

RICHMOND LAND BANK

**AT PRESTON & 3RD STREET
JACKSON WARD**

MAKING AN INTERIM CARE GARDEN 2021



ABOUT THE PROJECT

This interim care garden evolved as a collaboration between the Richmond Land Bank (Operated by Maggie Walker Land Trust, MWCLT) and Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects (NBW) in the stewardship of a group of fifteen vacant land bank parcels next to Shockoe Hill Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia, before they can be transferred to a designated end-use through the land bank process.

The amount of time before these parcels are developed could be a year or several years, so together we devised ways to signal care in the unknown interim, to recall the vibrant history of this historically Black neighborhood, to build relationships between the nonprofit, current neighbors, and city officials while opening imagination for the future of the site in a way that foregrounds justice and honors its history. This zine is a way to continue those goals, while also documenting the process as a case study and providing information and resources for people looking to do similar work in other places.

This project relied on 74 volunteer work hours during our work days, the design services donated by NBW, the support and facilitation by MWCLT, the generous access to the Valentine's Edith K. Shelton Collection and lots of borrowed landscaping equipment.

Thank you!



PROJECT TEAM

Chloe Hawkins (NBW)
Chloe Nagraj (NBW)
Julia MacNelly (MWCLT)
Erica Mutschler (NBW)
Taryn Wiens (NBW)
Thomas Woltz (NBW)

and many volunteers

A Special Thank-You to the Valentine in Richmond for use of photographs from the Edith K. Shelton Collection in this publication.

A history of margins, and of marginalizing



1864 US Coast Survey map *land bank parcels added in blue

“Richmond’s irregular terrain, with ravines and gullies, shaped its early development.”

In the 1700s and 1800s the area of Richmond around the land bank parcels in the northern part of what is now Jackson Ward was isolated from the city center by a gully, making it less desirable for early development. Because of this, free Black residents as a marginalized group settled here, on the literal margin of the city, pre-emancipation.

Over time, thanks to its residents, Jackson Ward became a bustling neighborhood with over 300 Black-owned businesses, along with churches, schools and social organizations. In this process, extensive regrading of the streets better connected this area to the rest of the city & facilitated development.

¹ “North Jackson Ward Vision Plan.” Richmond Land Bank, December 2020. <https://www.richmondlandbank.com/north-jackson-ward>, page 6.



Freeway construction, 1957 *land bank parcels added in blue



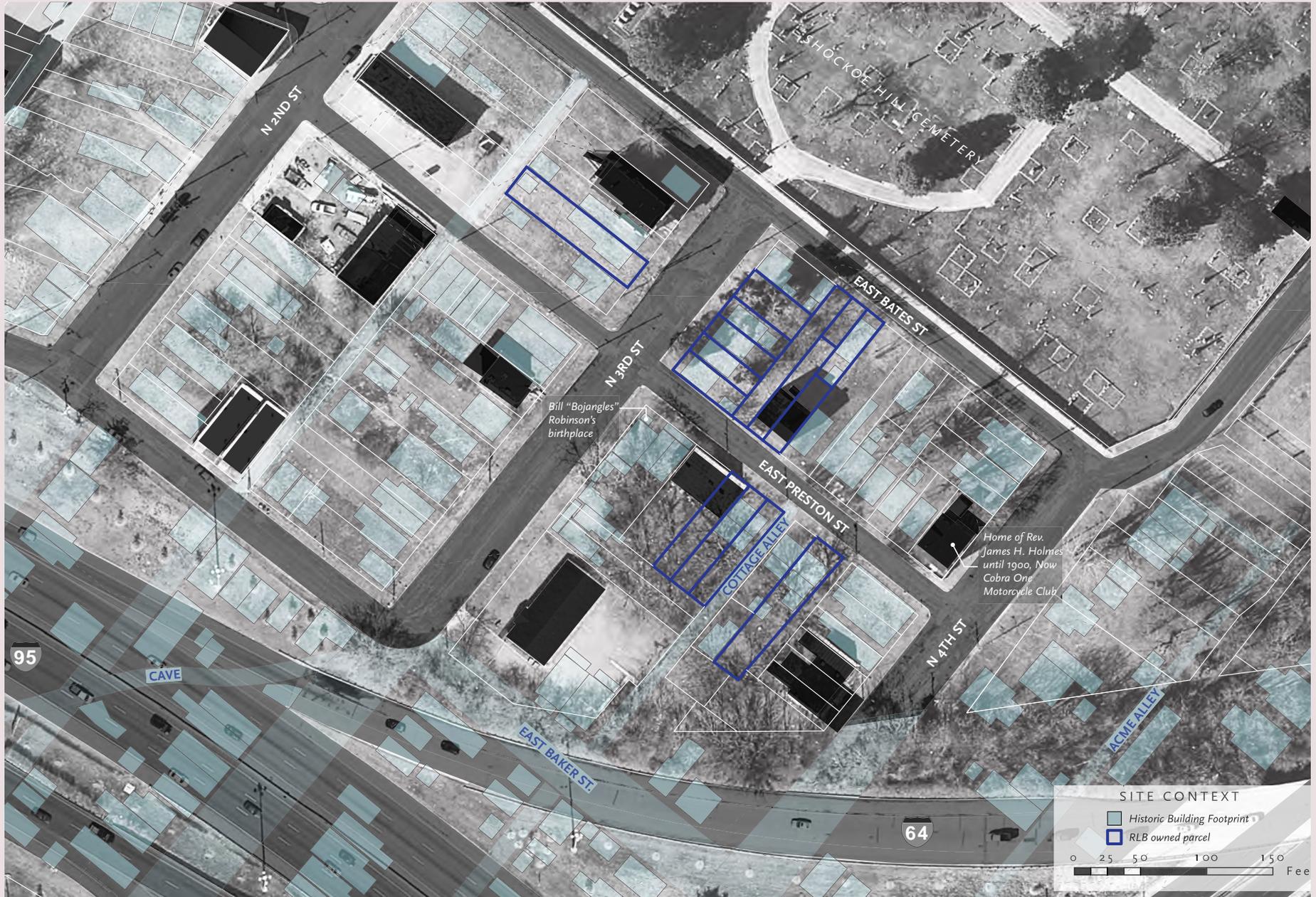
Aerial view of the site looking across the freeway toward the rest of Jackson Ward *land bank parcels added in blue. Photo by Johnny Miller from the “Unequal Scenes” series.

