



# MEETING SUMMARY

**Date:** Thursday, February 24, 2022

**Time of Meeting:** 4:00 – 5:30 PM

**Subject:** Steering Committee Meeting #2

**Project:** Reconnect Jackson Ward Feasibility Study

**Project UPC:** 114874

**Contract Number:** 49401-009

## MEETING ATTENDEES:

Name	Affiliation/Role	Email
<b>Reconnect Jackson Ward Steering Committee</b>		
Adam Bond	Ebenezer Baptist Church	<a href="mailto:adam.bond@ebenezerrva.org">adam.bond@ebenezerrva.org</a>
Anedra Bourne	Venture Richmond	<a href="mailto:abourne@venturerichmond.com">abourne@venturerichmond.com</a>
Aria Kirkland-Harris	Ebenezer Baptist Church	<a href="mailto:aria.kirkland-harris@ebenezerrva.org">aria.kirkland-harris@ebenezerrva.org</a>
Billy McMullen	Community Member	<a href="mailto:billymacspeaks@gmail.com">billymacspeaks@gmail.com</a>
Charlene Pitchford	Gilpin Court Tenants Council	<a href="mailto:crprhatenantcommissioner@gmail.com">crprhatenantcommissioner@gmail.com</a>
David Lambert	Eye Que Optical	<a href="mailto:eyequeoptical@gmail.com">eyequeoptical@gmail.com</a>
Desi Wynter	Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority	<a href="mailto:desi.wynter@rrha.com">desi.wynter@rrha.com</a>
Donté McCutchen	Moriah Baptist Church	<a href="mailto:donte.mccutchen@gmail.com">donte.mccutchen@gmail.com</a>
Janis Allen	Historic Jackson Ward Civic Association	<a href="mailto:janisaa55@yahoo.com">janisaa55@yahoo.com</a>
Jerome Legions	Carver Area Civic League	<a href="mailto:jeromelegions1@gmail.com">jeromelegions1@gmail.com</a>
Jim Hill	Carver Area Civic League	<a href="mailto:jaschrhill@gmail.com">jaschrhill@gmail.com</a>
Leighton Powell	Community Member	<a href="mailto:leighton.powell@scenicvirginia.org">leighton.powell@scenicvirginia.org</a>
Mecca Harris	ART 180	<a href="mailto:mecca@art180.org">mecca@art180.org</a>
Nate Goodenow	Walter Parks	<a href="mailto:nate@wparks.com">nate@wparks.com</a>
<b>Office of the Secretary of Transportation – Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment</b>		
Ronique Day	Deputy Director	<a href="mailto:ronique.day@oipi.virginia.gov">ronique.day@oipi.virginia.gov</a>
<b>City of Richmond</b>		
Maritza Pechin, AICP	PDR-OED Deputy Director	<a href="mailto:maritza.pechin@rva.gov">maritza.pechin@rva.gov</a>
Dironna Clarke	DPW-OETM Administrator	<a href="mailto:dironna.clarke@rva.gov">dironna.clarke@rva.gov</a>
Yessenia Revilla	PDR-OED Planner	<a href="mailto:yessenia.revilla@rva.gov">yessenia.revilla@rva.gov</a>
DeAndrae Spradley	Planner	<a href="mailto:deandrae.spradley@rva.gov">deandrae.spradley@rva.gov</a>
Kelli Rowan	Program Manger	<a href="mailto:kelli.rowan@rva.gov">kelli.rowan@rva.gov</a>
<b>Virginia Department of Transportation</b>		
Ben Mannell	TMPD Assist. Division Administrator	<a href="mailto:ben.mannell@vdot.virginia.gov">ben.mannell@vdot.virginia.gov</a>
<b>Whitman, Requardt and Associates, LLP</b>		
Caleb Parks	Project Manager	<a href="mailto:cparks@wrallp.com">cparks@wrallp.com</a>
<b>Ebony Walden Consulting/Storefront for Community Design</b>		
Ebony Walden	Community Engagement and Coordination	<a href="mailto:ebony@ebonywalden.com">ebony@ebonywalden.com</a>
Shawn Balon	Community Engagement and Coordination	<a href="mailto:shawn@storefrontrichmond.org">shawn@storefrontrichmond.org</a>
<b>OnPoint Transportation Public Relations</b>		
Mike Carosi	Community Engagement and Coordination	<a href="mailto:mike@communicateonpoint.com">mike@communicateonpoint.com</a>

