



THE SHOCKOE PROJECT

LET THE TRUTH BE TOLD



LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL PAVILION A SHOCKOE PROJECT SITE

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

THE MASTERPLAN AND LUMPKIN’S SLAVE JAIL PAVILION

BACKGROUND

The design for Lumpkin’s Slave Jail Pavilion comes out of decades of work by the Richmond Slave Trail Commission and Richmond community. The 2006 and 2008 archaeological investigations of Lumpkin’s Slave Jail site confirmed the presence of archaeological deposits associated with the antebellum slave-trading complex, most notably the deposits of the jail structure itself nearly 15 feet below current grade. Driven by the desire of the community to expose and interpret these deposits, the Lumpkin’s Slave Jail Pavilion will bring visitors down below ground to that historic grade to see **the only indisputable physical evidence of the massive interstate slave trade that occupied Virginia’s capital city.**

PROJECT PURPOSE

One component of the masterplan in Shockoe Valley, Lumpkin’s Slave Jail Pavilion excavates and daylights the deposits of Richmond’s most infamous slave jail. For 143 years, the slave market was buried and its very existence not acknowledged publicly. But in 2008, the complex of Robert Lumpkin, notorious slave trader, was dug out from almost 15 feet of fill and rubble. The pavilion at this site will re-expose these discoveries to the public, shelter them by a semi-conditioned pavilion, and create a space that, through intentional interpretation and multi-level experiences, will no longer let this story go untold.



Drone photo of the 2008 excavation, James River Institute for Archaeology.

HISTORIC CONTEXT

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LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL

THE DEVIL'S HALF-ACRE

“Lumpkin's Jail was owned by Robert Lumpkin, whose compound included lodging for slave traders, a slave holding facility, an auction house, and a residence for his family. Enslaved Africans held for auction at Lumpkin's Jail referred to it as “the Devil's Half Acre.” In 1867, Mary Lumpkin, a Black woman who was his widow, rented the complex to a Christian school, a predecessor institution of Virginia Union University.”

The two-story brick slave pen was approximately forty feet long. The bottom floor was the main jail area, and typically temporarily held men, women and children who were fit to be sold to plantation owners or other slave traders. The jail featured “barred windows, high fences, chained gates opening to the rutted streets, and all seen and smelled through a film of cooking smoke and stench of human excrement.”

At times, it was filled by so many slaves that they were virtually on top of one another, sometimes crammed into one room or floor and lacking toilets and outside access other than a small window. Slaves at the jail often died of disease or starvation, if not from beatings and torture. The nearby market with ready canal and railroad access was used as a slave market, or auctions were held in nearby hotels. Slaves were groomed, fed, and dressed up to be sold at auction, then pushed onto a boat or train to their next destination.

Source: **Richmond Slave Trail Markers**, *Built by Blacks: African American Architecture and Neighborhoods in Richmond*, and [Encyclopedia Virginia](#)

Digital reconstruction of Lumpkin's Slave Jail complex by BAM Architects, 2011. Source: BAM Architects

