



**National Trust for  
Historic Preservation**  
*Save the past. Enrich the future.*



**Preservation Virginia**

December 2, 2020

Mr. Rodney M. Poole, Esquire, Chair, and  
Members of the Richmond Planning Commission  
900 E. Broad St., Room 511  
Richmond, VA 23219

**Re: Ordinance No. 2020-240 – Historic Shockoe Hill African Burying  
Ground**

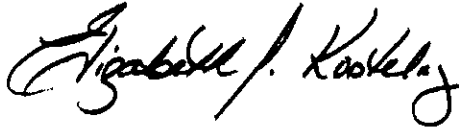
Dear Mr. Poole and Members of Richmond Planning Commission:

Preservation Virginia and the National Trust for Historic Preservation write to support passage of Ord. No. 2020-240, which would authorize the City of Richmond to acquire property at 1305 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street for the purpose of preserving Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground. From 1816 to 1879, this land served as the city's municipal graveyard for residents of African descent. Research suggests that there were more than 22,000 people interred at the site, which would make this one of the largest burial grounds for free people of color and enslaved people in the United States. We respectfully request that you approve the ordinance and move forward to ensure that this property is transferred into public ownership and sensitively preserved.

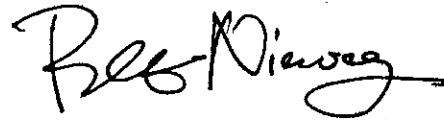
Richmond is home to a host of significant historic properties that tell the story of some of our nation's most difficult histories. For years, the city has taken strides to broaden the range of historic properties that are preserved and interpreted for the public, including through projects like Richmond's Slave Trail and the ongoing planning and development processes around Shockoe Bottom. Acquiring the land on 5<sup>th</sup> Street would further support these efforts to preserve, acknowledge, and reckon with the history of racial discrimination and erasure of people, communities, and their histories. We believe that property associated with the Shockoe Hill African Burying Ground should be preserved and interpreted to meet the needs and vision of Richmond's African American and descendant community.

Following acquisition of the property, alongside members of the African American and descendant community, the National Trust and Preservation Virginia stand ready to lend support to this important effort. Thank you for considering our views and for your public service in support of the City of Richmond.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth S. Kostelny  
Chief Executive Officer  
Preservation Virginia



Robert Nieweg  
Vice President Preservation Services & Outreach  
National Trust for Historic Preservation

Cc: The Honorable Levar Stoney, Mayor  
Matthew Ebinger, PDR  
Kimberly M. Chen, DED