

## Peace Bowles, 2021 EDI Fellow for Richmond VA



### **Project Overview and Role**

My role as the Equity Fellow for the Richmond Office of Sustainability was to support Community Engagement and Communications. A portion of my work was done by building out a youth engagement council program (paying students in middle and high school to be supported in crafting a program that will further engage their peers and families). Partnering with stakeholders to offer mentor services and technical expertise. I also invited Roundtable and Working Group Members from RVAgreen2050 to host Community Walks. Alongside our partner, the Science Museum of Virginia, we gathered air quality data and noted the environmental injustices when comparing an affluent predominantly white neighborhood (Windsor Farms) to a historically black community that had a highway built through it just a few decades (Jackson Ward).

Neighbors responded very positively to these events and are suggesting we do walks in different council districts.

- [Here is a link to the aggregated data from Windsor Farms.](#)
- [Here is a link to the aggregated data from Jackson Ward.](#)

Regarding communications, I conducted RVAgreen Profile Interviews. These interviews desired to tell the stories that make up the people behind EJ work in the city. It is an invitation to open the doors for neighbors to share why they are invested and the various projects they are producing. The RVAgreen Profile Interviews are continuing with the current intern for the office. This project has reinforced the importance of relationship building. I also witnessed the pivotal distinction between Community Engagement and Communications. They are separate and deserve distinct attention, NOT to be lumped together. Doing so, does a disservice to the project, staff, and the community. The intended impact of the work was to share stories of optimism with neighbors that are typically not engaged in EJ projects. We hope to continue nurturing spaces for storytelling to ensure healing and trust is rooted in everything we do. Here is a link to the [RVAgreen Profiles](#) highlighting EJ work and personal experiences of living in Richmond.