

CUBC

COMMISSION RESEARCH & PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION BRIEFING

MAY 19, 2026
PROJECT DIRECTOR AND RESEARCH TEAM BRIEFING



Purpose of Today's Briefing



Current project posture



Project design vs. research design



Stages of work completed



Research validation framework & Institutions of focus



Next steps: RVA/VCU listening sessions & Interviews



Commissioner guidance + Q&A



COMMISSION MANDATE / PROJECT OVERVIEW

01 Historical Research

Institutional expansion and Black displacement

02 Evidence Review

Archival, legal, spatial, and community-based evidence

03 Public Engagement

Affected communities and stakeholders

04 Reporting

Commission updates and final report



PROJECT DESIGN VS RESEARCH DESIGN



Project Design

- Staffing + contracts
- Work plans + timelines
- DLS coordination
- Meeting structure
- Document control
- Public engagement planning
- Reporting systems

Research Design

- Institutional intake
- Archival research
- Property/legal records
- GIS/spatial analysis
- Oral history + testimony
- Evidence logs
- Validation standards



STAGES OF THE PROJECT

✔ Stage 1

Project Formation & Governance

✔ Stage 2

Research Intake & Framework Development

✔ Stage 3

Validation & Analysis

✔ Stage 4

Public Engagement & Listening

✔ Stage 5

Synthesis & Reporting & Listening



OUR WORK:

- 01** Identifies historically Black communities impacted by institutional expansion while reconstructing their demographic, cultural, economic, and spatial histories over time.
- 02** Documents timelines of land acquisition and displacement while analyzing the methods used by institutions, including eminent domain, urban renewal, condemnation laws, demolition policies, and other coercive practices.
- 03** Examines the long-term impacts of displacement on housing, business ownership, generational wealth, families, descendants, and cultural assets while compiling community concerns and lived experiences related to institutional expansion.



PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

OUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

- **Newspapers, photographs, letters, and telegrams.**
- **Genealogical resources: censuses, social security records, death certificates, etc.**
- **Oral Histories and community interviews.**
- **Real Estate, property assessments, and GIS surveys.**
- **Secondary media (national and local media outlets, school newspapers, documentaries, etc.)**
- **Engagement with local government officials and urban planning authorities.**

Current Institutions of Focus

University of Virginia

- Founded in 1819.
- Began its land acquisitions in the early 20th century by expanding into a historically Black neighborhood called Canada.
- Affected the Canada, McKee Row, Vinegar Hill, Gospel Hill, and Fifeville neighborhoods; all historically Black neighborhoods founded between c. 1836 and 1969.
- Relied on eminent domain, urban renewal/developer pressure, private land purchases, and demolitions.
- Land loss promoted gentrification, displaced Black renters and homeowners, closed businesses, destroyed economic independence, and curtailed the accessibility of affordable housing.

Longwood University

- Founded in 1839 as the Farmville Female Seminary.
- Most land acquisitions occurred between 1911 and 1991, and affected a geographic area of Farmville called the “Triangle.”
- Affected Race, Pine, Franklin, Madison Street, Chambers, Ely, Redford, Vine, and South Streets.
- Relied on eminent domain and condemnation law.
- Land loss, worsened during Massive Resistance, caused Displacement, pushed Black residents out of Farmville and Virginia, more broadly.
- Surviving residents and descendants still mourn the loss of their cultural and community resources.

Current Institutions of Focus

Christopher Newport University

- Founded in 1961 as Christopher Newport Junior College.
- Most land acquisitions took place in the “Shoe Lane Area” between 1961 and 1963, and again between 1987 and 1995.
- The Shoe Lane Area is made up of Shoe Lane, Moore Lanes, Warwick Boulevard, and Prince Drew Road.
- Relied on eminent domain and sales through the CNU Real Estate Foundation and CNU Education Foundation.
- Land loss potentially affected more than three dozen families and left the Shoe Lane area irreparably fractured geographically, economically, racially, and culturally.

Virginia Commonwealth University

- Founded in 1838.
- Land loss took off after desegregation began in the 1960s.
- Land and property acquisitions have affected the Carver neighborhood (formerly Sheep Hill), Navy Hill (absorbed by MCV Campus), French Hill (French Garden Hill), Freetown, Newtown-West, Jackson Ward, West Broad Street (Monroe Park Campus), and West Grace Street (Monroe Park Campus).
- Relied on sales facilitated by alumni, the VCU Real Estate Foundation, and potentially eminent domain during the mid to late 20th century.
- Currently relies on acquisitions and dispositions facilitated by VCU’s Capital Assets and Real Estate (CARE) team, including the VCU Real Estate Foundation.



How are we identifying displaced community members?

- Genealogy
- Real Estate Property Assessments
- Contemporaneous Newspapers
- Engaging affected neighborhoods
- Engaging civic associations and local community organizations representing neighborhoods.



Next Steps - RVA/VCU Why Host a Community Listening Session in Richmond?

- Richmond's affected Black community is well-engaged on the issue of displacement.
- We have engaged current and former neighborhood residents, civic associations, local Black community organizations, churches, and VCU staff members, including VCU's Office of Community Engagement and Division of Government Relations.
- The Cultural Heritage Stewardship Plan (CHSP) and Zoning Code Refresh have galvanized the public to turn its attention towards addressing issues of unchecked development activities, institutional expansion, and gentrification in historically Black neighborhoods in Richmond.