As Jackson Ward became a center of Black economic, social and political power, the all-white planning commission and all-white city council of Richmond adopted the 1946 Master Plan, which proposed building I-64 and I-95 through the middle of the neighborhood. To make way for freeway construction, 1,900 Black families were evicted from their homes — about a tenth of the neighborhood at the time. Although the land bank parcels were not directly demolished for construction, the freeway effectively cut them off from their churches, schools, businesses and social networks and resulted in the high rate of vacancy today.

In the 1800s, topographic isolation allowed residents a degree of agency and self-determination on the margins of an unequal society, but the present-day isolation of these parcels has been designed and constructed as a tool of racial segregation and control.



- 1** Land Bank Parcels
- 2** Shockoe Hill African Burial Ground
- 3A** First location of Maggie Walker's St Luke Penny Savings Bank
- 3B** Final Location of St Luke Penny Savings Bank
- 4** Historic 5th and Leigh Intersection (destroyed)
- 5** Sixth Mt Zion Baptist Church (almost destroyed)
- 6** Navy Hill School (destroyed)
- 7** Richmond City Jail (built with the freeways)
- 8** Gilpin Court Public Housing Development (built c. 1940s)
- 9** The freeway that split the neighborhood (I-95/ I-64)

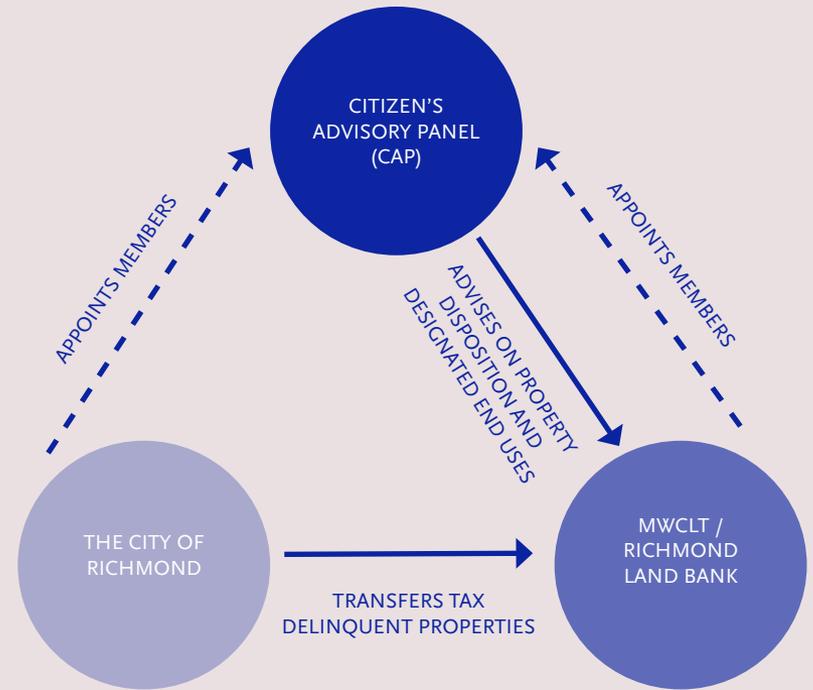




What is a Land Bank?

Richmond Land Bank is a program of the nonprofit Maggie Walker Community Land Trust (MWCLT) that acquires vacant and tax-delinquent properties from the City of Richmond. Normally, these properties would go through the tax auction process, going to the highest bidder with no guarantee that they would be put to use. Instead, the City transfers them to MWCLT for a low judicial sale fee, and MWCLT agrees to steward them through a transparent, community-driven process.

The Richmond Land Bank makes its land use designation and disposition decisions with the support of a 9-person volunteer panel called the Citizen's Advisory Panel.



In the case of Jackson Ward, the process will look something like below. While the primary goals of the Land Bank are to do an efficient, streamlined and transparent transfer, they also want to build trust. Without their own development power they rely on finding for-profit or non-profit groups interested in developing the parcels in a way that is aligned with the needs and desires of the community—which is why the timeline for development is so uncertain. In this case, finding committed partners to develop the site in accordance with community priorities is crucial, and might take time.



A slow, care-based strategy

For the work we describe in this booklet, our strategy is to perform small, temporary acts of care that both uncover pieces of the past and provide space to imagine different futures, that build relationships slowly, that set this place up to be transferred toward a more equitable future driven by the black imagination.

We share the tools and process we used as a case study. Each place is unique, but we hope this blueprint can encourage similar work elsewhere, rooted in learning, observing and responding.



PLAN AN INTERIM CARE GARDEN

COLLABORATORS

See which existing nonprofits, gardening groups, city staff, local artists, or community groups might be open to working with you. Collaborating allows resources and knowledge to be shared.

In this case study, Richmond Land Bank was our primary collaborator. They already were responsible for stewarding the site and had specific goals, resources, and limitations, which strongly guided the trajectory of the project.

SITE SELECTION AND RESEARCH

Perhaps you have a site in mind that is on your property or in your community. Perhaps you are a non-profit like MWCLT which has land that can be stewarded creatively. Perhaps there is an area in your city where you'd like to plant a temporary care garden. However you decide on a site, researching the history of the site is an important and generative precursor to design.

A few examples of questions that might guide your research are:

What is the ownership history of this site?

Are there any cultural or historic sites of interest near the site?

