

# RECONNECT JACKSON WARD



## Reconnect Jackson Ward

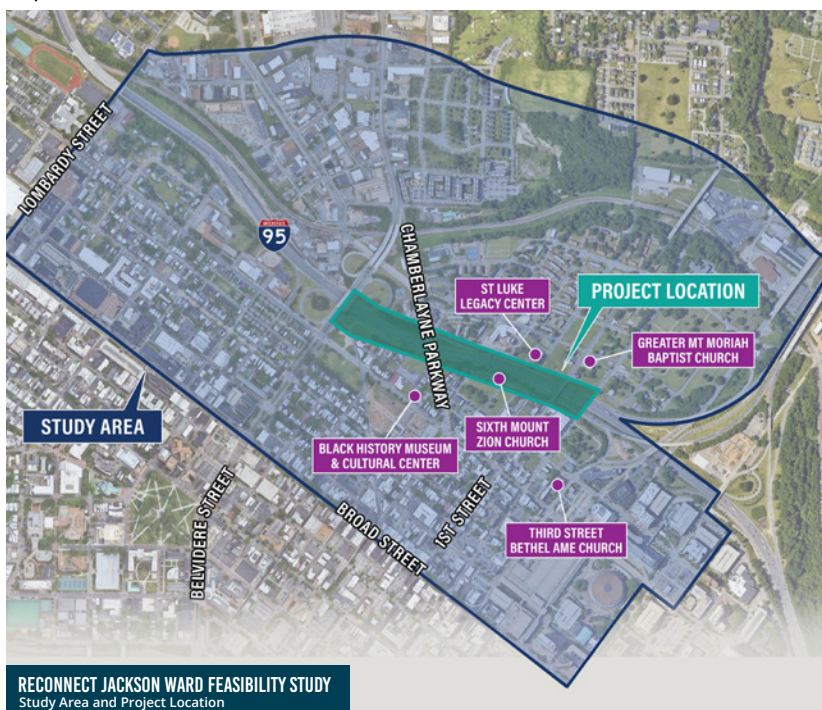
A Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program Grant recipient

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Virginia Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIP), in coordination with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the City of Richmond, undertook a feasibility study to identify opportunities to reconnect Jackson Ward and the surrounding neighborhoods, a historic African American community that has been physically and economically separated by Interstates 95 and 64 since the 1950s.

The feasibility study began in January 2022 and included public information meetings, pop-up events and focus groups, providing the public with an opportunity to help guide the decision-making process and ensure the project responds to the needs of the community. The City applied for the Reconnecting Communities Pilot grant in October 2022, and were notified in February 2023 of their award.

The feasibility study identified that it would be technically possible to implement a new bridge or cap structure within the study area; however, careful continued community engagement and additional studies and analyses will be needed to advance the successful implementation of the project. These efforts will be informed by important thematic design elements and recommendations identified in the feasibility study report.



Given the complexities of the constrained urban project location, construction costs for a reconnection will be considerable. The City of Richmond received \$1,350,000 from the US DOT Reconnecting Communities Discretionary Grant Program. The funds will support planning activities to improve access and reconnect Jackson Ward through the creation of a new bridge or freeway lid that would incorporate transportation connections, public spaces, and opportunities for future development.

### PROJECT LOCATION

The study area generally encompasses Jackson Ward and surrounding neighborhoods and has focused on the evaluation of improvements between the Belvidere Street Bridge over I-95 to the North 1st Street Bridge over I-95.

## FRAMEWORK DESIGN PLAN

Through the initial public engagement process, the community identified conceptual themes and amenities to be included in the conceptual project plan. Four themes were selected to capture Jackson Ward's community vision as it reflects on its past, present, and future as a way of commemorating and reviving Black excellence and ownership in Jackson Ward and other displaced neighborhoods.

### PRIMARY FRAMEWORK THEMES

#### Mixed Use – Commerce/Housing

- Reestablish the historic neighborhood and opportunities for marketplaces, commerce, and innovation.
- Prioritize Black wealth creation by creating home, business, and land ownership opportunities.



#### Faith & Contemplative Space

- Reconnect Jackson Ward with paths that encourage cultural growth and discovery and provide a space for the community that encourages personal growth and development.



#### Youth Engagement Space

- Build and promote excellence and opportunities in Jackson Ward for youth and personal engagement.
- Provide youth with a space for recreation and leisure.

#### Arts & Entertainment Space

- Integrate arts and entertainment spaces that celebrate the history and culture of Jackson Ward and provide a space for community events and entertainment.



## NEXT STEPS

The City of Richmond will continue to engage the public and work to advance the Reconnect Jackson Ward project. The City is currently working with the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to execute the grant agreement.

The goal of the additional planning activities is to design a project that is fiscally feasible and will reconnect the community. Planning activities funded by the planning grant are anticipated to include:

#### Additional Studies and Analyses

- Traffic evaluations and additional analyses
- Environmental reviews required for federally-funded construction projects

#### Preliminary Engineering and Design

- Utilizing designers with experience designing Black spaces

#### Local History and Culture Archival Research

- To inform community sensitive design as well as impact analyses

#### Philanthropic Coordination

- Identifying support and partners dedicated to the creation and establishment of an organization/foundation

#### Continued Community Engagement