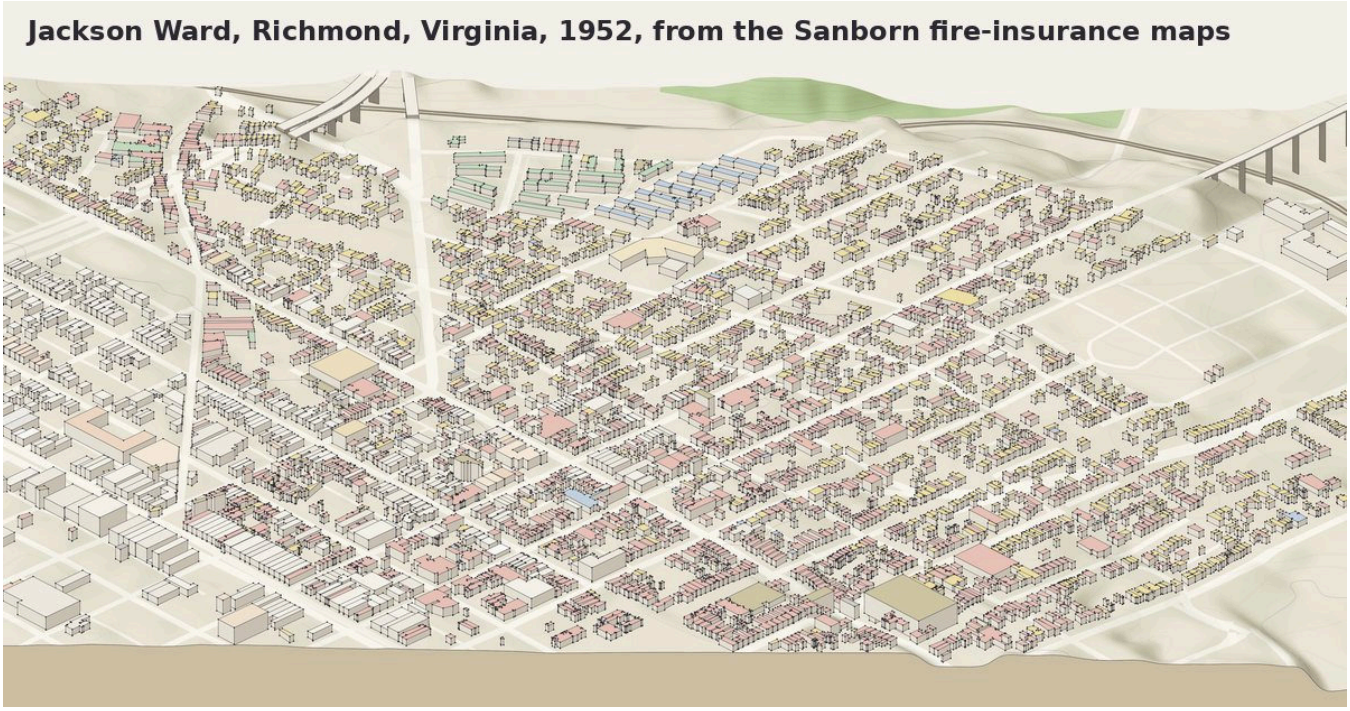
Jackson Ward, Richmond, VA, before I-95, block by block

Jackson Ward in Richmond, Virginia, drawn building by building from the Sanborn fire-insurance maps of 1925 and 1952, on an estimate of the ground before the highway, with the same blocks about a year after the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike opened and today.



Chris Busse

Large-screen edition, November 22, 2026

The current version, with any later corrections, is at busse.github.io/isoscape/p/jackson-ward.html

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> **About this page.** Chris Busse, a Richmond artist, made this page with Claude. It is drawn from the Sanborn fire-insurance maps of 1925 and 1952 at the Library of Congress, OpenStreetMap, City of Richmond assessor records and U.S. Geological Survey elevation data. Its facts were checked against the sources listed below in November 2026. Corrections are welcome through the contact page, and changes will be dated here.

Between 1955 and 1958 the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike Authority, which the General Assembly created in 1954, built its toll road through Jackson Ward, then the center of Black business, church and civic life in Richmond [Acts of Assembly 1954; Community Plan 2026, timeline]. The road now carries I-95 and, through the ward, I-64 as well [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.3]. It runs in a trench up to about 8 m deep. The last Sanborn edition before the road, the 1925 survey as corrected and reissued in 1952, shows the blocks the trench went through building by building, and the 1925 edition shows them a generation earlier. Chris Busse has drawn those blocks with isoscape, the drawing tool he built with Claude, on an estimate of the ground as it stood before the trench, so the same frame can be seen about 1925, in 1952, about a year after the road opened, and today. The page goes in order of time and ends with how we know what each picture shows, how sure it is, and where it may be wrong.

This page draws buildings and ground from maps. It does not show people, and it cannot say who lived in a house or what the ward meant to them. That is for the ward's families, churches and institutions to tell; Who keeps the ward's history points to some of them.

Where this is, and how to read the pictures

The Sanborn Map Company drew American towns for fire insurers, building by building, on large numbered sheets bound in volumes. Colors on the sheets give each building's material (brick in pink, wood frame in yellow), letters and numbers give its use and stories,

and between editions the company pasted correction slips over the sheets to keep them current [LoC, Sanborn collection].

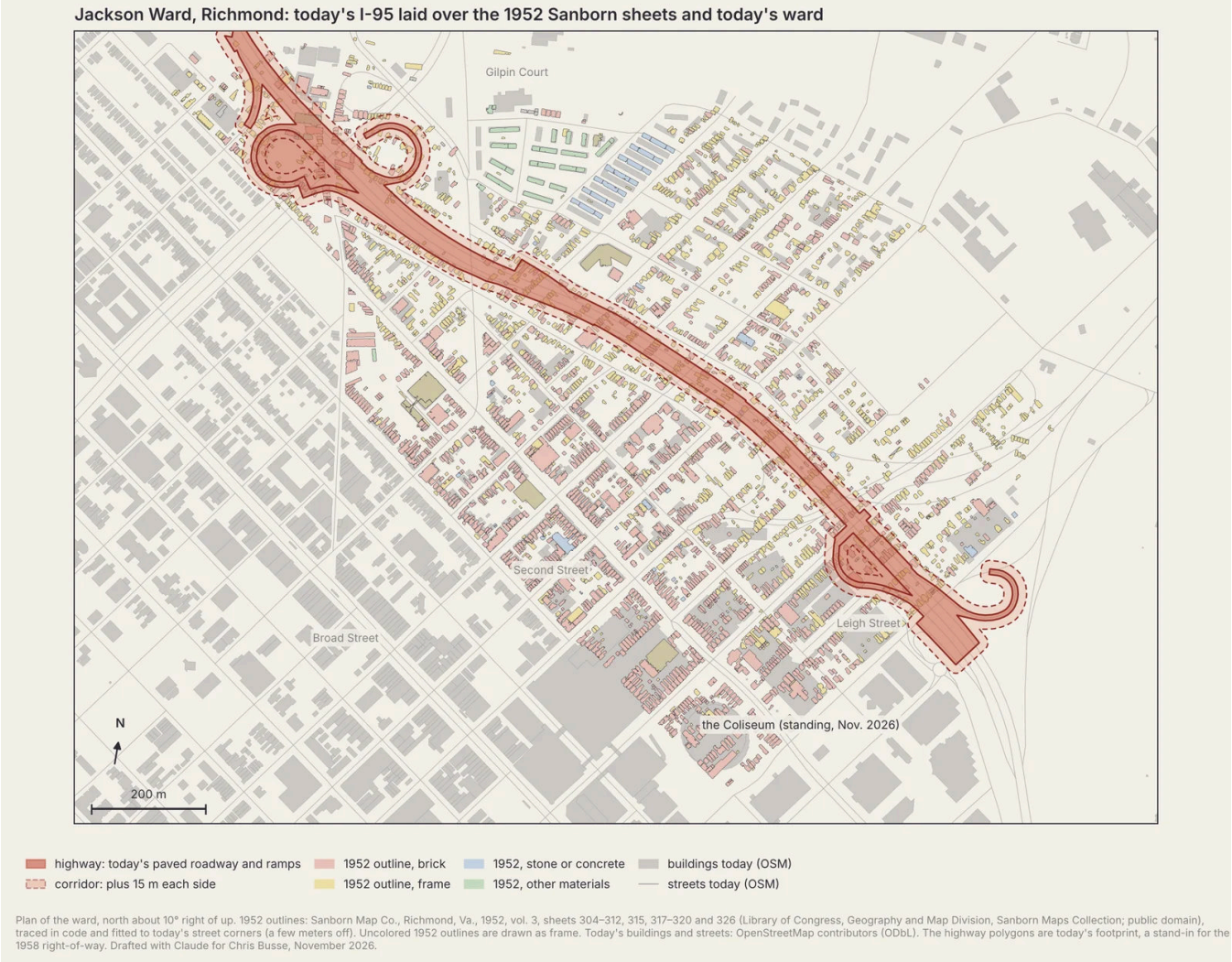


Fig. 1. A plan of the ward, north near the top: where I-95 runs today (red) over the buildings on the 1952 Sanborn sheets in their printed colors, over today's streets and buildings (gray). The round Coliseum is at lower right. *How this was made:* drawn in code from the same files as the maps: the 1952 outlines, today's OpenStreetMap buildings and streets, and the count's two polygons (see How many buildings stood in the highway's path). Today's buildings show where blocks were rebuilt after the road.

The large pictures below are drawn from the south, looking north, as if from a low airplane. In them the highway runs from upper left to lower right. Broad Street is the near edge, Belvidere Street the left edge, and the railroad and Gilpin Court lie along the far edge. Second Street, the ward's main street, runs up from the near edge a little right of center.

Jackson Ward, as the city's 2022 feasibility study describes it, takes in two other communities, Navy Hill and Apostle Town [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.2]. Navy Hill lay roughly north of Leigh Street between 3rd and 10th Streets and had become a majority-Black neighborhood in the early twentieth century, Harry Kollatz Jr. writes [Kollatz 2019]; the eastern part of the frame, and of the highway's path, runs through it. Apostle Town, on the ward's north edge, was cleared in 1941 for the Gilpin Court public housing (see Gilpin Court).

Jackson Ward in 1925, from the Sanborn survey of that year

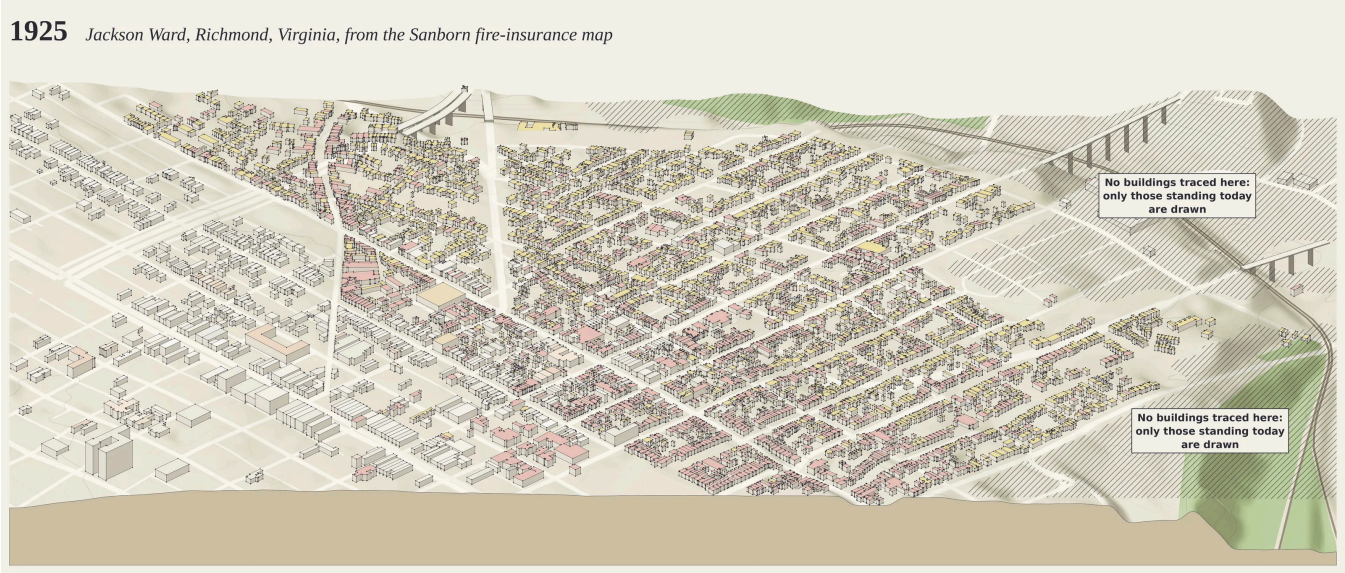


Fig. 2. Jackson Ward about 1925, seen from the south, from Belvidere Street to 7th Street and from Broad Street to the railroad. Frame houses are yellow, brick pink. Hatched blocks at upper right are where no building was traced; only buildings standing today are drawn there. *How this was made:* traced from the 1925 Sanborn sheets, with buildings standing today that the city dates to 1925 or before. The ground inside today's trench is the same estimate as in 1952. See Tracing the Sanborn sheets.

The 1925 volume's sheets carry marks dated early 1925, most of them March. Its title page bears the Library of Congress's receipt stamp of May 16, 1925, and the table on its key map where later corrections would be listed is blank. So it shows the ward as first surveyed for that edition [LoC, Sanborn 1925 vol. 3]. On these sheets most buildings north of Leigh Street are frame. Tracing the sheets in

code found 3,907 outlines, 2,317 of them colored as frame [1925 notes].

Jackson Ward was made a city ward in 1871, drawn to take in a majority of Richmond's Black population [Community Plan 2026]. The city's 2022 study says the ward system concentrated Black voting power in one of the city's six wards [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.2]; the community plan's timeline says the lines were drawn to dilute Black voting power [Community Plan 2026, timeline]. It was a political ward until 1905 [Wikipedia, Jackson Ward, citing the National Register nomination].

Its institutions were old by 1925. Among them were Ebenezer Baptist Church; Sixth Mount Zion, organized by John Jasper in 1867 and in the ward from 1869; John Mitchell Jr.'s *Richmond Planet* (1884); the True Reformers' savings bank (1888, the first Black-owned bank chartered in the United States); the Mechanics' Bank, which Mitchell chartered in 1902; and Maggie L. Walker's St. Luke Penny Savings Bank (1903) [Community Plan 2026; Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4]. The Hippodrome on Second Street opened about 1914, the National Park Service says [NPS, Hippodrome].

Sources differ on two of those dates. Ebenezer's own history dates its first steps to 1856 and its first building to 1858; the community plan gives 1858 and the feasibility study 1855 [Ebenezer Baptist Church]. For the Hippodrome, the community plan gives 1914 in its timeline and 1913 in its text, as the feasibility study does [Community Plan 2026; Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.1].

Second Street was known as Black Wall Street by 1903, the National Park Service says [NPS, Black Wall Street], and the Historic Jackson Ward Association writes that the ward was nicknamed the Harlem of the South [HJWA, History].

It was also a neighborhood hemmed in by law. In April 1911, according to Michael Q. Rogers's reading notes on Christopher Silver's history of the city, City Council passed a residential segregation ordinance drawn block by block; the notes say it did not bar Black residence

outright but began to stop Black neighborhoods from expanding [Silver 1984, via Rogers's notes].

The city's 2022 feasibility study says that on the "redlining" maps of the 1930s, maps that graded neighborhoods for mortgage lending, every Black neighborhood in Richmond was marked undesirable, and that their residents were "barred" from financing for housing and businesses [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.2]. On the Home Owners' Loan Corporation's 1937 map of Richmond, much of the ward north of Leigh Street lies in an area graded D and colored red [Mapping Inequality, Richmond 1937, area D1]. Redlining in Richmond, VA draws that map on the ground it graded.

By the 1930s more than 8,000 Black Richmonders lived and worked in the ward, the 2022 study says, citing a 1994 University of Richmond master's thesis by M. E. Taylor [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.1].

