

Good evening Council President Samuels, Vice President Robertson, and Members of City Council,

Our names are Ellen Chapman, Kim Allen and Terry Brock. We are the steering committee of a new community organization, RVArchaeology, which advocates for archaeological resources in Richmond. Archaeologists living and working in the Richmond region have reviewed the archaeological plan associated with the Revitalize RVA Development Project. We have shared this review with members of Council and the Mayor's office and are now submitting this review for the record. We have also uploaded it to our RVArchaeology website for public information.

Our review includes a number of concerns such as the nature of the public's engagement in the Mayor's archaeological initiative. Questions include, how will experts be selected for the expert panel? What archaeological protocols will be implemented? What if there are significant archaeological discoveries that impact the construction schedule? Several of our respondents are concerned that the initiative may be intended to replace a Section 106, which it does not. Some members of the public may already have this impression, which must be clarified.

Respondents praised administration efforts to engage the public, however public engagement set forth in the initiative does not provide a defined role for the public in developing research questions or contributing to project design. For example, will the public have an opportunity to weigh in on how the archaeological project will be conducted and which sites should be considered for archaeological excavation?

Respondents were also concerned by the lack of a stated role for particular descendent communities. These include Native American, African American, and veteran communities, such as descendants of those who fought in the Civil War.

Again, public engagement is an important concern and we ask that more thought be given to the logistics of this engagement such as involvement of the school systems and providing sufficient notice through a variety of media of convenient times and locations that facilitate opportunities for public engagement.

Finally, this response asks for clarification on key elements of this initiative. For example, if a large number of human burials or other human skeletal remains are uncovered, what will be the protocols to manage these discoveries? Why are surveying techniques such as coring, shovel test pits, or geophysical methods not being considered as strategies to proactively identify intact site deposits after modern fill have been removed? And finally, we ask that details be provided for all aspects of the project requiring federal permitting and utilizing federal funds.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Mayor's archaeology initiative and consider it an important display of seeking public engagement. We believe that archaeology is a tool for identifying, studying, and preserving Richmond's cultural and historical resources whether or not there are public debates about development activities.

Thank you,  
Dr. Kim Allen, Dr. Terry Brock, and Ellen Chapman  
Steering Committee, RVArchaeology