aria Kirkland-Harris, Director of Stewardship and Community Development Ebenezer Baptist Church – *Excited about green spaces and open places for gathering. Has seen similar projects in DC, NYC and is excited to see what is possible in Jackson Ward.*
- Billy McMullen, former National Football League Philadelphia Eagles player and Richmond native whose father grew up in Jackson Ward – *He’s looking forward to seeing restored physical and mental infrastructure for youth. Works with youth at Carver Elementary.*
- Charlene Pitchford, Commissioner on the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) Board of Commissioners and Gilpin Tenant Council Member – *Present, but not able to introduce herself.*
- David Lambert, resident of Richmond’s Northside 3rd Voter District and owner of Eye Que Optical in Jackson Ward north whose father has been here for over 60 years. Eye Que Optical is the first building north of the 1st Street Bridge that has been a part of the community for over 60 years – *Potential opportunity for bridge park, but also economic empowerment to permit business to come across the bridge.*
- Desi Wynter, Director of Redevelopment at RRHA – *The word “Reconnect” is significant. Good to see an actual plan as we better this community from the damages that have happened over the past several decades. Has worked closely with Maritza on Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant.*
- Donté McCutchen, resident of Jackson Ward and member of Greater Mt. Moriah Baptist Church on 1st Street north of the bridge – *He’ll have a chance to offer insight as well as those family and friends on both sides of the bridge.*
- Janis Allen, President of the Historic Jackson Ward Association and longtime resident of Jackson Ward, whose grandparents and parents grew up here – *Excited about community engagement.*
- Jerome Legions, President of the Carver Area Civic Improvement League – *He’s excited that Carver was included in the project and to enhance Jackson Ward and the community. What affects Carver affects Jackson Ward.*

- Jim Hill, 30-year resident of Carver and member of Carver Area Civic Improvement League. Has heard his neighbors talk about what it was like before the highway came through – *He’s excited for the opportunity to help heal not only the physical damage that was done, but also be able to begin to make reparations to people who were harmed and restore economic vitality to the area and those who were part of it.*
- Leighton Powell, 20-year Jackson Ward resident and preservationist at heart – *Wants more green space and righting the wrongs. Allow Mt. Zion to have the greenspace that was taken from them years ago. Healing of physical and spiritual connections.*
- Marland Buckner, Interim Director of Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia located in Jackson Ward – *It’s one of a handful of unique opportunities that the City is presenting to solve problems.*
- Max Hepp-Buchanan, Director of Riverfront and Downtown Placemaking at Venture Richmond who was also a member of the Richmond 300 advisory council - Big Moves section of plan – *He’s excited to see this get going.*
- Mecca Harris, resident of Jackson Ward and Community and Engagement manager at Art 180 – *Excited to meet others and restore historic impact, especially the youth.*
- Nate Goodenow, architect specializing in urban infill and multi-family development. Office is in Jackson Ward. Likes to take old parking lots and expressways and make them into usable civic spaces that solve needs for housing, greenspace – *Worked on similar project in NYC and saw the healing that it brought.*
- Ron Stallings, resident and property owner in Jackson Ward.
- Zarina Fazaldin – Happy to be a part of the committee.

Digital Poll Question Part 1: The Steering Committee was asked, “How aware are you of the Reconnect Jackson Ward Feasibility Study?” The results are shown below.

How aware are you of the Reconnect Jackson Ward Feasibility Study?