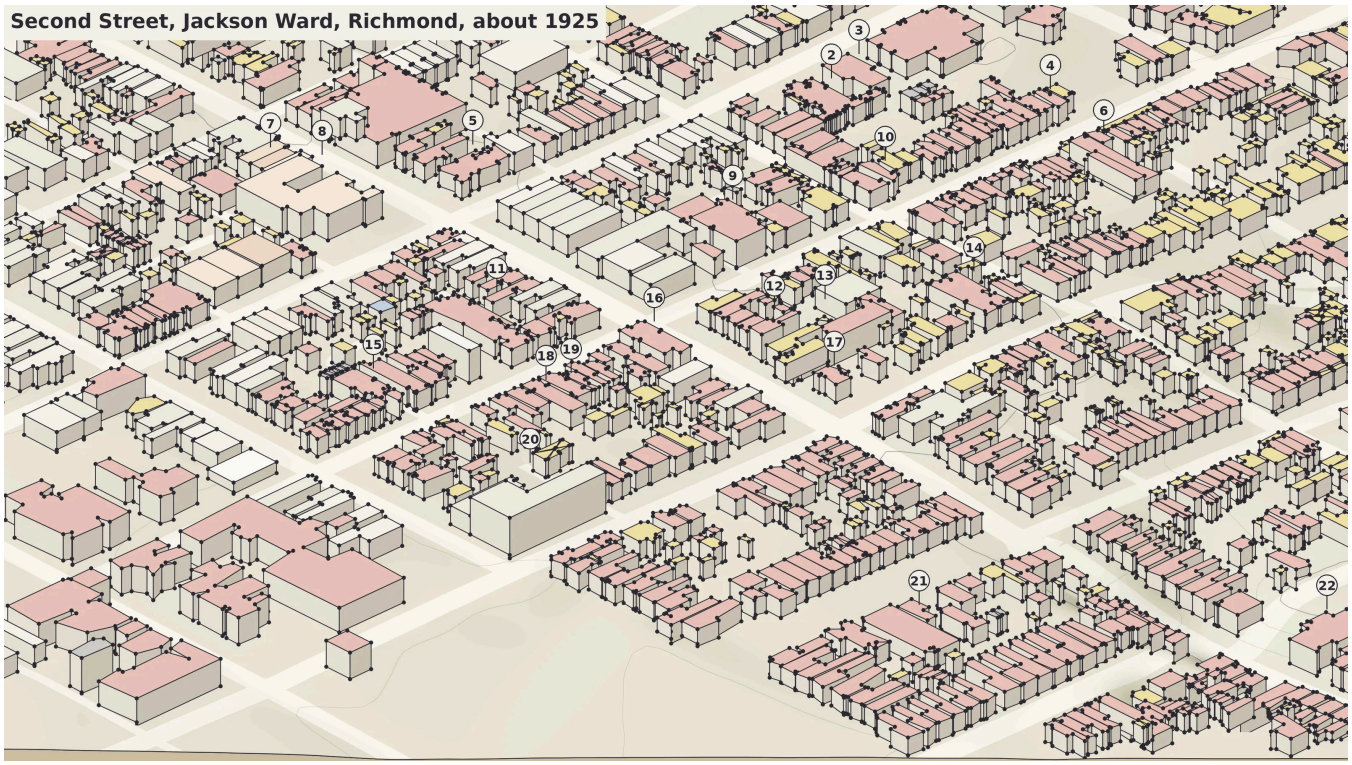


Fig. 3. Second Street about 1925, from Broad Street at the near edge to past Leigh Street. The 22 numbers are keyed in the table below. *How this was made:* a close crop of the 1925 view, numbered where the 1925 sheets print a name or use beside a building that is drawn here (tools/sanborn/jw/named1925.csv). Numbers run from the top of the picture down. South of Clay Street the buildings come from the older volume 1 tracing, which names none. See Tracing the Sanborn sheets.

#	As the sheet prints it	Stories (as printed)	Sheet
1	Corby Baking Company, Plant C	3	306
2	St. Joseph's R.C. Church (Colored)	not printed	308
3	Rectory	2	308
4	Peoples Bible Institute (Colored)	not printed	307
5	Sharon Baptist Church (Colored)	not printed	306
6	Undertaker	2	307
7	Leigh St. Holiness Church (Colored)	1-1/2	306
8	Booker Washington School (Colored); fireproof part "built in 1923"	3	306
9	True Reformers Hall: Colored hall & meeting rooms 2nd & 3rd, printing 1st	3	308
10	Bank	not printed	308
11	Hippodrome Theatre (Colored)	1-2	308
12	Otira Apartments	3	308
13	Undertaking parlors 1st, meeting halls 2nd & 3rd	3	308
14	3rd St. Bethel A.M.E. Church (Colored)	not printed	308
15	Moving Pictures (Colored); lobby	1-1/2	308
16	Miller Hotel (Colored): stores, hotel entrance, dining room	3	308
17	Y.M.C.A. (Colored)	2	308
18	Offices	not printed	308
19	Bank	not printed	308
20	Bank	3-4	308
21	Miller & Rhoads Private Garage	not printed	309
22	Leigh St. Memorial M.E. Church	not printed	309

The "Sheet" column gives the page of the Sanborn volume each name is printed on. Names are as printed; "(Colored)" is the sheet's own word.

The bank at 212–216 East Clay (20) is the building the Mechanics Savings Bank put up in 1909 and opened in 1910; the bank failed in 1922, and the Southern Aid Society bought the building in 1930 [NPS, 212 East Clay Street]. The National Park Service shows True Reformers Hall (9) as a three-story building on Second Street [NPS, Black Wall Street]. The sheet does not name the other two banks (10, 19).

1952: the last Sanborn edition before the road

1952 *Jackson Ward, Richmond, Virginia, before the Turnpike, from the Sanborn map as reissued that year*

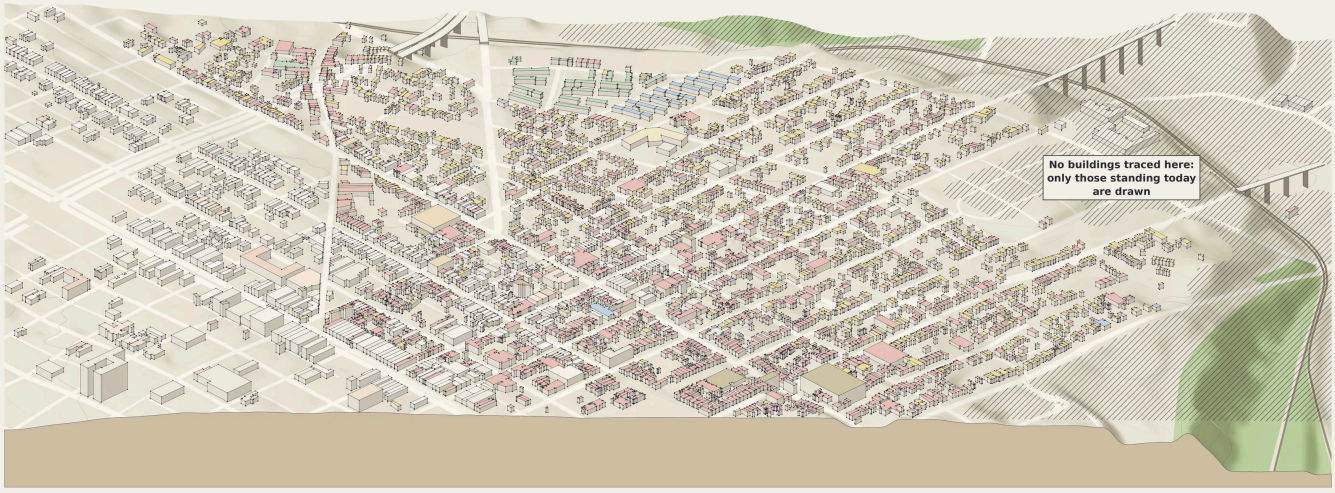
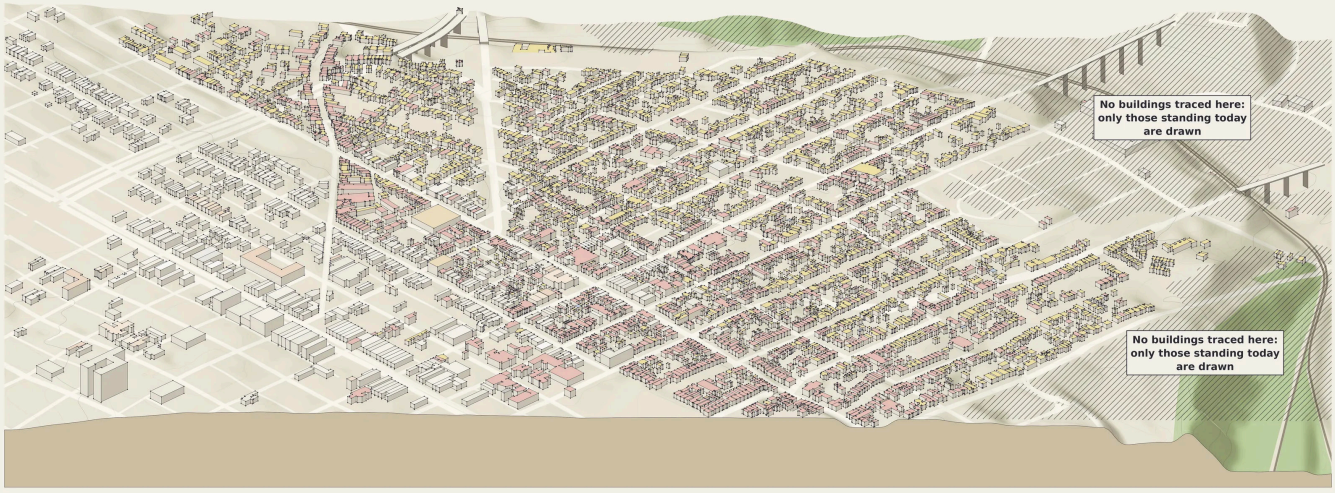


Fig. 4. Jackson Ward in 1952, the same frame. Hatched blocks at upper right, in Navy Hill and along the rail land, are where no building was traced from the sheets; only buildings standing today are drawn there, and the picture should not be read as showing those blocks empty. *How this was made:* buildings north of Leigh Street from the 1952 Sanborn volume 3, south of it from the 1924–25 and 1950–52 volume 1 tracings (Second Street from Broad to Clay traced again for this story), and buildings standing today that the city dates to 1952 or before, on ground rebuilt by estimate where the trench is now (about ±2 m in its middle). Streets that ran where the trench is now are read off the sheets. See The ground before the trench and Tracing the Sanborn sheets.

About 1925

1925 *Jackson Ward, Richmond, Virginia, from the Sanborn fire-insurance map*



1952

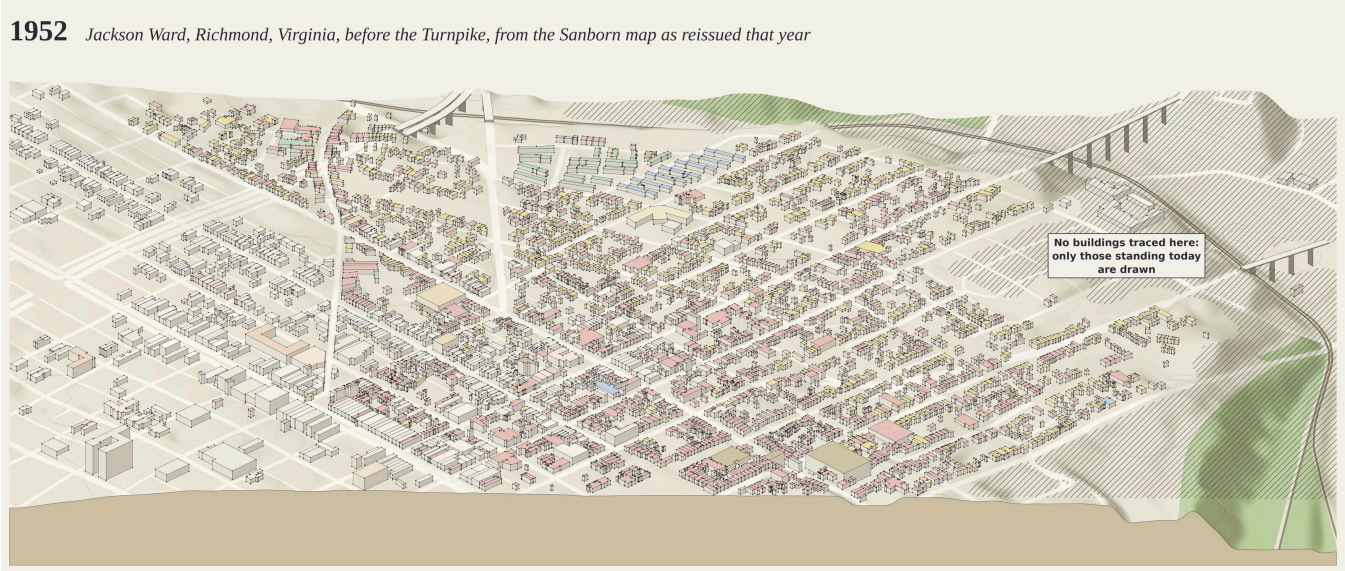


Fig. 5. The same frame about 1925 (first picture) and in 1952 (second picture). The two pictures follow, about 1925 first, then 1952. Most blocks change little; in 1952 Gilpin Court's long buildings stand where Apostle Town's frame houses were.

The 1952 volume is the 1925 volume 3 as corrected by the publisher and reissued, with "Copyright 1952" on every sheet and a new index dated September 1951 [LoC, Sanborn 1952 vol. 3; trace notes]. A union list of Sanborn holdings records a 1943 revision of the same volume between the two [Berkeley Union List]. Matched sheet by sheet, the 1925 and 1952 printings agree to about 0.1 m on the ground wherever both draw a line, so most of the 1952 drawing is the 1925 survey. The corrections draw what was built later, such as Gilpin Court and the Armstrong High School annex of 1938. An outline the publisher did not redraw may show its block as surveyed in 1925.

On the 15 sheets traced for this story there are 2,875 building outlines of 12 m² or more. Reading the sheets gave 103 names and uses printed beside them: churches, schools, lodges, theaters, a Y.M.C.A., ice plants, laundries and warehouses. The sheets print "(Colored)" beside the names of Black institutions, and this page keeps the sheet's own word where it quotes a name.

The city's 2022 study says redlining in the 1930s left Jackson Ward, Navy Hill and Apostle Town overcrowded and underfunded [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.2]. The ward was also where Black

Richmond banked, worshipped, went to school and to the movies. The 1952 sheets show the dense rows of frame houses in the north blocks and the brick churches and halls along Leigh and Second Streets.