**Windy Campbell** | Community Engagement and Coordination | [Windy.campbell@communicateonpoint.com](mailto:Windy.campbell@communicateonpoint.com)

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

## 1. Introductions/Icebreaker

There were a few additions and changes to the Steering Committee list since the January 27, 2022, kickoff meeting. The Steering Committee members were asked to introduce themselves, their affiliation, and to share a favorite place in Jackson Ward or the surrounding neighborhood.

- Rev. Dr. Adam Bond, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church – *Favorite place is Ebenezer Baptist Church.*
- Anedra Bourne, Deputy Executive Director at Venture Richmond – *Anywhere along 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.*
- Billy McMullen, former National Football League Philadelphia Eagles player who works with a lot of youth in the area – *Mama J's is "always good to me."*
- Charlene Pitchford – Commissioner on the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) Board of Commissioners and Gilpin Tenant Council Member, also a resident of Gilpin Court.
- David Lambert, licensed dispensing optician owner of Eye Que Optical and family owns other property in area – *Favorite spot is Eye Que Optical "for all your eye care needs" and favorite food spot Jackson Ward is Soddy's and Mama J's.*
- Desi Wynter, Director of Real Estate at Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority – *Love Jackson Ward and enjoys coming to town and walk around the neighborhood.*
- Donté McCutchen member of Greater Mt. Moriah Baptist Church and resident of Jackson Ward – *Favorite place is my church also Barky's Music Store in Jackson Ward.*
- Janis Allen, President of the Historic Jackson Ward Association – *Favorite place is my historic home on Jackson Street.*
- Jerome Legions, President of Carver Area Civic Improvement League – *Favorite bumps up against Jackson Ward and is Carver Elementary (Moore Street) School.*
- Jim Hill, former City of Richmond planner and long-term resident of Carver, member of Carver Area Civic Improvement League – *Loves Mama J's and Big Herms but favorite place is own front porch in Carver.*
- Leighton Powell, 19-year resident of Historic Jackson Ward and Chair of new Historic Jackson Ward Historic Preservation Committee – *Favorite place is my house and wherever foxhound dog wants to walk through the neighborhood.*
- Mecca Harris, Art 180 in Jackson Ward – *Art 180 is favorite place or Saison for French fries.*
- Nate Goodenow, Walter Parks Architects – *Parklet in front of Art 180 and plaza at Gallery 5, big fan of Saison.*