Have there been any large infrastructure projects near the site? If so, how were they funded?

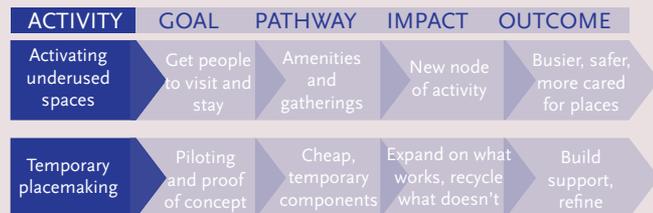
How has the occupation of the site changed over time?

How has race factored into infrastructural and urban planning decisions that have shaped the site?

Local archives, historical societies, universities, city GIS websites, and libraries are great resources for pursuing site-based historic research.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

We referenced The Urban Institute's report "Creative Placemaking and Community Safety" as inspiration for low-impact, community-driven place-based interventions. Two activities in the report linking placemaking to community safety were particularly relevant for this project:



DESIGN

What are the goals of your project? In this case, primary goals were to indicate care and recall the rich history of the neighborhood by activating the space of the street. Because the site may be transferred to a new owner and developed in the future, the installation also had to be temporary and no/low cost. Below are some low-impact design moves to prompt ideas:

| SUBTRACT | ADD |
|--------------------|---|
| Invasive removal | Soil amendment |
| Trash removal | Planting |
| Brush removal | Signage |
| Excavation | Temporary art: corn starch paint, wheat paste, sidewalk chalk |
| Mowing | |
| Selective clearing | |

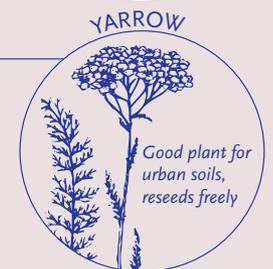
PLANT SELECTION

Plant selection is mainly dependent upon sunlight, moisture availability, and soil quality. Maintenance needs should also factor in. For this site, we chose plants with an exciting bloom that would do well in full sun with little water and low quality soil. We only chose annuals because the short term future of the site is uncertain.

 Plants we used at the RLB site are **bold**.

Sample Plant Palette

- From seed:
 - Centaurea cyanus (Bachelor Button)**
 - Cosmos bipinnatus (Cosmos)**
 - Helianthus annuus (Sunflower)**
 - Consolida ajacis* (Larkspur)
 - Tropaeolum majus* (Nasturtium)
 - Verbascum thapsus* (Mullein)
 - Zinnia elegans* (Zinnia)
- Cover crop (from seed):
 - Trifolium repens* (White Clover)
- Live Plant (Container or Plug):
 - Achillea millefolium (Yarrow)**
 - Allium cernuum (Nodding Allium)**
 - Aster sp. (Aster)**
 - Coreopsis (Tickseed)**
 - Echinacea (Coneflower)**
 - Monarda fistulosa (Beebalm)**
 - Rudbeckia hirta (Black-eyed susan)**



INSTALL AN INTERIM CARE GARDEN

START HERE → Is the site cleared of vegetation?

Yes

No

Site Prep: Cleanup + Clearing



Get utilities marked before digging!

| TASK | TOOLS |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Invasive removal | Shovels, hand tools, dumpster |
| Small tree removal | Chainsaw, dumpster |
| Garbage cleanup | Trash bags, gloves, dumpster |
| Sod removal | Spade, shovel, or edger |
| Loosen compacted soil | Tiller, pickax |

Good soil = rock +
air + water +
organic matter +
organisms



Amend the soil

COMMON ORGANIC MATTER ADDITIVES:

- Plant materials (leaves, straw, grass clippings)
- Compost (adds nutrients, lowers pH)
- Composted manure
- Peat moss (retains water, lowers pH)

Case Study: Site Prep into Design

At our May 8 workday, we started digging to figure out where garden beds could be sited. **1** We found the intact historic brick sidewalk a few inches deep. **2** Our plans for the day shifted to focus on uncovering as much of the sidewalk as possible. Revealing the sidewalk shifted bed placement and immediately changed the character of the site and how it can be used. **3**



PAUSE



What have you learned about the site through prep work?
Have you found any artifacts?
Does this change how you initially thought about the site?
How might this alter the design you had initially planned?



What are you planting?

Seeds

Live Plants

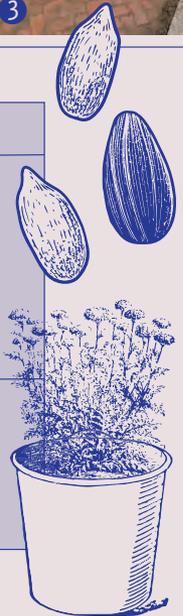
Plant seeds at depth specified on package according to design plan.

Lay plants out according to design plan. Dig hole to depth of container. Remove plant from container and loosen roots. Place root ball in hole and cover with soil. Mulch over top of roots.

Water deeply

Seeds or Live Plants?