Second Street, the ward's main street, 1925 and 1952

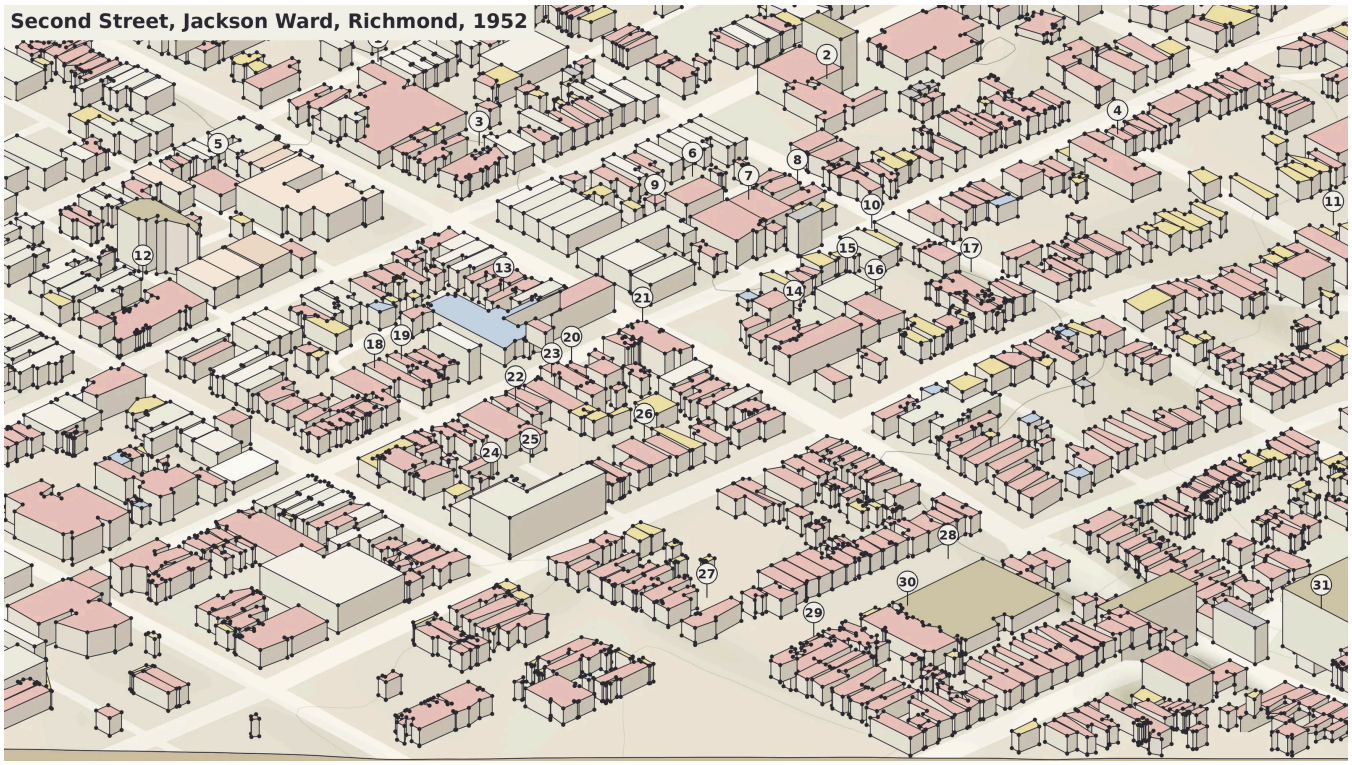


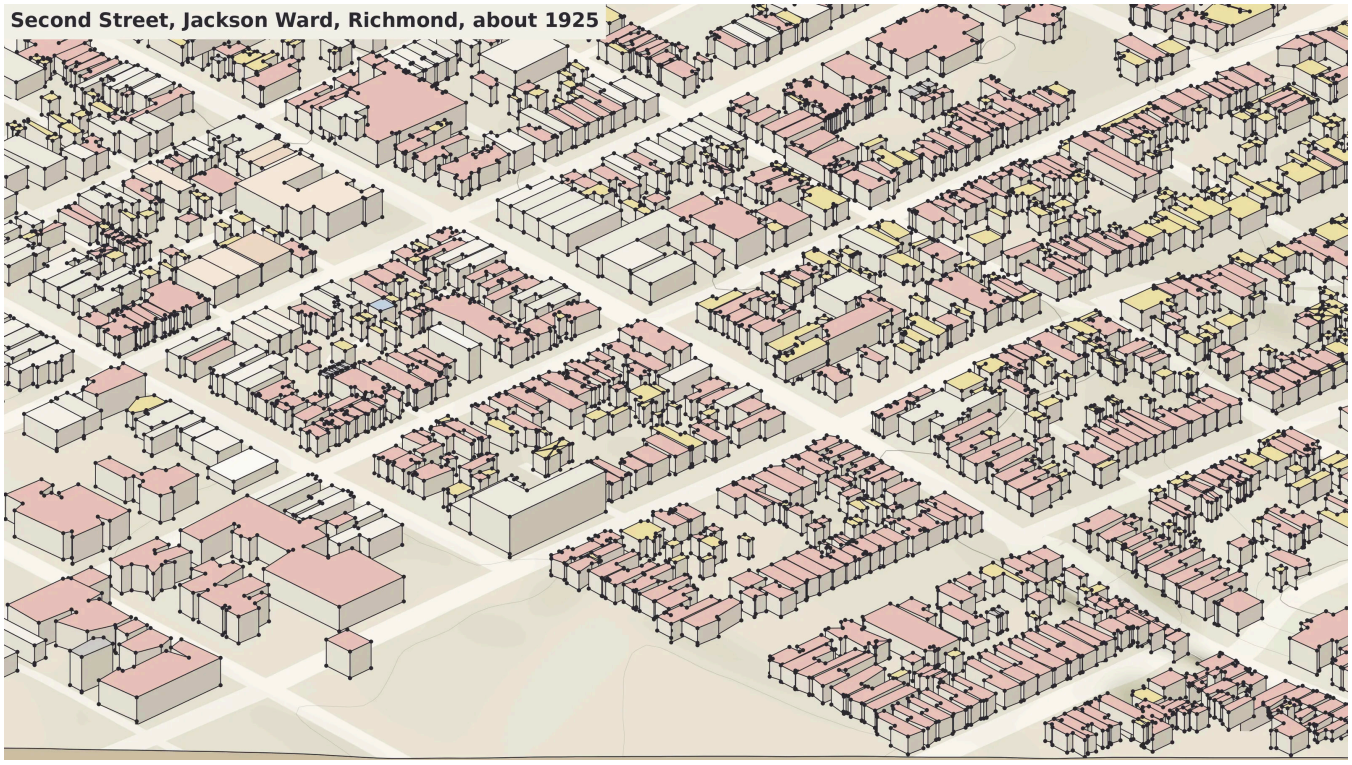
Fig. 6. Second Street in 1952, from Broad Street at the near edge to past Leigh Street. The 31 numbers are keyed in the table below. *How this was made:* a close crop of the 1952 view, numbered where the 1952 sheets print a name or use beside a building that is drawn here (`tools/sanborn/jw/named.csv`). Numbers run from the top of the picture down; a marker stands over the top of its roof. South of Clay Street the buildings come from volume 1 sheets 2 and 3, fitted again and traced for this story, which were not read for names. See Tracing the Sanborn sheets.

#	As the sheet prints it	Stories (as printed)	Sheet
1	Furniture storage warehouse; loading shed; furniture repair	not printed	306
2	St. Joseph's R.C. Church (Colored)	not printed	308
3	Sharon Baptist Church (Colored)	1-2	306
4	Undertaker	2	307
5	Auto repair	not printed	306

#	As the sheet prints it	Stories (as printed)	Sheet
6	Storage house (vacant)	4	308
7	Colored hall & meeting rooms 2nd & 3rd; club; store	3	308
8	Filling station; auto repair	not printed	308
9	Apartments	2	308
10	Store; hall 2nd	2	308
11	Restaurant; hall 2nd (Colored)	3	307
12	Stores; upholstering & repair; tire repair	not printed	306
13	Hippodrome Theatre (Colored), movies	1-2	308
14	Leigh St. Y.M.C.A. (Colored)	3	308
15	Auto & casket storage	2	308
16	Storage	not printed	308
17	Third St. Bethel A.M.E. Church (Colored)	not printed	308
18	Moving pictures (Colored); restaurant; lobby; store	1-2	308
19	Restaurant	2	308
20	Rest. (restaurant); "Fl. abv. 1st"	3	308
21	Stores; hotel entrance; dining room	3	308
22	Restaurant; store	not printed	308
23	Restaurant; hotel	2	308
24	Offices	2	308
25	Stores; office; Southern Aid Society of Va. (Colored), office building; stores; nos. 212-216 E. Clay	4	308
26	Apartments	2	308
27	Offices	2	308
28	Miller & Rhoads furniture warehouse; garage 1st, upholstering 2nd, furniture repair 3rd ("fireproof construction built 1936"; "built 1941")	not printed	309
29	Elks Home, Williams Lodge (Colored)	not printed	309
30	Miller & Rhoads furniture storage	2	309
31	Leigh St. M.E. Church	not printed	309

No. 21, at the corner of 2nd and Leigh, is the 1925 sheet's Miller Hotel. Neverett A. Eggleston Sr. leased it in 1939, bought it in 1942 and renamed it the Hotel Eggleston; it was demolished in 2009 after a partial collapse [UVA, Green Book project].

About 1925



1952

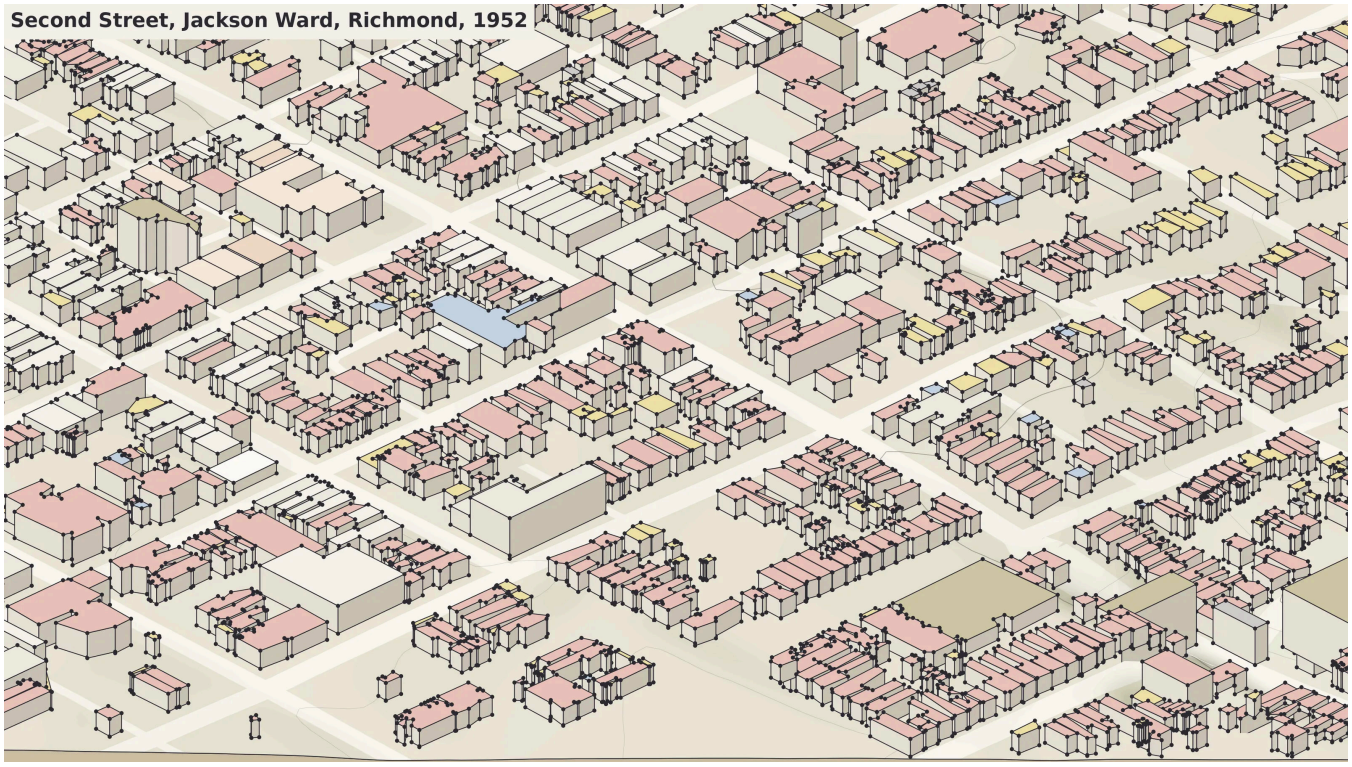


Fig. 7. Second Street about 1925 (first picture) and in 1952 (second picture), the same blocks.

Second Street, "the Deuce," was the ward's main commercial street [Community Plan 2026]. Between the two tables, the sheets show it changing in use more than in form. True Reformers Hall (1925 no. 9) is a "colored hall" with a club and a store in 1952 (no. 7). The Miller Hotel's entrance and dining room are still printed (16, then 21). The bank building at 212–216 East Clay is the Southern Aid Society's office building (20, then 25). Miller & Rhoads' private garage of 1925 has become a furniture warehouse built in 1936 and 1941 (21, then 28).

On sheet 308 of the 1952 volume, between Clay and Jackson Streets, the sheet names the Hippodrome Theatre, a second moving-picture house, the Leigh Street Y.M.C.A., Third Street Bethel A.M.E. and St. Joseph's churches, restaurants, stores, offices and a "colored hall & meeting rooms" [trace notes]. It also names the Elks' Capitol City Lodge, which is not numbered in the close view. The Hippodrome closed in 1967 [Community Plan 2026].

The label "Southern Aid Society of Va." on sheet 308 is printed under the frontage numbers 212, 214 and 216 of one 4-story office building on East Clay Street (25). The National Park Service says the Society bought the former Mechanics Savings Bank building at 212 East Clay in 1930 and added two wings when it became the Society's headquarters [NPS, 212 East Clay Street]. The building stands today, so it is drawn from today's map.

How the Turnpike came to run through Jackson Ward

THE TURNPIKE THROUGH THE WARD, 1946–58

1946

Harland Bartholomew and Associates' master plan for the city, made for the City Planning Commission, proposes expressways through it.

Encyclopedia Virginia (the plan); Style Weekly, 2013. Wikipedia, citing Campbell, names R. Stuart Royer and Associates as the firm that proposed a turnpike

June 13, 1950

Voters reject the expressway plan in a citywide referendum. Only 8 of 55 precincts vote for it.

Style Weekly, 2013; Rogers, 2011, quoting Silver

November 1951

A second referendum, forced by former mayor J. Fulmer Bright's petition, fails by almost 2 to 1. A headline of the day put the margin at 6,002 votes.

Style Weekly, 2013; Rogers, 2011 (the same writer), citing the Times-Dispatch. His notes on Silver give June 13, 1951

August 24, 1953

City Council, 6 to 1, concurs in a consultant's report on toll roads for the Richmond–Petersburg area. Silver writes that this moved the decision to the General Assembly and prevented another referendum.

Rogers, 2011, from the Council's records and quoting Silver, p. 192 (the book not seen)

April 8, 1954

The General Assembly creates the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike Authority, with the

Fig. 8, continued



Fig. 8. The Turnpike through the ward, 1946 to 1958, each date with its sources. A solid dot means the sources opened for this page agree, a ring that they disagree, and a dashed ring that the date rests on another writer's reading of a book not seen here.

Harland Bartholomew and Associates' master plan for the city, made in 1946 for the City Planning Commission [Encyclopedia Virginia,

1946 plan], proposed expressways through it, Style Weekly says [Style Weekly 2013]. Wikipedia, citing Campbell, names another consulting firm, R. Stuart Royer and Associates, as proposing a turnpike that year [Campbell 2012, p. 154, via Wikipedia]. The plan called the housing of "the dense Negro areas north of Broad Street" very bad [Encyclopedia Virginia, 1946 plan].

Richmond's voters said no to a downtown expressway twice. In the first referendum, on June 13, 1950, only 8 of 55 precincts voted for it [Style Weekly 2013]. A second, forced in 1951 by a petition of former mayor J. Fulmer Bright, failed in November by almost 2 to 1; a newspaper headline of the day put the margin at 6,002 votes [Style Weekly 2013; Rogers 2011]. The Style Weekly article and the 2011 University of Richmond thesis cited here are by the same writer, Michael Q. Rogers, whose reading notes on Silver's book date a referendum to June 13, 1951; his thesis puts that date in 1950.

On August 24, 1953, City Council voted 6 to 1 to concur in a consultant's report on toll roads for the Richmond–Petersburg area, Rogers writes from the Council's records [Rogers 2011]. Silver, as Rogers quotes him, writes that the vote moved the decision to the General Assembly, prevented another referendum and set aside a petition of 400 signatures, and that local officials cited the cost of buying industrial land against cheap residential land [Silver 1984, p. 192, as quoted by Rogers 2011; the book itself has not been seen].

The General Assembly created the Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike Authority by an act approved on April 8, 1954. The act gave the Authority the power of eminent domain, left the road's location to the Authority subject to the State Highway Commission's approval, and put its powers beyond the supervision of any city [Acts of Assembly 1954, §§ 33-255.28, 33-255.29, 33-255.42]. The act provides for no vote of the people. The Library of Virginia, Wikipedia and VCU Libraries give 1955 for the Authority's creation [LVA 2024; Wikipedia, Turnpike; VCU Libraries].

Wikipedia, citing Benjamin Campbell's history, says the Authority announced four months after its creation that the road would be built through Jackson Ward, and that the consultants' first report held that

destroying housing "offers no serious obstacle to a highway location" [Campbell 2012, p. 154, via Wikipedia]. The city's 2022 feasibility study says that city officials decided the best route through downtown was through the middle of Jackson Ward; it gives no source for that sentence [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.3]. Which other routes were studied is not known to us yet.

Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church stood at the edge of the path. It was spared in 1956: the state's register nomination says it was allowed to stand because of its historical significance, credits its pastor, Dr. Augustus Walter Brown Sr., with saving it, and notes that the interstate swings around it [DHR 127-0472]. Wikipedia, citing Campbell, says the road was rerouted slightly [Campbell 2012, via Wikipedia].

Clearance and construction ran from 1955 to 1958 [Community Plan 2026, timeline], and the Authority photographed the work every month from 1956 to 1958 [LVA 2024]. The road opened on July 1, 1958: 34.7 miles from Dinwiddie County to Henrico County, built for $76.7 million with toll revenue bonds [LVA 2024]. In August 1958 it became part of I-95 [Wikipedia, Turnpike]. It was the only part of Virginia's I-95 not built with federal money [Richmond Family Magazine 2022]. Tolls ended in 1992 [Wikipedia, Turnpike].

How many buildings stood in the highway's path

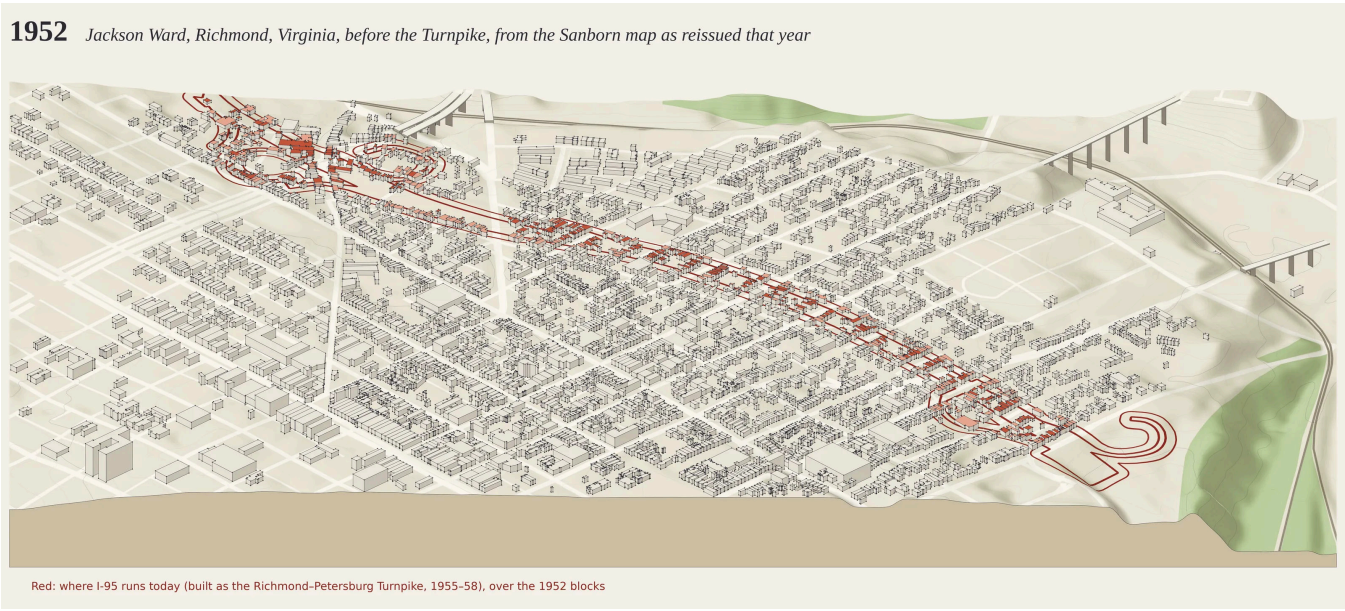


Fig. 9. The 1952 view with every building inside today's I-95 footprint picked out: darker for today's paved roadway and ramps, lighter for the corridor of 15 m either side. *How this was made:* the 1952 view, with exactly the buildings the count lists picked out, by the polygons in The count's polygon and rule.

How much was destroyed for the road has been counted many ways, and the counts disagree. They cover different areas (the ward, the ward and Navy Hill, or the whole 34.7-mile road), and they count different things (people, families, homes, structures). This page reports them side by side and does not choose among them.

Figure	What it covers	Source
about 7,000 people, about 10% of Black Richmonders	the Turnpike, 1955–57	Silver 1984, via Rogers's notes
more than 1,000 homes and businesses; 7,000 residents; 390 acres; 10% of Black Richmonders by 1958	across the city	Feasibility Study 2022, citing Kollatz 2013
1,900 Black families, about 10% of the city's Black population, and 300 more facing the loss of their homes	"Turnpike and related construction," by 1957	*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 1957, per Encyclopedia Virginia
1,900 families	"for four-lane highway through the neighborhood in 1957" (the item's own words)	LVA Document Bank

Figure	What it covers	Source
more than 7,000 people (900 families, 90% of them Black); 700 homes and businesses in Jackson Ward; 34 streets rerouted	1955–57	Grant application 2022
more than 700 homes, churches and businesses	Jackson Ward	Richmond Family Magazine 2022
1,000 homes; 31 streets blocked	Jackson Ward	Campbell 2012, p. 154, via Wikipedia
over 1,000 homes	Jackson Ward and Navy Hill	VCU Libraries
more than 1,000 residents and business owners	Jackson Ward	LVA, House to Highway
over 1,000 families	the Turnpike	Richmond Free Press 2024
about 1,000 structures; 7,000 residents	the I-95 clearing	VCIJ 2024
thousands of Black residents displaced; hundreds of homes destroyed	1955–58	Community Plan 2026, timeline

This story adds one more number, of a different kind: **buildings on the 1952 Sanborn sheets within today's highway footprint**. There are **216** in the polygon of today's paved roadway and ramps, and **447** in the corridor of that pavement plus 15 m on each side. These are outlines on a map. Outlines under 12 m² (privies and the smallest sheds) are not counted, and an apartment house counts once. The number does not count homes, families or people. The polygon is today's footprint, standing in for the 1958 right-of-way (the strip of land the road was given), which we have not seen.

The number is approximate, and its edge matters. Moved 5 m in or out, the polygon gives 134 to 300 buildings in the paved polygon and 366 to 515 in the corridor; counting every outline the polygon touches gives 284 and 513. About a tenth of each polygon (10% of the paved and 11% of the corridor), the ramp loop between 7th and 8th Streets, lies beyond the traced sheets, and buildings there are not counted. How it was made is in The count's polygon and rule.

By the letters on the sheets, 299 of the 447 are dwellings or flats (270 dwellings, among them duplexes and apartment houses, and 29 flats), 54 are private garages and 28 are stores. The 6 church outlines include three pieces of one church, St. Beulah Holiness Church, and the one school is the Navy Hill School, "built 1867" on

the sheet. Some outlines are parts of one building: 103 of the 447 are under 30 m².

East of about 3rd Street, north of Leigh, the corridor runs through Navy Hill. The count covers the highway's path from the Belvidere Street ramps to the line of 8th Street only, not the rest of the route through Navy Hill and downtown that several of the published figures include. An outline may hold several households, and the land taken in 1958 ran wider than today's pavement. So the number is a floor for buildings on this stretch and cannot check the figures above. Counting the street numbers the sheets print on each building would give dwelling units, which is the next step.

The streets the highway cut

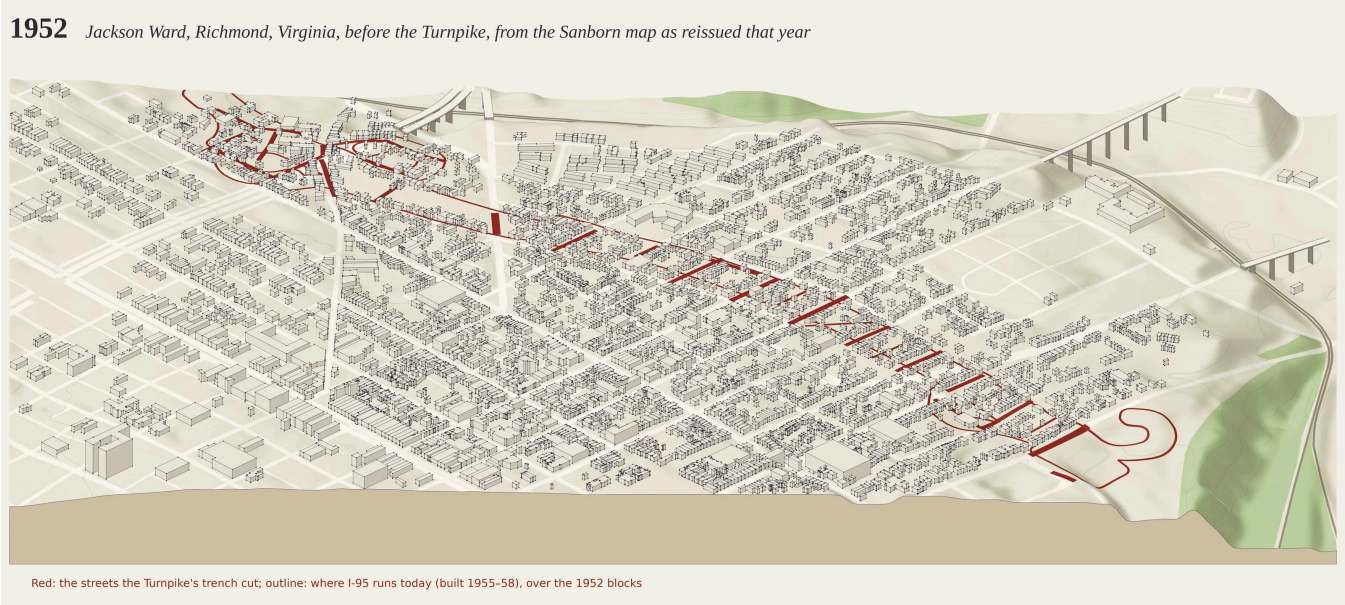


Fig. 10. 1952: the 31 stretches of street and alley the trench cut (red), with today's corridor outlined. *How this was made:* seven stretches join a street's two surviving ends straight across the trench, as the U.S. Geological Survey's 1934 map shows them running through. The other 24 are read off the 1952 sheets: each street's center line, placed by the sheet's fit, kept where no street runs today and where at least 20 m of it, and at least 40% of that, lies in the corridor. See The ground before the trench and Tracing the Sanborn sheets.



Fig. 11. Today: the same corridor, with the bridges that now carry the surviving streets over the trench (red).

Seven streets that ran through at street level now end at the trench or cross it on a bridge: Chamberlayne Parkway, St. James, 1st, 2nd, Duval, 5th (now Maggie L. Walker Place) and 7th.

Inside the corridor the 1952 sheets print 24 more stretches of 22 streets and alleys, 2,275 m in all, where no street runs today [LoC, Sanborn 1952 vol. 3]. Among them are:

- Moore, Gilmer, Munford, Shooks, Calhoun and West Baker Streets;
- St. Paul and St. John Streets;
- North 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Streets, and East and West Duval Streets;
- a stretch of Brook Road;
- Cave, Paradise, Cottage and Gilbert Alleys.

The pictures draw 31 stretches in all. Published counts of the streets cut run to 31 [Campbell 2012, via Wikipedia] and 34 [Grant application 2022]; they count whole streets over other areas, so they and our 31 stretches measure different things.

Only what was cleared for the highway

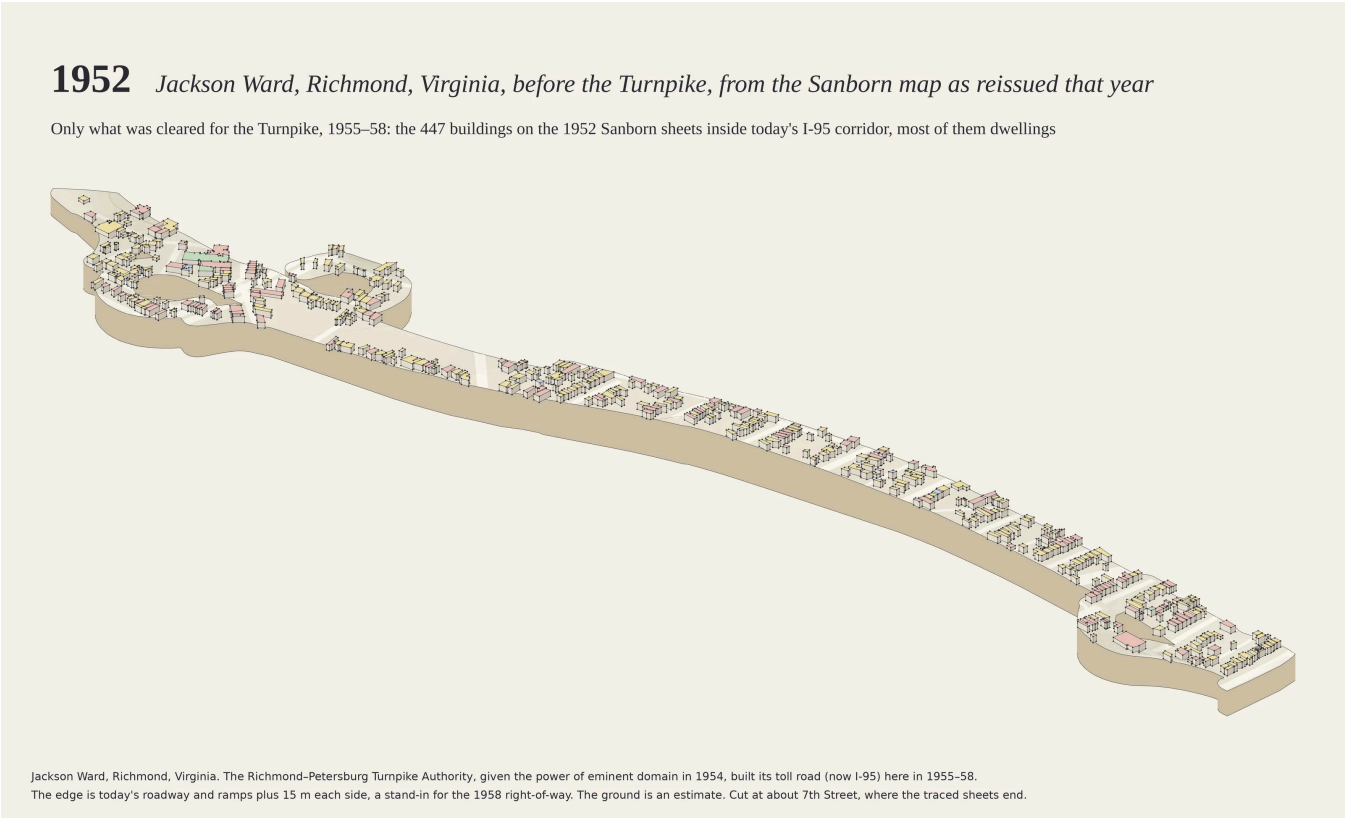


Fig. 12. Only what was cleared for the Turnpike: the 447 buildings on the 1952 Sanborn sheets inside today's corridor, 299 of them dwellings or flats, drawn alone with their streets and ground. The Richmond–Petersburg Turnpike Authority, given the power of eminent domain in 1954, built its toll road here in 1955–58 [Acts of Assembly 1954; Community Plan 2026, timeline]. *How this was made:* the 1952 view cut to the corridor polygon (today's roadway and ramps plus 15 m each side) and drawn alone, with the ground's cut edge as the slab's sides. 216 of the buildings lie in the paved polygon. The streets are those of 1952, and the ground is the estimate rebuilt before the trench. The edge is today's footprint, standing in for the 1958 right-of-way. At its east end the island stops where the traced 1952 sheets stop, at about 7th Street: the ramp loop beyond was not traced, so it is left off.

