



JUSTICE & SUSTAINABILITY ASSOCIATES

Engagement, Consensus & Land-Use Decision-Making

About Justice and Sustainability Associates (JSA) and Richmond, VA

Three things to understand about JSA are its concern, confidence, and composure. The company's vision statement is, *"We envision the creation of technologically smart, culturally competent, environmentally secure, economically just, moral, humane "beloved communities" across the world."*

The company has been unapologetic in pursuing that vision and all it implies. JSA's introduction to Richmond's places and people took place through its participation in the award-winning Hull Street Corridor project as a member of the Rhodeside and Harwell team. The Hull Street project provided an opportunity to learn about regional/local politics, economic opportunities, physical assets and contradictions, emerging demographics, unarticulated fears, and strong desires for progress.

The next collaboration JSA had with Richmond occurred against the backdrop of Virginia Commonwealth University and its role as, perhaps, Richmond's most important downtown developer – a remarkable achievement and status. The opportunity emerged when the new University president moved to "do the right thing" by the human remains of pre-Civil War African American residents discarded in an old well after use as anatomy class cadavers on the former Medical College of Virginia.

For two years, JSA worked on the East Marshall Street Well project to produce a series of "community consultations" initially conceived of by a multi-stakeholder planning committee of political, community and academic leaders. Later in its evolution, "the Well" project led to the convening of a Family Representative Council that stood in as the family for the unknown people whose corpses had been so cruelly disrespected. Those "consultations" introduced to Richmond residents the methodology that JSA grew while working in collaboration with the principals of Public Engagement Associates as some of the senior staff of the award-winning deliberative democracy organization, America Speaks.

Visitors to JSA's website typically comment on a few components they find striking. The first two "Core Values" state:

*We will trust in the God that is within everybody and everything.
We will serve in ways that please our ancestors.*

Those two promises define how JSA accepted the invitation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, "the Cathedral of the Confederacy" to design and help it conduct a series of "prayerful consultations" by its congregation after the "Charleston Massacre" on the appropriateness of the extensive Confederate iconography in its historic sanctuary. To say it plainly, the experience of working with that "downtown, white shoe" church as it set out on its journey to become a "Cathedral of Reconciliation" provided further preparation to manage the civic engagement process that the Master Plan update deserves.

We will begin with what we believe about human beings, not what we see.

That is the first statement of JSA's Principles of Practice. The concern, confidence, and composure that JSA will contribute via the Master Plan update derive from our sincere belief in the people of Richmond with whom we have already lived, worked, and played.

For more information, visit jsallc.com or contact Tasha Chambers at tasha@jsallc.com or (804) 298-1018.