



SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURYING GROUND

A Shockoe Project Site

Richmond, Virginia



Community Engagement Report
January 2025

**Beneath this old gas
station, that billboard,
and I-95/64 is
Shockoe Hill African
Burying Ground
Active 1816 – 1879**

**An estimated 22,000
free and enslaved
African Americans were
buried here.
Shockoe Hill African
Burying Ground**

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Acknowledgments

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Councilwoman Ellen Robertson
Richmond City Council, District 6

Lenora McQueen
Direct Descendant of Kitty Cary

Mayor Levar Stoney
Former City of Richmond Mayor

City of Richmond

Kim Chen
City of Richmond Special Projects Manager

Jeannie Welliver

Curatorial Team

Ryan K. Smith
Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University

Ana Edwards
Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project

A special thanks to the following sponsors for hosting engagement sessions:

Shockoe Hill Apartments

Main Street Station

The Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia

1 PURPOSE AND PROCESS



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SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURYING GROUND

The City of Richmond opened the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground here in 1816 to replace the Burial Ground for Negroes in Shockoe Bottom. The new cemetery, laid out along the northern end of Fifth Street near the city's poorhouse, began as two adjoining one-acre plots, one for free people of color and one for the enslaved. The grounds expanded greatly over time, eventually spreading down the slopes and into the valley. With an estimated 22,000 interments, it was among the largest cemeteries for free and enslaved African Americans in the U. S. during its era. After closing the cemetery in 1879 due to overcrowding, the city repurposed the site, making the burial ground unrecognizable today.

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES, 2021

Purpose and Process

Executive Summary

Between June 2023 and September 2024, Baskervill hosted five Public Engagement Sessions in multiple locations in proximity to the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. These sessions were meant to allow Baskervill to facilitate, discuss, and collect comments, feedback, concerns, questions, hopes, and expectations about the future of this site from all who may wish to do so. Baskervill also hosted an online survey with the public presentations and opportunities to gain feedback digitally. This report documents this process and is broken into three parts.

Part one presents the purpose of the project and the process of engagement Baskervill utilized in these sessions. Baskervill facilitated all in-person and virtual discussions and online surveys with help from Waterstreet Studio and the City of Richmond. Each session lasted 1 to 2 hours and utilized the same framework outlined below:

- Welcome & Baskervill Engagement Team Introductions (5-10 min)
- The Shockoe Project Introduction (2-5 min)
- A Brief History of Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground (15 min)
- Group Discussion and Open Forum (10-15 min)
- Presentation of Relevant Examples (15-20 min)
- Group Discussion and Open Forum (30-60 min)
- Online Survey #2 Introduced and Concluding Thoughts (5-10 min)

Part two presents the comments and responses from the various engagement sessions, formatted and edited for clarity. The intent is to provide as full a representation of the discussions and conversations had while maintaining anonymity for participants.

Part three of this report presents the analysis of feedback and responses collected through the engagement process, divided into two parts: PRIORITIES and GOALS. The “Priorities” collate the needs and wants that were most consistently expressed by multiple participants in multiple sessions, independent of one another. The “Design Goals” are Baskervill’s guiding design objectives informed by the priorities expressed by session participants. The proposed next steps are based on the findings of this report.

Purpose and Process

What We Heard

PRIORITIES

Radical Truth Telling **and adding context to the Richmond story**

Honor the Ancestors **as whole beings**

Acknowledge Past Desecrations **and cessation of all further desecrations**

Connect the Site **physically and contextually to the larger Shockoe Project**

DESIGN GOALS

Tell the Story of Place **as fully as possible including the history of desecration and how and why The Burying Ground is as it is today.**

Tell the Story of Kitty Cary, **Lenora McQueen, and the countless others whose stories might be similar. Tell the story of ancestors reaching through time and space to connect us to the past.**

Create a Thoughtful Space **of reflection for the public that celebrates and honors those buried at the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground as their fullest selves.**

Create a Meaningful Space **for relatives and descendants to reunite with, mourn, and remember ancestors and loved ones.**

Utilize Fine Art and Public Sculpture **to envisage the journey of those buried in this place and to punctuate a community commitment to continued reverence.**

The responses and comments expressed in this Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground Engagement Report contain invaluable and pertinent information about the various specific desires of large portions of the community. This report will be foundational to memorialization efforts moving forward.

Purpose and Process

Historical Background

Historical Desecrations

The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground was established in 1816 as the second municipal burying ground in the City of Richmond for the interment of free people of color and the enslaved. It was a segregated part of the Shockoe Hill Cemetery. The burying ground grew to become one of, if not, the largest burying grounds of its kind in the United States (larger than the African Burial Ground in NYC), with map studies indicating an expanded footprint slightly over 31 acres. (McQueen).

Throughout its history, The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground has been repeatedly desecrated. As early as 1832, grave robbers routinely preyed on the burying ground to obtain medical cadavers for the training of students at multiple medical schools. In 1865, on the eve of emancipation, Confederate authorities exploded an adjacent powder magazine. Burials were halted in 1879, with the burying ground containing an estimated 22,000 burials, a very conservative estimate. Between 1882 and the mid-1930s the City engaged in multiple infrastructure projects that caused significant damage to parts of the burying ground, to the extent of exposing burials during construction and in some cases using bones and bodies as street fill.

In the late 1950s the city rezoned, then sold one of the last remaining portions of the burying ground in its possession to the Sun Oil Company. They built a Sunoco Service Station on the site. Eventually the property changed hands to become Talley's Auto Center. An additional portion of the site was sold for the construction of I-64).

Recent Reclamation

In 2018, the City slated 1305 N 5th St. for auction because of back taxes. In 2021, following intense and dedicated activism and lobbying by Lenora McQueen and action by the City Attorney's Office and DCAO Sharon Ebert the city acquired the parcel at auction to prevent further desecration and to begin the process of recognition. In 2022, the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground received a State Historic Highway Marker and was added to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Shockoe Hill Burying Ground Historic District. In 2023, The City of Richmond painted a temporary mural on the abandoned service station. In 2024, Richmond City Council established the site at 1305 N 5th St. as a cemetery, and began measures to address the Lamar billboard.

