

A VISION PLAN FOR SHOCKOE BOTTOM

Richmond History

In the three decades before the ending of slavery in 1865, some 300,000 to 350,000 people of African descent were sold out of Virginia to the cotton, sugar cane and rice plantations of the Deep South. Richmond's Shockoe Bottom district increasingly became the center of this trade and the second-largest slave-trading market north of New Orleans. Brought to the district by owners and professional slave traders, men, women and children were housed in jails and pens scattered throughout the district, sold in auction houses concentrated along and just west of 15th Street and transported South by railroad, walked along the Trail of Enslaved Africans to ships waiting at Manchester Docks on the James River or, fastened together in lines called coffles, simply forced to walk the long distances to their new places of enslavement.

The most important sites discovered – to date – in this district are the Manchester Docks, Trail of Enslaved Africans (Slave Trail), Lumpkin's Jail at 15th and East Grace streets, the African Burial Ground above East Broad Street and Omohundro Jail at 17th and East Broad. However, the whole area from the James River north to Marshall Street and from several blocks west of today's Interstate 95 to about 20th Street to the east was one integrated trading district in which the many businesses servicing the trade were concentrated.

Shockoe Bottom has twice been listed on the **National Register of Historic Places**. In 1981, the Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row Historic District was established to attract investment and spur renovation of the area's historic buildings. In 2008, Shockoe Bottom's significance in the slave trade and U.S. history brought a second designation. Further, Shockoe Bottom meets five out of the 10 criteria for a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. If pursued, there is no doubt this international honor would be imparted to this historic district.

Only by memorializing a significant section of this area can the true scope of the slave-trading enterprise be understood, thereby enhancing its value as a historic site and a destination for historic tourism, especially but not exclusively relating to the African-American community.

The majority of Black Americans today could trace some ancestry to Shockoe Bottom, potentially making it one of the most compelling tourism destination sites in the entire country. African-American tourism is one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry, a trend reflected in the fact that there are now more than 150 Black Heritage museums operating in 37 states. Virtually every other city once associated with slavery and the slave trade has developed a museum dedicated to that history. Charleston, S.C., which already has one museum exploring this past, is now raising \$75 million for a new International African American Museum, scheduled to open in 2017, with the goal "to re-center South Carolina's place in global history, illuminating its pivotal role in the development of the international slave trade and the Civil War." Only Richmond, which arguably has the greatest claim to this history, has neglected its past.

See Addendum: The Growing Market in African-American Tourism.

The Mayor's Development Plan

The **Revitalization of Richmond Plan (RRP)** proposed by Mayor Dwight Jones is based primarily on the commercial development of North Boulevard, with secondary development in Shockoe Bottom, anchored by a new baseball stadium. The stadium part of this plan would receive substantial public funding. There would also be some recognition of the area's slavery-related history, but this would be funded largely by private, as yet unidentified donations.

The Vision Plan

The Vision Plan represents another alternative, one with the potential to raise as much as the mayor's alternative plan, plus more revenue from increased tourism, while allowing the City to avoid the embarrassment of desecrating a site increasingly recognized as completely inappropriate for a ballpark.

The Vision Plan has three elements:

1. Keep baseball on the Boulevard, with a new stadium or renovated Diamond, and the same new commercial development there described in the mayor's alternative plan;
2. Allow commercial development in Shockoe Bottom as described in the Mayor's plan, but without a stadium.
3. Reclaim a section of Shockoe Bottom as a **Sacred Ground Memorial District** – a memorial park – large enough to convey a sense of the enormity of the slave trade practiced there but still allowing development of surrounding areas. The exact name of this district would be selected after a thorough community conversation.

As with the RRP, the Sacred Ground Memorial District would include the Lumpkin's Jail site and Winfree Cottage, the African Burial Ground, the Execution of Gabriel state historical marker and a section of the Trail of Enslaved Africans, which passes the Reconciliation Statue.

