

The Visual Impact of Gentrification in Richmond, VA

Contents

I.	Program Description.....	2
a.	Award Levels.....	2
b.	List of Participants.....	2
II.	Narrative.....	2
a.	Enhancing the Humanities.....	2
b.	Environmental Scan.....	3
c.	History of the Project.....	4
d.	Work Plan.....	5
e.	Final Product and Dissemination.....	6
III.	Biographies.....	7
IV.	Appendices.....	7

I. Program Description

A. Award Level

This project is a Level II grant that is seeking \$55,000 to uncover the effects of gentrification in Richmond, Virginia.

B. List of Participants

Amanda Corbosiero, Director
Undergraduate, University of Richmond 2019
B.A., Journalism and Communications

Jason Burkett, Co-Director
B.A., Catawba College
M.P.P., Loyola University Chicago

Kathryn Howell, Co-Director
B.A., Political Science, University of Georgia
M.A., Public Policy, Johns Hopkins University
Ph.D., Community and Regional Planning, University of Texas

Benjamin Teresa, Co-Director
B.S., Chemistry, Davidson College
Masters of Urban Planning and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago
Ph.D., Planning and Policy, Rutgers University

II. Narrative

A. Enhancing the Humanities

Gentrification is the process of repairing and rebuilding homes and businesses in deteriorating areas, such as urban neighborhoods, this results in an influx of middle-class or affluent people and often the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents. Richmond has long standing history as the capital of Virginia, the Confederacy, and a high percentage of black population. Most recently, Richmond has been known for attracting millennials due to the influx of new restaurants, businesses, modern apartment buildings, and has been consistently ranked the last five years as the top 25 cities that millennials gravitate to (Parker, n.p.).

The start of redevelopment in Richmond occurred during the late 1960s when Shockoe Slip was turned into a commercial and entertainment district. Areas like Scott's Addition, an industrial hub, and Jackson Ward, Navy Hill, Church Hill, all predominantly black areas, have seen massive redevelopment projects which have rotated those neighborhoods into sought out places to live. This surge of white-middle class millennials and families causes an influx of taxes and rent which in return causes existing residents to no longer afford living in that area. Studies have

shown that nearly 20 percent of people moving out of revitalizing neighborhoods were displaced (Zuk et al, 28).

This project will be focusing on the time-period of 1970, when redevelopment started to occur in Richmond, and continue to present day. Data will be collected from public record about past, current, and future developments in Richmond. Distressed areas will be located, as well as, income values, and race percentage of neighborhoods. The final data analysis will be of evictions and some interviews will be conducted in order to gain narrative of those forced to relocate from their homes. This information will then be placed on one map; race percentage will be color coded with darker areas showing a higher concentration of black population and lighter areas will show the white population. A heat map will illustrate where redevelopment is occurring, and relocation will be shown through the old place of residence and a line drawn to the new place of residence, accompanying this will be some narratives of those forced to move.

This project looks to address the following questions: 1) Are certain demographic areas being targeted for redevelopment projects? 2) Are their negative impacts of gentrification, though it is highlighted as a positive act by the city? These questions will be answered through the visual components of the map and the information serves intellectual value for students in Richmond, the public, scholars, and those who have garnered a high political standing in the city of Richmond.

Students who enjoy going to new restaurants, bars, and stores in the city will see the double-sided problem that occurs when these businesses open such as local businesses that used to be in these areas declining (Necci, par. 10). The public of Richmond and beyond can see how the price of living will increase, such as rent and taxes, and residents will no longer be able to afford the area. In 2017 a local business bought a building in Brookland Park for \$105,000 and sold it in 2018 for \$250,000 (Platania, par. 7). Scholars will be able to answer the cultural effects that gentrification has on urban areas. Finally, those in public standing in the city of Richmond will also be confronted with the negative effects that gentrification may have on the public rather than just seeing the positive.

Overall, this project will be a significant enhancement to the humanities since it is an extension of cultural studies. This looks at the ways in which culture creates and transforms individual experiences, everyday life, social relations and power. It combines theories in communication, history, and economics, all of which have importance to gentrification. The history of certain neighborhoods in Richmond, the financing for projects as well as the income of residence, and the conversations around gentrification from those in power and those displaced all serve as important context in the field of the humanities.

B. Environmental Scan

There is similar work related to my project on the topic of gentrification, but none focus specifically on Richmond and mapping the issues. I will discuss three that I found applicable to my project, *Mapping the Historic West End: The Digital History of African American Neighborhoods in Charlotte, North Carolina*, *Anti-Eviction Mapping Project*, and *Expansion and Exclusion: A Case Study of Gentrification in Church Hill*.