TIMELINE

- MAY—JUNE 1830**
The slave trader Bacon Tait purchases three thirty-foot-wide lots on Wall Street, in the Shockoe Bottom district of Richmond.
- JULY 6, 1833**
Bacon Tait sells three lots on Wall Street, in the Shockoe bottom district of Richmond, to Lewis A. Collier. The structures are worth about \$400.
- NOVEMBER 27, 1844**
The Bank of Virginia sells the lots to Robert Lumpkin. He establishes a business catering to slave traders, including a so-called jail to confine slaves waiting for sale.
- 1850s**
Robert Lumpkin buys three additional lots adjacent to the three he already owns on Wall Street, in the Shockoe Bottom district of Richmond.
- MID- TO LATE 1854**
Anthony Burns spends four months confined at Lumpkin's Jail, in Richmond, awaiting sale.
- 1866**
Robert Lumpkin dies in Richmond.
- MAY 1867**
Mary Lumpkin, the African American widow of Robert Lumpkin, leases the lot to the Reverend Nathaniel Colver, who seeks to found a Baptist seminary. The first classes are held in Lumpkin's Jail.
- 1873**
Mary Lumpkin sells her Richmond property, including the former Lumpkin's jail, to Andrew Jackson Ford and his wife, Mary Lucy Ford. The jail will be demolished sometime in the next three years.
- 1892**
Andrew Jackson Ford and his wife sell the property that once was the site of Lumpkin's Jail to John Chamblin and James H. Scott, who establish the Richmond Iron Works.
- EARLY 1920s**
By this time, the Seaboard Air Line Railway has erected a large freight depot on the Richmond property that was once the site of Lumpkin's Jail, a slave-holding pen.
- LATE 1950s**
The western part of the lots that once were the site of Lumpkin's Jail, a slave-holding pen in Richmond, is buried during construction of the Richmond and Petersburg Turnpike.
- 2006 AND 2008**
Archaeological excavations and investigations into the site of Lumpkin's Jail, a slave-holding pen in Richmond, are conducted.

COMMUNITY VISION

ENGAGEMENT AND PROPOSALS

Since the creation of the Richmond Slave Trail Commission, which was tasked with preserving and presenting the history of slavery in Richmond, the community's involvement in developing and telling this history and story has been powerful. Below is a timeline of many of the masterplans, proposals, workshops, and engagement work that have engaged with the site or this story.

- 2010

MASTERPLAN PROPOSAL

Stockton Clay Architects
- 2013

BASEBALL STADIUM PROPOSALS
- 2014

MASTERPLAN PROPOSAL

BAM Architects
- 2015

A COMMUNITY PROPOSAL FOR SHOCKOE BOTTOM

Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality
- NOVEMBER 2015

RICHMOND SPEAKS ABOUT LUMPKIN'S JAIL SITE

Richmond Speaks
- 2016

A COMMUNITY PROPOSAL FOR SHOCKOE BOTTOM MEMORIAL PARK

The Center for Design Engagement
- 2017 - 2018

LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL/DEVIL'S HALF ACRE PROJECT

SmithGroup
- 2019

RICHMOND NATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM AT THE LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL SITE

SmithGroup
- MARCH 2023

ORIENTATION AND INTERPRETATION WORKSHOP

Shockoe Project Team
- MAY 2023

CURATORIAL WORKSHOP

Shockoe Project Team
- OCTOBER 2023

[SHOCKOE SMALL AREA PLAN](#)

City of Richmond
- FEBRUARY 2024

[SHOCKOE PROJECT MASTER PLAN](#)

Baskervill

A) RICHMONDERS WANT A PLACE THAT IS AUTHENTIC — THAT TELLS THE WHOLE STORY, THAT COMMUNICATES REAL EMOTIONS AND ALLOWS PEOPLE TO EXPERIENCE WHAT IT WAS LIKE AT LUMPKIN’S JAIL SITE.

- “This is the untold secret truth. This is real. This is the beginning.”

Community Participant, Richmond Tenant Organization (RTO)
- “Give the raw version, not the textbook version. Don’t downplay it.”

Student, Armstrong High School
- “In 2020, I would hope to take my little brother to not necessarily a museum but a historical site. One with authenticity and is informative like no other.”

Student, Huguenot High School
- “Invoke emotions, not just the head but the heart.”

Community Participant, Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School
- “It should be immersive, interactive/immersive. Not just renderings.”

Community Participant, Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School

- “Capture the experience of the enslaved.”

Community Participant, Franklin Military Academy
- “Seventeen years ago there was very little mention of racial history – but identifying the Slave Trail changed this pattern. Lumpkin’s gives an opportunity to tell the horrible story of that history.”

Community Participant, Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School
- “Black on black – disrespect of human life among race. School dropouts. If our children could touch base with the reality of how our people were locked up and caged like animals. The impact. Take people back. Feel and touch and walk around. It will enter spirits. You have to go through it.”