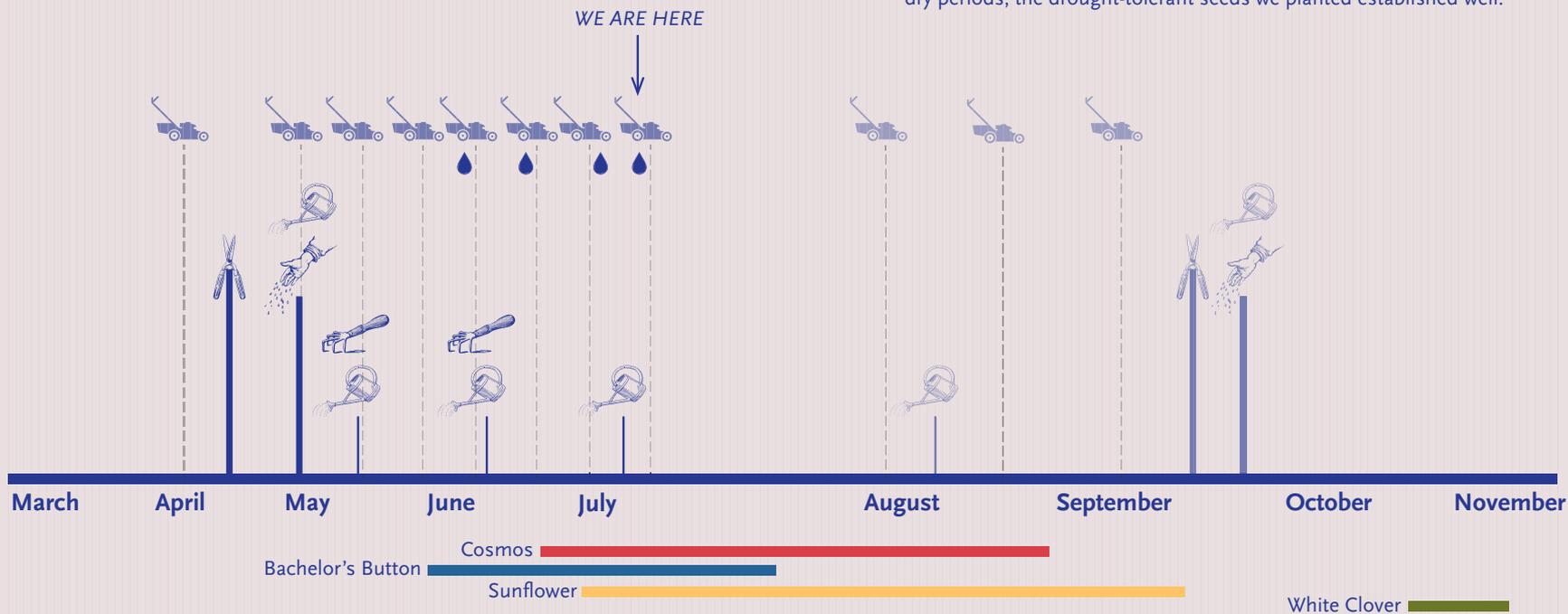
| | |
|--|--|
| SEEDS | |
| PROS | CONS |
| Affordable Many options Seed saving Easy install | Germination rate Tight planting window Time to establish Direct seed limits options |
| LIVE PLANTS | |
| PROS | CONS |
| More immediate impact More flexibility with planting times Heartier plants | Expensive Limited to nursery selection Water until established More labor-intensive install |



MAINTAIN AN INTERIM CARE GARDEN

Maintenance can be a design tool! Selective mowing, thinning, deadheading, and pruning can change the character of the site. Seed sowing and watering occur at specific times based on climate and rain.

This schedule shows the maintenance activities we have undertaken so far and plan to undertake at the RLB site. Because there was no water source onsite, we depended mainly upon rain. Ideally, watering would occur more often as the garden establishes. However, even with limited watering and dry periods, the drought-tolerant seeds we planted established well.



-  Rain
-  Cut back in early spring and late fall if reseeding is not desired
-  Spring planting of annuals and perennials, fall planting of cover crop or perennials
-  Water during establishment and dry periods
-  Hand weeding
-  Mow areas of grass



April 24, 2021



existing conditions

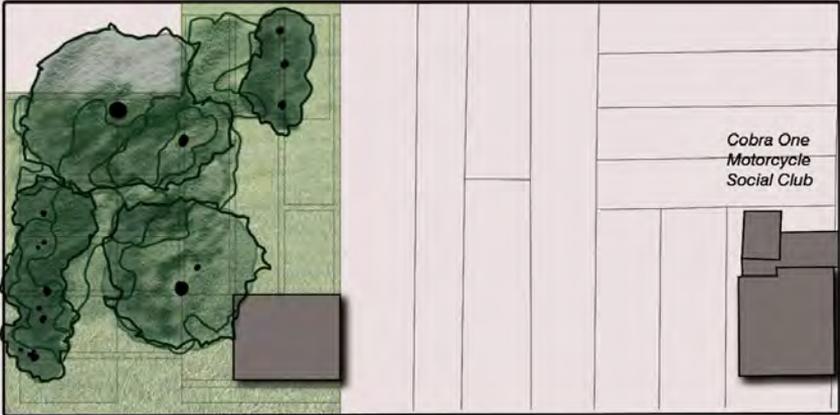
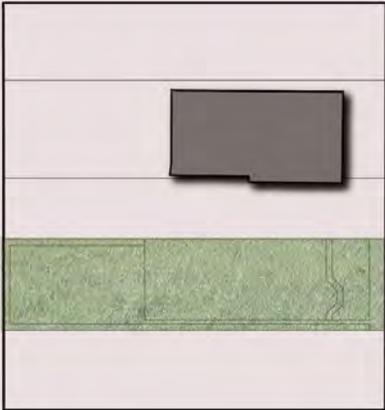
↑ SHOCKOE CEMETERY

