



HOPE
FOR A
FUTURE

Church Hill North Better Block Report



Project Team and Sponsors

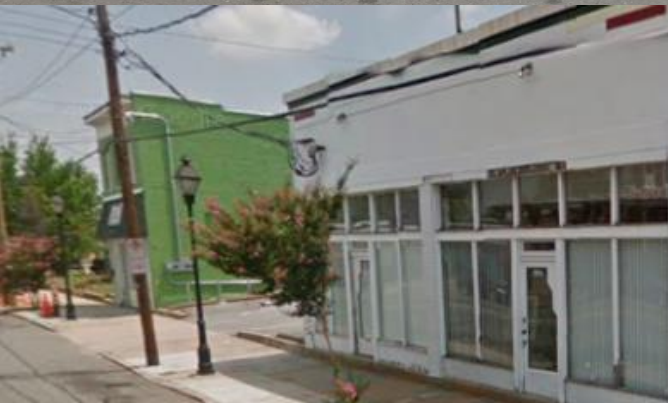


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Overview



A project that temporarily transformed two blocks of North 25th Street in Church Hill North neighborhood of Richmond, VA into a model active community. Team Better Block conducted a series of workshops to build pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, active public spaces and pop-up shops with the community.

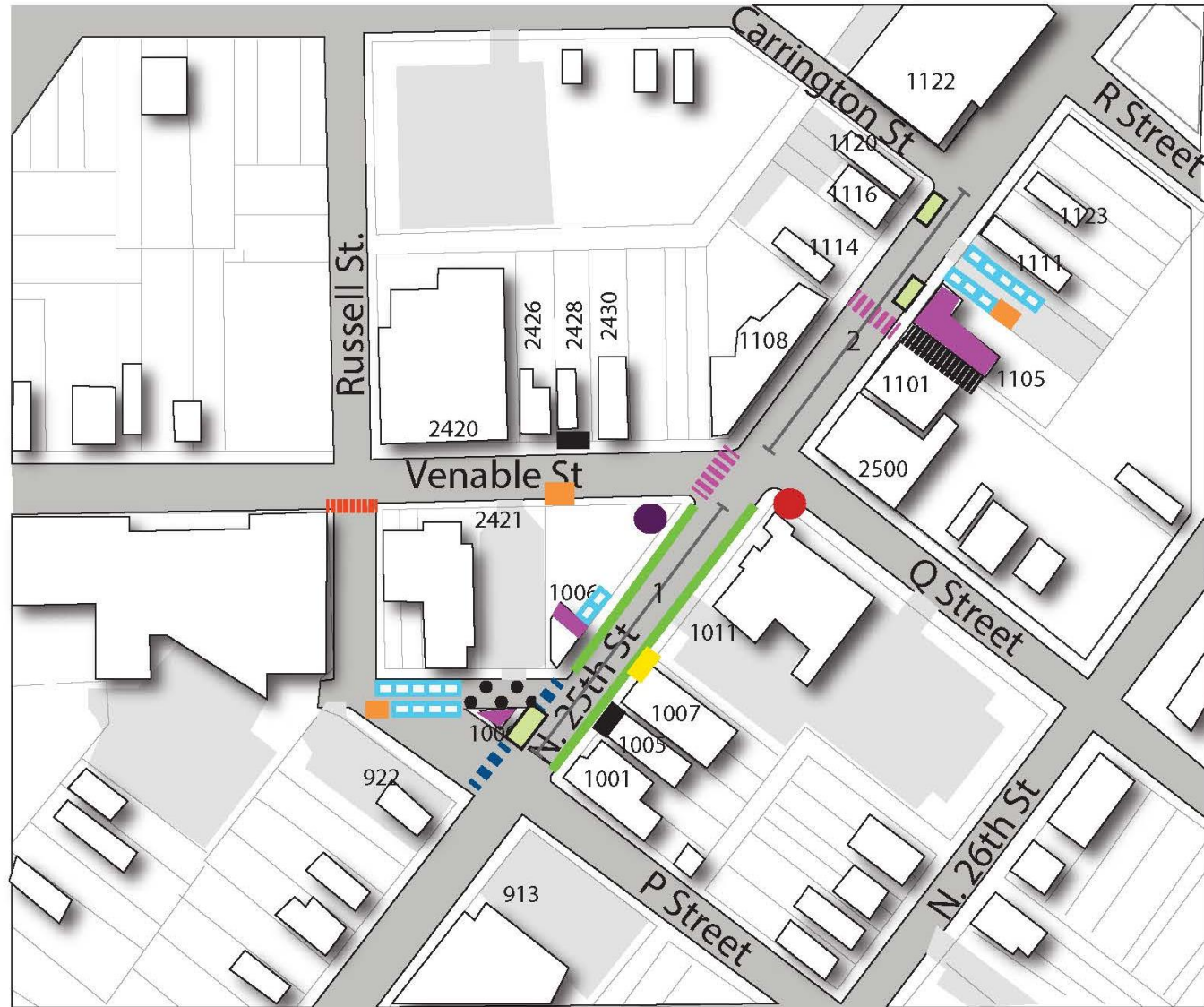
Community Walk




Richmond's Better Block targeted a commercial intersection along North 25th Street in the Church Hill North neighborhood. The initiative began in March, with a community walk and discussion that asked residents what changes they'd like to see on the block. The walk informed the build plan on the next page.

Church Hill North Better Block Build Plan

-  Bike Lanes
-  Pop Up Shops
-  Planter Boxes
-  Market Tents
-  Food Truck
-  Decorative Crosswalk
-  Parklet
-  Cafe Seating
-  Chalk Board Wall
-  Info Kiosk
-  Public Art
-  Fruit Stand
-  Activated Alley
-  Road Closure Barricades



Build Workshops



Better Block is a Texas-based organization that has worked in dozens of cities around the country. They use a placemaking method called tactical urbanism, which brings residents together to create rapid, temporary improvements. Through the process, neighbors meet each other, share skills, tools and resources, and the community builds social capital. In the lead-up to the Richmond project, dozens participated in hands-on workshops like how to build pallet furniture and make a street more pedestrian friendly. Those skills were applied directly to the block, with newly created seating to encourage socializing, and bike lanes and a mid-street crosswalk to calm traffic.



Tamera Tazewell: *The classes have been awesome. The pallet class was awesome, we made benches and chairs and everyone's been helpful, I just like the area and I think it's going to turn-around for the better and we're having a good time out here.*



In just three months, the efforts of an estimated 100 volunteers culminated in a two-day event that showcased building improvements, local artists and entrepreneurs, and ways to make the area more safe and welcoming.

FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 2014

3 PM. TO 5 PM. EAST END ECONOMIC SUMMIT

ROBINSON THEATER COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER // 2003 Q STREET