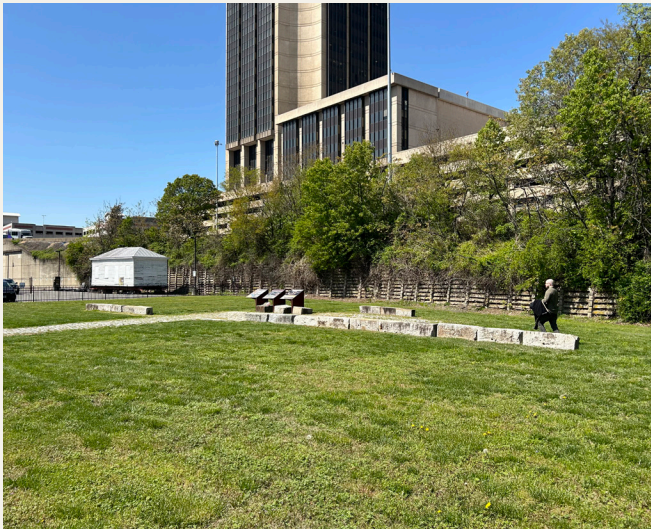
Community Participant, Richmond Tenant Organization

Community members’ input, from [Richmond Speaks About Lumpkin’s Jail Site: Draft Report on Community Engagement](#)

EXISTING CONDITIONS

SITE PHOTOS

THE SITE TODAY



EXISTING SITE

SITE TODAY



DESIGN

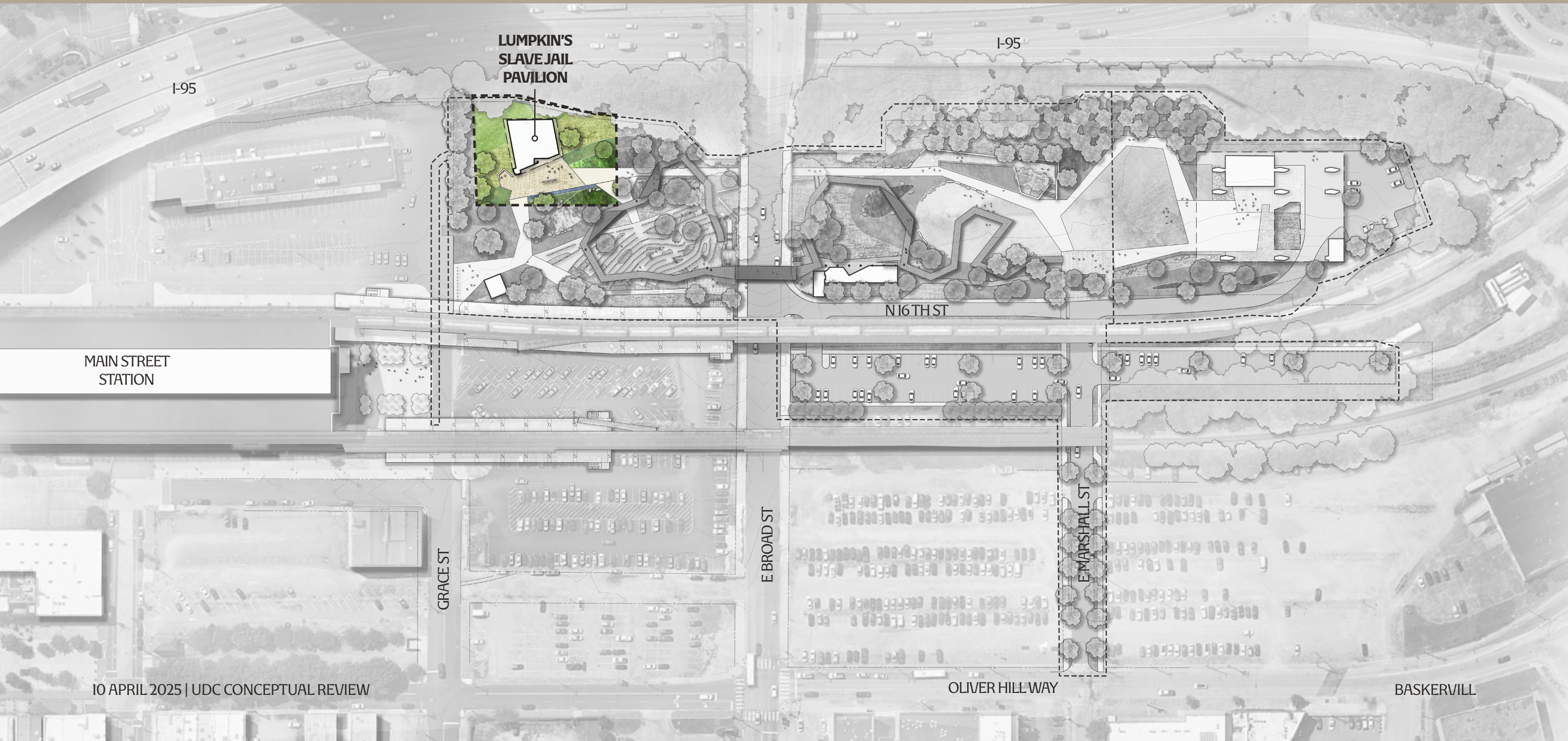
LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL PAVILION