The Digital History of African American neighborhoods was funded by the NEH and the grant period is from September 2017 until February 2019. This project looks to develop a web app to publish location-based content such as photographs, documents, and oral histories that will then be placed on an interactive map. It focuses on Charlotte, North Carolina which is another city like Richmond which is undergoing significant social change and gentrification. Charlotte has a long standing African American population and it is important to recognize this demographic in relation to gentrification and social change which is why our projects are similar in nature. However, this project plans on developing its own mobile application but for the Richmond project we will be using open-source software that already exists. Another difference is that the *Digital History of African American Neighborhoods in Charlotte* mainly focuses on the history of the city, whereas our project will include some oral narratives of displacement but mainly feature data on demographics, income, and redevelopment projects. This advances the field of study on gentrification in an historically black area because of the depth analysis that will be shown (Smith and Lunsford, n.p.).

The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project is a data-visualization, data-analysis, and story collecting documentation of gentrifying landscapes. It primarily looks at the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, and New York City. This project is most similar to *The Visual Impacts of Gentrification in Richmond* project based on the technology used, however, differs in the nature of the maps. The maps for the Anti-Eviction project are separated into a multitude of areas such as evictions by demographic, relocation, rent prices in relation to income, and stories. For our project, all of these subgroups will be placed onto a single map so the viewer can fully grasp the severity of the issues that revolve around gentrification. This advances the field of study since we understand the importance of showing rather than telling therefore it is important for a multitude of contributing factors related to gentrification is shown on one single map.

The case study on gentrification in Church Hill focuses on one specific neighborhood in Richmond which was historically known for crime rate and predominately African American population, but is now a desired neighborhood to live (Parkhurst, 4). This study looks at the renewal, revitalization, and gentrification that occurred in this area. The main layout features the history of the area and how foundation members of Richmond strategically sought to replace African American tenants with white tenants which successfully lead to a white section of Richmond. Overall, this project only relates to the project I am proposing due to the focus on one neighborhood in Richmond. However, *The Visual Impacts of Gentrification in Richmond* adds more context and values to the topic since it will provide both written and visual components and feature more issues rather than just a historic analysis of one neighborhood that has undergone redevelopment in Richmond.

C. History of the Project

For the project, we will research data that is located at City-Data.com. This provides the preliminary information needed for the different neighborhoods in Richmond for population by race, median household income, percent below poverty level, and the percent of change from current time versus the neighborhood in 2000. This is free public data that will be collected and placed in an interactive map.

The Richmond Government website will be accessed to gather the Master Plans that were adopted in January 2001 by the Planning District. As well as the ArcGIS maps created by Richmond 300 for existing land use and master plan for future land use which took information from the City of Richmond Planning and Development Review (2018) about the different plans for growth in the city. The Master Plan is referenced by city officials, developers, business-owners etc., to understand the city's priorities to land. It is specifically used by developers to figure out hotspots for development. This knowledge is valuable to figure out redevelopment projects that have occurred and will occur in the future.

All this data will then be placed into an ArcGIS interactive map in which we would need an advanced GIS Professional subscription costing \$3,800 per year. Once the map is created this will be public information and open access for everyone.

D. Work Plan

The beginning part of this project will be dedicated to collecting data on demographics such as, race, income and poverty levels. Jason Burkett will be allocated to this section due to his expertise in program evaluation and research. This step is the easiest to access and it will be the shortest phase of the plan since it will be found on City-Data.com.

The next phase will be more research on development and land use in Richmond found both in maps created by Richmond 300 (Richmond300.com) and work plans created by the Planning and Development committee of Richmond (Richmondgov.com). This phase will be extensive research and will be allocated a two-month research period. Director, Amanda Corbosiero will be allocated to this section.

The next phase will be researching evictions in Richmond from the state Judicial Council. The eviction cases through aggregated data from the county courthouses across Richmond will be taken out. We will collaborate with the Campaign to Reduce Evictions and the RVA Eviction Lab to collect as many stories of eviction cases we can get to show relocation and personal narrative. This will be the longest phase and three months will be dedicated and Amanda Corbosiero will be assigned to this.

The final phase will be placing all this data on an interactive map. Race will be represented on the map by variations of red. The darker the red, the higher concentration of black population, the lighter the red the higher concentration of white. Income value will also be color coded, and poverty levels will be shown in percentage when you click on an area. Relocation will be shown through lines starting off at the original home of residence and then where they moved to along with this there will be a narrative accounts. Finally, past development and future plans will be shown with a heat map Kathryn Howell and Benjamin Theresa will be assigned to these two tasks.