1959, about a year after the road opened

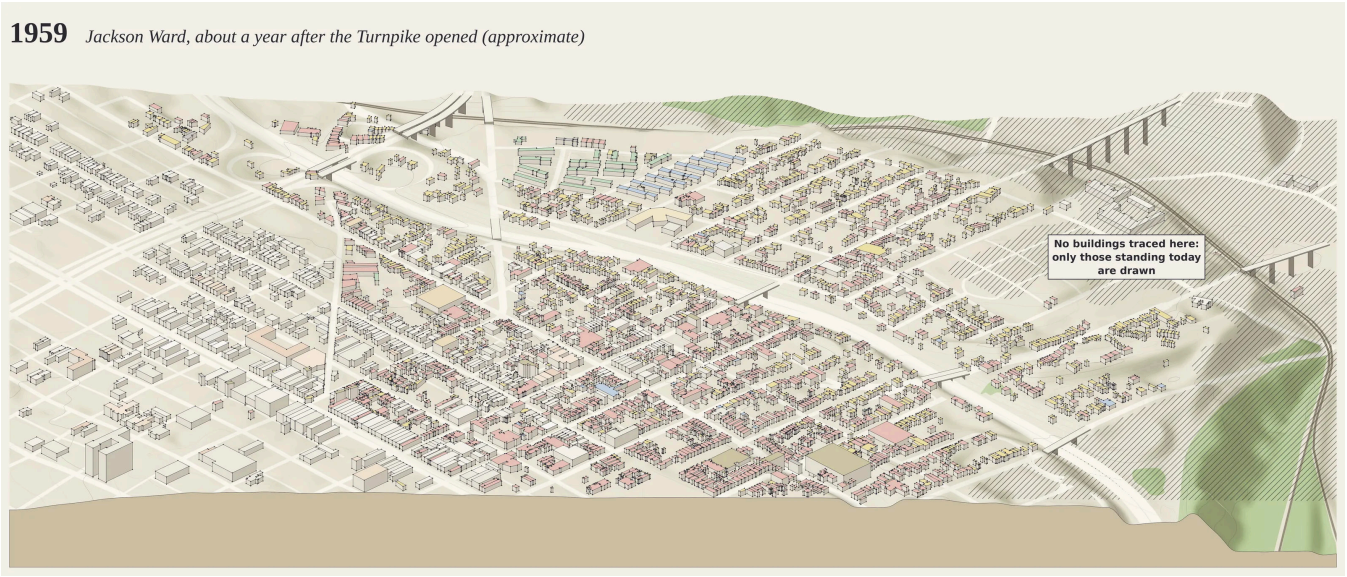


Fig. 13. Jackson Ward in 1959, about a year after the road opened. **Approximate.** *How this was made:* the 1952 view, less every traced building with a point inside the corridor, on today's ground. The road, its ramps and bridges are drawn as they are today. Buildings cleared outside that corridor still stand here, and later clearances are not yet dated building by building. Gilpin Court's 1957 addition is drawn only where the city's records date its buildings to 1957 or before. Hatched blocks at upper right are where no building was traced. See Measured, inferred, unknown.

The picture is labeled approximate because its edges are. The corridor polygon is today's footprint plus 15 m, and the 1958 right-of-way has not been seen. Gilpin Court was enlarged in 1957 to house families the Turnpike displaced [Encyclopedia Virginia]. Urban renewal in 1976–78 took down about 150 more homes in Jackson Ward, the community plan's timeline says [Community Plan 2026, timeline]. The Coliseum was later built on cleared blocks of Navy Hill [Kollatz 2019]; a photograph shows it under construction on December 30, 1968 [WVTF 2016]. On November 19, 2026, it still stood, and the city was aiming to demolish it by the end of 2027 [WWBT, November 2026].

In 1957 the Turnpike Authority and the city took by eminent domain a cottage built in 1793 by Abraham Peyton Skipwith, who had bought his freedom [LVA, House to Highway; Axios, April 2026]. Its owners then were a Black family who had held it since about 1900, the Library of Virginia says, and the Richmond Free Press calls them its

last Black homeowners [LVA, House to Highway; Richmond Free Press 2024]. The cottage was sold for about $25 and moved to Goochland County [LVA, House to Highway; Axios, April 2026].

The JXN Project, founded by the sisters Enjoli and Sesha Moon, rebuilt the cottage in Jackson Ward as a reconstruction of the original. It opened on Bates Street in April 2026 with the JXN Haus, the project's headquarters [The Richmonder, April 2026; Richmond Magazine, May 2026].

Gilpin Court: public housing built over Apostle Town

Gilpin Court came first. On January 16, 1941, City Council passed the ordinance that began clearing Apostle Town, a section of Jackson Ward [LVA 2025]. Encyclopedia Virginia says the name came from its streets, St. Stephen, St. James, St. Peter, St. John and St. Paul [Encyclopedia Virginia]; of those, only St. Peter is on the 1925 sheet of the project site, which also names Cabell, Tyler, Hickory, Calhoun and Tazewell, so Apostle Town as named reached beyond the site [LoC, Sanborn 1925 vol. 3].

The Richmond Housing Authority, which the city set up in 1940, built the project with a federal allotment from the U.S. Housing Authority [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.2]. Charles Gilpin, the actor the project is named for, a pillar of Richmond's Black society, had lived at 200 Charity Street; his house was among those torn down [LVA 2025]. The project was dedicated on April 28, 1943, with 301 units [LVA 2025]. Encyclopedia Virginia gives 300 units and 250 families displaced, with less than four months to move; Campbell, via Wikipedia, gives 297 units replacing 200 houses [Encyclopedia Virginia; Campbell 2012, p. 152].

Few of the people the clearance moved came back. The city's 2022 study says many of the 200 homes were owned by whites and occupied by Black families, that only 25 applications came from families who had lived on the site, and that in wartime Black defense workers had preference, so that 153 of the 301 units went to higher-

income defense workers [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.2]. At the dedication, the Library of Virginia writes, 85 units were occupied by Black families [LVA 2025].

Additions in 1957 and 1970 added 482 units [Feasibility Study 2022, §1.4.4]. The study and the community plan give the finished project, with Fay Towers of 1971, as 781 units on about 38 acres, two fewer than 301 and 482 make [Community Plan 2026]. The Turnpike left Gilpin Court and the rest of North Jackson Ward cut off from South Jackson Ward and from the rest of the city [Encyclopedia Virginia].

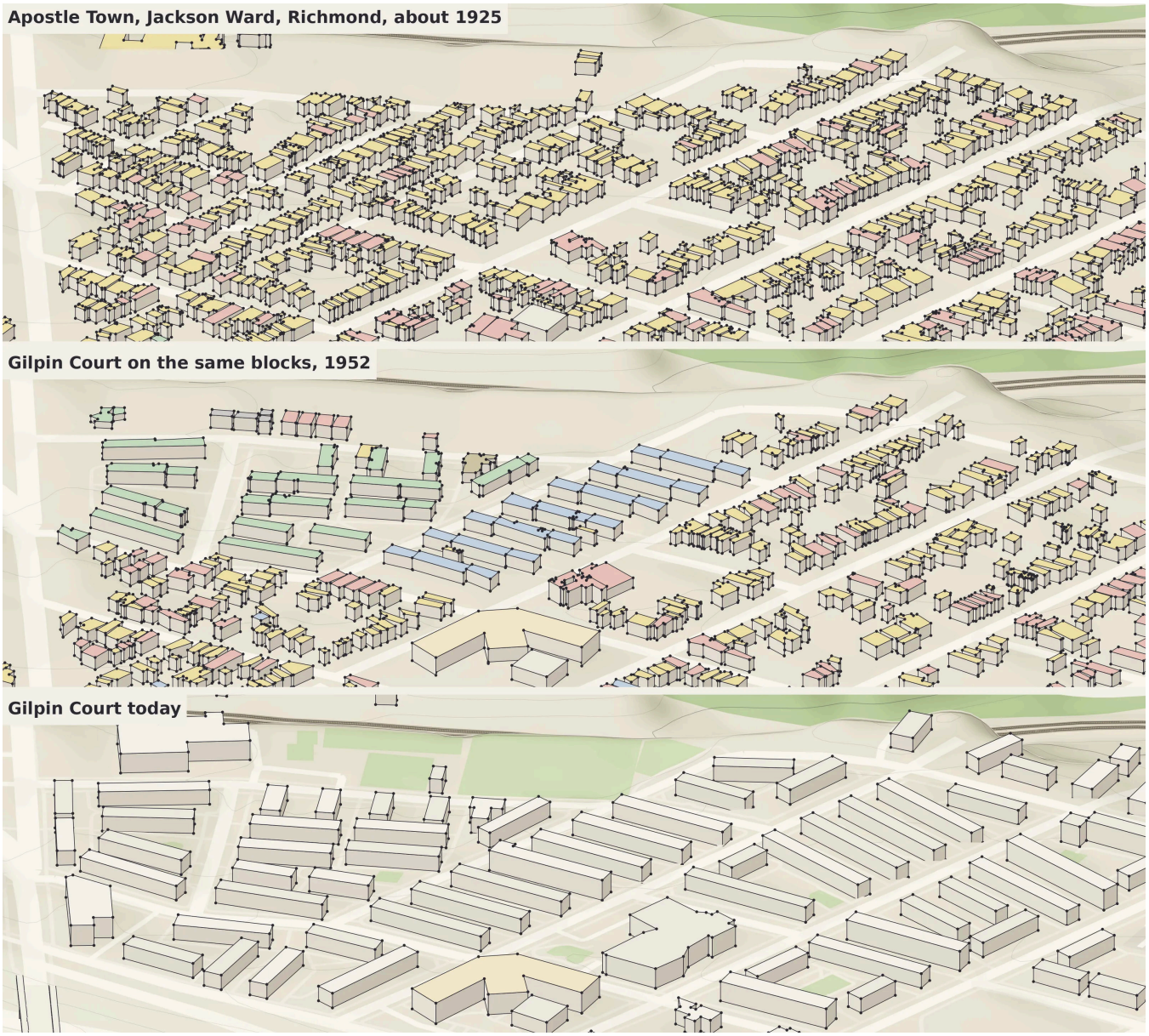


Fig. 14. Apostle Town about 1925 (top), Gilpin Court in 1952 (middle), and today (bottom). Gilpin Court is drawn in the 1952 sheet's own colors, green and blue, though the sheet labels its buildings brick-faced. *How this was made:* the same close crop of the 1925, 1952 and today views. In 1925, where Apostle Town's streets differ from today's, they are drawn as sheet 318 prints them: Cabell and Tyler Streets, and Hickory Street on its old line, read off the sheet and drawn until 1941; Gilpin Court's own streets and paths are drawn from 1941 [LoC, Sanborn 1925 vol. 3; LVA 2025]. The sources give about 200 houses; the 119 buildings here are the 1925 outlines on the project site that the 1952 sheets no longer show, taken to have gone in 1941, when the clearance began. Whether any went earlier is not known. Sheet 318 rests on one control point (8.5 m off), so the whole block may sit several meters from where it stood.

People live in Gilpin Court today, and it is drawn here as homes. In July 2026 a draft agreement between the city and the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority called for one-for-one replacement of all 781 units and expected the redevelopment to take

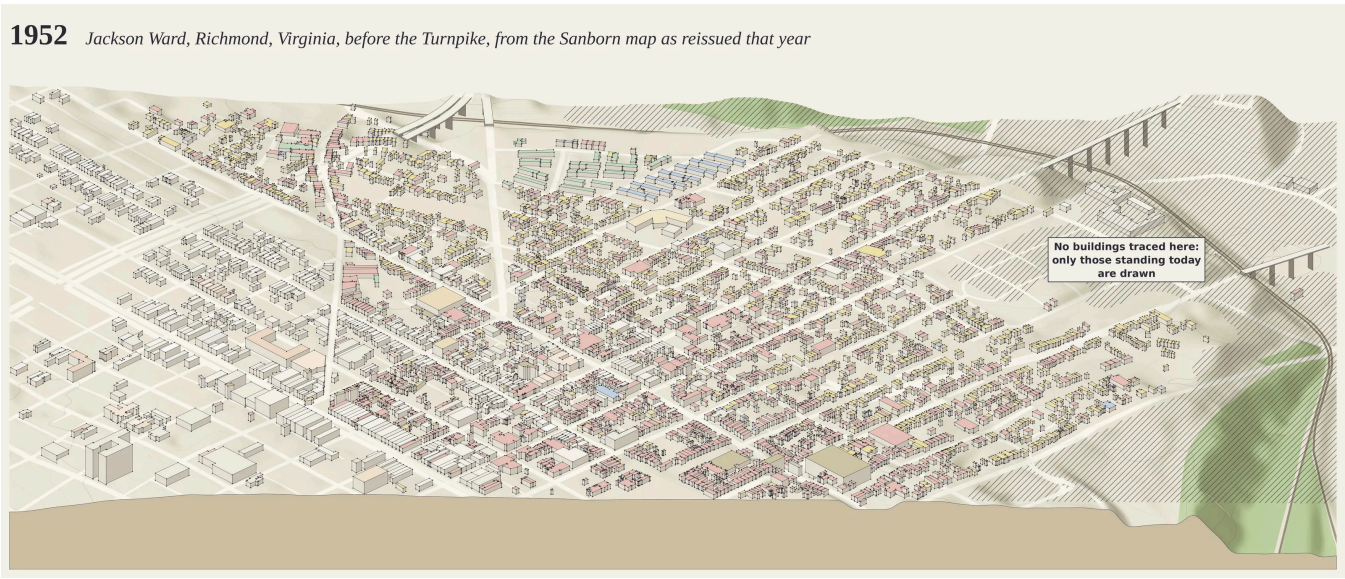
at least ten years [Gilpin Court MOU 2026]. The housing authority had filed plans for a first phase of 56 units in two buildings, to be built before any demolition [Axios, July 2026; The Richmonder, July 2026]. The agreement was expected to be signed by September 1, 2026; whether it was, we could not confirm by November 22, 2026. Residents' groups, the Gilpin Court Tenant Council and Gilpin Informed Residents, are named in the city's community plan [Community Plan 2026]. This page takes no position on the plan.

Jackson Ward today, and the proposed cap over I-95



Fig. 15. Jackson Ward today: the trench crosses the ward, Gilpin Court lies north of it, and bridges carry some of the old streets across. *How this was made:* drawn from OpenStreetMap (the open, volunteer-made world map) and USGS lidar (laser measurement of the ground from aircraft), as every isoscape view is. See How it's made.

1952



Today

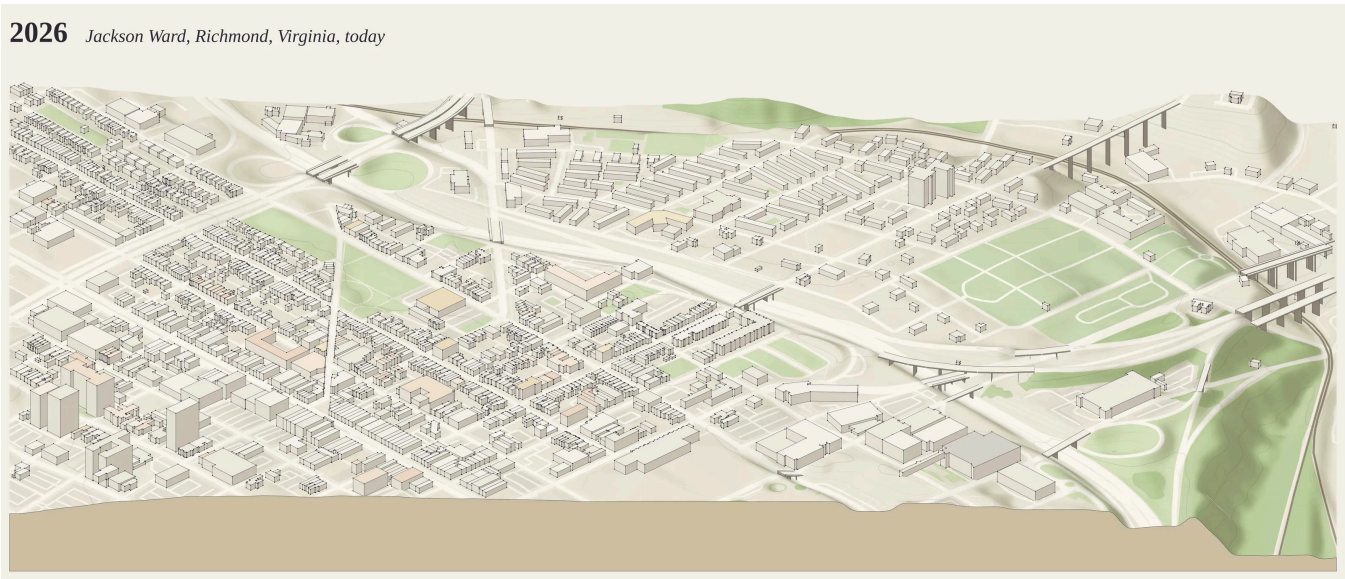


Fig. 16. The same frame in 1952 (first picture) and today (second picture). *How this was made:* the 1952 and today views on this page, drawn in one frame so they line up; inside today's trench the 1952 view stands on ground rebuilt by estimate. See The ground before the trench.