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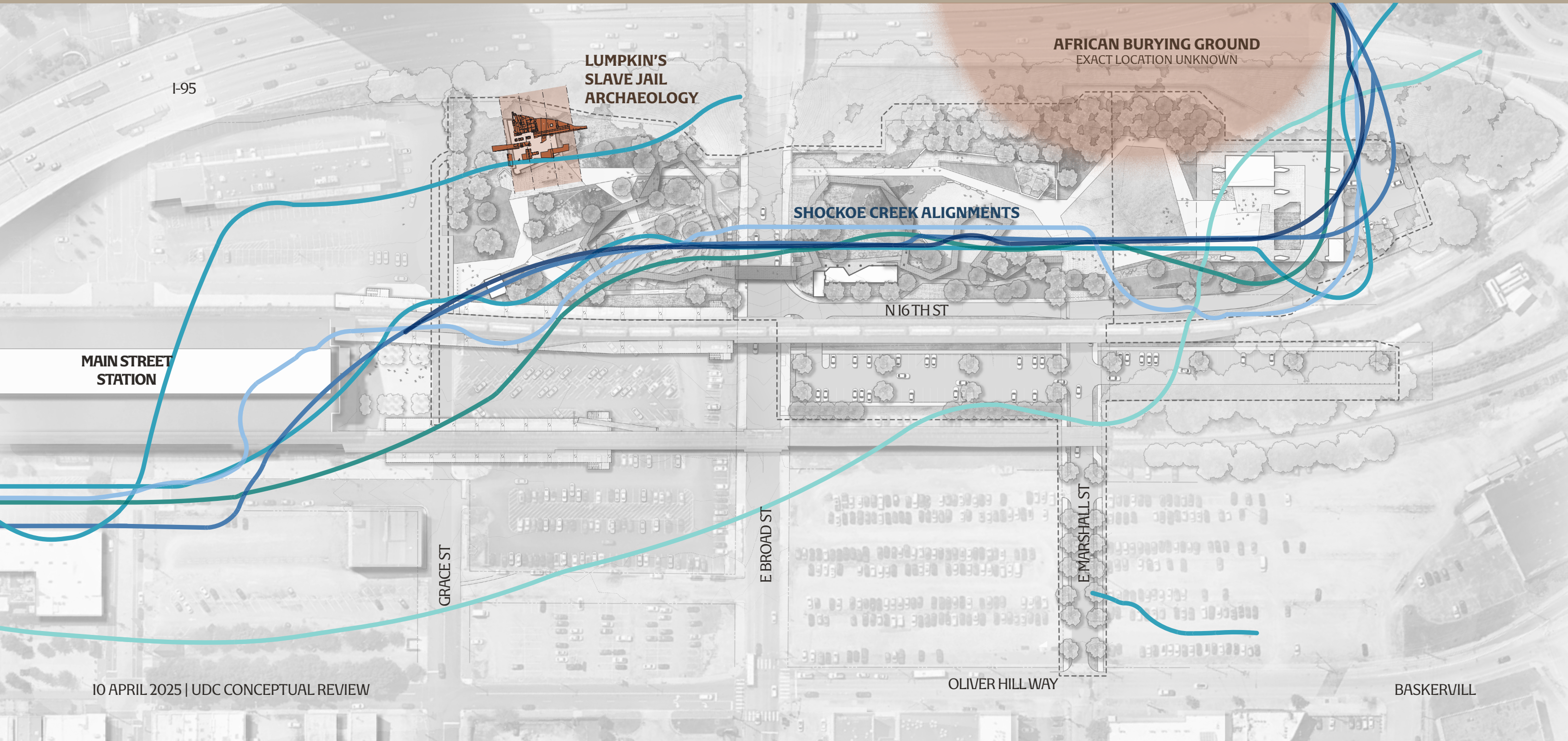
SITE PLAN