Sources:

richmondcemeteries.org/potters-eld/ (Ryan K. Smith),

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shockoe_Hill_African_Burying_Ground (Lenora McQueen)

Purpose and Process

Historic Timeline

1816–1879

The City of Richmond opened the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground to replace the Burial Ground for Negroes in Shockoe Bottom. The new cemetery, laid out along the northern end of 5th Street near the city's poorhouse, began as two adjoining one-acre plots: one for free people of color and one for the enslaved. "That portion of the Cemetery allotted to the coloured poor is by its locality and arrangement being an unenclosed field, ill fitted for a burial place, and is now over crowded condition renders it impossible to make any interments therein without disturbing some previous burial, thus making it both repulsive and inhuman." (1877 petition to find a new suitable place for the burial of colored poor.)

1880

The Richmond Daily Dispatch reported that "When the colored paupers and others were buried on the hillside north and east of the Hebrew Cemetery they generally fell into the hands of the resurrectionists. The ground was used for more than fifty years, and of internments made in recent years very few skeletons will now be found in the graves." This was very much an exaggeration but spoke to well-known practices at the time.

1857

Kitty Cary, an enslaved woman in Richmond, and four-time great grandmother to Lenora McQueen, dies in her early 60s. Her death is commemorated in a poem published in Harper's Weekly in 1866. This poem helped lead McQueen to rediscover the Burying Ground more than 150 years later.

1877

City Council minutes indicates "the Cemetery allotted to the colored poor is by its locality and arrangement, being an unenclosed field, ill fitted for a burial place, and is now over crowded condition renders it impossible to make any interments therein without disturbing some previous burial, thus making it both repulsive and inhuman."

1882–1891

The City of Richmond and private developers begin continuous desecration of the Burying Ground including road extensions, construction of a viaduct, railroad projects, and selling the land to the adjacent Hebrew Cemetery. An 1883 *Daily Dispatch* article indicated that "a great many dead people had been exposed at the place where the Street Committee extended 5th Street," and also that "Some of the dead bodies and bones had been used to fill the grade of the street."

“...people who profited by the desecration of the burial ground on Poor-house Hill, North 5th Street when graves were dug into, bones scattered, coffins exposed, and the hearts of the surviving families made to bleed by the desecration of the remains of their loved ones.”

- John Mitchell, Jr. Richmond Planet Editor

1950-1960

The Richmond City Council “rezoned for industrial use an eroded hillside at Fifth and Hospital [Streets] that was once set aside as a Negro Burying Ground.” The land was used as a city playground, a portion developed for the dog pound, and the City then sold the corner plot to the Sun Oil Company who built an automobile service station on the Burying Grounds. Land was also sold for the construction of Interstate 64.

2018-2020

In 2018, the City of Richmond seized the lot for back taxes and slated it for public auction. In 2020, as a direct result of intense lobbying by Lenora McQueen, Richmond City Council and Mayor Levar Stoney proposed and approved an ordinance to reacquire the plot, effectively saving it from continued desecration.

2022

Thanks to the intense dedication of Lenora McQueen and a coalition of activists, The Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, The Virginia Landmarks Register, and received a Virginia Department of Transportation highway marker. McQueen says, “it has earned some acknowledgment, recognition, and consideration. Protection, it still does not have, with the exception perhaps of 1305 N 5th St., the 1.2 acre parcel that was reclaimed by the city and was recently re-designated as a cemetery. The other 30 acres of the burial ground is still threatened and remains one of Virginia’s most endangered places.”

Purpose and Process

Project Purpose

Between June 2023 and September 2024, Baskervill hosted five Public Engagement Sessions in multiple locations in proximity to the Burying Ground. These sessions included members of the immediately adjacent communities, faith and political leaders, activists and descendants, historians and academics, and local and state officials. Next steps in the memorial concept design are:

Preliminary Design | Feb - Apr 2025

Design team will develop design concepts based on input received from public engagement sessions.

Design Presentations | TBD

Presenting preliminary designs to the City of Richmond for feedback and comment. Refine designs based on feedback.

Public Design Presentations | TBD

Presenting preliminary designs to the public for feedback and comment. Refine designs based on feedback.

In November 2024, the Richmond City Council approved action to re-designate the site as a Cemetery, providing the site with the civic protections all other municipal cemeteries enjoy. The City of Richmond Department of Public Works Special Capital Projects Group, in coordination with multiple City agencies, engaged Baskervill to develop design concepts that acknowledge, memorialize, and bring awareness to the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground.

The work is led by the Baskervill and Waterstreet Studio in close consultation with Lenora McQueen.

.....
: NOW, THEREFORE,
: THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:
: § 1. That the City-owned real estate known as 1305 North 5th Street and identified as
: Tax Parcel No. N000-0233/006 in the 2024 records of the City Assessor be and is hereby
: established as a cemetery in accordance with section 7-21 of the Code of the City of Richmond
: (2020), as amended, subject to the requirements of general law. For purposes of this ordinance,
: the term "cemetery" has the meaning ascribed to that term in section 7-1 of the Code of the City
: of Richmond (2020), as amended.
:

-Excerpt from City Ordinance No. 2024-283

Purpose and Process

Presentation and Discussion Slides

AGENDA

- The Shockoe Project Intro
- From Shockoe Bottom to Shockoe Hill
- From Albemarle County to Shockoe Hill
- From Then to Now
- Archaeological Findings
- Tell Us What You Heard
- Memorialization & Memorials
- What Message Does This Memorial Need To Convey?
- Next Steps

THE SHOCKOE PROJECT

The 10 Acres

For More Information Visit
TheShockoeProject.com

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURYING GROUND

Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground Memorial

"Visiting Richmond during the early 1850s, Frederick Law Olmsted described the peculiar nature of relations between slaves and masters in late antebellum Virginia. On a Sunday afternoon he encountered a black funeral procession, composed of a hearse drawn by two horses, six coaches behind it, and six well-dressed men sitting atop saddle horses.