The Vision Plan adds two square blocks bounded by Broad Street to the north, 17th Street to the east, Franklin Street to the south and the CRX railroad tracks to the west. This excludes the Exxon gas station and all existing businesses between Grace and Franklin streets. (*See accompanying map.*)

The District itself would form a coherent whole, symbolizing the fact that at one time Shockoe Bottom was an integrated commercial district serving the slave trade, while at the same time providing vital public park/green space for this highly dense urban area.

One new element in this plan is a linear water feature: the **Shockoe Creek Canal Extension**. This waterway would run along the east side of the present-day CSX railroad tracks. In addition to being an attractive new feature to the Bottom and illustrating the historic connection between Shockoe Creek, the Kanawha-Haxall canals and the James River, this feature would satisfy the EPA and Chesapeake Bay Act mandate to separate storm water and sewer management.

The physical development of the Sacred Ground District could proceed in stages, as follows:

- Purchase the unused, privately owned parcels of land within the area bounded by Broad Street to the north, 17th Street to the east, Franklin Street to the south and the CRX railroad tracks to the west.
- Set up a professional-looking website to explain the history of the area and promote it as a tourism destination.
- Remove the city parking lots and sod the District, as was done with the African Burial Ground.
- Landscape the District with trees and shrubbery.
- Unite the District east and west of the railroad tracks with symbolic fencing that includes 350,000 silhouettes, representing the number of people sold from Virginia in the three decades before the end of slavery in 1865.
- Extend the Trail of Enslaved Africans to provide a walking path through the District.
- Erect signage along the path explaining the various sites in the District as well as the history and significance of the area as a whole, including that of American Indians, Quakers, Masons, the Jewish community and the founding of Richmond.
- Develop an online walking tour that can be accessed by smart phones and other personal devices.
- Develop a printed brochure that describes the district and its history.

At this point there would be a historic district that can attract tourism, producing tax revenue for the city.

The further development of the district could proceed as follows:

- Commemorative sculpture in the African Burial Ground.
- A visitor's center, with books, magazines, artwork and other related items for sale.
- Development of the site of Lumpkin's Jail as an educational center.

A Sacred Ground Museum

And finally there would be a museum dedicated to telling the story of the people who were forced to pass through Shockoe Bottom.

- This museum could be constructed on the reclaimed land between the railroad tracks and 17th Street and Broad and Franklin streets. While concentrating on the Virginia slave trade, there would also be exhibits on the history of the area's indigenous people, as well as early Jewish, Quaker, Masonic and municipal history.
- The museum would also cover the origins of enslaved people in Africa itself, so that visitors can understand that Black History did not begin or end with slavery. Emphasis could be on the Malian Empire of West Africa, where many Black Americans have their roots. The history of that empire is taught in Virginia public schools under the SOL program. Further, Richmond has a Sister City and close cultural relationship with the Malian city of Segou.
- To tell the full story of Shockoe Bottom, the museum would have exhibits on examples of Richmond-area resistance, such as the 1800 Gabriel's Rebellion; the 1841 Creole Mutiny; the 1849 self-emancipation of Henry "Box" Brown; and the ending of slavery in Richmond on April 3, 1865, when thousands of Union troops, led by Black soldiers, marched into the city, liberated Lumpkin's Jail and held a rally on Broad Street – right on the northern edge of the Sacred Ground District.
- More modest exhibits covering other aspects of the African-American experience could refer visitors to the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia, American Civil War Museum at Historic Tredegar/Museum of the Confederacy; the Maggie Walker House; and other museums that address these areas.

- The museum could include a genealogy center, with printed and online resources and DNA testing that would enable visitors to actually trace their own ancestry on the very site where the majority of African-Americans today could trace some ancestry. This type of research will be a focus area of the 2014 Future of Richmond's Past Civil War Day.
- The visitors' center and bookstore would be moved to this new site.
- A performing arts space could attract songwriters, musicians, poets, artists, dancers and others who have developed work related to Black History.