↑ SHOCKOE HILL
AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

E BATES ST

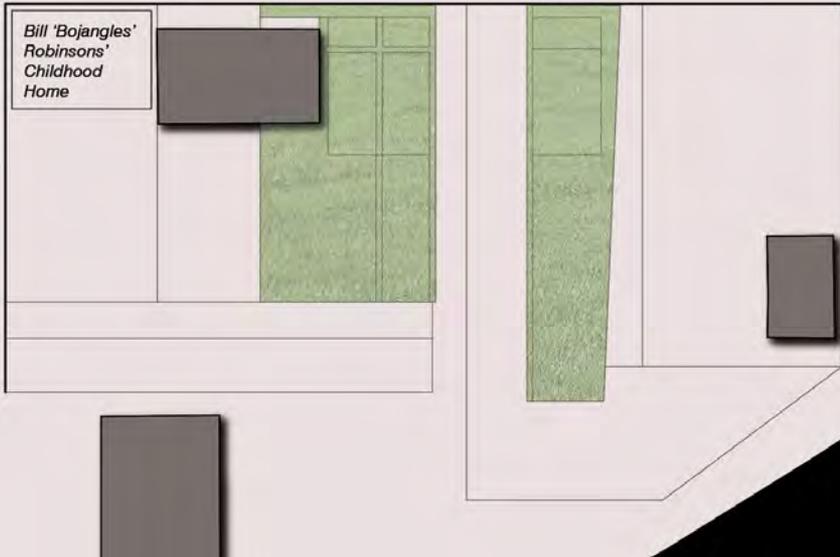
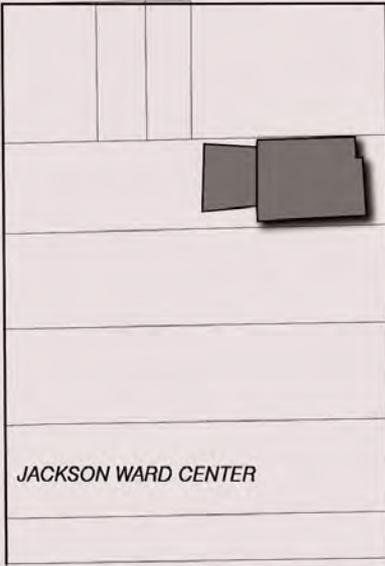
N 3RD ST

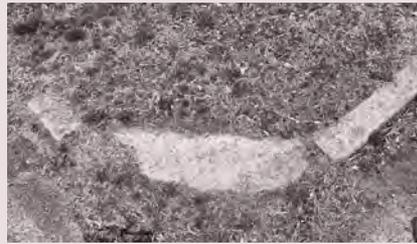
N 4TH ST



E PRESTON ST

← GILPIN COURT





4/24 WORKDAY INVENTORY

4 TASKS

- Trash Removal
- Invasive Removal
- Brush Removal
- Curb Cleaning

7 VOLUNTEERS x 4 HOURS = 27 VOLUNTEER HOURS

- 3 Chainsaw Users
- 3 Brush Removers
- 1 Organizer & Documenter

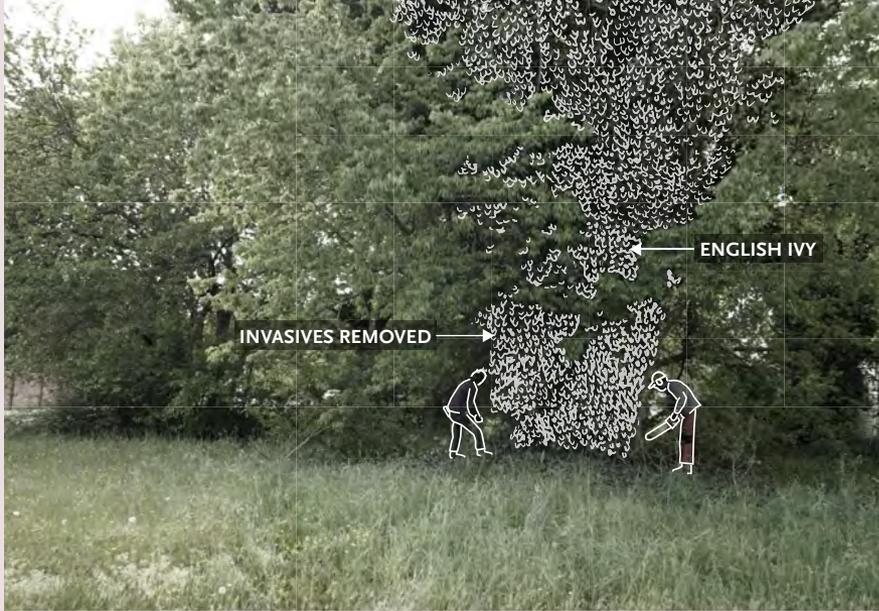
BORROWED EQUIPMENT

- 7 Pairs of Garden Gloves
- 2 Chainsaws
- 2 Ear & Eye Protection
- 2 Chaps
- 2 Helmets
- 2 Handsaws
- 1 Tree Pruner
- 3 Loppers
- 1 Reciprocating Saw
- 2 String Trimmers
- Rake
- 15 Garbage Bags
- 3 Pairs Disposable Gloves
- 1 Wheelbarrow

COST: \$351

- \$351 for one 15-yard dumpster rental for brush disposal. Code enforcement connected MWCLT with Public Works to dispose of the rest of the brush for free (approximately 30 yards) which would normally cost \$100. We didn't realize how much brush we would generate and should have worked out disposal beforehand!

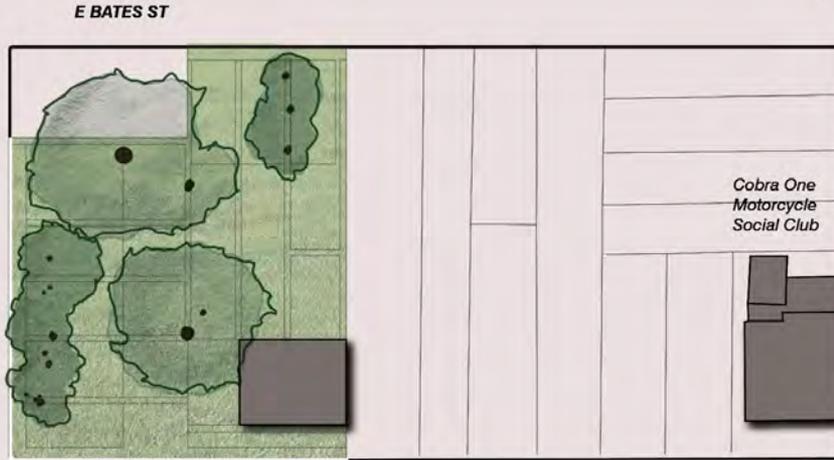
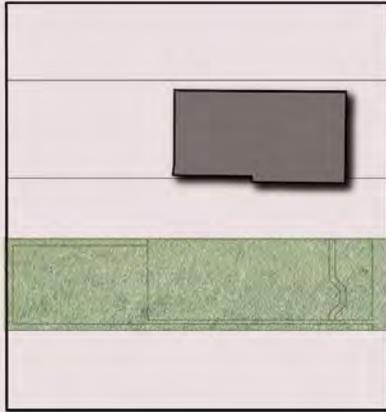
April 24 workday tasks