"The procession, which was followed by many in our more modest manner, moved to the burial place without a single white person coming from, instead to a lonely part of the country, where a dozen black men left over the grave of a child and sang a 'hail and adieu'."

Olmsted noted the "unreflected feeling, in connection with the simplicity, nature, rude truthfulness, and absence of all display in funeral arrangements, the contrast the appearance revealed a strange world about which Olmsted knew little, at the **grave site**, he found a black minister presiding in a "holiness" and "devout" "exalted language, and though he comprehended" but very few of the words "in this 'hail brotherhood' scene, he admitted that there was a 'plaintive melody' to the music."

—A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States, With Remarks on Their Economy

From Shockoe Bottom to Shockoe Hill

1809 Young Map - City

1828 Bates Map - City

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

From Albemarle County to Shockoe Hill

1814 Cary Map

1835 Bates Map

LenoraMcQueen discovered records showing her enslaved four-time great-grandmother, Kitty Cary is buried at Shockoe Hill.

LenoraMcQueen discovered records showing her enslaved four-time great-grandmother, Kitty Cary is buried at Shockoe Hill.

From Then to Now

1809 Young Map - City

2021 Google Map - City

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

From Albemarle County to Shockoe Hill

1814 Cary Map

2021 Google Map

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Shockoe Hill African Burial Ground Historic Boundary

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Tell Us What You Heard

Small Group Discussion

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

From Then to Now

1809 Young Map - City

2021 Google Map - City

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Shockoe Hill African Burial Ground Historic Boundary