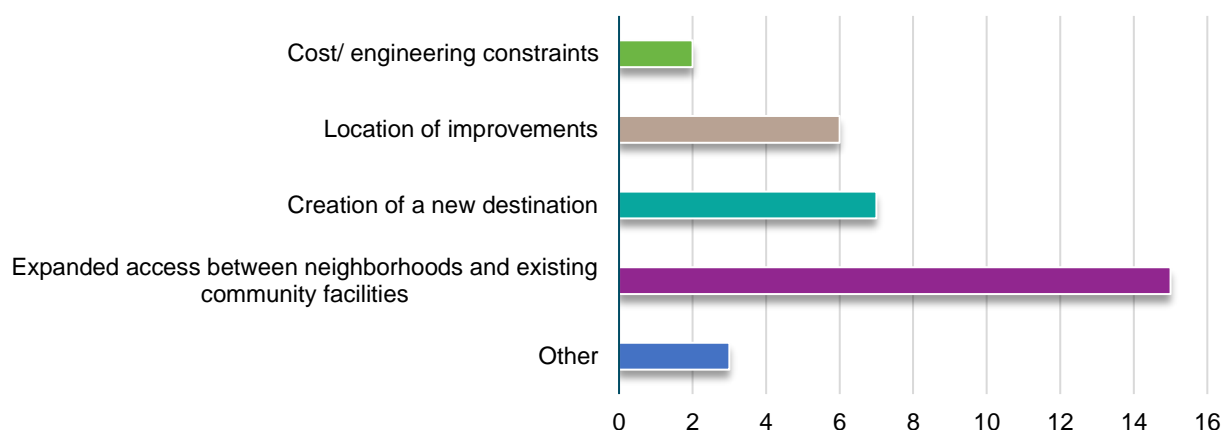
## 2. Study Updates

- A summary of the January 27, 2022 Steering Committee Kickoff meeting was provided including:
  - Results of polling questions; and
  - Review of the study scope.
- Existing conditions and data gathered since the previous meeting were shared including:
  - Demographics and income data from north and south of the interstate and surrounding study area;
  - Opportunities and constraints were briefly summarized;
  - A map was shown illustrating businesses and communities where improved connections and land use could benefit;

- Historic sites and parks were illustrated where opportunities existed as well as regulatory requirements for potential effects to these facilities; and
- Other improvements and transportation projects in area were shown that will need to be taken into account and additional engineering constraints will need to be considered.
- The study is intended to be a community-driven process; the intent is to solicit input from the public first and evaluate that from a feasibility standpoint.

**Digital Poll Question Part 1:** *The Steering Committee was asked, “What parameters do you think are most important to prioritize when evaluating a reconnection of Jackson Ward? (select up to two)” The results are shown below.*

### What parameters do you think are most important to prioritize when evaluating a reconnection of Jackson Ward?



Other suggestions included: Free parking; things to do; public transportation; for the children; better stores; impacts to property values and maintaining affordable housing; housing and other economic benefits to the community displaced by VDOT; enhancing the quality of the neighborhood and city; prioritizing modes - transit, pedestrian, bike access; impacts to businesses during construction; City Bus line and extending the GRTC Pulse Service; reconnect the economic and housing benefits for the community; gentrification potential of the improvements; lighting is very important; resiliency of improvements for future flooding; address the damages highways have caused for communities; housing; economic advancement for families; investing in what was taken away from the community; generational wealth invested strip mall of black owned businesses; free youth program; and entrepreneur education opportunities.

### 3. Questions and Answers

**Q** (Jerome Legions): It bumps up against Carver. What would the impact be as far as traffic is concerned as it bumps up against our neighborhood? Will there be a mode of transportation thru bridge – bike lanes, etc. – will that increase level of traffic going thru Leigh Street in Carver. Already high level of traffic with exit from 95 onto Leigh Street. Will it help to reduce traffic?

**A** (Caleb): *At this stage, nothing is off the table but considerations of reconnecting the existing street grid is a consideration that could be evaluated for its feasibility. We can take it into account as part of study.*

*(Maritza): It's too early to determine anything like that.*

**Q** (Jerome Legions): If the bridge is designed for residential, that population impact would have impact on Carver elementary kids. Carver Elementary already overcrowded. How do we consider what will go on the bridge as far as housing is concerned, and what impact would it have on elementary/middle schools?

