

Jackson Ward Community Plan

COMMUNITY EXPO

Thursday, May 12, 2022 and Thursday June 16, 2022

Hippodrome Theater – 528 N 2nd St and Gallery 5 – 200 W Marshall St

VISION for Jackson Ward/Gilpin

Notes from the 'Neighborhood' board: *"What Could be Improved in Jackson Ward?"*

- Alleys (litter)
- alleys - cobblestones + potholes + drainage
- roads - potholes
- shade trees - more (in parking lots too) - pollution from highway
- affordable housing
- sidewalks (roots causing unevenness)
- streets (big potholes)
- trash
- community activities
- jobs for teens
- better car street parking allotment - angle parking in areas
- remove rainwater tax from bill - counties don't pay this and rent from the city
- special parking permits should not deter people like churchgoers, etc.
- local supermarket - where can I get a quart of milk and fresh eggs?
- more trees
- workspaces
- splash pad
- a lot more trees - evergreen trees!

Notes from the 'Engagement' board: *What type of engagement activities would you and your family get excited about participating in?*

- special needs resources
- resource project & additional resources
- entrepreneurial development courses
- real estate investing involvement & understanding course for parents and children

Notes from the 'Housing' board: *Where should new housing go?*

- where there is no old housing - don't replace existing housing (in Jackson Ward)
- housing should be in keeping with existing scale
- there should be front porches, gardens - social experience
- rowhouses
- trees should be included! Need more shade
- address parking lots - with trees, green materials/stormwater management
- make Gilpin beautiful for everyone - a place to be, not to leave
- have front porches, gardens, and wide sidewalks in Jackson Ward

Notes from the 'People' board: *Where do you access services?*

- Bon Secours, Churchill
- Abner Clay Park

- Kroger/Whole Foods

Community Listening Session

What do you love about living in Jackson Ward?

- Diverse socioeconomic groups live together
- day-to-day interaction of different types of people
- feels that Richmond 300 plan only focused on dense growth and would not be sufficient for Jackson Ward's needs
- Desire tangible actions that aren't just for show
- One community member has attended numerous community meetings and is frustrated that decisions are made by people/authority figures not affected by the outcome.
- residents desire more affordable day care options
- Appreciate that it's an urban setting and that you can walk to amenities, businesses, etc
- concerned that they might not be able to afford to stay long term
- Desires more neighborhood places for young parents/families to gather.
- Safety
- residents expressed concern about alleys, as these are often dark at night and uncared for
- no "drive slow" sign in front of playground despite requests to city
- most sidewalks could be improved
- Sidewalks are an issue, not in good condition and often a trip hazard
- some streetlights are too bright and makes sleeping on the street side of a home uncomfortable
- Cleanliness
- litter on the street despite frequent pick-up trash
- Parking
- Residents mentioned that most streets have two-hour limits, and the area is aggressively ticketed
- most streets require a parking permit
- VCU students take up street parking during class hours
- Concerned that new developments related to Richmond 300 plan do not require parking

Where do you feel safe?

- Safe around the N Adams area
 - There is a diversity of socioeconomics, lots of people, lots going on, communal and visual things going on

Housing

- desire for clear plan for residents to own businesses in the neighborhood
- Doesn't think there should be additional high-rise towers in Jackson Ward or Gilpin Court, these feel out of place here
- the density here should match Jackson Ward (3-4 stories max); mentioned that "The Penny" building feels out of place
- Desire for green space as part of residential units or at least easy access to public green space
- residents feel "bullied" by the city because they live in a historic home in a historic district, so any repair is extremely expensive and it's hard to keep up with

- Example: an 82- year-old resident living with their 105-year-old-mother in a home got citations for adding a wheelchair ramp and for hanging a rug outside
- Proximity to VCU can feel like a threat
 - when looking to purchase a home in Jackson Ward, residents noticed that developers/rental companies/real estate inventors were looking to buy homes for student housing
 - Students are more transient, which doesn't build up community in the long term
 - Student rentals can drive up rent since students are paying by the room; these are not realistic rental prices for families
- Need to increase RHA staff, have them trained on the community service
 - There are only 5-10 people in the tenant office.
- Paying for applications. Housing market is already tight
- Need more resources to be able to help residents