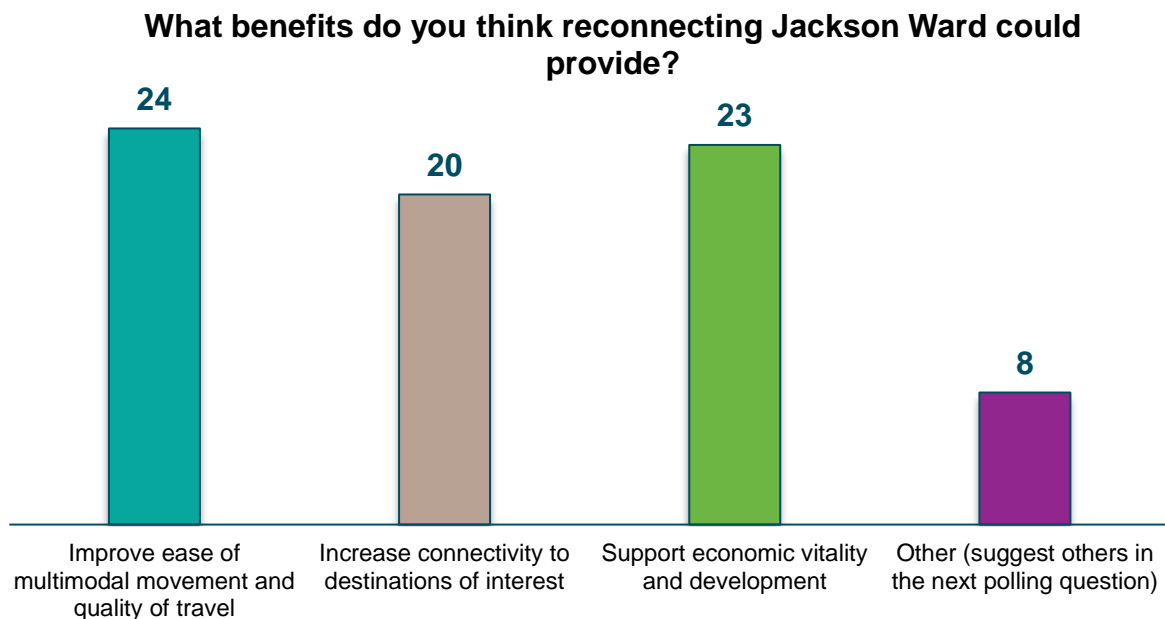


2. Outline Study Scope, Goals, and Schedule

Caleb Parks discussed the background of the project and how we got here.

- Reviewed the timeline associated with this neighborhood and construction of the Richmond-Henrico Turnpike, which was redesignated as an interstate facility.
- The initial vision for the study was identified from the six Big Moves initiatives identified in the Richmond 300 Master Plan, adopted by the Richmond City Council in December 2020. One is recapping neighborhoods to try to reknit neighborhoods that were separated by past infrastructure projects.
- The goal of the study is to evaluate the engineering feasibility of physically reconnecting Jackson Ward, Gilpin Court, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- The study process is intended to be community driven and result in the identification of a recommended concept and is anticipated to extend over an approximate six-month period.
- The study is intended to position the City of Richmond to apply for future funding opportunities, primarily the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program, which is expected to provide \$350 million in capital construction grants to be distributed nationwide over a 5-year period. Also looking to identify other opportunities through this effort.
- Examples of other similar projects were shown. The cap could provide a roadway connection, bicycle or pedestrian connections, a park, some combination, or other facility over the interstate.

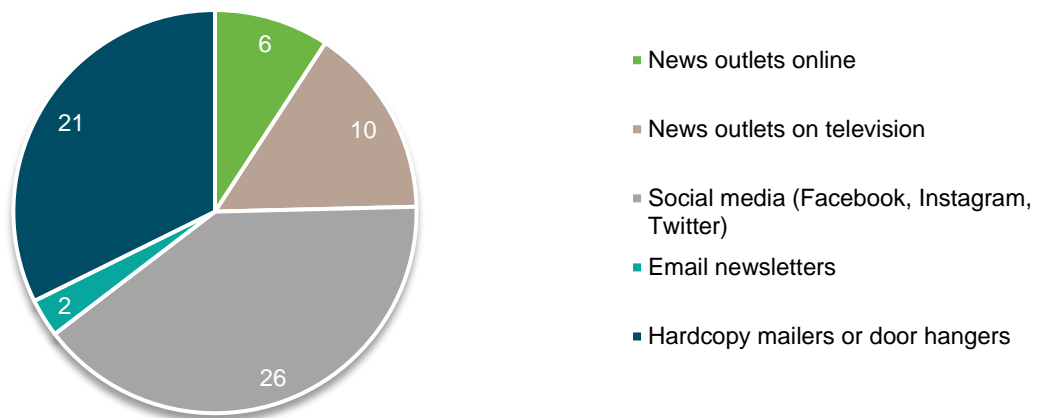
Digital Poll Question Part 2: The Steering Committee was asked, “What benefits do you think reconnecting Jackson Ward could provide?” Multiple choices could be selected. The results are shown below.



Other suggestions included: housing, access, pedestrian and bicycles, remembrance, reparative work, community engagement, memorial, reconnected community, improved safety, equity, feel more unified, mental infrastructure, fairness, historical linkage, beautification, and better zoning.

Digital Poll Question Part 3: *The Steering Committee was asked, “What are your recommendations for reaching out to the community with information and to get feedback?” Multiple choices could be selected. The results are shown below.*

What are your recommendations for reaching out to the community with information and to get feedback?



3. Review Roles/Commitment of Steering Committee

Ebony Walden provided an overview of the Steering Committee commitment, roles and responsibilities.

- The Steering Committee will:
 - Assist to engage the community and serve as project ambassadors
 - Share information with the community (neighbors, co-workers, etc.)
 - Help identify partners, outlets, stakeholders, community happenings
 - Attend monthly meetings
- Primary ways of engagement:
 - Three public meetings
 - Four focus group meetings
 - Pop-up events in community, where people are
 - Interviews of up to 10 descendants – looking for stories on history, perspective, and culture
- The Study Team will be hiring two community ambassadors, organizing pop-up events, and distributing doorhangers. The Community Ambassador application was provided: <http://www.storefrontrichmond.org/community-ambassadors>

4. Questions and Answers

Q (David Lambert): What is estimated timetable for completion?