Jackson Ward was listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register on April 20, 1976 and the National Register on July 30, 1976, and became a National Historic Landmark on June 2, 1978. The state's record notes that "redevelopment and expressway construction have reduced its size" [DHR 127-0237].

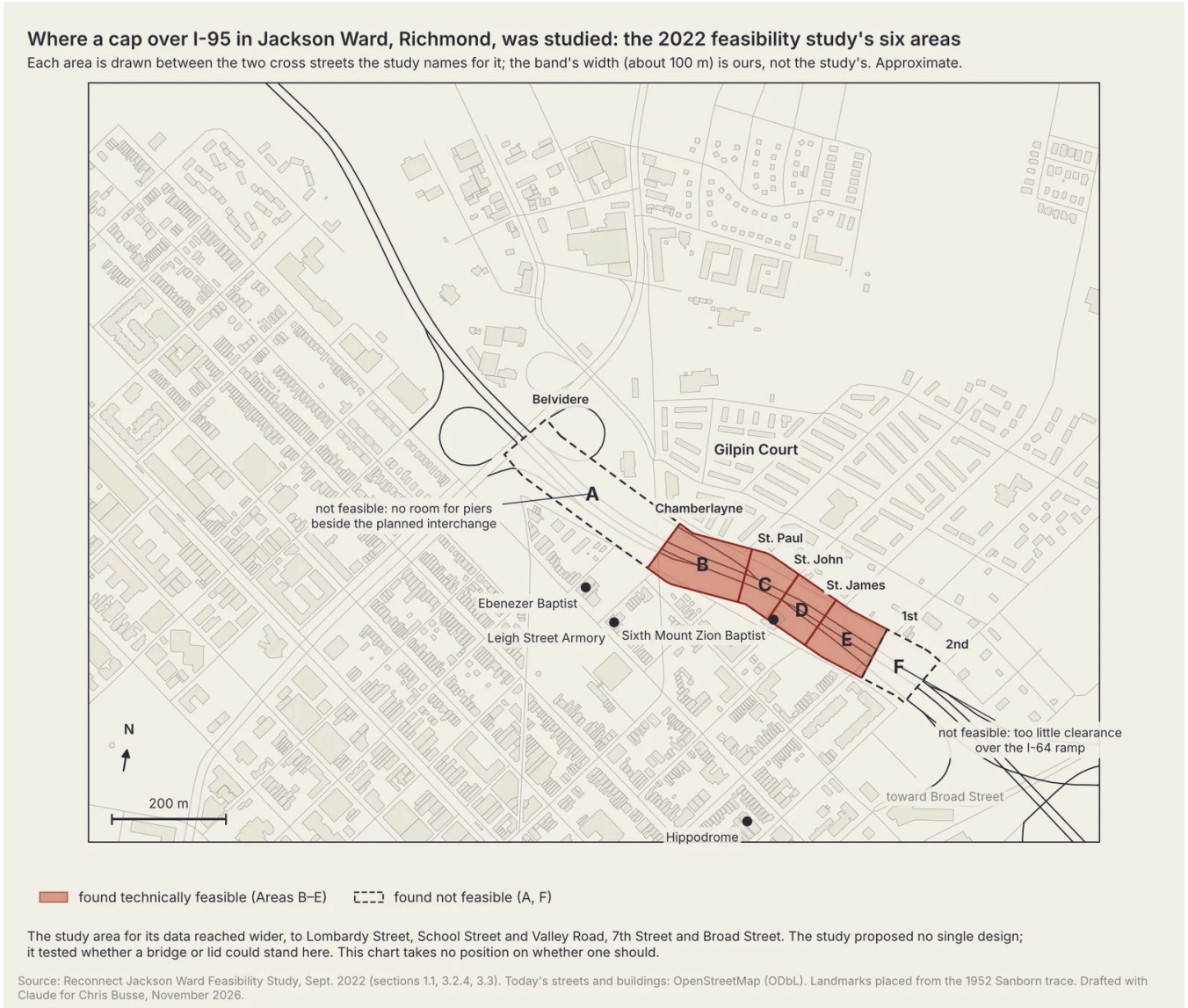


Fig. 17. The six areas over I-95 that the 2022 feasibility study tested for a cap, a park or deck built over the highway: four found feasible, between Chamberlayne Parkway and 1st Street, and two not. *How this was made:* each area is drawn between the cross streets the study names for it; the widths are ours. Approximate.

A cap or lid over the highway is being studied. The 2022 feasibility study, by the state's Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the city, found it would be "technically possible" to build a bridge or lid in a study area that ran from the Belvidere Street bridge to the North 1st Street bridge. It found four of its six areas feasible, from Chamberlayne Parkway to North 1st Street [Feasibility Study 2022, §3.2.4; Fact sheet 2023].

On February 28, 2023, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced a $1.35 million planning grant to the city [City of Richmond]. City Council accepted it on September 23, 2024 [Ord. 2024-206], and the city then aimed to hire a consultant by early 2025 [VPM 2024]. Federal records show the whole grant obligated under an agreement signed September 26, 2024, which runs to March 30, 2028 [USAspending]. The community plan, edited in July 2026, still lists securing federal funds and "hire a consultant team" as next steps [Community Plan 2026]. Whether a consultant has been hired we could not find.

People in and around the ward hold a range of views on the cap. As reported by Elizabeth McGowan for the Virginia Center for Investigative Journalism in July 2024 [VCIJ 2024]:

- **For it:** businessman David Lambert calls the cap's intent excellent and sees a chance for economic revival, though he asks how it will make money.
- **For it, with conditions:** VCU instructor and urban planner Jim Smither sees a park over the highway as an asset if it comes with an acknowledgment of past harms, and says the conversation must start with reparations. City Councilor Ann-Frances Lambert is not opposed but says the city must first address what happened, and supports action on reparations; she told VPM the city "displaced one of the most robust African American communities" [VPM 2024].
- **Against or doubtful:** civil rights activist and local historian Gary Flowers calls it the wrong priority and argues that the city should turn down the grant and spend on Black culture, commerce and education. Benjamin Ross, church historian at Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, asked "reconnect to what?" and said a cap would dilute the church's preservation story by hiding the visible evidence of what happened.

These views date from July 2024. This page takes no position on the cap. The study area is outlined; no design is drawn.

How we know

Every picture above is drawn by Chris Busse with isoscape, the tool he draws with, built with Claude. The tracing, the ground and the count were done in code, with Claude, under his direction (see the artist statement). This section says how each was made, how far off it may be, and what would make it better.

The ground before the trench

Today's ground comes from USGS lidar, resampled to a 5 m grid. Under the highway it shows the trench: about 80–100 m wide and 3 to 6.5 m deep under the old cross streets, and up to about 8 m deep between Brook Road and Chamberlayne Parkway. No survey of the ground inside the trench before 1955 could be found online, so the 1952 views use an estimate.

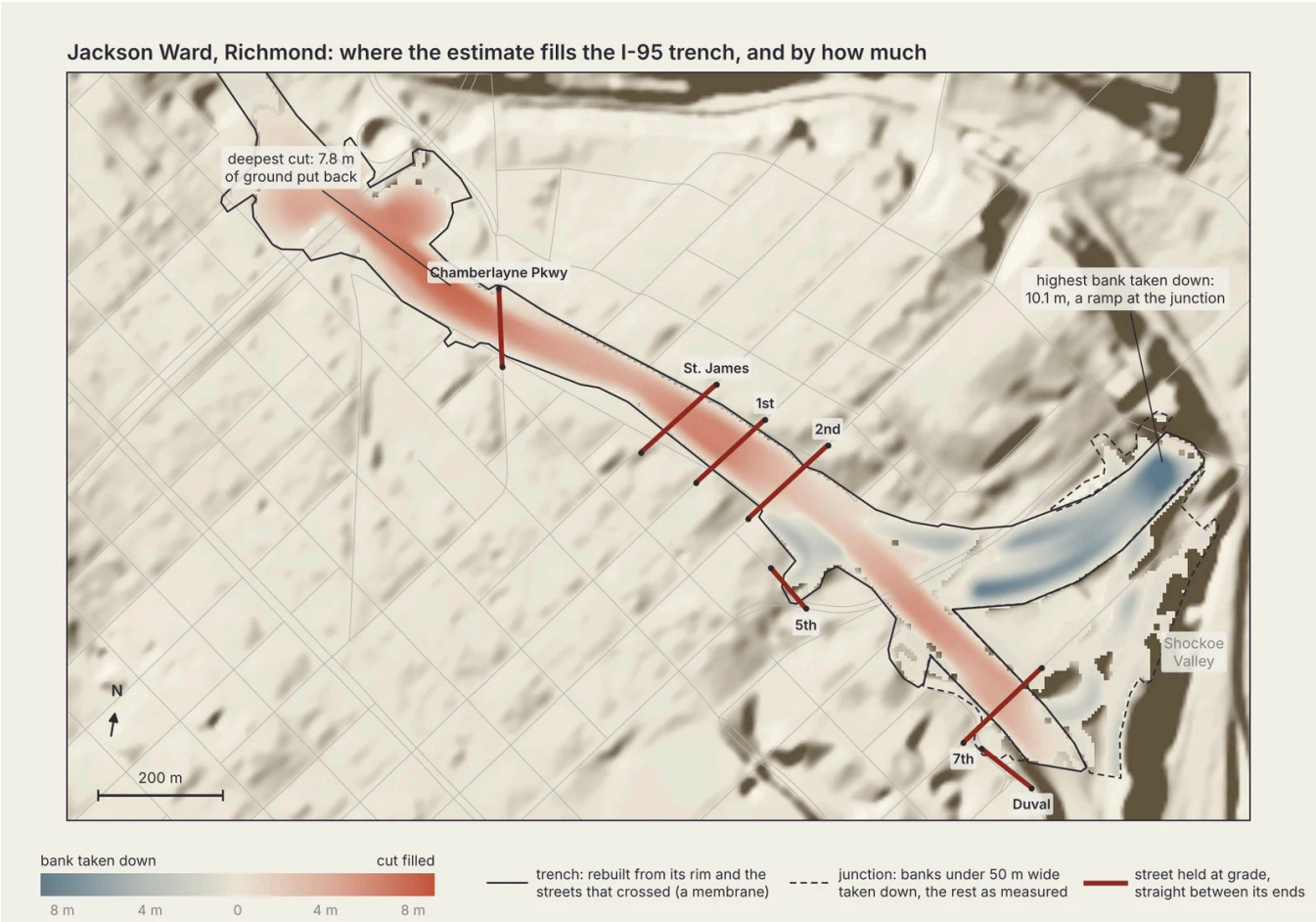


Fig. 18. Where the estimate fills the trench (red, deeper toward dark red) and where ramp banks are taken down (blue), with the outlines of each method and the seven streets held at street level.

The estimate is a membrane, like a rubber sheet stretched across the trench and pinned to the measured ground at its edge: each point inside takes the average of its neighbors. The seven streets that crossed at street level are held straight between their surviving ends; holding them moves the rebuilt ground by about 6 cm on average (root mean square) and 58 cm at most, because the ground there is nearly level. Around the I-95/I-64 junction, from about 7th Street east, where the ramps stand on the edge of the Shockoe Valley (the valley east of the ward), the lidar is kept and only banks narrower than 50 m are taken down. As this ground is drawn, the most put back in the trench is 7.8 m, between Brook Road and Chamberlayne Parkway, and the most taken away is 10.1 m, where a ramp's bank stands inside the trench's outline at the junction.

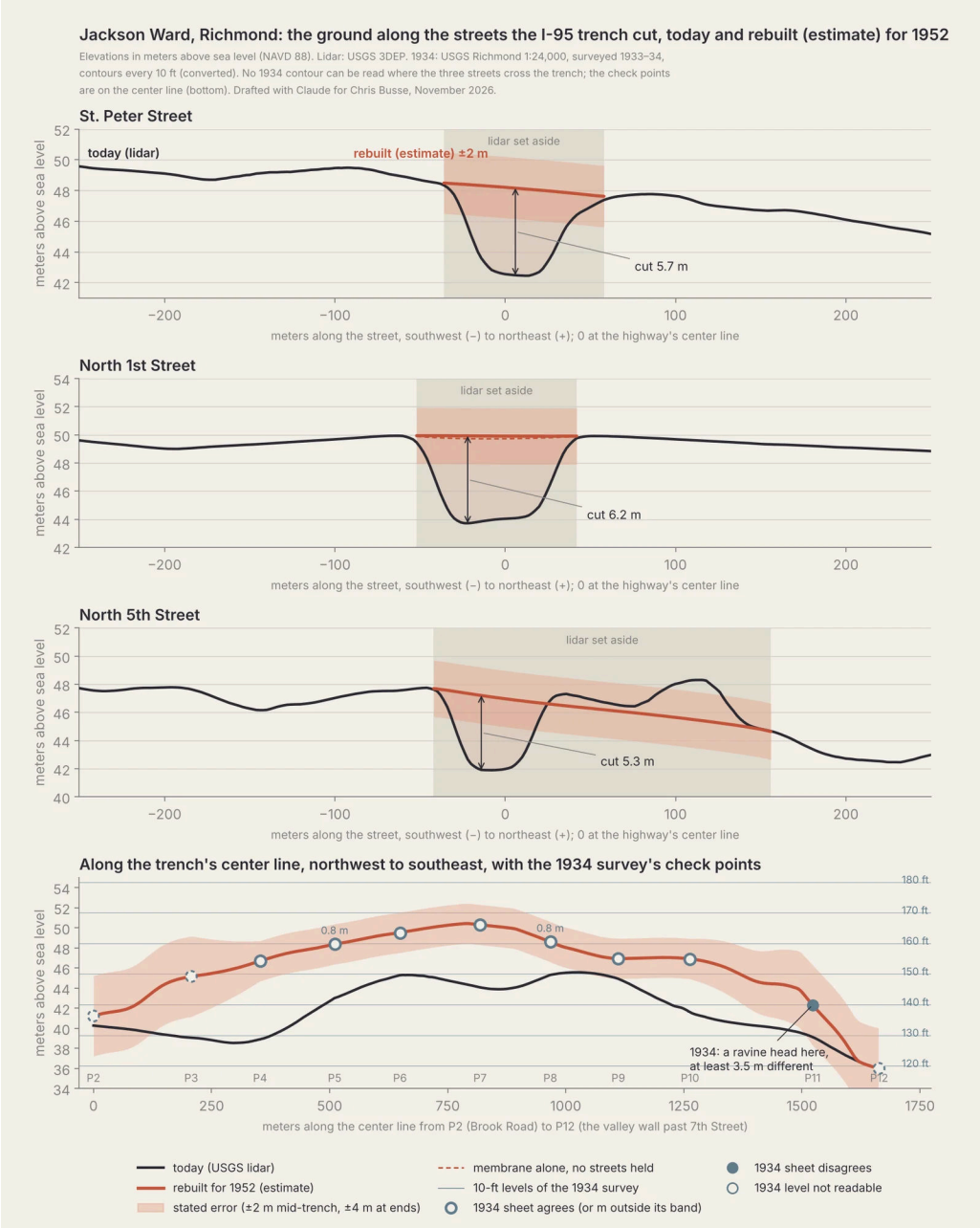


Fig. 19. Ground height along St. Peter, North 1st and North 5th Streets across the trench, and along the trench's center line with the 1934 survey's check points. The band is the stated error, wider toward the ends.

The street profiles show the cut under three streets that once crossed: about 5.7 m under St. Peter Street, 6.2 m under 1st Street and 5.3 m under 5th Street, as this ground is drawn. The error is put at **about ±2 m (95% of points) in the middle of the trench**, the worst of five trials on level plateau, and **3 to 4 m or more at its ends**, toward Belvidere Street and toward 7th Street. Near 7th and Duval Streets the 1934 survey shows a small ravine the method cannot rebuild, and

there the sheet differs by at least 3.5 m. Relief smaller than the trench is wide, such as a knoll or a dip, is lost everywhere.