PAVILION AND SURROUNDING SITE WORK



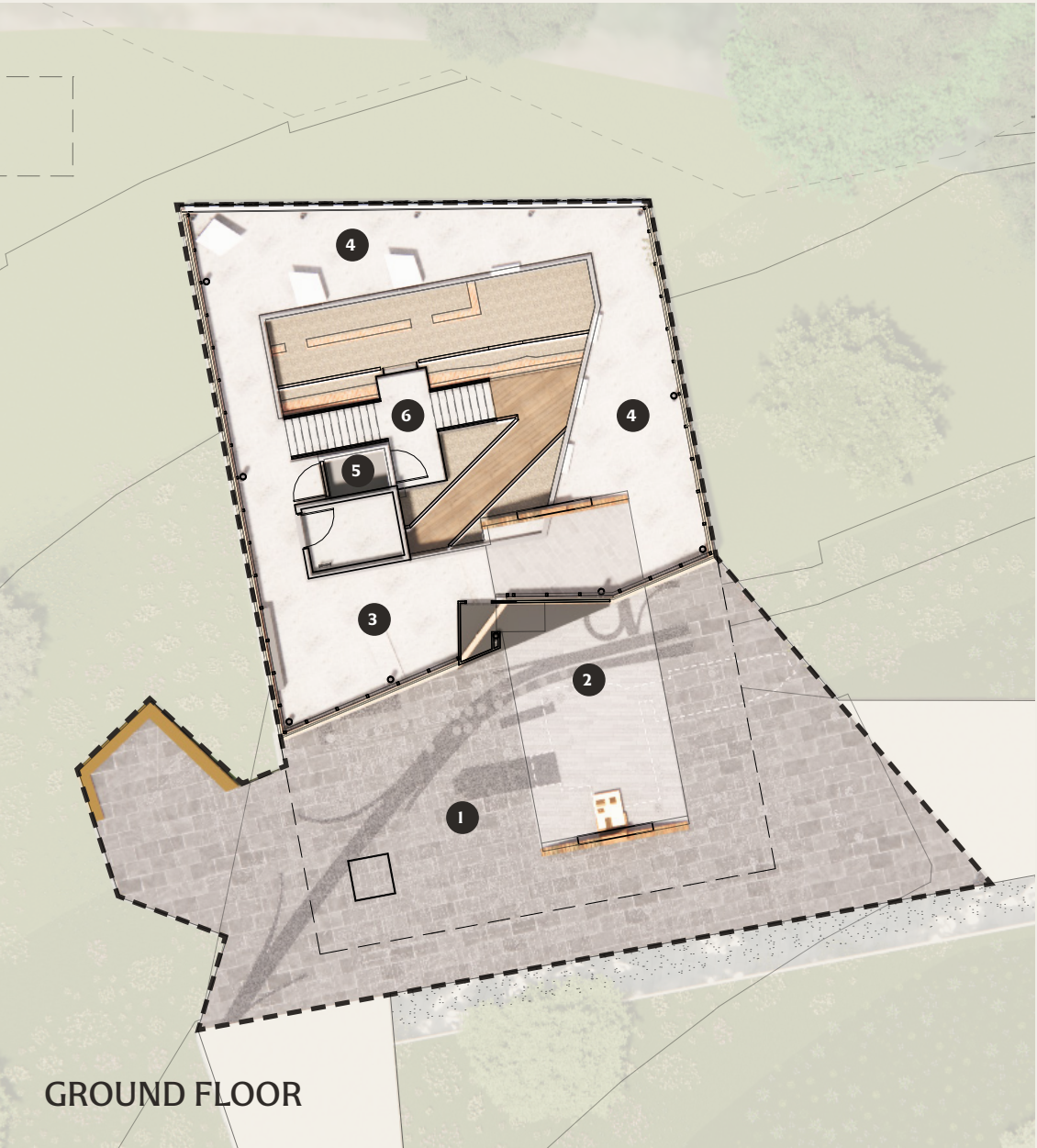
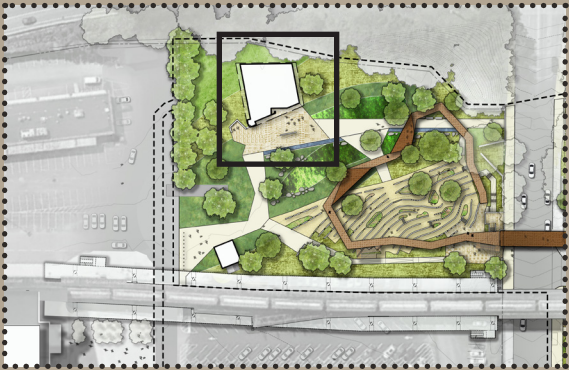
HISTORIC ALIGNMENTS