5 PM. TO 9 PM. CHURCH HILL NORTH BETTER BLOCK PROJECT

FOOD TRUCK COURT FEATURING THE DON SECOURS CLASS A ROLL MOBILE KITCHEN AND OTHER LOCAL VENDORS

STREET PERFORMERS FROM THE GREAT BUSK AT THE TEMPORARY OUTDOOR THEATER // N 25TH STREET AND VENABLE STREET

POP-UP SHOPS

FARMERS MARKET PLAZAS

ENHANCED STREETSCAPES INCLUDING PARKLETS, NEW TEMPORARY CROSSWALKS AND BIKE LANES AND PUBLIC GATHERING SPACES

PUBLIC ART INSTALLATIONS THROUGHOUT THE BETTER BLOCK AREA

8 PM. TO 10 PM. OUTDOOR FAMILY THEATER

SHOWING DISNEY'S ANIMATED HIT 'FRODO' // N 25TH STREET AND NINE MILE ROAD

44 1100 N 25TH STREET

CHURCH HILL ALLEY MARKET

THE CLOTHES BACK SECOND HAND SHOP PROVIDING NEW AND GENTLY USED QUALITY APPAREL, ACCESSORIES AND HOME FURNISHINGS

BRITANY ADAMS' THRIFT BOUTIQUE SHOP FEATURING

ANTIQUES, ART AND HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

THE URBAN LIFESTYLE CLOTHING AND ART WORK

EMPOWERING THE MODERN MAN & WOMAN

CHURCH HILL ACTIVITIES AND TUTORING

MOCHAMIA'S WORKSHOP WOODWORKING AND

SCREEN PRINTED T SHIRTS

THE STEEL GRANT PROGRAM EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

FOR BUSINESSES LOOKING TO LOCATE TO CHURCH

HILL & SURROUNDING AREA

SHAMMA WHITE VINTAGE & CONTEMPORARY

CLOTHING AND ACCESSORIES

USA HUTCHINSON CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

DON SECOURS ACTIVATION TENT

OCEAN GROCERY

44 2430 VENABLE STREET

44 25TH & VENABLE ST

VENABLE STREET PLAZA

HITTY BRITNEY HAND DIPPED ICE

CREAM AND ROASTED PEANUTS

BAG & BONES BICYCLE COOPERATIVE

BICYCLE REPAIR, MAINTENANCE,

EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

TYVIE STAMMACK CUSTOM MADE

HULA HOOPS

OUTDOOR STAGE WITH LIVE

PERFORMANCES THROUGHOUT

THE WEEKEND

44 1100 N 25TH STREET

URBAN ART OASIS

ORAL HISTORY LIVE ACTION DRAL

HISTORY PROJECT TO RECORD

THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF THE

BUILDINGS

BARGE WORKSHOP TWO DAY HIP

HOP WORKSHOP

44 1100 N 25TH STREET

HERSTORY REPEATED

THRIFT AND CONVENIENCE STORE

FRESH MARKET SHOP OFFERING

FRUIT, WATER, JUICE, NOSTALGIC

CANDY AND NUTS, PROVIDING

COMMUNITY EDUCATION CLASSES

44 2500 Q STREET

COMMUNITY MESSAGE BOARD

ENCOURAGING AND ENRICHING DIALOGUE

BETWEEN COMMUNITY MEMBERS

44 1000 N 25TH STREET

25TH ST MAKER SPACE

UNICA BRISTER FINE ART & CRAFTS

ARTIST GALLERY AND SHOP

APRIL SCOTT HAND MADE GIRL'S

DRESSES, HOODED CAPES, SKIRTS

AND PANTS

44 1000 N 25TH STREET

JEWELS GENERAL CONTRACTORS

44 1000 N 25TH STREET

PLAZA MARKET

FARMER'S MARKET COLORFUL

PRODUCE, FRESH DAIRY,

BAKED GOODS, SKIN CARE

AND HANDMADE CRAFTS,

AMONG OTHER SEASONAL

AND SPECIALTY ITEMS

44 P ST & BURTON ST

P STREET PLAZA

CLARE BEBBY HAND PAINTED WOODEN

BEAD NECKLACES & KNITTED FLOWERS

EMILY WARRIOR VARIOUS GOODS

FOR DYOLISTS FROM RECLAIMED

MATERIALS

MILE BARN CLOTHING & JEWELRY,

PLUS ART ACTIVITIES FOR THE

WHOLE FAMILY

INDUSTRIAL VISUAL ARTS CENTER

OF RICHMOND PRESENTS

PROJECTS, WORKSHOPS & DEMOS

SHIRAZ MARRIOTT CREATIVE DREAM

CRAPTS CUSTOM MADE SPORT

CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

SHEET PELLETIER JEWELRY & SCARVES

NEW NORMAL COO FRIENDLY AMERICAN

GROWN AND SEWN TEES, HOODIES,

YOGA WEAR & JEWELRY

DON SECOURS ACTIVATION TENT

44 1000 N 25TH STREET

PLAZA MARKET

FARMER'S MARKET COLORFUL

PRODUCE, FRESH DAIRY,

BAKED GOODS, SKIN CARE

AND HANDMADE CRAFTS,

AMONG OTHER SEASONAL

AND SPECIALTY ITEMS

SATURDAY, JUNE 14, 2014

7:30 A.M. WALK-UP REGISTRATION FOR 5K

9 A.M. TO 3 PM. CHURCH HILL NORTH BETTER BLOCK PROJECT DAY 2

9 A.M. FREE INAUGURAL BETTER BLOCK 5K // INTERSECTION OF N

25TH STREET AND P STREET

FOOD TRUCK COURT

10 A.M. PARTNERSHIP FOR SMARTER GROWTH COMMUNITY WALK AND

TALK // BEGINS AT EAST END PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1200 N 25TH STREET

