

## **RVARCHAEOLOGY**

Good morning, and thank you for being here. Our names are Dr. Kim Allen and Ellen Chapman. The two of us, in addition to Dr. Terry Brock, Research Archaeologist at The Montpelier Foundation, make up the Steering Committee for RVArchaeology, an organization recently founded to promote opportunities for public engagement with and research of Richmond's archaeological resources. We have scheduled this meeting with the press to discuss two things: First, the need for Richmond to act as better stewards towards their rich archaeological resources, and second, our questions regarding the Mayor's plan for archaeological investigation at the development sites included in the Revitalize RVA plan.

Richmond has rich historical, architectural, and archaeological resources, but archaeology is currently underutilized as a tool to investigate the city's past. Our organization believes that the City has a responsibility to better protect, mitigate, and use these resources to learn from and promote our City's heritage, particularly as it moves towards becoming a Tier One City. Currently, Richmond's laws do not adequately account for archaeological impacts, particularly at areas outside of the Old and Historic Districts, which places many areas of historical significance at risk.

This can be seen specifically in the area impacted by development in Shockoe Bottom, which currently is not located in an Old and Historic District. This development area has not been the subject of archaeological investigations despite its status as the oldest neighborhood in the city and its listing as part of a National Registered Historic District. The area covered by the proposed development is known as the historic site of at least three slave trader sites, a Civil War hospital, numerous historic commercial buildings, and a two-block section of the original 1737 town plan for Richmond. While these structures no longer appear on the landscape, there is great potential that they exist archaeologically. Given these cultural resources, this 8 acre site represents a critical opportunity for the city of Richmond to truly engage with its archaeological resources in a meaningful way.

We are pleased to know that the Mayor has considered some of the concerns of the community regarding archaeological investigations. We understand that this afternoon during the informal session of City Council there will be a presentation of the findings of this archaeology study, the first part of his archaeological and historical review process presented on March 27th. When this plan was announced, we looked forward to engaging with the Mayor in a dialogue about how to improve the plan, and in April we posed several questions for clarification about the proposal itself. These questions and related concerns were collected from professional archaeologists in the City and surrounding areas, including the Council for Virginia Archaeologists. They were sent to the Mayor's office and to members of City Council and entered into the record at the May 12th City Council meeting. We have yet to hear from the Mayor regarding our concerns. So today, we are eager to hear

results of that initial archaeological study, in hopes that some of these concerns will be addressed. Given that the Mayor's plan has already begun, we have additional questions that we hope will be addressed during this afternoon's briefing. Our specific questions include the following:

1. What area of the project will this plan cover? Is it only going to cover the baseball stadium footprint, or will it also extend to the associated private development projects, like the proposed grocery store, museum, hotel, and other elements?
2. Which federal agencies has the City contacted regarding their interest in initiating a Section 106 historical and archaeological review?
3. Does this archaeological plan take into consideration the potential for archaeological sites at the site of the Boulevard Development?
4. How will this archaeological plan proactively identify intact site deposits, to avoid the discovery of significant sites during construction activities?
5. If archaeological deposits are uncovered by construction monitoring, what will the criteria be for conducting an excavation? What timeframe will archaeologists have to record remains discovered in this manner?
6. What will the procedure be if a large number of human burials or other human skeletal remains are uncovered?
7. What is the budget for this undertaking? What is the conservation and curation plan for the artifacts recovered in this project?
8. What level of archaeological investigations will be performed on identified sites that are not associated with the slave trade, such as the City's founding and the Civil War period?
9. What will be the process for assessing archaeological and historical significance and selecting sites for excavation?
10. Will sites of historical significance be excavated fully, or is their opportunity for archaeological excavations to change the development plans to protect and preserve these sites?
11. How is the Mayor's "Panel of Experts" selected, and what are their responsibilities? Is it possible for members of the public to participate or inform their selection?
12. What happens if the amount of archaeological work that is necessary to properly mitigate the development area exceeds the allotted 4 months?

These are our questions regarding the Mayor's plan for archaeological investigation. It has been our pleasure to introduce you to RVArchaeology this morning. You are invited to join us at our next meeting scheduled for Saturday, May 31st at The Black History Museum and Cultural Center located at 00 Clay St. in Historic Jackson Ward. Thank you again for joining us this morning, and now we'd be happy to take your questions.

Ellen Chapman, Terry Brock, Kim Allen  
Steering Committee  
RVArchaeology