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

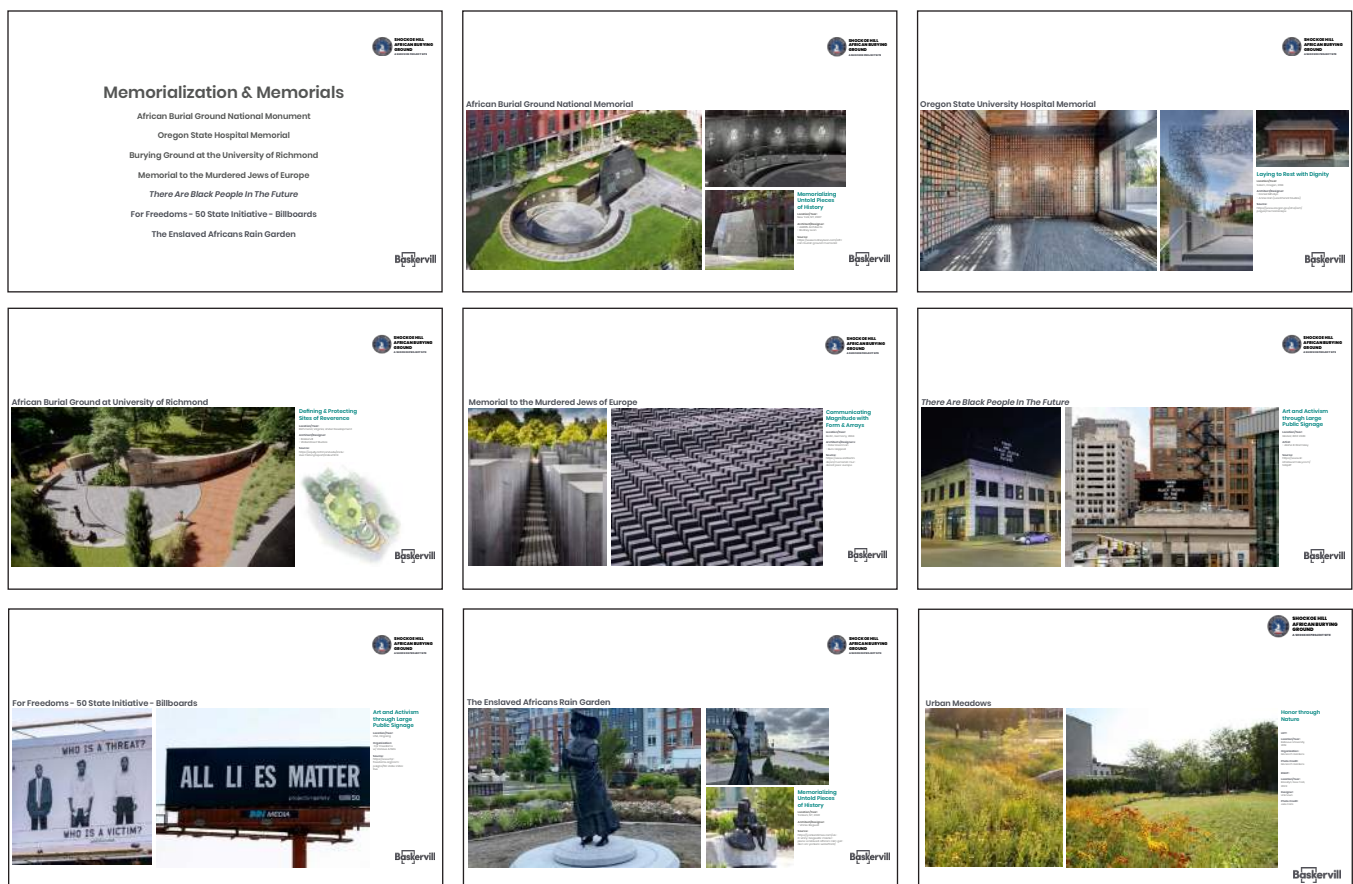
Tell Us What You Heard

Small Group Discussion

SHOCKOE HILL AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

Purpose and Process

Presentation and Discussion Slides



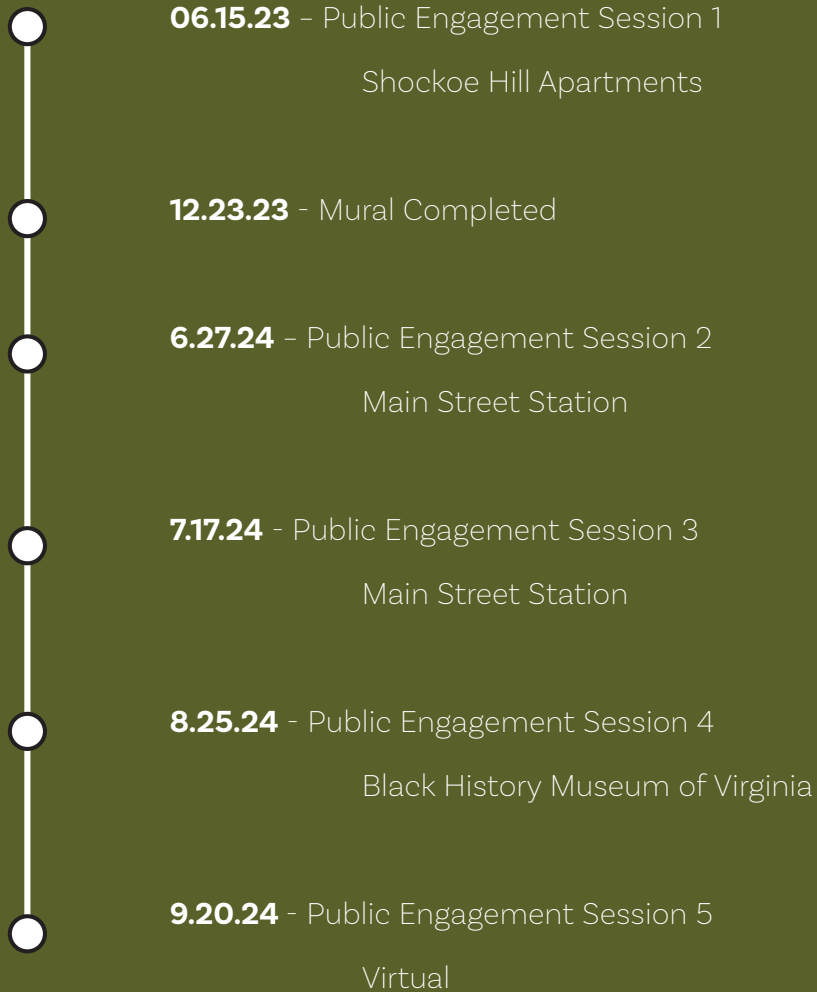


These slides served as supplementary visual materials throughout the facilitated engagement sessions. The slides include an introduction and overview of The Shockoe Project, a brief history of the Shockoe Bottom African Burying Ground, and a focus on Lenora McQueen and her work to reclaim the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. Also included are eight examples of relevant works of recent memorialization efforts intended to help frame the conversation about what memorialization at the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground might look like.



2 **COMMUNITY FEEDBACK**

Engagement Sessions Timeline



KITTY CARY.

No marble tells where Kitty Cary sleeps —
Only a simple slab of painted pine,
Time-stained and worn, her poor memorial keeps —
One brief and half-obliterated line —

So near the highway, that the yellow sand
From passing wheels falls thickly on her grave —
In death, as in her life, proscribed and banned —
For Kitty Cary lived and died a slave.

Ay, lived and died before the Almighty's hand
Struck the strong fetters from the bondman's limbs,
And made the farthest borders of the land
Shake with her dark-browed kindred's freedom
hymns.

Alas! too early snapped the silver cord,
Or all too slowly came the tardy good —
Life was to her but toil without reward :
And death the welcome end of servitude.

Death brought her freedom. Haply it may be
That Kitty Cary, from some fairer sphere,
Looks down to-day and pities tenderly
The bitter bondage of existence here ;

Yet smiles to see her race with freedom crowned,
Subject no longer to a master's rule,
Nor grieves because their thoughtless children bound
Across her grave-mound, on their way to school ;

For nothing guards her humble place of rest,
The straying cattle browse above her head,
Untended goats pause in their hungry quest
To crop the scanty herbage from her bed.

Yet Nature's self has not forgotten her,
But decks her lonely grave with dainty grace ;
See! in the wind the blossomed sweet-briars stir,
And scatter fragrance round her resting-place.

In-Person Community Engagement

June 15th, 2023 | June 27th, 2024 | July 17th, 2024 | August 25th, 2024

Shockoe Hill Apartments,
Main Street Station,
The Black History Museum

Approx. 150 participants

Responses by facilitators to
questions from participants in
BOLD.

Comments and Feedback

What is the significance of the 1994 reference?

**The Well at the VCU medical college was
“discovered” and memorialized in 1994.**

Was DNA collected from the remains at the well?

That is an ongoing project.

With 22,000 people, has any ground scanning or archaeology been done on Shockoe Hill?

There has been an archaeology study which has shown evidence of human remains. Two ground penetrating radar studies have been done and have come back inconclusive. Another ground scanning study will be conducted this summer.

Do we have information of all the parcels that touch the burial ground and the owners?

Yes, all this information can be found online by viewing the city’s parcel viewer.