In terms of a timeline, April 3, 2015, should be seen as the date by which substantial work is completed on the District so it can host the city's activities marking the 150th Anniversary of the end of Confederate rule in Richmond and the day when more than 100 years of slavery in the city was ended. Up until the advent of the Jim Crow era in the early 20th century, this date was celebrated in Richmond as Emancipation Day and marked by mass parades and rallies.

Note: If the RRP plan is accepted, the new stadium would be under construction at the very time that these memorial activities are taking place, which would be an international embarrassment for Richmond.

Financing

The Vision Plan basically replaces the RRP's Shockoe stadium with a memorial park, while keeping all other elements of the mayor's alternative plan. This would allow the anticipated collection of the new tax revenue the mayor has described, while adding new tax revenue realized by greatly enhancing Richmond as a tourist destination.

In addition, Mayor Jones has proposed that the City of Richmond contribute \$5 million toward memorializing the slave-trading history of Shockoe Bottom, while Gov. McDonnell has proposed that the state contribute \$11 million.

Further, a percentage of the new tax revenues resulting from Shockoe Bottom development could be dedicated to the gradual development of the District. This would be a Tax Increment Funding, or TIF revenue stream, as described in the mayor's plan. As the commercial development grows, the District grows.

Infrastructure

While eliminating the incongruent ballpark, the Vision Plan allows all the other development elements of the Mayor's plan for Shockoe Bottom, including:

- Redevelopment of the 17th Street Farmer's Market, with a public plaza
- Development of the Main Street Station as a transportation hub
- Hotel
- Supermarket
- Office space
- Parking deck
- 750 new residential units

Further,

- The scale of new development respects the existing architectural pattern in this historic neighborhood.
- The new development would include caveats for affordable housing and local business development to insure equal access to the economic benefits of the development.
- The need for and expense of a separate on/off ramp from I-95 are eliminated.
- The need for and expense of removing/relocating the Exxon station are eliminated.
- The new Shockoe Creek Canal Extension satisfies the EPA and Chesapeake Bay Act mandate to separate storm water and sewer management, while providing vital public park/green space for this highly dense urban area.
- The Vision Plan does not destroy the existing street grid.
- Improvements in existing infrastructure would be made in conjunction with new development construction.
- Like other plans under discussion, the Vision Plan is at the same time specific in its delineation and features but also notional. That is to say, in its parkland, museum, sculpture and other features, it attempts to clearly portray a vision but anticipates changes in the course of wider community consultation.

Planning

A newly established Design Overlay District will encompass the Vision Plan area.

Benefits for the community

- Increased tax base
- Jobs – landscaping, construction, tour guides, docents, park maintenance, tourism amenities, in addition to the hotel, supermarket and other jobs mentioned in the RRP.
- Finally coming to terms with Richmond's critical role in the internal slave trade.

Addendum: The Growing Market in African-American Tourism

African Americans spend an average of \$40 billion dollars annually on travel.

<http://www.adventuretravelnews.com/mind-the-gap-exploring-the-african-american-adventure-travel-market>

Travel and Tourism

By Salome Kilkenny

Posted in: Industry Focus, Magazine Edition - May 2011

<http://www.tnj.com/departments/industry-focus/travel-and-tourism-1>

“African-Americans constitute one of the country’s top three fastest-growing markets in all segments of the travel and tourism industry, including sports tourism, meetings, adventure travel, heritage and cultural tourism, religious retreats, romantic getaways, eco-tourism, wellness vacations and international travel, according to Black Meetings & Tourism. With a buying power estimated to reach \$1.1 trillion by 2014, African-Americans account for 45 percent of the \$90 billion in total revenues generated by multicultural travel, Black Meetings and Tourism says.

“Travel planners catering to African-Americans cite growing numbers. Of attendees surveyed at the 2010 African American Travel Conference in Niagara Falls, N.Y., 89 percent said they were finding new travelers in their community and 62 percent said the average number of passengers per tour is 36 and up. Based in Salem, Ohio, African American Travel Conference comprises more than 2,000 travel planners serving the African-American community. The survey findings were published in the organization’s 2010 African American Travel Industry Report.”