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1809 YOUNG MAP | 1877 BEERS MAP |
| 1835 BATES MAP | 1905 SANBORN MAP |
| 1856 ELLYSON MAP | 1925 SANBORN MAP |

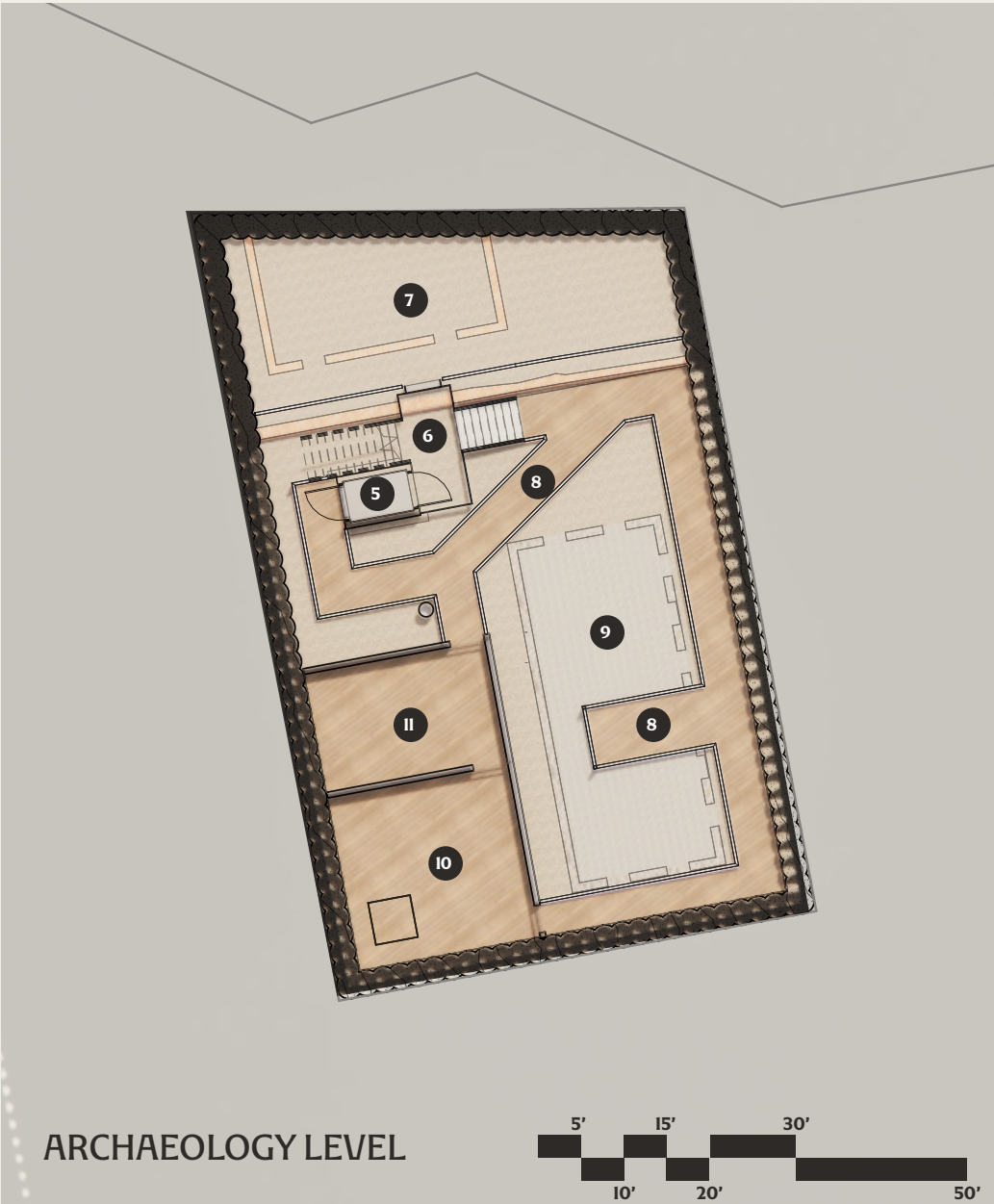


LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL PAVILION

FLOOR PLANS



GROUND FLOOR

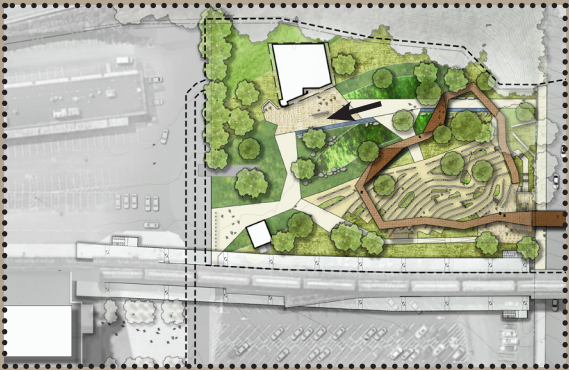


ARCHAEOLOGY LEVEL

- 1 ENTRY PLAZA
- 2 INTERPRETIVE FOOTPRINT OF THE THIRD LEVEL OF LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL
- 3 ENTRY THEATER
- 4 MEZZANINE EXHIBIT SPACE
- 5 ADA ACCESSIBLE LIFT
- 6 STAIRS WITH LOOKOUT LANDING
- 7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS OF LUMPKIN'S COMPLEX UPPER LEVEL
- 8 ELEVATED WALKWAY
- 9 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS OF LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL FOUNDATIONS
- 10 REFLECTION SPACE
- 11 EXHIBIT SPACE

LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL PAVILION

ENTRY PLAZA



LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL PAVILION

ENTRY



FUNDING AND SCHEDULE

FUNDING AND SCHEDULE

LUMPKIN'S SLAVE JAIL PAVILION

Supported by allocated funding from the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia, Lumpkin's Slave Jail Pavilion and the surrounding landscape is set to break ground in 2026.

The Shockoe Institute is already underway. **Lumpkin's Slave Jail Pavilion is the next step.**