A: June-July. August is when they anticipate funding availability.

Q (Marland Buckner): Where does the project sit with the city government? Is this a point-to-point funding play? How does it fit with economic development? What precedence are you looking at across the country?

A (Maritza): Any federal funding opportunity requires a local-state match. The City's Office of Equitable Mobility and Transit will help with aligning the capital. Starting at the beginning to make sure we're thinking of funding sources. Not just create a pretty plan – but how it would get paid for. Maritza has spoken with folks in other cities with similar concepts – a park deck in Texas. TXDOT paid for deck; foundations and locally sourced for buildings on top of deck.

Q (Max Hepp-Buchanan): What's going to be the biggest determining factor in terms of size and scope? How do we pass from 1 block to a 2 block cap? What's the width/depth of the project?

A (Ebony): Feasibility Study will determine how much can go on top of bridge; physical constraints and what are the possibilities from an engineering standpoint.

(Caleb): We are in the very early phases of the study process. We will look at the vision identified in Richmond 300 and see what is feasible between Belvidere and east of 1st Street. The ability to implement a cap will be evaluated from a feasibility standpoint. Could be a pedestrian facility, bike or roadway connection.

(Maritza): There are other projects happening in JW/Gilpin; Belvidere interchange; the Fall Line Trail; North-South BRT coming down on Chamberlayne. We will bring in those transportation projects into the feasibility considerations.

(Ebony): We're aware in linking our ideas into funding. State, regional and federal dollars. We're trying to ensure we have some elements of the study to add in the elements of the other projects as well. We hope that we have a study that we can go after federal dollars as well as regional or state.

Q (Nate Goodenow): Are there other design engineers contributing?

A (Ebony): WRA will produce design concepts. Between now and mid-March, our first community meeting, survey, pop-up meetings. Getting people on board and excited about it. This feedback will go to the designers/engineers – how will this fit into design, and what would it cost? Steering committee will see concepts, choose and prioritize. What is the will of the people around the concept to choose? Community to pick a preferred concept which we would use to get funding to make it happen.

5. Open Discussions: Focus Groups/Committee Visioning Meeting

- The study will include interviews and focus groups. The Steering Committee was asked Who should we invite? Who would be potential partners?
- A Google document was distributed to solicit names, contacts, organizations recommended by the Steering Committee.
- There was some discussion on upcoming Community Meeting events and possible locations.
 - The Black History Museum was offered as a possibility within COVID constraints.
 - The Greater Mt. Moriah Baptist Church was offered as a possible meeting location or the St. Luke Legacy Center.

- The North side of the interstate was suggested for future locations to fully engage people who live on that side of the bridge and show the project as inclusive and friendly as possible.
- Wellness Wednesdays at St. Luke Legacy Center, every Wednesdays between 10 AM – 6 PM was suggested as a possible pop-up event location.
- Monumental Events hosted by the Valentine was recommended.
- Sheep Hill Memories, a play about Carver history that included information from interviews with elders that aren't with us now, was suggested for potential story telling. Probably available at VCU library or Community Involvement Office.

6. Next Meeting and Next Steps

- Steering committee to provide contacts for possible stakeholders for future focus groups and descendant interviews.
- The study team will take the feedback from this meeting, as well as the form with the stakeholder information, ideas for meetings, connections.
- Additional information regarding the study, including a project fact sheet, would be distributed after the meeting to the Steering Committee to share and spread the word.

7. Additional Questions and Answer

Q: This is about the construction of the physical bridge. But the design can highlight the culture, the history, the stories of people who were there. History, culture can be incorporated into the design.

A (Maritza): *There's a lot of history that we need to elevate. History will be something that we'll be looking to repair and acknowledge what has happened. That's why we're having interviews with descendants, so we can have those stories brought to forefront.*

Q (Desi Wynter): Mentioned greater Jackson Ward project, re-development of Gilpin Court and all the way to the convention center. Reconnecting Jackson Ward can influence the greater plan.

A (Ronique): *Hearing from the community, the wants and the desires. And ensuring that's actually feasible. Need to be realistic with competitive funding. We want to hear and prioritize what's most important to the community. See how much based on today's dollars, what it looks like. Then we can determine what's feasible. We might have to be creative in seeking out opportunities. Everyone equally wants to be a part of this and see that it happens. As much as you can be engaged, and get others to be engaged, it will affect our outcome.*

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES:

The Reconnect Jackson Ward Feasibility Study Steering Committee meetings are open to the public and anyone interested in attending are permitted to register for the meeting. The list below represents additional attendees present at the meeting.

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