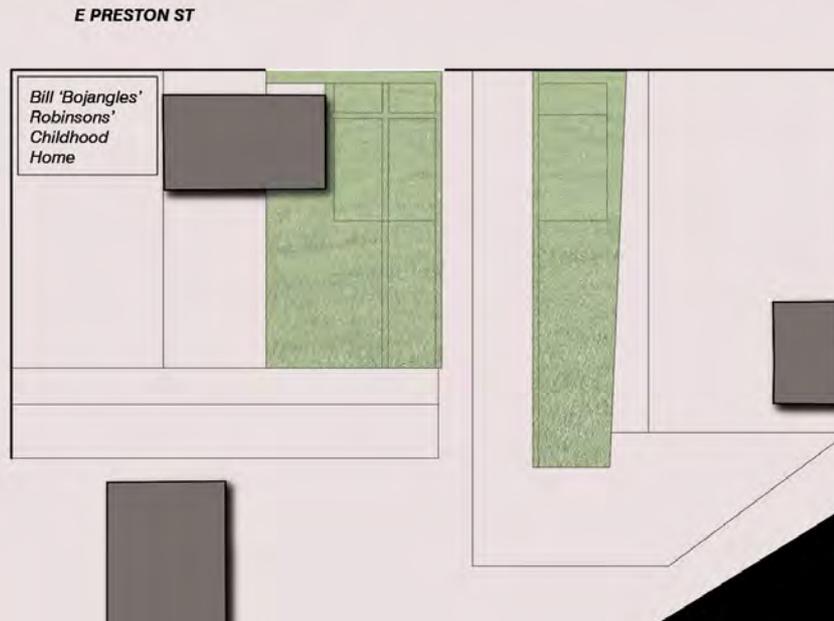
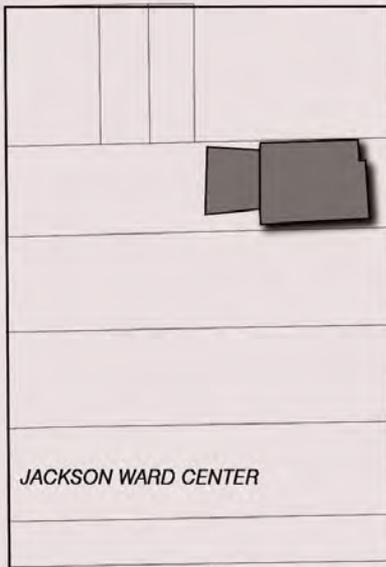
after April 24 workday

↑ SHOCKOE CEMETERY

↑ SHOCKOE HILL
AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND



← GILPIN COURT





5/08 WORKDAY INVENTORY

4 TASKS

- Sod Removal & Tilling
- Uncovering Sidewalk
- Amending Soil
- Seeding Plants

10 VOLUNTEERS x 4 HOURS = 40 VOLUNTEER HOURS

BORROWED EQUIPMENT

- 10 Pairs of Garden Gloves
- 5 Shovels
- 2 Rakes
- 1 Broom
- 2 Measuring Tapes
- 20 Wooden Stakes for Marking Planting Beds

RENTED EQUIPMENT

- 1 Tiller

SEEDS & AMENDMENTS

- 1 lb sulphur cosmos seeds
- 1 lb cosmos seeds dwarf - sensation mix
- 2/3 lb pygmy sunflower seeds
- 2/3 lb blue cornflower - bachelor button
- 2 yds compost
- white play sand for seed dispersal

COST: \$292

- \$154 for one-day rental of a Heavy Duty Tiller
- \$138 for seeds

after May 8 workday

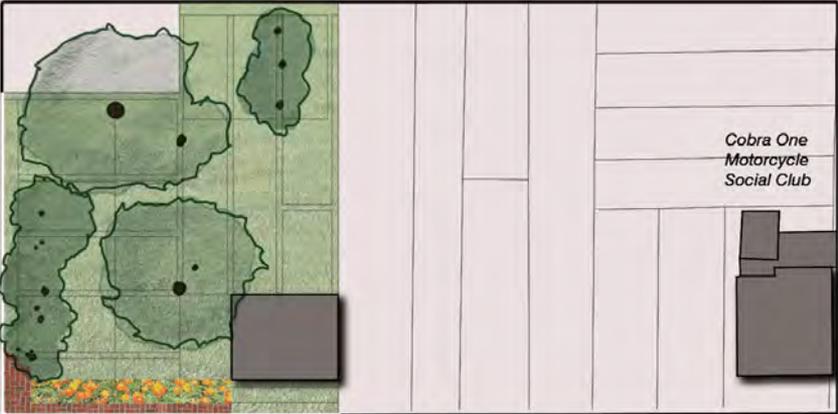
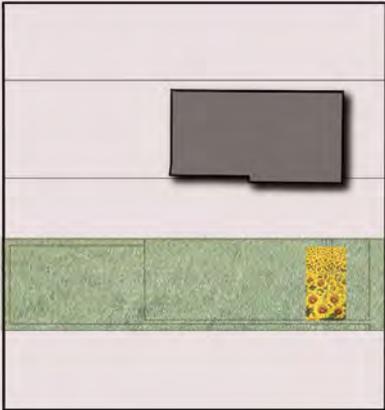
↑ SHOCKOE CEMETERY