People

- Carver is the elementary school zoned for Jackson Ward
 - You could walk here if you lived on the eastern side of Jackson Ward, otherwise you must get a ride/ride the bus
- Youth attendee said the park is supposed to be for kids up to 12 years old and she does not like it when high schoolers sometimes take over the swings at the park.
- High schoolers are seen riding scooters through the neighborhood. What are kids from 12-18 supposed to do in the neighborhood?
- Need more outdoor space; places for smokers that aren't beside the park
- Additional outdoor spaces should be inviting - if they're not inviting, they won't get utilized.
- Many outdoor smaller options might be better for different uses than one big park
- expressed concern that park shown on plans looks like a mega park.
- Need for local, neighborhood-specific education resources to sustain history of Jackson Ward amongst residents
- Increased relational capacity, so the people become part of the plan. It appears that there is already a plan
- Looking for restoration. Not just looking for a park. Reconciliation.
- Cycles of poverties. There needs to be a plan to improve quality of life, Access to education, etc.
- 100 years to make up for.
- Feedback is taken but is it being considered?
- Vouchers are [nonsense]. There needs to be real opportunities for people to rise above poverty.
- quality transportation. Voucher program model comes with issues
- Demolition of entire courts... Phasing
- People who live there would be caused so much trouble. People have their own networks
- Secure housing. How to set up residents to be successful, utility setup training, rental
- Voucher system not perfect. Ways to improve and break the models, how to expand the radius.

Vision

- Go beyond the vision

- HUD terms and things are being brought up. But long-term success needs to be talked about more. Two things are happening at the same time. Thinking about 10-20 years in the future.
- Presenting the HUD plan but also thinking about the redevelopment for the future. Then truly develop the vision.
- Undo as much as possible. Need to hear and see more aspirational goals. We need to aim higher, and target further. Need a grand vision. There is no vision!
- How do you address meeting more frequently while the plan keeps moving forward?
- How do you address the plan vs engagement?
- How do you distinguish between the long term and short terms?
- People feel that the plan moves forward no matter what in the 18-month timeline
- The Conversation never ends. It's a living document
- how does the readjustment of the plan affect the residents?
- Reconnect Jackson Ward is immediate. Long-term option to reconnect must be considered, as the community plan is long-term.
- (Referring to the old maps) Put back what is on the maps. Implement the 'Highways to Boulevards' plan.
- A 14-lane highway was removed from the city. The highway does not benefit the community but serves outsiders.
- preservation, uplifting existing community
- less dichotomy between the north and south
- I'd love for a Main Street in Gilpin
- it feels like they put in a lot of cheap houses
- invest in small business loans to community
- identify and cultivate entrepreneurs
- it's already happening but services (utility services) have been pushed underground
- adapt RHHA's policies; loosen them so they're not as restrictive
- if you're trying to get a foot up, you can get grace, so you don't get pushed out
- if it's mixed-use housing, you could slowly transition up
- it used to be you couldn't stay there for that long, everyone was always working towards the next thing
- use the government money to invest in the people and change their lives instead of on a big development
- you can go from Manchester down Broad St and you're in another world
- Until we change the mindset of the people, we're having discussions about
- it's going to take a lot more than money to create a progressive city
- the plan has to be blessed and intentions have to be honorable
- still a lot of drug use, it's not safe
- it's not the people that live there, but people that come IN to the community
- my family wants me to move (from Gilpin) but there is no "safe neighborhood"
 - if I move, I'll probably end up in a less safe place
- I don't want to leave, I can walk many places
- how we change the perception that the neighborhood is not safe?
- systemic racism is real, it is here today
- STATEMENT: Invest in the people, children, schools and define what community means. Build culture from the ground up, honor history, work to change perception of safety and combat systemic racism.

- STATEMENT: We envision a Jackson Ward that continues to be a diverse, historically rich neighborhood where residents can trust that the city is held accountable and responsive to their needs. This includes ensuring affordable housing (with both ownership and rental options), parking that prioritizes residents, improved sidewalks, safely lit streets and alleys, varying scales of flexible open spaces, and resident-owned businesses that make it a welcoming place to live and to stay.

Questions

- Will there be moving assistance for residents of Gilpin Court? Physical and practical assistance, like moving boxes, rental trucks, movers, etc.
- How is the accountability of the voucher system going to held up with the external forces at play?