Two checks support those numbers.

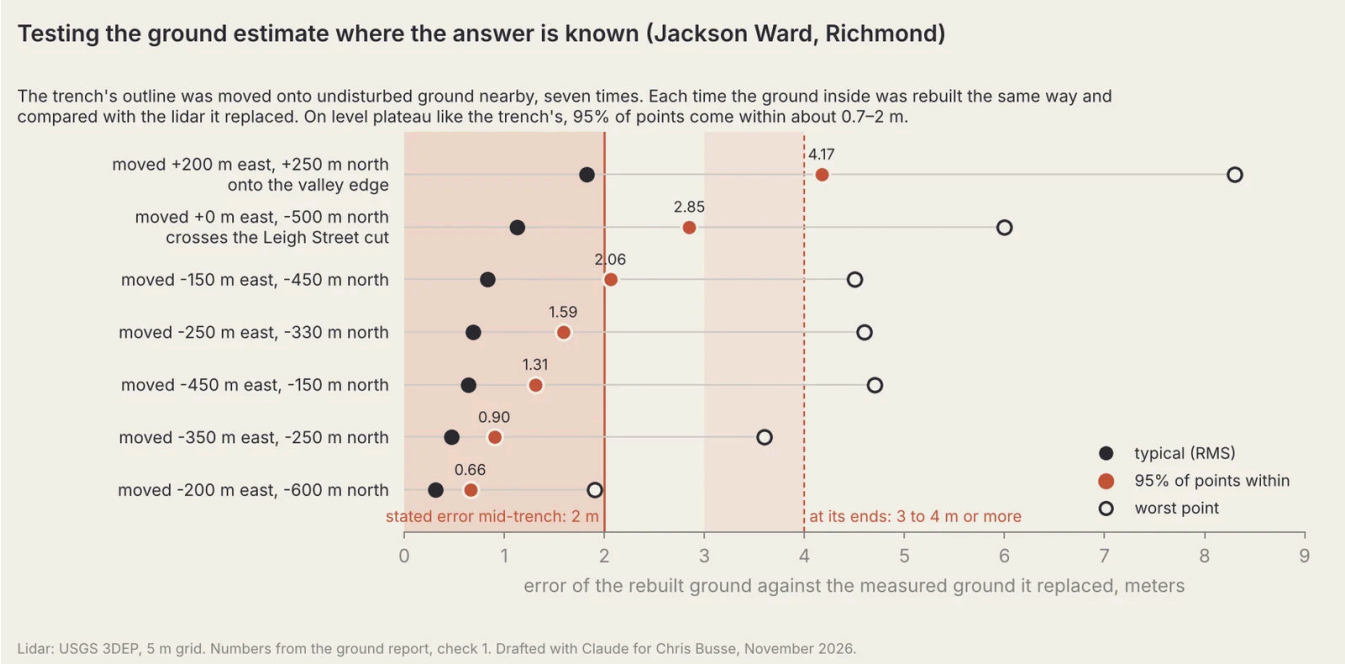


Fig. 20. Seven trials of the ground estimate on undisturbed ground.

Testing the estimate where the answer is known. The trench's outline was moved onto undisturbed ground nearby seven times, and the ground inside rebuilt and compared with the lidar it replaced. On level plateau like the trench's, 95% of points came within 0.66–2.06 m in the five trials. Where the outline crossed the Leigh Street cut or a valley edge, it did worse (2.85 and 4.17 m).

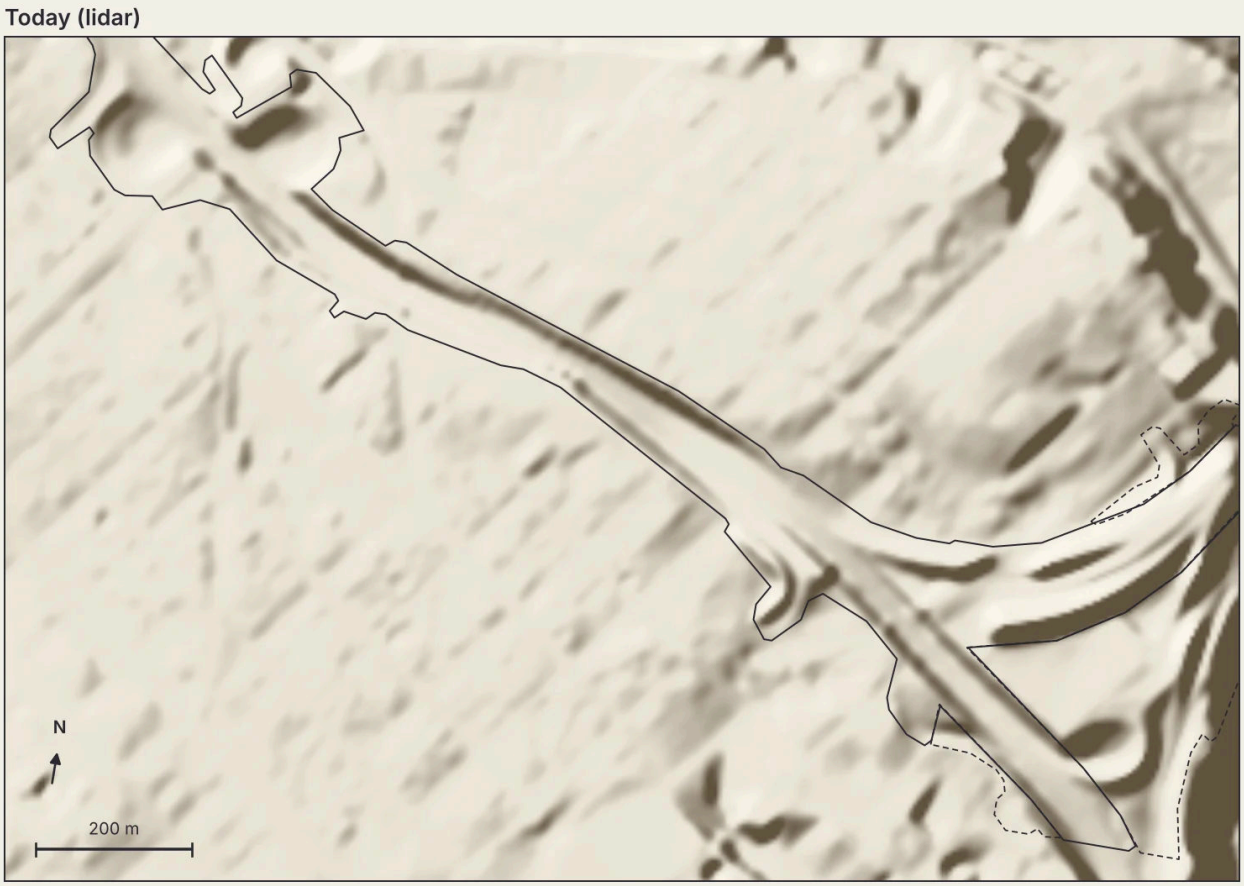


Fig. 21. The U.S. Geological Survey's 1934 map under the trench's outline, with the check points along its center line (P1 lies beyond the frame).

The 1934 survey. The USGS Richmond sheet, surveyed in 1933–34 with contours every 10 feet, shows the streets running through before the road. At the seven points in the trench's middle where it can be read (P4 to P10), the rebuilt ground falls in the 10-foot band the sheet shows, or within 0.8 m of it. That shows the estimate is not far off there; it cannot show it is closer than the band, so it does not narrow the error below about 2 m. At P11, near 7th Street, the sheet shows a ravine head and differs by at least 3.5 m. At P1–P3 and P12 its levels could not be read.

Today (lidar)

Jackson Ward, Richmond: the ground alone, lit from the northwest

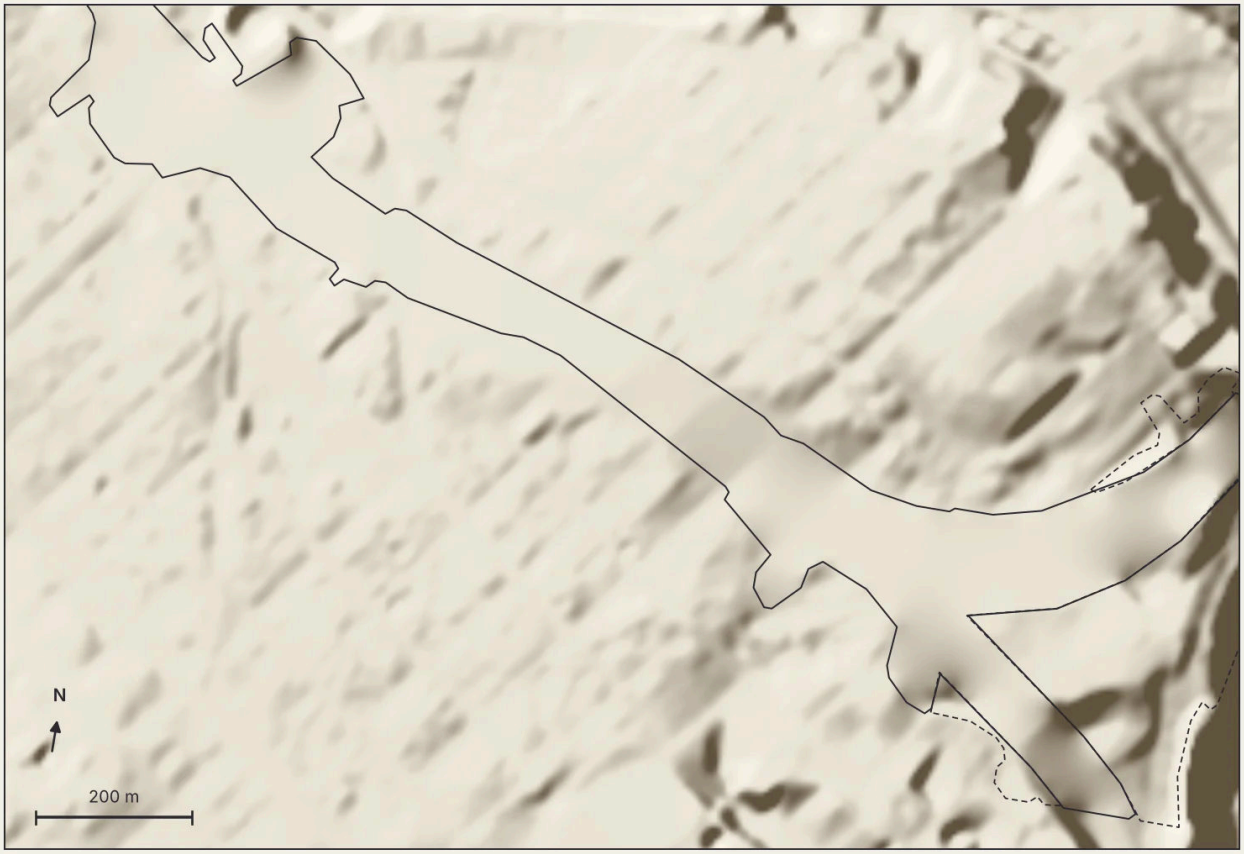


Relief exaggerated 4× in the shading. Solid outline: the trench, rebuilt; dashed: the junction, ramp banks taken down. Lidar: USGS 3DEP. Drafted with Claude for Chris Busse, November 2026.

Rebuilt (estimate)

Jackson Ward, Richmond: the ground alone, lit from the northwest

Rebuilt for 1952 (estimate)



Relief exaggerated 4× in the shading. Solid outline: the trench, rebuilt; dashed: the junction, ramp banks taken down. Lidar: USGS 3DEP. Drafted with Claude for Chris Busse, November 2026.

Fig. 22. The ground alone, lit from the northwest: today with the trench (first picture), and rebuilt by estimate with the trench filled (second picture).

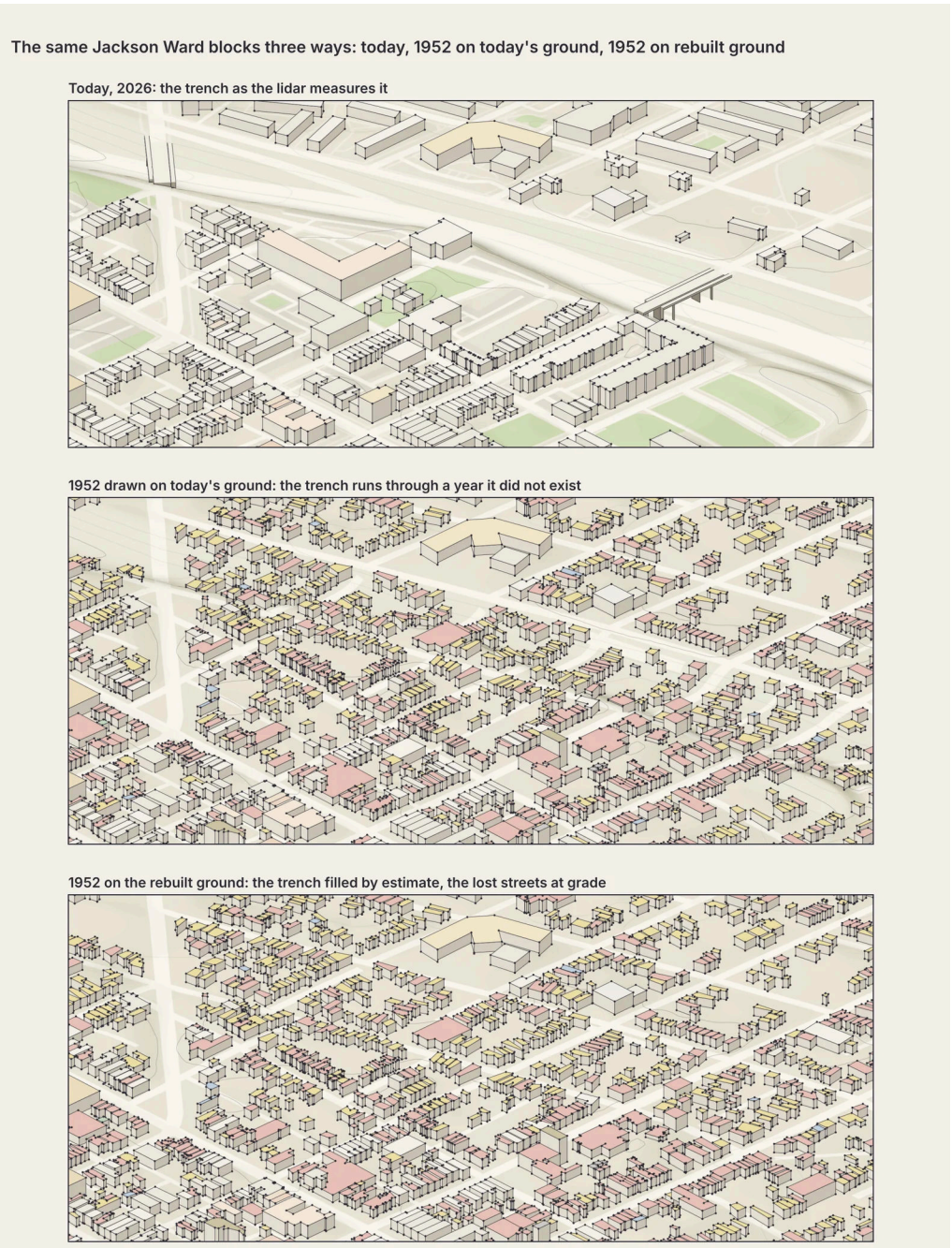


Fig. 23. The same blocks three ways: today; 1952 drawn on today's ground, with the trench showing; 1952 on the ground rebuilt by estimate.