10:30 A.M. TO NOON MUSICAL PERFORMANCES BY LOCAL ARTISTS

NOON: GRASS BAND // OUTDOOR STAGE AT N 25TH STREET AND

VENABLE STREET

1 PM TO 2 PM MUSICAL PERFORMANCES BY LOCAL ARTISTS ON

GRASS // OUTDOOR STAGE AT N 25TH STREET AND VENABLE STREET

POP-UP SHOPS

FARMERS MARKET PLAZAS

ENHANCED STREETSCAPES INCLUDING PARKLETS, NEW TEMPORARY

CROSSWALKS AND BIKE LANES AND PUBLIC GATHERING SPACES

PUBLIC ART INSTALLATIONS THROUGHOUT THE BETTER BLOCK AREA

5 Pop-up Shops

2 Parklets

650 Feet of cycle track

Over 100 Volunteers

3000 SQ feet of new public space

6 existing business storefronts remodeled w/ \$1300 grants

Capital One Micro Grants Various Locations on North 25th Street



Pam Crews: By Capital One and the Better Block project coming in, it's given us a chance to paint the building, redo the storefront and the glass, it made it so much better, it gave it an uplift.

Crews was one of five property owners who received a \$1300 grant from Capital One to fix up the outside of their buildings.


Five Pop-Up Shops Various Locations on North 25th Street




Jacole Thomas: *This is kind of a depressed area if you will and I thought it was something positive and it really, really has been. I'm re-energized because being an entrepreneur can be hard, it can be discouraging. This is good, this puts me back to where I knew I wanted to be, to realign my vision. So I just think it's a great project.*

Community Fab Lab

1105 N. 25th Street



Richmond's Better Block also emphasized local talent through an open air art studio in the large brick courtyard of the upcoming coffee shop Miracles. There, painters worked on murals sized to fit in windows previously boarded up with weathered plywood.



David Marion: They wanted to get a collection of artists out to help enlighten, inspire, bring some inspiration to the area. We were brought together as joint community of artists to help out with the effort and the community, which is really important.

Mural North 25th Street



Other artists included Sir James Thornhill, Hamilton Glass, Latasha Dunston and Ed Trask, who independently sought permission from a property owner to transform the side of a brick building. Already painted mossy green, it became the canvas for Trask's large piece depicting a youth playing the violin, a blue bird perched on the top of bow.

New Streetscape North 25th Street



Michael Wynn: *What this event did is bring out the diversity that was already in the neighborhood, it was just everybody was in their own corner. There's a lot of demographics in this neighborhood, rich, black, white and poor so this event brought everybody out.*

Activate and Invest



Along with a 5k run/walk hosted by Sports Backers, local leaders also held the East End Economic Development Summit. The city has been working on revitalization plans for the larger area for years, investing in the new MLK Middle School, library renovations and healthy food access. Bon Secours Community Hospital says it's also committed to the physical, social and economic health of the East End. The healthcare organization plans to build a "Center for Healthy Communities" and a medical office building which officials say will create dozens of new jobs. And they've allocated \$300,000 in grants to small businesses and start-ups in the neighborhood.

Public Plaza: North 25th Street



A vacant lot featuring a giant sculpture spelling out the word “love” became a **Public Plaza** for the diverse crowd. On a grassy area, youth tossed a beach ball and swung inside hula hoops while listening to local musicians No BS! Brass Band. Many other improvements were made to public spaces and the street.

Parklet

1105 North 25th Street



A **parklet** is a small space serving as an extension of the sidewalk to provide amenities and green space for people using the street. It is typically the size of several parking spaces. Parklets typically extend out from the sidewalk at the level of the sidewalk to the width of the adjacent parking space

First divided cycle track in Richmond: North 25th Street



A **cycle track** is a form of cycling infrastructure consisting of marked lanes, tracks, shoulders and paths designated for use by cyclists and from which motorized traffic is generally excluded. The term includes bike lanes, cycle tracks, separated bike lanes, road shoulders and side paths located within a road right-of-way.

Crosswalks and Bicycle Markings: North 25th Street



The Better Block allows for innovation and in this project a buffered bicycle lane used green skip markings to highlight an approaching driveway and vinyl colorful markings for a crosswalk. These and other improvements led to quantifiable changes to the safety and livability of the block.

Metrics: North 25th Street

10% decrease in average decibel level

Average noise levels on N 25th Street measure 65db, which is louder than a typical conversation. During Better Block ambient noise decreased to 58db due to parklets, café and pop-up spaces.