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AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

E BATES ST

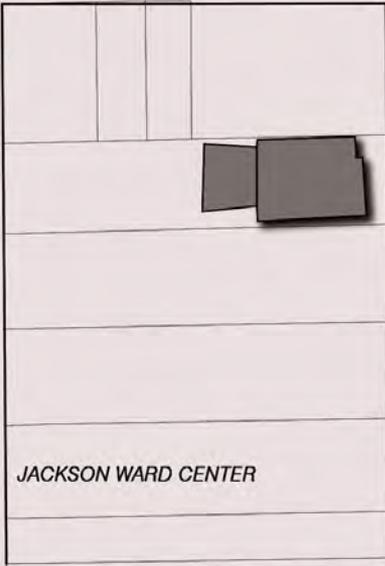
N 3RD ST

N 4TH ST



← GILPIN COURT

E PRESTON ST











*June 6— light weeding & watering & overseeding patchy spots :
2 people, 2 hours*

DESIGN AS RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

Material changes to the site are one way of describing the result of the workdays, but another way to evaluate the outcome is the relationships built in the process:

Our first workday happened to coincide with a fundraiser for breast cancer that Cobra One Motorcycle Club was hosting on the other side of the block. Their music kept the volunteers motivated and when we finished working they graciously invited us over to eat lunch with them.

That set up a closer relationship between Cobra One and MWCLT, which will help the process of eventually transferring the parcels in a way that better accounts for and invites meaningful input from the immediate community.

Before the work days, the land bank parcels often got cited and fined by city

code enforcement. Now not only do the parcels look more upkept and in-line with code, but the code enforcement officer has gotten to know MWCLT and how they work, and arranged for the Public Works Department to help remove the brush from the first workday, which MWCLT may be able to now replicate on other parcels in other areas of the city.

People involved in other work at MWCLT have learned more about this area through the workdays, and expressed interest in organizing and running workdays in the future. It's expanded the discussion among MWCLT staff and board members about what could happen here.

In addition, NBW and MWCLT have established a solid relationship that may lead to future collaborations on other projects.



Creative Stewardship

Too often, designers don't get to know a place or community until they are asking for feedback toward a fixed design. Maybe community engagement can start far ahead of extracting information, and start with a process of building relationships that may or may not lead to a permanent spatial change. Temporary stewardship can be a creative act of care; it can be designed.



1957



Edith K. Shelton Photograph Collection. V.91.42.2331/PHC0039. The Valentine, Richmond, Virginia

2021



1st Workday

2nd Workday

So, what's next?

“Residents and stakeholders envision a neighborhood centered around Black-owned property, commerce, arts, culture, and agriculture.”¹

As we move forward, we shouldn't forget what the soil remembers. While many of the lots in this neighborhood may appear vacant, they contain a patchwork of births and deaths, celebrations and innovations, grief and loss, battles and injustices, gardens and communities. Under the surface they store memory of many lives-lived.

The fact that the area currently has high levels of vacancy is not from a lack of care; it is directly related to the legacy of racism in housing, planning, insurance, lending, political, and infrastructural policies, as carried out by private and public institutions alike, and its future should face these past injustices.

The process of uncovering the brick sidewalks that run along N. 3rd and E. Preston Streets affirmed that sometimes this past is right under the surface: beneath an unassuming ground of sod and weeds we began to uncover the herringbone pattern of a wide, carefully-laid

brick sidewalk and were transported to a vision of a thriving neighborhood as it once was.

Although Land Banks traditionally have been used to deal with “blighted, underused or problem properties,” digging deeper into the histories of seemingly ‘blighted’ areas often uncovers a rich and storied past, and people like Cobra One Motorcycle Club or the JXN project picking up the pieces and uplifting their communities.

In 2020, Historic Richmond (a non-profit with the mission to preserve the distinct character of Richmond's history) collaborated with RLB to fund a community survey and exploratory area study. Together they engaged partners, nearby residents, and community leaders in conversations to help guide future development of the 15 RLB-owned properties. Through the study they asked, “What is a solid vision for the future (near-term and longer-term)? What principals and potential uses should be considered in future development?”

In the study they identified a set of community visions and values, including options for future uses. Regarding the future development of the 15 RLB owned lots, the Land Bank looks to facilitate a collaborative transfer process that both honors the location's rich past and provides an achievable vision for the future.

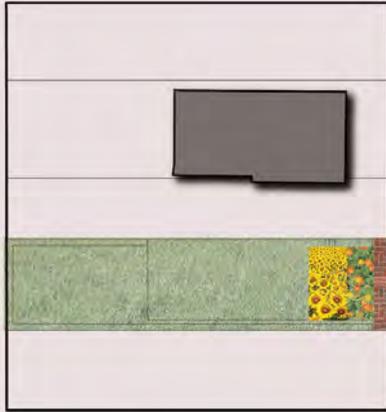
In the meantime, we have some ideas for expanding the interim garden through future work days & will continue building relationships here and holding space for a more just future.