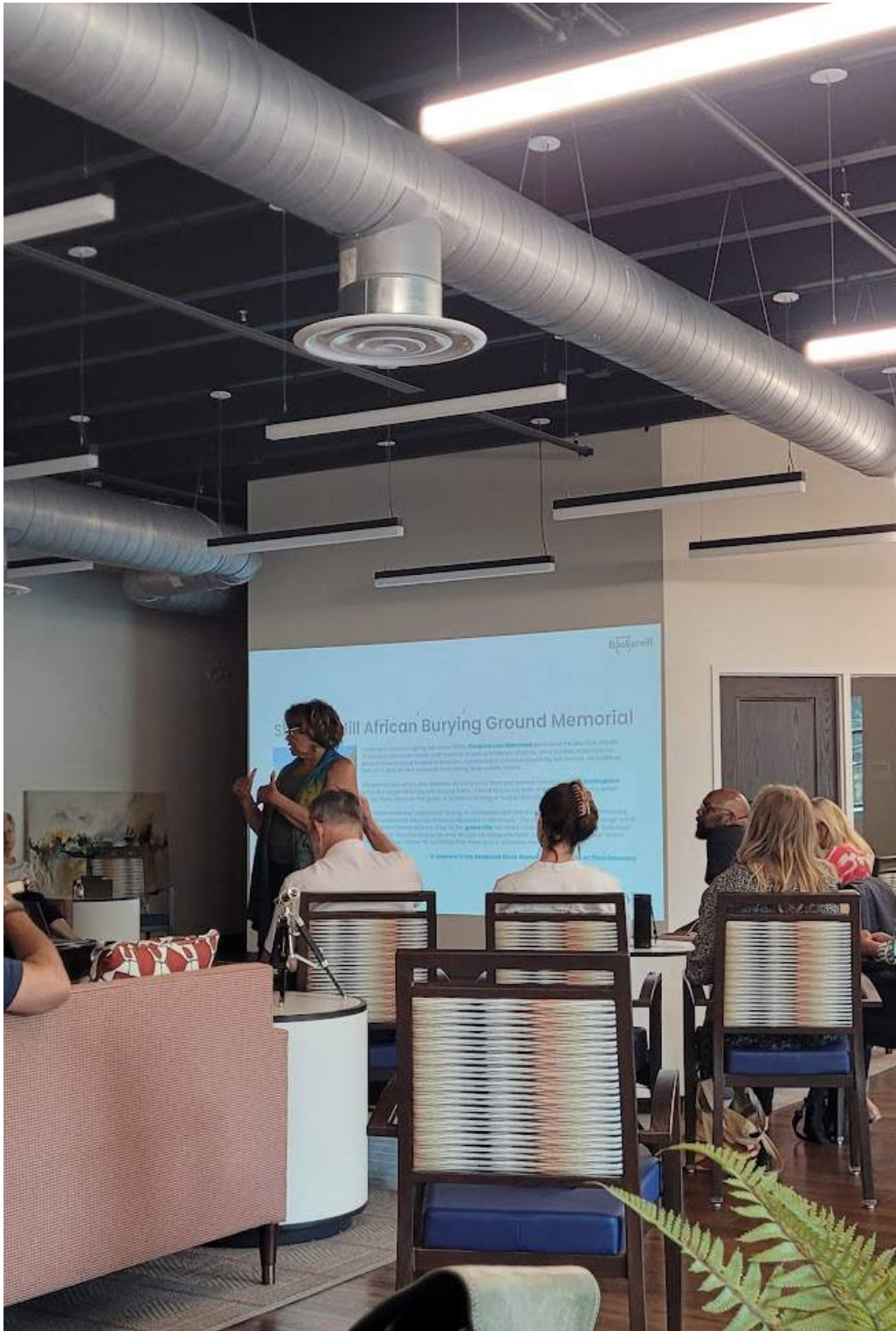
The building on the Burying Ground is a desecration but also perhaps an opportunity. Can potentially redesign the building as an interpretive center

Site is a place of resistance with its history of executions: Gilles, an enslaved man, was executed at Shockoe Hill.

What is within reach of changing/acquiring more rights and property of the site?

What is happening with the site and its history, is a metaphor for what is still happening to African Americans today.

Is it illegal for them to place a billboard on a cemetery? It is such an eye sore. Can we have it removed?



Councilwoman Robertson addresses participants of a Community Meeting, June 15, 2023.

“What is happening with the site and its history, is a metaphor for what is still happening to African Americans today.”

We’ve been working on this for around 2 years. Unfortunately it is legal. Lamar, who owns the billboard on site, is not yielding rights to the billboard.

This billboard could be seen as a design opportunity.

Billboard discussion is moving through the city attorney’s office.

33.2 chapter 12 legislation of Virginia or Richmond traffic code (verify)

Will not be able to retrofit the law for this situation on the city level.

If we don’t get the answer, we want from the city. Next step is taking it to state legislative.

Over half of the audience (15ish ppl) agree with “the removal of the billboard is nonnegotiable.”

Removing of the billboard would also cause a disturbance on the site. Is that acceptable?

Can we fund something to be put on the billboard? Or swap it with another city-owned property?

Design for the mural – is this what we want as a temporary exhibit?

Text will be written on two sides of the existing building. One side will face the street, the other the highway.

Does anyone have concerns about this (mural)? No issues. No negative comments.

Was the gas station blacked owned?

Unknown.

There is a bike trail that connects downtown and the Shockoe bottom. Can we connect them to Shockoe Hill, and name burial ground a destination on the bike trail?

We should build something the community could use instead of only something that looks pretty.

Can we include “22,000” or “largest” terminology on the mural?

Anything is possible.

Can we add text or a banner to the short side of the building?

This is doable.

We need to be careful about the unintended consequences this project may have.

It is more important to show the history than worry about potential pitfalls? How far are we willing to go?

At both Shockoe Hill and Bottom Burial Grounds, once people become aware of them, the respect comes immediately, and people want to be involved. Examples: people who maintain the grass, protector group, flower lady, clean up volunteers.

[We can’t forget] about who Black Richmonders have been over the last 200 years. My great-great-grandmother, Harriet Taylor, has put me on an adventure because she was right here in Shockoe Bottom at the time.



Historian Ana Edwards hands the microphone to Lenora McQueen during a community meeting. June 27, 2024

I say that because there are amazing people that have walked here, and their descendants have left Richmond because they encouraged them to get away from this place, because they wanted more from them.

I used to live in Boston, and I've come back to take care of me and my parents, so I say that because I think that the opportunities for greater research about who we are and who the descendants are is really, really important.

I have been fascinated by the stories that my Aunt Ada would tell me about being a little girl and walking on 8th and 4th Streets right where Shockoe Hill Cemetery for White folks was, and when she would tell me these stories about how her grandmother, Grandma Jenny, Harriet's sister, would tell her who the people were in the cemetery. And as I've been exploring what's going on in that area, there is an amazing Black community of people that we're totally ignoring.

And when I think about the stories of Dr Singer Jones, as people may know about what's going on with Richmond Community Hospital and their efforts to hold on to that story. Sarah and her husband were right in that same area. There are so many people, and I really think that trying to rebuild that is important. People do digital neighborhood work. I know there's a guy named Scott at the University of Richmond who worked with Ed Aires at UVA that had been doing some of this work to just see what was going on in Shockoe bottom. Why can't we begin to do that on our Black neighborhoods? Go through the genealogy, see the names, see where people are? Trust me. This can be a really rich set of stories that Kitty has helped us and guided us to.