**A** (Maritza): *Schools are a good point. HUD funded plan for Gilpin/Jackson Ward, that's something we'll be talking about. Increasing housing units will be a school consideration. That will be a bigger consideration than any type of structure going over the highway.*

*(Ebony): Part of process is to figure out what/where. This could be a pedestrian crossing, a park. We're not sure yet. Housing on top of highway seems ambitious but we're looking at what is possible, what are the constraints and mix that with the needs-goals of community. What's the viability? It is all part of the process.*

**Q** (Jim Hill): Great opportunities for improving urban experience of existing residents, inviting other people in to experience the area around Gilpin Court and North Jackson Ward, which used to have so many more people. Bridging could provide real opportunities for additional modes of transportation, making pedestrians and bikes safer. The installation of Belvidere through Jackson Ward and Carver was a dress rehearsal for the interstate. They took out the 600 block of west streets and displaced those neighborhoods to put Belvidere through there. Then much more calamitous turnpike severed North Jackson Ward. Improve safety for crossing between Carver, North and South Jackson Ward.

**Q** (Janice Allen): Are there any parameters? Are you eliminating anything? May be helpful to take options off the table.

**A** (Ebony): *We are trying to figure out what is a priority to connect for the community? It's not a housing project. Reconnecting Jackson Ward. Usually, housing doesn't go over highways. We're trying to see what's important to reconnect. It's a dance of what conceptually is a priority for the community, combined with engineering/cost.*

*(Maritza): Engineering team will help us to determine impacts on community. Design parameters to think about.*

**Q** (Leighton Powell): There are good examples of capping highways in Columbus, Dallas, DC. It might be helpful to show the group what it looks like.

**A** (Ebony): *We will show examples of what has been constructed in other locations/states.*

**Q** (Billy McMullin): Reconnect Jackson Ward is a history thing. How do we maximize what was taken, dollarwise? Billy's father experienced that. Looking at it from a phasing standpoint, if we're going to talk, let's dive in deeper: dollars do matter, but a lot of dollars were lost 2-3 generations ago with demolished homes and displacements. We should have a strong discussion on that. Peoples' parents, grandparents lost lots of dollars, when you go out to the community, you'll hear that.

**Q** (Anedra Bourne): Agrees with Billy. It's part of what the conversation needs to be. It's reinvesting in what was taken away.

**Q** (Jerome Legions): Agrees with both Billy and Anedra. It needs to be a project that will support generational wealth. Who will own the land? City? Or will it be property that developers can buy and develop themselves?

*A (Maritza): Can't answer that question now. Wants to look at current ownership. Great that this study is happening right before the Community Plan. Wealth creation on a bigger scale, housing, etc. Encourage everyone to get involved in RRHA Community Plan.*

*(Ebony): This is a transportation funded project. The community can look at taking advantage of federal transportation dollars in making Richmond competitive, use other planning perspectives to have conversations. This is a springboard for a larger community conversation.*

**Q (Billy McMullen):** Putting a cap on the cost of the project sets a precedence for the rest of the conversations. We are aware of how and when and what was taken. Who owns this? Other cities are using community involvement/sweat equity – co-investing and other creative ways they can get involved. Create something magical.

*A (Ebony): Other projects that are happening around the US that are reimagining. Richmond isn't unique in that. It's a national movement that is happening. <https://freeway-fighters.org/freeway-fighters-network-map-landing-page/>*

**Q (Jim Hill - typed comment):** "Argue for your limitations and they are yours."

*A: This is a great prelude to the community discussion. How we frame it, how we get it out there. Reconnect: need to pave the way to what Billy and Anedra are saying. What does it mean to reconnect? What do you want?*

**Q (Leighton Powell):** We're calling it a "Reconciliation Project".

**Q (Anedra Bourne):** It's a "Reinvestment Project," in what was taken. Use the right themes, don't gloss over truly what was lost.

**Q (David Lambert):** I agree with everyone. It is a transportation project. Land piece established from what point to what point. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to Chamberlayne. Start from there and establish land rights and economic program. Food destination, residential. Define who families were who lost their land – establish a fund to reinvest in them, their businesses.

**Q (Janis Allen):** The planning grants for capital construction that were mentioned in original meeting. Are we moving on a hard schedule to secure applications? Is the City trying to put money behind it as well? How feasible is it?