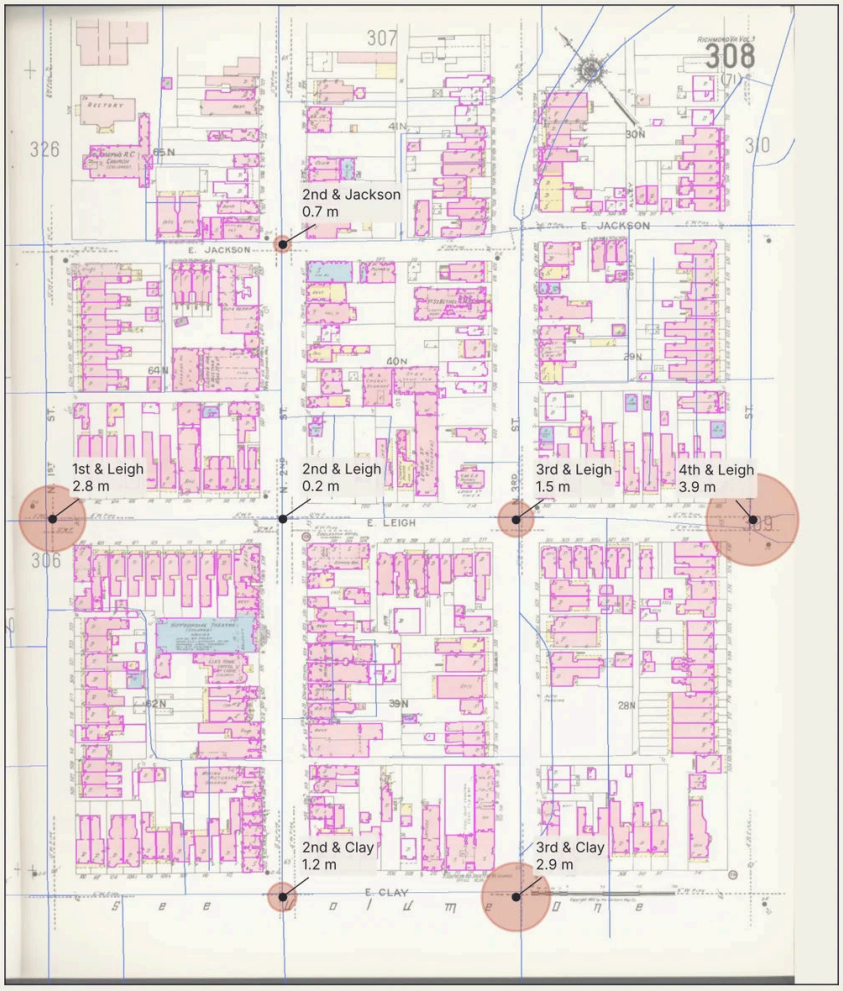
The three-way view shows why the estimate matters. Drawn on today's ground, the 1952 streets dip into a trench that did not exist. On the rebuilt ground they cross level.

What might replace the estimate with a survey: the Turnpike Authority's records at the Library of Virginia (Accession 40941), open to researchers who visit [LVA 2024], if they hold plan-and-profile sheets (engineers' drawings of the ground along the road) showing the ground before construction, or VDOT's own plans; and a 1922 survey at 1:2,400 by R. H. Randall & Co., catalogued as "Topography area surrounding city of Richmond" (Library of Virginia, G3884.R5C2 1922 .R53), if it covers the ward [LVA map guide]. None of these has been seen for this story, and we found none online.

Tracing the Sanborn sheets

The 1952 buildings come from 15 sheets of the Sanborn map of Richmond, volume 3, as reissued in 1952 (sheets 304–312, 315, 317–320 and 326), at the Library of Congress [LoC, Sanborn 1952 vol. 3]. Each sheet was fitted to today's street corners, and its building outlines were traced in code, then checked against the sheet.

One Jackson Ward Sanborn sheet fitted to today's street corners: sheet 308 of the 1952 volume



How the sheet is placed

7 street corners were read on the sheet (black dots) and matched to where today's street center lines cross. One fit (a shift, a turn and a scale) carries the whole sheet onto the map.

What a red disk means

After the fit, each corner lands a little off. The disk's radius is that miss, drawn five times larger than the sheet's scale so it can be seen. On this sheet the misses average 1.9 m; the largest is 3.9 m.

What it means for a building

A building on this sheet may sit a few meters from where it stood, less than a house's width. No block was seen pushed across a street. Part of each miss is today's streets, some moved since 1952.

Colors on the sheet

Pink: brick; yellow: frame; blue: stone or concrete block, as the sheet prints them. Magenta outlines: the tracing. Blue lines: today's streets (OpenStreetMap).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Richmond, 1952, vol. 3, sheet 308 (Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Sanborn Maps Collection; public domain), with the trace's overlay. Drafted with Claude for Chris Busse, November 2026.

Fig. 24. Sheet 308 of the 1952 volume, Second Street from Clay to Jackson, with the seven street corners used to fit it (control points) and how far each misses after the fit.

After the fit, each corner lands a little off. On 14 of the 15 sheets the mean miss is 1.1–3.6 m, and the worst single corner is 6.7 m, at St. James and Duval on sheet 326. A building may sit a few meters from where it stood, less than a house's width; no block was seen pushed across a street. Sheet 318, which draws Gilpin Court, has only one usable corner and was turned and shifted to fit the Gilpin Court buildings standing today (8.5 m).



Fig. 25. How far each street corner misses after the fit, on all 15 sheets, with each sheet's mean.

Colors on the sheets give each building's material: pink for brick, yellow for frame. The 1952 printing leaves many frame houses uncolored; those are taken to be frame, an inference checked on one sheet against the 1925 printing.

Stories and uses were read off the sheets for the buildings counted in the corridor and those near Second Street, 479 in all (stories for 164 of them). A building is drawn 3.6 m a story where its stories were read, and two stories high where they were not. Of the 447 counted in the corridor, the letters read on 403 include 270 dwellings (houses, duplexes and apartment houses), 54 private garages, 29 flats, 28 stores, 6 church outlines and a school. A dwelling may hold one household or several.

Second Street from Broad to Clay is on volume 1 of the 1950–52 printing. Its sheets 2 and 3 were fitted again to street corners read off

them (misses of 0.5–2.9 m) and traced, adding 198 outlines the earlier tracing had missed there.

Busy outlines were simplified before drawing: corners closer than 1 m to a straight run were dropped and near-rectangles squared, with no wall moved more than 1 m. The counts are made from the outlines as traced.

1925. The 15 sheets of the 1925 volume 3 were matched to their 1952 reissues feature by feature (1,300 to 3,500 matches a sheet; the median mismatch is about 0.1 m on the ground) and placed by the 1952 fits, so their positions carry the same few meters of error. In 1925 every building is colored, and the tracer reads the colored fills [LoC, Sanborn 1925 vol. 3]. That tracer splits more porches and frame fronts into outlines of their own than the 1952 one did, so the two tracings read the sheets differently. By the same rule (a point inside an outline of 12 m² or more), the 1925 tracing finds 244 outlines in the paved polygon and 506 in the corridor, against 216 and 447 in 1952. The difference is not a count of buildings lost between 1925 and 1952, and this page does not use it as one.

The count's polygon and rule

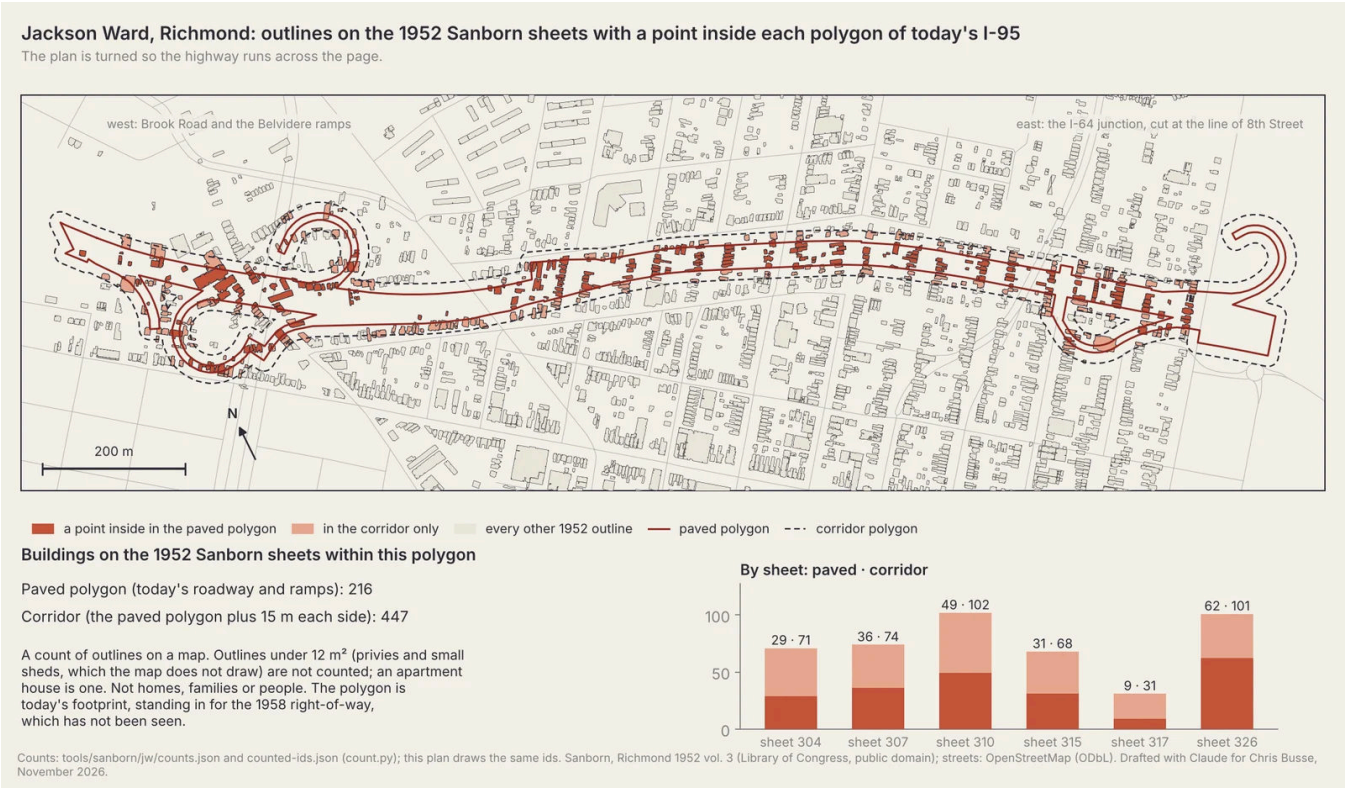


Fig. 26. The count's two polygons along the highway, turned to run across the page, with the 1952 outlines inside each and the count by sheet.

The polygon is built from today's OpenStreetMap ways of the Turnpike and its ramps, each widened to its lanes at 3.65 m plus 3 m shoulders, with the gaps between carriageways closed. It runs from the Belvidere Street ramps to the line of 8th Street, and leaves out I-64 east of the junction, built later. The traced 1952 sheets stop at about 7th Street, so the ramp loop between 7th and 8th Streets (10% of the paved polygon, 11% of the corridor) is counted as having no buildings. The corridor adds 15 m on each side for the cut slopes and walls.

A building counts when a point inside its outline falls in the polygon. Using the outline's center instead gives 211 and 449. Outlines under 12 m² are not counted: the map draws nothing that small (12 m² is the smallest building the region draws), and counting them would give a number the pictures cannot show. They are privies and sheds under about 3.5 m on a side. One outline on sheet 317, the box of the

sheet's correction table, is not a building and is left out. The counts are 216 and 447, from one file, `tools/sanborn/jw/counts.json`, which `count.py` also fills with the ranges given above; the count picture, the plan and the island draw the same buildings, from the list the count writes.

What the number cannot say: the 1958 right-of-way may differ from today's footprint, the ramps of 1958 were not today's ramps, and an outline the publisher did not redraw may show its block as surveyed in 1925, so a building gone at any time from 1925 to 1955 may still be on the sheet. The tracer splits some row houses at every party wall and merges others, and misses some small buildings.

Measured, inferred, unknown

	What	How we know it
Measured	Today's ground	USGS lidar, a 5 m grid; a few centimeters on open ground
Measured	Each 1952 outline, its position and printed color; the 103 names and uses	Read off the sheets; placed to within a few meters (above)
Measured	The 1934 survey's streets and contours	USGS, 10-foot contours; placed by its own projection and a shift of about 15 m
Inferred	The ground inside the trench before 1955	The membrane estimate: about ±2 m mid-trench, 3 to 4 m or more at its ends
Measured	24 stretches of street inside the corridor; Apostle Town's 1925 streets	Read off the 1952 and 1925 sheets and placed by their fits
Measured	Uses and stories of 479 buildings	Read off the 1952 sheets, as printed
Inferred	The seven lost street stretches	Straight joins between surviving ends, which the 1934 sheet shows running through
Inferred	When Apostle Town's buildings went	1941, when the clearance began, for every one the 1952 sheets no longer show
Inferred	Uncolored outlines are frame buildings; heights where stories were not read	Checked on one sheet; two stories assumed
Inferred	Which buildings the road took	A point inside each outline, tested against today's footprint; 134–300 and 366–515 with the edge moved 5 m
Unknown	The 1958 right-of-way	Library of Virginia, Accession 40941, not yet seen
Unknown	When each 1952 outline was last surveyed (1925 to 1951); what changed before 1955; when each later loss happened	Not yet dated building by building

	What	How we know it
Unknown	Dwelling units in the corridor	The street numbers printed on each building, not yet counted
Unknown	Uses and stories outside the corridor and Second Street; most stories inside it	Not yet read; needs the full-size scans
Unknown	Which routes were studied, 1946–54	Silver's book and the Authority's papers, not yet seen

Sources and rights

Source	Used for	Rights
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Richmond, 1952, vol. 3, and 1950–52, vol. 1, Library of Congress	1952 buildings and streets	Public domain; credit Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, Sanborn Maps Collection
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Richmond, 1925, vol. 3, Library of Congress	1925 buildings and Apostle Town's streets	Public domain (published 1925); same credit
USGS Richmond, Va., 1:24,000, surveyed 1933–34	The check on the rebuilt ground	Public domain (federal work)
USGS 3D Elevation Program lidar	Today's ground	Public domain
OpenStreetMap	Today's streets, buildings and highway	ODbL; © OpenStreetMap contributors
City of Richmond, year built (assessor)	Dating buildings standing today	City open data
Reconnect Jackson Ward feasibility study, 2022	The study areas, facts on the cap	Public document; facts cited, no images copied
Books, articles and archives listed below	Facts, each cited	Cited and paraphrased; short quotations only

Who keeps the ward's history

The ward's history is kept by its own people and institutions, among them the Historic Jackson Ward Association, the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia, the JXN Project, the Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church, Ebenezer Baptist Church, the Gilpin Court Tenant Council and Gilpin Informed Residents. This page does not draw on their collections, apart from Ebenezer's published church history; readers should go to them.

This page uses published work listed under Sources. Among it are the Library of Virginia and the JXN Project's exhibition *House to Highway*, which closed on February 28, 2026 [LVA, House to Highway]; the Library of Virginia's archivists; the National Park Service; and writers including LaToya Gray-Sparks, Elizabeth McGowan, Michael Q. Rogers, Kelley Libby, Ashley Craig and Harry Kollatz Jr. Christopher Silver's and Benjamin Campbell's books are known here only through others' readings, Kollatz's 2013 article only as the feasibility study cites it, and M. E. Taylor's 1994 thesis only as the study and the plan cite it.

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How this page was made

The text was drafted by Claude for Chris Busse from sources opened while drafting, then checked against them in November 2026. The maps are drawn by Chris with isoscape; the charts are drawn in code from the same data as the maps (`tools/stories/jackson-ward/`). See the artist statement for how Chris works with the tool. Nothing on this page is for sale.

Corrections and changes

- **November 22, 2026.** The stated error of the rebuilt ground was widened to about ±2 m mid-trench and 3 to 4 m or more at its ends, from ±1.5 m and ±3 m, to match the page's own checks. The count now gives how far it moves with the polygon's edge and how much of the polygon lies beyond the traced sheets. The 1952 volume is described as the 1925 survey corrected and reissued. The route section now gives what the 1954 act provides and attributes the choice of route to each source that names it. The island's east end is at about 7th Street, not 8th.

About this PDF

Made from the web page with isoscape's PDF tool, drafted with Claude. Large-screen edition, November 22, 2026, from the page as it stood that day; the page's own note on how it was made is above, unchanged.

The current version, with any later corrections, is at busse.github.io/isoscape/p/jackson-ward.html