I'll say one last thing. In the late 80s, Arthur Ashe had an opportunity to come to a group called the Richmond Urban Forum. And I know because I wrote the letter for my father to send to him to ask him to come. And Arthur said "it would be so wonderful to have a Black Homecoming for people that have been from Richmond and can interconnect and come home again". We have not welcomed them, the Armstrong-Walker Classic was one clear time when we had a Black Homecoming and we would have over 35,000 people that would be there dressed in either orange and blue or green and white, and it was so wonderful to see them and you didn't have to worry about guns, craziness. Everybody was proud to be Black, proud to be from Armstrong or Walker because you had generations of families that were educated. We're losing the history of our communities, we're losing the history of what Black education in Richmond has been since it started right here in Shockoe Bottom, at the devils-half-acre and Virginia Union.

I tell you, We have got to go back so we can see where we're headed forward, and all of us can learn this because you never know who's beside you that you're related to and trust me I am always surprised because the father of Harriet's children had white skin. There's a lot of miscegenation in the Richmond community if you go back to the history. We will find how much related we all are.

What I want to emphasize is that poor Richmonders, those of us who grew up laboring, have a voice too and we should be included.



Architect Burt Pinnock, FAIA, addresses participants of a community meeting. August 25, 2024.

Virtual Community Engagement

September 20th, 2024

Virtual
7-8:30pm

15 participants

Comments from Meeting Chat

1. Similar to Lenora's last remarks on the national news video, why is this project taking so long? We've had several meetings, but the outcome remains unclear. Can you share specific next steps and timelines?
 2. It seems like the efforts for Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground are fragmented. Is there a comprehensive plan in place?
 3. Who is accountable for ensuring the project is prioritized? What accountability measures are there to avoid endless meetings without progress?
 4. How is the community's input being acted on, rather than these meetings just being check boxes?
 5. What's the city's vision for 'wholeness' here, and how do we move from discussions to real action that honors those buried?
 6. Why are meetings scheduled on less accessible days like Sundays and Fridays? Can we schedule them during the week for better community participation?
 7. Can we set clear milestones with deadlines and communicate them transparently to the public?
- 332,680 impressions on 1 billboard face, and 468,255 on the other billboard face per week.
- Have you reached out to Walker Armstrong alumni who have vested interests in this?

How are you doing particular outreach to engage those with Richmond ties who live in greater Richmond region, particularly those ties to the Divine Nine and other groups, as well as Astoria Beneficial Club was stated in 1901 just 3 blocks away?

What ways are you reaching out to the community regarding these meetings? I stumbled upon it by accident when searching the Internet and African American burial ground.

Gentrification doesn't help identify true stakeholders that can help you.

I like the idea of keeping the billboard with a message that speaks to our African American place in history.

I agree with the previous ideas about using the billboard as a storytelling aspect of an interactive memorial space. I think interactivity will bring longevity to the site.

Within the realm of a memorial, will there be any effort to identify the people that are buried in the area allotted to this project?

There is ongoing research into the cemetery and the identity of those who might be buried there.

Love the water as well as using all 4 elements of Earth, Wind, Fire, Water. Also to plant a healing garden using native plants of West Africa to symbolize "re-seeding" representing us as the Collective rebirthing the Liveliness of our Ancestors!

Online Survey Responses

Survey Launched June 26, 2024

Survey Found at:
<https://www.baskervill.com/shockoe-hill-african-burying-ground-public-comment/>

11 Respondents



What message or theme or idea should be conveyed in a permanent memorial? Did any idea shared resonate with you? What other thoughts would you like to share?

Something that conveys how small the parcel is compared to the entire Burying Ground.

Convey the individuality of it: the journey and the story it took just to get here today (specifically Lenora's experience).

It needs to include art that visually tells the truth.

Honoring the ancestors – I think you should do what Ms. McQueen wants – the sculpture telling the story of Olmsted's visit to Richmond and the funeral procession he observed and so generously recorded for us to know today! I also like the idea of incorporating the structure and billboard into the memorial. You all are doing great work and I thank you!

Thank you for the opportunity to share.

It should be a place to tell the story and to stop and think and ponder. It should be able to evolve as we learn more.

They matter.

Honor the ancestors with areas for rituals and sacred quiet space.

An indigenous reflection with historical American roots not associated with Africa. The Africa part of this story is misrepresented to reflect natives as slaves from Africa and not prisoners from our own nation. We are products of census genocide, not plantations.

Something that commemorates[recall and show respect for (someone or something)]the fact that we are a part of history, from slavery to current day, in this place called United States of America, and our place in history, I can't think of how to put faces to the memorial other than have representations of those we know were buried in these Shockoe burial sites.

Hello,

I was very happy to attend your meeting on Friday and glad to hear that something is being done to the space. I feel that I may know the space more intimately than anyone on the call, as I am from Highland Park and have crossed the former Stonewall Jackson bridge every day since I was ten years old to go to school, and now work. And as a bus rider, I have stood at that site many times at different times of the day and night, even resting on the stones recently placed there by Parks & Recreation. So, you can just imagine my surprise when I learned that the former service station at that stop stood upon the graves of my ancestors and horror in knowing how the space was neglected and forgot about for close to a century.

One of the things that I have always admired about the space is its silence. Though it is right next to I-64, the space has always had a quiet reserve, especially at night. So, if this element can be preserved, I think that would be best. I remember hearing someone mention something about an everlasting recording, and I think that'll disturb the space and those who are laid to rest there. Much like the other cemeteries in the area, I think this needs to remain a space of reflection and peace.

I personally liked the U of R model and the Urban Meadow. I think a mix of a stone structure that points north, or perhaps on the direction of the center point of the cemetery, would be nice surrounded by a well-maintained meadow. I like the meadow because I personally think we need to retain elements of the nature reclaiming the space, just as nature reclaims our bodies, and also as a reminder to the disservice of the souls there by former city fathers and the white suburbanites of Highland Park who systematically suppressed the memory of the area, for the ease of their auto travel. This will remind us of how easy it is to forget spaces, the importance of preserving them, and truly give a space of reflection over the ravine.