*A (Dironna): The purpose of this study is to submit a grant, we're very much on a timeframe. We want to tie it to funding requests as we develop scope. That's why we have this engagement timeline. Anticipate funding out in Fall, want our ducks in a row to be competitive.*

#### **4. Community Visioning Meeting Preparation**

- Reviewed Community Meeting event date, time, and purpose
- Flyer – Asked Steering Committee members to share it with at least 10 other people – friends, others, social media. Want as many people as possible. Open House.
- Discussed interest and involvement in the Steering Committee. Five individuals suggested they would help spread the word and four suggested they could help volunteer or staff future events.
- Asked Steering Committee to help get the word out. If unable to attend, everyone was requested to complete a study survey.



## 5. Review Community Engagement Plan and Next Steps

- Discussed future pop-up events and requested input from the Steering Committee to let us know any events.
  - There was a suggestion to look at Kanawha Plaza as a possible location for a pop-up event so that the community could understand the intended concept. This will be considered; however, the goal is to focus on events within Jackson Ward and the surrounding neighborhoods.
  - There is a request for presentations to be prepared for the Carver Civic Association meeting in April as well as the Coalition of Civic Associations.
  - An additional request for a presentation to the Historic Jackson Ward Civic Association on March 15.
  - FeedMore events, when people are waiting in line for food, were suggested.
  - Calvin Center and Cheryle Thompson at RRHA were suggested as ambassadors that could go out in March to do surveys (could include foodbanks).
  - There is a feeding every day for lunch at Greater Mount Moriah that would be a great location to meet with the community.
- Discussed project ambassadors that will be hired to attend events and engage in conversations.

## 6. Open Discussion: Update Stakeholder List

- Requested additional stakeholders or possible interested individuals that may help with study
- Also looking for descendants to interview. Descendants of those who had their land taken away and were impacted. Telling of those stories. Narrative vs. transportation vs. economic development. The steering committee was requested to share suggested names.

**Q** (Jerome Legions): What are you going to do with their stories, archive them? Name this street after so and so? Need to do more than say we have this in our archives. As far as reconciliation, why aren't we talking to people who currently live in these neighborhoods now?

**A** (Ebony Walden): *We want to know their personal experience, what they want to see in the future. Ideas of how to commemorate people's stories are wonderful ways to figure out how to share this in the future.*

**Q** (Donte McCutchen): I am adamant that Gilpin residents are informed as much as possible, also looking for other persons who were affected by the highway: there are Navy Hill residents who still are living. Not just Jackson Ward residents and descendants. Speaking on behalf of his family, who lived in both areas. We might want to talk to Navy Hill residents as well. More inclusive, not so commercialized and just saying Jackson Ward. We should use the language, "Navy Hill" verbiage when we're posting. We can't speak fully about Jackson Ward and ignore Navy Hill. Even if in small print. In the call for stories, we don't want to leave former Navy Hill residents/descendants out. JW is not the only thing that exists. Create camaraderie, healing. Don't forget all things that go on in that area.

**A** (Ebony Walden): *Let us know who they are, give us their names. We'll try to follow up.*

*(Caleb Parks): We say in documentation we're reconnecting JW and surrounding neighborhoods but want to make sure it's understood the intent is to consider Carver, Gilpin, Navy Hill. We will make sure those names are included in the documentation.*

**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.*

Name	Email
<b>Travis Bridewell</b>	travis.bridewell@rva.gov
<b>Aimee Callahan</b>	aimee@BLLiving.com
<b>Christian Campbell</b>	homeshowswithchristian@yahoo.com
<b>Dream El</b>	ashleel28@gmail.com
<b>Kim Glinkin</b>	kglinkin@wrallp.com
<b>Josh Mallow</b>	joshua.mallow@mbakerintl.com
<b>Brian Mercer</b>	brian.mercer@richmondgov.com
<b>Jonathan Spiers</b>	jonathan@richmondbizsense.com