Thoughts/Suggestions

- where is history and culture coming to reflect in the new era?
- is Jackson ward the small community and Gilpin court the larger community?
- how is culture going to be reflected?
- "it's been a cool place to live"
- major concern is affordable home ownership
- haven't had programs since the 1990s
- hard to purchase a home here, especially for African Americans
- need something for children to do in both Gilpin and Jackson ward
- attracted to front porches and shade trees
- the way development happens is a concern (building out of scale, challenging existing buildings)
- history and culture come from the ground up, can't just put up a sign
- no way you can move forward without looking backward
- invest in people in the community
- offer what their neighbors need
- all we knew was community, are we creating another community that already exists?
- what does community consist of? Can we build upon the existing community?
- "We had a seat at the table, but not everybody ate"
- this community was for African American people who didn't have a refuge
- it looks like vegetable stands, the things that made our culture so beautiful and rich
- where does that leave the intelligent people that built the community? Dentists, tailors, etc
- at the end of the day, history is about telling your story in your community
- owe it to people that came before us
- not enough police protection, they ride around but don't do much
 - when I was young they would get out and talk to you, community policing
- at one time they had incentives in Jackson ward by nonprofits for police, and firemen to live in the community they policed
 - now property ownership is mainly through developers, vcu
- we don't know our neighbors, mostly students
- most properties are rentals, big turnaround
- less policing and more engagement
- housing is a heavy problem

- last year Jackson ward civic association fought against property purchased for low income b/c the investor wanted to split up property into too many rooms w/out way to see neighbors
- no longer family homes, students are less invested in neighborhood
 - we, the long time residents, end up cleaning after them
- what does community look like? what is our new normal? What is the standard?
- makes me sad not to have comradery
- this new plan sounds great but I can go to any major city where this has taken place and it does not reflect who I am as a black woman in America
- if we're going to be great, we should know our culture and how to know each other
- how is this project advertising to people who have access to money?
- we have no children here, no youth, no teenagers in Jackson ward
- we used to grow up together and know the children
- the police used to come through with the horses and the children love that
- all the children are in Gilpin
- Jackson ward=architecturally rich
- Gilpin=architecturally barren
- the school will have to be better
- most of the issues in schools is trauma and we're not investing in the children
- project money should go into schools and the children
- "I would not move to a neighborhood that did not have good schools"
- inside the plan, the schools will improve but why was current community not good enough reason to improve the schools before the plan
- people that live here are passing through, have enough resources for other education outside RPS or children aren't school age
- schools make up community, that's like a church, that's where you learn and explore
- we have a lot of churches whose members don't live in the community anymore
- art180 did a project at VMFA asking "what does community look like"
 - kids had scary answers like "loud" meaning they're hearing things they shouldn't
- I love Richmond but I want us to fix the real problem so we can be a great river city
- we can keep throwing money at these spaces OR we can invest in the people and bring them together
- bus / public transportation improvements
- does any of this include financial counseling? Can organizations support?
- what programs are in place to help people build generational wealth?
- home ownership is one of the things we keep getting away from
- the first goal is to have collateral to be able to negotiate properly
- its been proven, when people own things they treat them better than when they don't belong to them
- how can we as intelligent people make it better instead of coming to "take"
- Jackson ward, this community, was left to their children, and they made decisions that maybe weren't the wisest
- we're the last 2 people on our block that lived here for decades
- we have a transient community
- rental properties are a cash cow, can we have paths to permanent housing
- can subsidies be for purchase? Rent to own?

- there have been too many evictions
- this community has more substance than any other in Richmond b/c it's been actually affected by Jim Crow
- where does the story get told so it can be passed along? We withstood redlining, built community, a public housing project was built that lifted up so many professionals into better places
- we should have some storytelling of that
- how do we get back to the people?
- we would not have this without Maggie Walker, etc
- Richmond has a responsibility to fix this, this is where it started
- when leadership changes it all changes
- I looked back at the city's plans "vision 2000", we're in 2022 and not much has been manifested from that plan except Jackson ward civic association and black history museum
- until we make investment in people and schools, we'll always have this issue unless we become extinct
- make sure these plans are held accountable

Other Questions or statements

- Reconnecting Jackson Ward- what is the status?
- Public transportation: The GRTC lines is chopping up the neighborhoods...same as I-95