30% decrease in average speeds

Average speeds decreased from 20 mph to 14 mph during Better Block, which significantly reduces the risk of fatality.



Before/After Perceptions: North 25th Street



Most like the history, barbershop, and potential of the area.

Most feel the area is safe, but needs:
To be cleaned, more police, more light and businesses that activate the street with food and neighborhood services.

What is missing?
More police, lighting, access to healthy food and activities for children.

What would make you walk or bike more?
More destinations to walk to and clean up area.



Does the area feel safer? **100%** Said Yes!
More people and activities make it feel safer.

What would make it even safer?
More police presence, program the public spaces and keep the cycle tracks.

What is missing?
More retail, restaurants and a grocery store were the most mentioned along with programming of public spaces with events.

What would make you walk or bike more?:
More cycle tracks and parklets.

Recommendations: North Church Hill Merchants Association



Association:

Starting with the property owners and businesses that participated in the Better Block develop a partnership between them and the Robinson Theater to program the area with events at least once a quarter. Build off this doing model with the formation of a formal merchants association after one year of loose affiliation.

Recommendation: North 25th Street



Clean It:

Multiple property and business owners began cleaning and repairing buildings during the better block! This indicates a strong perception change in the area and appetite for revitalization.

City: Conduct a free building permit month once yearly to aid in building repair and upgrades.

Private: Assist owners with design and continue storefront grants. Also, the roll-off dumpster was a big hit. In conjunction with the free permit month, stage two free dumpsters.

Recommendation: North 25th Street



Activate It:

Make the Better Block and 5k an annual event! The combination of community performances, food trucks, pop-up shops, bicycle lanes and placemaking created a lively scene. It allows the community to continually test improvements, build-momentum and advertise the budding destination of Church Hill North.

Recommendations: North 25th Street



City of Richmond: Use **cycle tracks** in the City's Bicycle Master Plan and integrate North 25th Street into the network.

Community: Advocate for wheelchairs and scooters to use cycle tracks with proper signage.

Private: Advance crowdfunding and public – private partnerships to fund infrastructure.

Recommendations: Church Hill North Fab Lab

Community Fab-Lab:

A **fab lab** (*fabrication laboratory*) is a small-scale workshop offering (personal) digital fabrication. A fab lab is generally equipped with an array of flexible computer controlled tools that cover several different length scales and various materials, with the aim to make "almost anything".

Owner: Consider hosting a Fab Lab on North 25th Street.

City: Support a zoning change that allows for small scale manufacturing, gathering, housing, retail and restaurant.

Private: Incentivize and fund the machines, materials, build-out and first year operating costs.



Recommendations: North 25th Street

City: Create a policy and incentive package to convert parking spaces into **parklets** and bicycle parking spaces on North 25th Street as a pilot project for entire city.

Private: host a competition for parklet design and award construction grants.



Recommendations: 1006 North 25th Street



Pop-up and Public Space:

Property owner: use the space to develop a series of pop-up businesses that activate the building and adjacent vacant lot at least once a quarter.

Private: Continue grants for pop-up shops.

City: Loosen rules for temporary certificates of occupancy and purchase adjacent vacant lot and allow for food trucks and community markets. Building a permanent stage and adding public art should be a public-private partnership.

Recommendations: Walking Tours

Tours:

During events, local REALTORS®, members of Historic Richmond Foundation, City of Richmond Economic and Community Development should host walking tours of vacant and underused properties aimed at attracting potential investors.



Recommendations: Development Strategy



Block by Block:

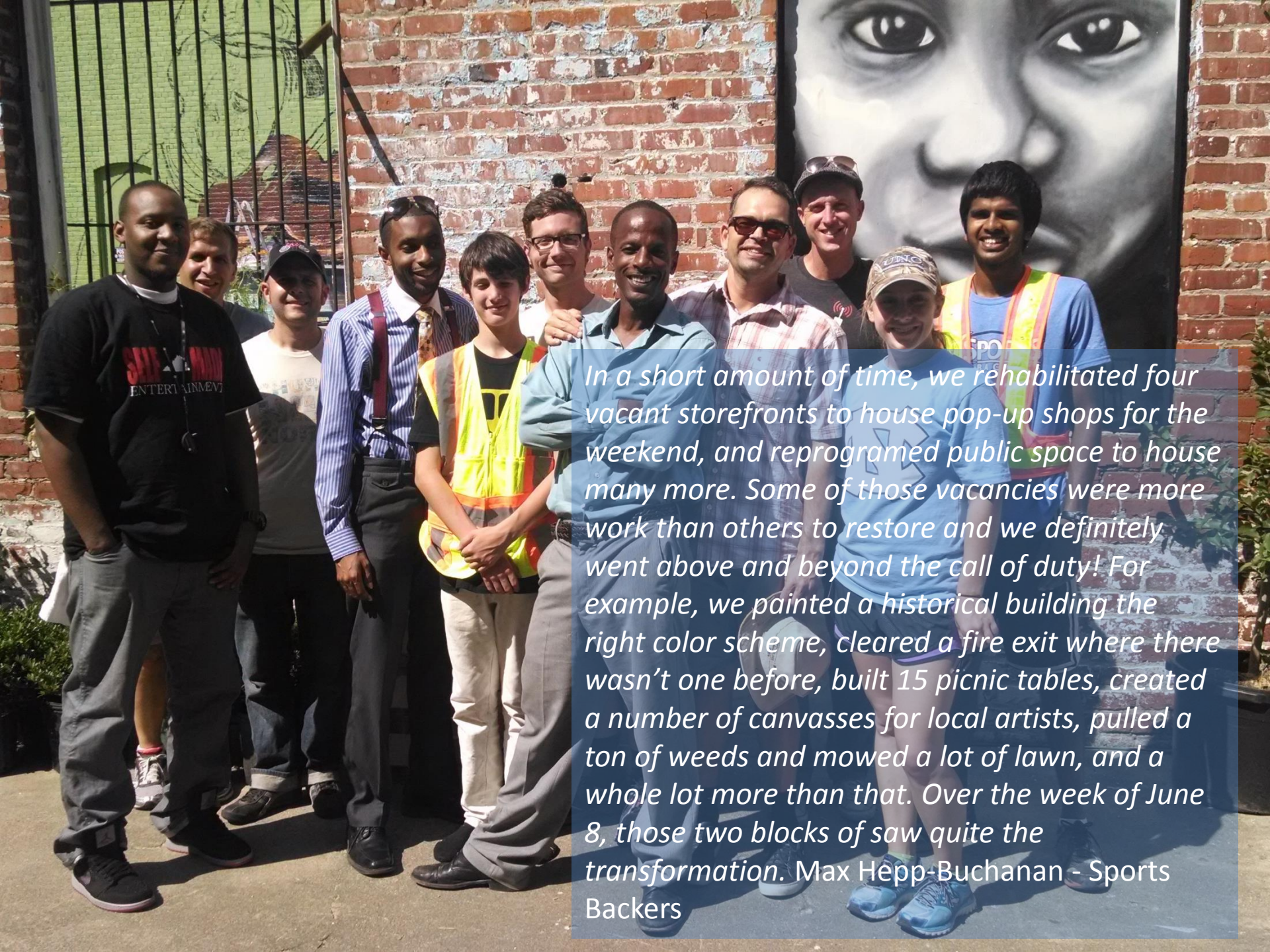
Capital One, Bon Secours, the Richmond Association of REALTORS®, DaVita, the Sports Backers, Councilmember Newbille, and many other people and organizations invested significant time and resources to make permanent changes to the area. Several investors and property management firms were there, checking out the vacant buildings and speaking with the property owners about possibilities. In short, it is going to take East End people and new people from outside of the area to revitalize Church Hill North.

Recommendations: Next Steps



Action:

Schedule a meeting of the potential Merchants Association (better block businesses and property owners/ Robinson Theater) and create an action list based on this report's recommendations. Don't meet again until progress is made (don't over meet).



In a short amount of time, we rehabilitated four vacant storefronts to house pop-up shops for the weekend, and reprogramed public space to house many more. Some of those vacancies were more work than others to restore and we definitely went above and beyond the call of duty! For example, we painted a historical building the right color scheme, cleared a fire exit where there wasn't one before, built 15 picnic tables, created a number of canvasses for local artists, pulled a ton of weeds and mowed a lot of lawn, and a whole lot more than that. Over the week of June 8, those two blocks of saw quite the transformation. Max Hepp-Buchanan - Sports Backers