I also think some benches, and resting places should be incorporated into the space; especially toward the road, near the bus stop, as there is a construction temp agency across the street from the site, as well as many who take the bus from that stop. Placing seating toward the road would thwart any unwanted loitering by individuals, separating those reflecting from those who seek respite but do not actually wish to visit the space.

When it comes to figurative models. Perhaps a black obelisk or a marker that 19th century people would have appreciated and found appropriate. I do not mind the billboard if it cannot come down, but if it can, I would prefer it to be removed so that reflectors can have a view of the valley and hill, with some kind of visual marker. I know people would like something a bit more flashy, but I believe a simple, well-maintained plan will be better off in the long run for the area, especially for the traffic the area already experience, though with your efforts, I am sure they will increase.

A concern I have though is for the parking of visitors. There really isn't any safe street parking in the area, especially with the Hospital St. Hill and its blind spots on Fifth. How would a number of motorists be able to visit the area without affecting those buried.

If you need any assistance, I would be more than happy to help.

- THE SPIRIT OF PLACE
- RESPECT THE

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show the magnitude
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Could use more
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innovation

Expensive
w/ limited
functionality /
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"THE SPIRIT OF
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Be a call to the

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→ "They have not seen
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they rested peacefully"

→ undo what has
been done.

→ allow them to rest in
any way you can.

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PRECEDENT FOR A

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BOVE-GROUND

PRESENTATION OF THOSE

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BE TO DISTURBANCE)

URIED ON THE SITE.

Precedent Responses

African Burial Ground National Memorial

Location: 290 Broadway, New York, NY
Year: 2007
Designer: Rodney Leon, AARIS Architects, Elizabeth Kennedy

Good.

Develop more.

I like the concept.

Wants letters from soldiers.

Washed away bodies, burial ground on a hill.

Keep in mind of the size & scale.

VCU grave robbing, stealing bodies to study science.



Precedent Responses

Oregon State University Hospital Memorial

Location: Salem, Oregon

Year: 2014

Designer: Daniel Mihalyo, Lead Pencil Studios - Annie Han

No.

I like that the vast numbers are represented with remains.

Amazing idea utilizing existing structure.

Waste of space.

I like the honoring of the remains and the connection back to the families.

It is not up to me to decide how to disturb/not disturb. It's up to the ancestors' families, the descendants.

Like the take-and-leave family engagement.

As stories of families are discovered, can their plaque be placed? Be a call to the community to keep searching so we can share and reclaim.

This is extremely moving.

Could use some more sentimental value.

Restoration, Righting the wrongs. "They have not seen peace in life, nor have they rested peacefully"! Undo what has been done. Allow them to rest in any way you can.

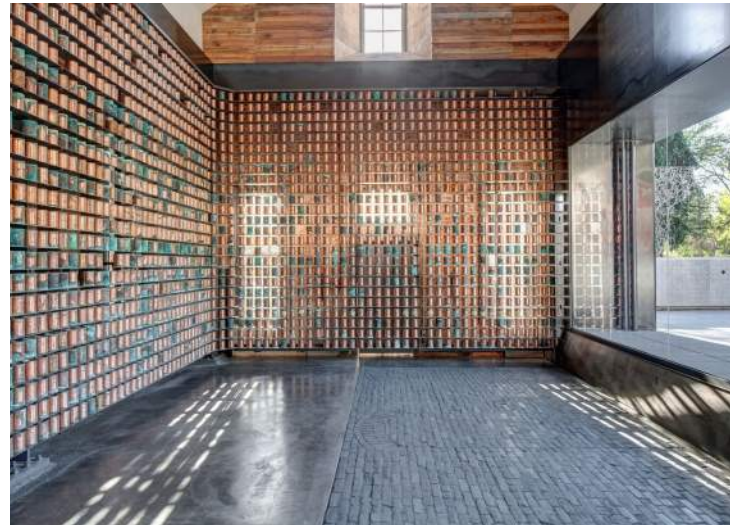
This is an interesting precedent for a site where there could be an above-ground representation of those people who may (or may not, due to disturbance) be buried on site.

I like how it's interactive for the families whose ancestors were impacted.

Bring humanity to the site through stories, letters, pictures as we discover them. "Keep uncovering history."

Combination of this and using the elements on site.

Similar possible reuse garage.



The look of this may be convicting to visitors, capturing, and educational.

Precedent Responses

African Burying Ground at University of Richmond

Location: University of Richmond, Richmond, VA

Year: In Construction

Designer: Baskervill, Waterstreet

Love this!

Highlight the idea of displacement in life and death. Protect the site in any capacity 3-dimensionally and architecturally from the elements.

The Olmsted account is multi-sensory. Season foliage on the site, sound, etc. I would love to see a place that affects multi-sensory experience, and invites people to linger and come back. Avoid a purely visual/view from outside approach.

My school. Love!

Ideal for the site.

Beautiful, great use of space, and multipurpose.

It's important to seek knowledge because the cultural and historic are important to self discovery.



Precedent Responses

Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

Location: Berlin, Germany

Year: 2004

Designer: Peter Eisenman

The numbers are represented and needs reveal.

Like this one!

Expensive with limited functionality/motives?

Could see an option.

Could use more landmark history information.

This is the only precedent that conveys a sense of extent/magnitude using the physical landscape. Something needs to communicate that the site extends far beyond the one parcel...