¹ Under “Support Black Ownership,” one of six guiding principles developed from themes identified during the community engagement phase of the exploratory study. “North Jackson Ward Vision Plan.” Richmond Land Bank, December 2020. <https://www.richmondlandbank.com/north-jackson-ward>, page 18.

future work day plans

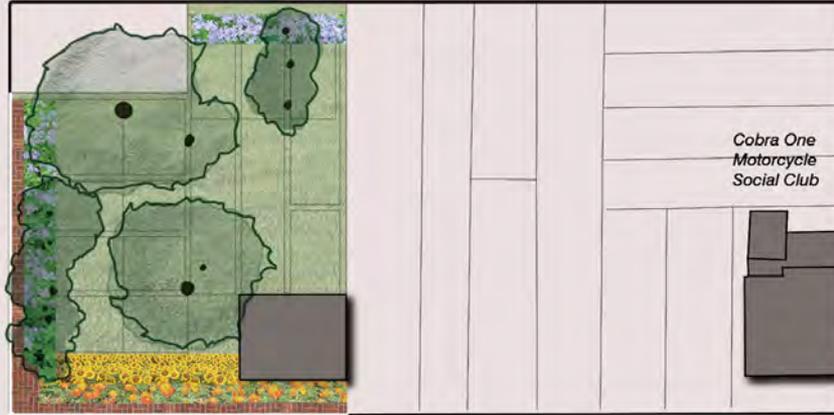
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E BATES ST

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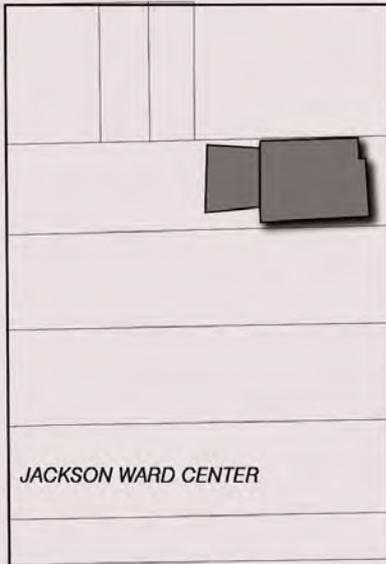
Cobra One
Motorcycle
Social Club

N 4TH ST

Home of Rev. James
H. Holmes until 1900

E PRESTON ST

← GILPIN COURT



JACKSON WARD CENTER



Bill 'Bojangles'
Robinsons'
Childhood
Home

HWY 64







Bibliography & Resources

LAND BANK RESOURCES

On the Richmond Land Bank website you can access the study they did on this area, as well as general information and a form for comments or questions: <https://www.richmondlandbank.com/north-jackson-ward>

SEED-PLANTING INFORMATION

American Meadows, see instructions on the webpage:
<https://www.americanmeadows.com/wildflower-seed-planting-instructions>

HISTORIC RESOURCES

"City Center Small Area Plan Draft." Richmond, VA, July 2021. https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2021-06/CityCenter_DRAFT_20210608_compressed.pdf
See timeline on pages 12-16

"North Jackson Ward Vision Plan." Richmond Land Bank, December 2020. <https://www.richmondlandbank.com/north-jackson-ward>

Unequal Scenes Photo Series: <https://unequalscenes.com/richmond>

Historic Jackson Ward Association: <https://www.hjwa.org/history/>

PLACE-MAKING AND PLACE-KEEPING RESOURCES

"Creative Placemaking and Community Safety." Research report from the Urban Institute, 2018.

"Creative Placemaking, Placekeeping, and Cultural Strategies to Resist Displacement." Citizen Artist Salon, U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, 2016. <https://usdac.us/blogac/2017/12/11/creative-placemaking-placekeeping-and-cultural-strategies-to-resist-displacement>

JACKSON WARD CULTURAL RESOURCES

The JXN project: <https://thejxnproject.com/about-the-jxn-project>. Recordings from their events are available on their website.

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE EDITH K. SHELTON COLLECTION THE VALENTINE, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Pages 1-2, OPENING SPREAD

"304 - 320 Preston Street" October 1970, V.91.42.1877b/PHC0039

Pages 9-12, TIMELINE COLLAGE (Photos cropped)

"304-320 Preston Street" October 1970, V.91.42.1877a/PHC0039

"14 W. Duval Street, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church" Easter Sunday, 1956, V.91.42.668/PHC0039

"901 N. 5th Street at Baker Street" 1956, V.91.42.2440/PHC0039

"Sixth and E. Duval Streets, northwest corner" (Navy Hill School) 1956, V.91.42.663/PHC0039

Pages 15-16, 1956/2015 views

"300 Block E. Preston Street (tree on N. Fourth Street)" 1956, V.91.42.1878/PHC0039

"307 1/2 - 311 1/2 Preston Street" 1956, V.91.42.1880/PHC0039

"320 E. Baker Street, at 4th Street" 1955, 91.42.63/PHC0039

"801 Brook Road at Baker Street" 1956, V.91.42.194/PHC0039

"901 N. 5th Street at Baker Street" 1956, V.91.42.2440/PHC0039

"302 E. Jackson Street" 1956, V.91.42.1274/PHC0039

"1000 N. 4th Street at Preston Street" 1956, V.91.42.2383/PHC0039

"1015 N. 3rd Street" 1956, V.91.42.2332/PHC0039

"E. Baker Street at 4th Street" 1956, V.91.42.64/PHC0039

Pages 57-58, 3rd street 1956/2021

"1015 N. 3rd Street" 1956, V.91.42.2332/PHC0039

OTHER TIMELINE COLLAGE IMAGE CREDITS

Richmond Planet (possibly under supervision of photographer James Conway Farley) - The Mechanics Savings Bank of Richmond, Va. Richmond Planet (Richmond, Virginia) January 6, 1906, page 1, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/7774943/richmond_planet/

United States Coast Survey. Map of the city of Richmond, Virginia. [Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Survey, 1864] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/2006626036/>.

Jackson Ward Photographs, [1952?], Accession #15572, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va.

"From the Archives, Richmond City Jail." Richmond Times Dispatch, 2017. https://richmond.com/from-the-archives/from-the-archives-richmond-city-jail/collection_1c381db4-131a-11e7-a115-f7543c13f8e0.html#9

"Farewell to the Navy Hill School" 1965, Richmond Times-Dispatch Archives.

Beers, F. W. Illustrated atlas of the city of Richmond, Va. [Richmond, Va.: F. W. Beers, 1877] Map. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/2005630891/>.

"A Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City", City Planning Commission, Richmond, VA, 1946. Accessed 2021 at <https://chpn.net/2014/02/06/bartholomews-1946-master-plan-for-the-city-of-richmond/>

