

Changing City Blocks

Study how urban renewal plans changed Virginia communities.

USII.8.b “explaining the significance of urban renewal plans including, but not limited to Jackson Ward in Richmond and Vinegar Hill in Charlottesville;”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each case study that tells what changed, and circle one phrase in each that tells why the change mattered.

Urban Renewal and Community Change

- ① After World War II, many cities used urban renewal plans to change older neighborhoods. City leaders often said they wanted to remove unsafe buildings, attract businesses, and increase tax money. Governments could buy or take property, clear land, and build new roads, offices, or housing. These plans could bring improvements, but they also gave officials great power. When residents had little voice, people could lose homes, jobs, neighbors, and important community places. To judge a plan’s significance, ask who gained, who was harmed, and what changed.
- ② Richmond’s Jackson Ward was a center of Black business, culture, and leadership. It included banks, newspapers, churches, and the homes of well-known Black leaders. During the mid-twentieth century, highway building and redevelopment threatened parts of the neighborhood. Some buildings and residents were lost, yet preservation efforts helped protect many historic places. Jackson Ward’s story is significant because it shows that renewal and transportation projects could endanger a community’s history. It also shows how residents, historians, and city leaders could work to save places that carried cultural meaning.
- ③ In Charlottesville, Vinegar Hill was a mostly Black neighborhood with homes, churches, shops, and gathering places. In the 1960s, an urban renewal plan led the city to acquire and demolish much of the area. Families and business owners had to leave, breaking social and economic connections. The cleared land was later used for new development, but the loss could not be measured only in buildings. Vinegar Hill is significant because it reveals the human cost of renewal decisions and raises questions about fair housing, community voice, and whose history a city chooses to protect.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What were two goals that city leaders often gave for urban renewal plans?

2 How did Jackson Ward show both a threat to a community and an effort to protect it?

3 What two kinds of connections were broken when families and business owners had to leave Vinegar Hill?

4 What does the Jackson Ward example teach about urban renewal, and what does the Vinegar Hill example teach?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

A city plans to replace an older neighborhood with offices and apartments. Write three sentences explaining one possible benefit, one possible harm, and one step leaders should take to include residents and protect community history.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each case study that tells what changed, and circle one phrase in each that tells why the change mattered. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What were two goals that city leaders often gave for urban renewal plans?	Any two: remove unsafe buildings, attract businesses, or increase tax money.
2	How did Jackson Ward show both a threat to a community and an effort to protect it?	Highway building and redevelopment threatened Jackson Ward, and some buildings and residents were lost. Preservation efforts protected many historic places.
3	What two kinds of connections were broken when families and business owners had to leave Vinegar Hill?	Social connections and economic connections were broken.
4	What does the Jackson Ward example teach about urban renewal, and what does the Vinegar Hill example teach?	Jackson Ward shows that renewal projects can endanger history but preservation can save important places. Vinegar Hill shows the human cost of demolition and displacement, including concerns about fair housing and community voice.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

New offices and apartments could create jobs and housing. The plan could force families and small businesses to leave, weakening community connections. Leaders should meet with residents before deciding, offer fair housing choices, and protect important historic places.

Accept reasonable benefits, harms, and community-protection steps that fit an urban renewal plan. The response should include all three required parts and show awareness of residents' voices, displacement, or historic places.