There are some slight risks we can run into with this project, due to the amount of court cases collected not all eviction cases will be located properly. To avoid problems in the work

progression we will also use a text analysis to mine out cases related to eviction to ensure accuracy.

The results of this project are intended to highlight the negative effects of gentrification and the need for implementation on redevelopment projects so those of a lesser income value are not being forced to move. Many believe that offering affordable housing options in the same neighborhood will fix this problem, however, there are limited spots available for affordable housing, an application process needs occur, and not everyone gets accepted.

To evaluate the results of project activities we will incorporate a variety of groups from the Richmond area. Campaign to Reduce Evictions is a group in Richmond that shines light on eviction problems in Richmond, inform tenants of resources available to them, and collect eviction stories. Another group, RVA Eviction Lab is housed at VCU and both of our Co-Directors work here. This lab focuses on eviction data and deep research into the qualitative and quantitative aspects of evictions. Both of these groups will be brought in to look at our data on evictions and collaborate to find narratives.

E. Final Product and Dissemination

This project will reach a multitude of people but we first want to impact the Richmond community which is our main target audience. The first way we plan to get this project out is to plan meetings with advocate groups in Richmond. We find that it is important for groups to spread this message to the community rather than us, the creators. Since these groups have a long standing in Richmond and speak for the greater good of the community they have more credibility and reputation in the area.

A group we plan to meet with is Thriving Cities, their mission is to equip communities and institutions with resources to lead change so that all can thrive together. They believe we should address inequities so that there can be a thriving city. RVA Thrives had a community listening process in which neighbors of the Southside of Richmond identified three key issues, one being gentrification. *The Visual Impacts of Gentrification in Richmond* will be presented to this group in a meeting since it sparks interest to their concern. We will bring the key findings and the map so that they can physically see what is going on in the community and find solutions and power within their community.

Another group we plan to meet with is the Initiatives of Change which is a group who looks at the injustices in the world and is committed to ensuring history lessons are not forgotten. The reason this project is important to present to this group is because African American's history's will be wiped in certain community's if redevelopment keeps occurring. The final group we will present this information to is the Campaign to Reduce Evictions which was brought up earlier in the proposal. By presenting our findings to this group they will have more information to expand upon gentrification.

By spreading our message in presentations to individual groups this project will have a larger outreach to the community. Based on the relationships and connections these groups have in Richmond we believe that this project will spread further than just our single impact. On top of

reaching out to groups, this project will have its own website in hopes of updating stories to the map. We will also have a forum section where people in the area can submit their eviction stories if they would like to be added to the map. This is similar to the Campaign to Reduce Evictions website section, however, we are placing this on our website in case community members want their voice to be heard since these submissions will be added to the map.

To ensure this project is accessible to individuals with disabilities such as impaired sight there will be an audible section for it to be read out. This is interactive and requires an individual to click on the sound button to hear the descriptions. We realize this project is interactive and the need for an assistant to the disabled will be required to view the site. This project will be placed online which is open access, however, not everyone has access to computers. This map as well as descriptions and narratives will be made into a pamphlet and located in bins around town. This is to ensure equal access in the city of Richmond to material regardless of economic status and electronics available. The printed-out version will also be made into a thicker pamphlet with braille for those who cannot hear or see. These methods will ensure to the best of our ability that people with disabilities do not feel excluded in viewing the project.

III. Biographies

Amanda Corbosiero is the director for this project. She is a student at the University of Richmond, majoring in Journalism and minoring in Rhetoric and Communications. Her liberal arts background, as well as concern for the humanities, fuels her passion for this project. Her experience in conducting interviews and creating narratives is where her interests and expertise lie.

Kathryn Howell is an assistant professor at VCU Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. She has a bachelor of arts in Political Science from University of Georgia, a master's degree in Public Policy from Johns Hopkins University and a Ph.D. in Community and Regional Planning from the University of Texas. Her expertise lies in affordable housing, community development and gentrification.

Benjamin Teresa is an assistant professor at VCU Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs. He has a bachelor of science in Chemistry from Davidson College, Masters of Urban Planning and Policy from University of Illinois at Chicago, and a Ph.D. in Planning and Policy from Rutgers University. His expertise is in real estate development and finance, community development and organizing, and urban political economy.

Jason Burkett is a research support specialist at VCU. His expertise is in project management, program evaluation and survey research. He has studied how local community organizing groups responded to a perceived increase in decision making power by state and local authorities. He has experience managing the data collection and analysis for student-community engagement at Loyola.

IV. Appendices

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