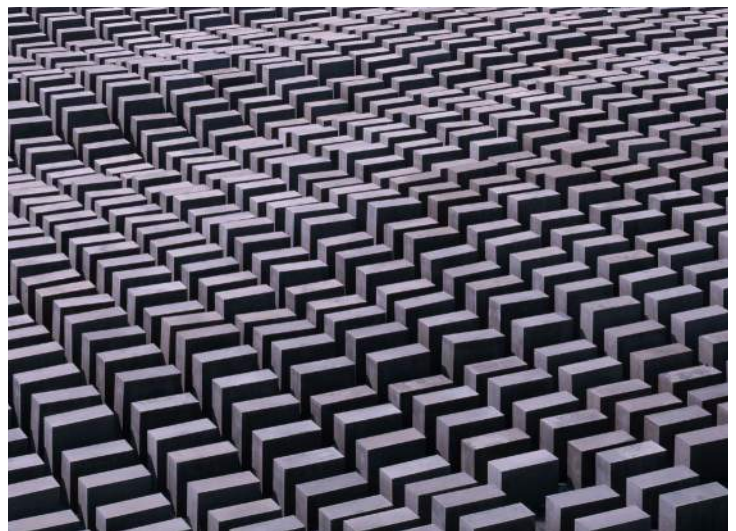
The idea of a raised or constructed topography makes sense considering the history of erasure and cut here. But perhaps earthwork concrete and spaces to gather to keep memory together.

Now that I know the story and history, I cannot drive on the roads. I have to drive around. The memorial should communicate the whole area of the burial ground.

The numbers show the magnitude of the atrocity and the simple design allows the audience to focus on the history.

The spirit of the place. Resurrect the historical reverence of the past. Awareness. "Did you know". Learning from your past to make informed decisions.

Genius Loci, "the spirit of place"



Precedent Responses

There Are Black People In The Future

Location: Global
Year: 2012-2020
Designer: Alisha B Wormsley

I want to see these on 95 commemorating the [Shockoe Bottom] Burying Ground underneath.

I like the messaging but it needs to be more permanent.

These installations are powerful, but essentially place-less... If the billboard is appropriated as a part of the memorial, it needs to relate to/ convey an understanding of this site.

Great! This might be a good way to preserve the history without too much disturbance.

Could we create something like a bridge with tiny houses to create a sense of life over this Burying Ground?



Precedent Responses

For Freedoms - 50 State Initiative - Billboards

Location: National
Year: Ongoing
Designer: For Freedoms w/ Various Artists

Could the billboard itself be removed but the poles kept up and turned into art installations? (Like holes cut into them and used as beacons?)

Powerful!

Good way to not disturb the remains.

I love this billboard message.

Repurpose the garage-it's part of the story.

A billboard that tells people driving by the truth.
People need to know!

I think include sculpture, billboard, and use the existing gas station structure.

Utilize billboards powerful message with the Oregon State theme.

If the billboard stays, I like this as an educational vehicle because many don't know.

Could these billboard be digital so this could change with different ideas?



Precedent Responses

The Enslaved Africans Rain Garden

Location: George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
Year: 2022
Designer: Perkins & Will

This is great.

Not sure this is powerful?

Nah...Not effective or moving enough. Reminds me of colonial statues.

Can we incorporate the idea of procession? Only 1 mile from Shockoe Bottom-how to connect? Can a winding procession or appropriating sidewalk and streets beyond make the site feel larger than what is left?



Precedent Responses

Urban Meadows

Location: Bellevue University
Year: 2019
Designer: Monarch Gardens

No comments recorded.





Lenora McQueen meets with Burt Pinnock at the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground Site, March 17, 2023
Photo courtesy of Ryan David

3 CONCLUSIONS AND ANALYSES

Priorities

Frequently Expressed Community Needs & Wants

1

Radical Truth Telling and Adding Context to the Richmond story

- Avoid apologia for the actions of desecraters
- Contextualize the stories of Shockoe Hill Cemetery and the Hebrew Cemetery with the inclusion of the African Burying Ground
- Identify and hold accountable the specific actions of institutions, businesses, organizations, and governments that contributed to the damage the site now faces

2

Honoring the Ancestors as Whole Beings

- Avoid using direct representations of specific people without historical evidence
- Convey that the narrative of enslavement is but one aspect of a whole person's life, history, and descendency
- Communicate the ordinary of the extraordinary, and the extraordinary of the ordinary

3 Acknowledgment of Past Desecrations and Cessation of All Further Desecrations

- Break the cycle of erasure and desecration
- Involved institutions acknowledge and seek to make right the past indiscretions and desecrations against the Burying Ground
- Establish a durable lasting maintenance and upkeep plan of action and protects the site from further damage

4 Connecting the site physically and contextually to the larger Shockoe Project

- Implement plans to reacquire, protect, and conserve more of the Burying Ground
- Develop strategies to draw visitors from Shockoe Hill to Shockoe Bottom and other African American cemeteries
- Physically connect Shockoe Hill with Shockoe Bottom through greenways, urban trails, and interpretive content that unifies the stories of both locations

Design Goals

1

Tell the story of place as fully as possible including the history of desecration and how and why the Burying Ground is as it is today.

2

Tell the story of Kitty Cary, Lenora McQueen, and the countless others whose stories might be similar. Tell the story of ancestors reaching through time and space to connect us to the past.

3

Create a thoughtful space of reflection for the public that celebrates and honors those buried at the Burying Ground as their fullest selves.

4

Create a meaningful space for relatives and descendants to reunite with, mourn, and remember ancestors and loved ones.

5

Utilize fine art and public sculpture to envisage the journey of those buried in this place and to punctuate a community commitment to continued reverence.

General Notes from the Team

- Making the community a better place to live that is for the people instead of against
- Treating the people that lived in Richmond area for many years with care for those that are unable to with Fentanyl issues
- Creating gatherings to find people in need to make sure people in the community are strong together (like monthly reunions)
- Creating fundraisers to support the area of Shockoe become a better community
- Educating the people to be aware of what is going on by passing out fliers, going door-to-door, or having town meetings to discuss it
- There can be a clean up crew that can help with keeping the area clean for the people to see what was there before the roads and other buildings
- Helping the homeless would also be beneficial to the community to raise awareness that they care about them
- Finding historians everywhere that might know information that is not discovered yet and spreading the word of the issue to others if they know anything
- Learning about people's experience with the area was an eye opener for what is really going on in its own city by excluding the citizens with voices for a while before taken seriously
- Listening to the people speak about their mind and Ms. McQueen talk about how she was able to find her ancestors in a matter of days to find her roots tracing all the way back to 1700's and 1800's was moving