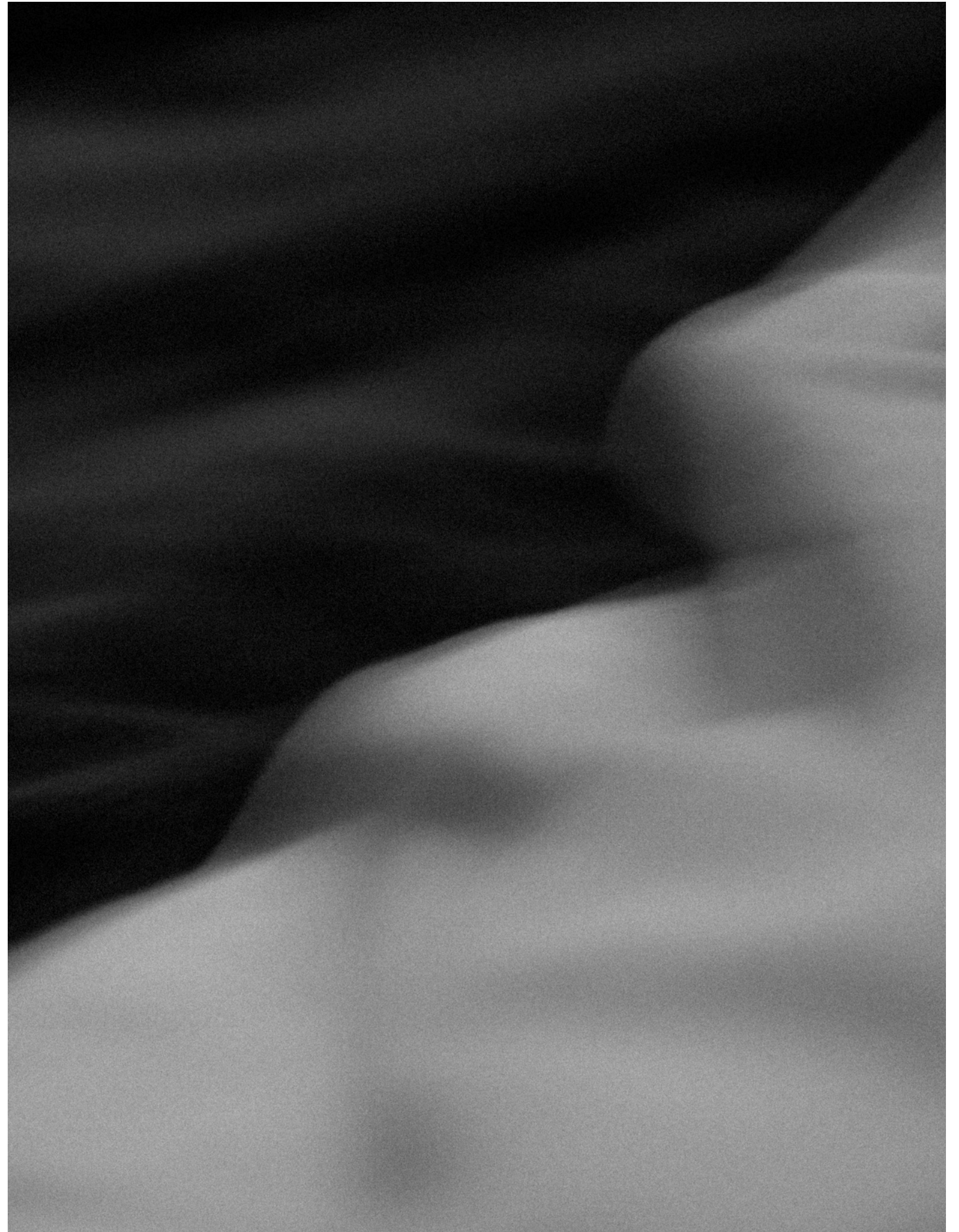
Our Neighborhoods and Areas of Focus in Richmond

- Carver (formerly Sheep Hill)
- Navy Hill
- French Hill (also known as French Garden Hill)
- Freetown
- Newtown-West
- Jackson Ward
- West Broad Street, Monroe Park Campus
- Grace Street, Monroe Park Campus

Why Focus on These Areas?

“There was much pride in the neighborhood. We were very self-sufficient. Everyone knew each other. Neighbors looked out for one another. It was one big family.” – Barbara Abernathy

- Each neighborhood represents a thriving, close-knit African American community that experienced land and property loss caused by a college or university.
- Each community profiled was self-sufficient. They established their schools, churches, businesses, and social clubs.
- These neighborhoods and communities were close-knit.





Who We Have Engaged In Richmond

- Residents of Carver
- Residents of Jackson Ward
- Members of the Carver Neighborhood Improvement Association
- Members of the Church Hill Civic Association
- Members of the Historic Jackson Ward Association
- Members of the Moore Street School Foundation
- Members of Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church
- Members of the Black Historic Preservation Alliance of Richmond Virginia (BHPA-RVA)
- Virginia Commonwealth University, Office of Community Engagement
- Virginia Commonwealth University, Division of Government Relations

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY —



01 Purpose

Build public awareness, transparency, and community engagement around the Commission's work.

02 Focus Areas

- Community stories & history
- Research updates
- Event promotion
- Public engagement
- Consistent branding



03 Platforms

Instagram • Facebook • LinkdIN



Home

About Us

Meetings &
Docs

Research
Resources



WEBSITE VISION

01. Purpose

Create a public hub for Commission information, research, and engagement.

02. Website Sections

- Home
- About
- Meetings & Documents
- Events & Listening Sessions
- Research Resources
- Media & Press
- Community Engagement

03. Goals

Transparency • Education • Accessibility •
Historical Preservation



Commission to Study
the Uprooting of
Black Communities



**COMMISSIONER
GUIDANCE + Q&A**