Affluent African American Travel Up 30 Percent: New Diversity Affluence Study Reveals

New York, New York (PRWEB) September 03, 2012

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2012/9/prweb9860540.htm>

“Diversity Affluence, a diversity research, marketing communications and business development consultancy that uniquely helps brands and businesses understand and market to affluent ethnic consumers, has released a new research report indicating **travel among Affluent African Americans has increased by 30 percent in the past three years.** The study also shows approximately 60 percent of the target group takes at least five overnight business trips and two-thirds of those traveling spend a minimum of \$2,000. **The findings come at a time when the overall travel and tourism industry is experiencing downturns due to the current economy.**

“The significance of the findings is not just in the surprising fact of an increase in travel among the Affluent African American market, but also how these trends impact industries outside of traditional travel and tourism,” says Andrea Hoffman, founder and CEO of Diversity Affluence. **“Restaurants, advertising companies, insurance companies, chambers of commerce, and arts organizations are only a few of the ancillary industries that also benefit from the increased travel among Affluent African Americans.”**

Facts on African-American Tourism: “Black Meetings and Tourism”

<http://www.visitcalifornia.com/media/uploads/files/editor/Gloria%20Herbert%20-%20Tapping%20into%20Burgeoning%20African%20American%20Travel%20Market.pdf>

African American Museums

The first African-American museum was the College Museum in Hampton, Virginia, established in 1868. [1] Prior to 1950, there were about 30 museums devoted primarily to African-American culture and history in the United States. These were located primarily at historically black colleges and universities or at libraries that had significant African-American culture and history collections. [2] Throughout the 1960s, the energy of the American Civil Rights Movement led to numerous local African-American museums being founded. [3] By 1991, there were about 150 African-American museums in 37 states. [1] As of 2010 the largest African-American museum in the United States was the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, Michigan. It will be exceeded in size by the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of African American History and Culture when completed in 2015. [4]

- [1] Dickerson, Amina J. "African American Museums and the New Century: Challenges in Leadership." In *Leadership for the Future: Changing Directorial Roles in American History Museums and Historical Societies: Collected Essays*. Bryant Franklin Tolles and Edward P. Alexander, ed. Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1991, p. 169.
- [2] Coleman, Christy. "African American Museums in the Twenty-first Century," In *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century*. Hugh H. Genoways, ed. Lanham, Md.: Altamira Press, 2006, p. 151.
- [3] Coleman, p. 152.
- [4] Dagbovie, Pero Gaglo. *African American History Reconsidered*. Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2010, p. 75.

Virginia African-American Museums (Partial listing)

African-American Museum of Fauquier County – Plains
Alexandria Black History Museum – Alexandria
American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar – Richmond
Anne Spencer House – Lynchburg
Armstead Tasker Johnson High School Museum – Montross
Black History Museum and Cultural Center of Virginia – Richmond
Black Heritage Museum of Arlington – Arlington
Blacksburg Museum – Blacksburg (planned)
L.E. Coleman African-American Museum – Halifax County
Freedom House Museum – Alexandria
Hampton University Museum – Hampton
Harrison Museum of African American Culture – Roanoke
Legacy Museum of African American History – Lynchburg
Robert Russa Moton Museum – Farmville
Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site – Richmond
Booker T. Washington National Monument – Franklin County
Waynesboro African-American Museum – Waynesboro

More information

Association of African American Museums

P.O. Box 23698

Washington, DC 20026

<http://www.blackmuseums.org/>

Annual Conference – Birmingham, AL – Aug. 6-9, 2014 – Hosted by the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

International African American Museum

Charleston, SC

Expected to open in 2017

"IAAM is a new museum of African American history and identity. It will communicate the largely overlooked history of African Americans in the Lowcountry, South Carolina, and explain how this population impacted the nation. IAAM aims to re-center South Carolina's place in global history, illuminating its pivotal role in the development of the international slave trade and the Civil War."

New Orleans African American Museum

<http://www.noaam.org/>