

**Where the Sidewalk Ends**  
Researching Public Infrastructure Requests and Actions  
by the Charlottesville City Council, 1920-1924

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*This report was completed in partnership with Jordy Yager of Mapping Cville*

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## Executive Summary:

The Mapping C'ville Project interprets and publishes the history of decisions and policies that led to the current spatialized racial inequities in the City of Charlottesville. This group of researchers aims to support the larger goals of the Mapping C'ville Project by investigating the patterns of Charlottesville, Virginia's infrastructure investments in the early 1920s. Through the partnership and guidance of Jordy Yager of the Mapping C'ville Project and the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, this Charlottesville infrastructure assessment from 1920-1924 is a continuation of last year's research group's assessment of the years 1925-1930. This analysis furthers the collective knowledge of how these key investments in communities may have connections to the different health and socioeconomic outcomes for Black and white residents within Charlottesville. While we do not analyze current health disparities in this paper, the infrastructure archival research aids in the understanding of how built environment improvements were often granted to white communities in a higher percentage than Black communities.

This report includes the following: historical context and major events for the timeframe of 1920-1924 in Charlottesville such as the water crisis, the erection of various Confederate statues, local political tensions, and the population and land expansion of the City of Charlottesville; analyses of archived meeting minutes from the Charlottesville City council to understand the kinds of infrastructure investments that occurred in the city during the aforementioned timeline; and the locational patterns of such investments. We find that much of the infrastructure developments were concentrated within the Downtown Charlottesville area within the markedly white neighborhoods of Belmont and Venable. The historic Black neighborhoods of Vinegar Hill, Starr Hill, and Gospel Hill received the smallest share of infrastructure investments during this timeframe. Overall, these findings emphasize the ways in which decisions made by the Charlottesville City Council in the early 1920s were critical to the eventual life outcomes of future Black residents of the city.

*“Through maps, I’m hoping that we can begin to see the bigger, more complicated, structures and decisions that have gotten us to where we are today — so that we may better think about where we want to go tomorrow.”*

Jordy Yager, Digital Humanities Fellow  
(Jefferson School African American Heritage Center)

## Introduction

We are a group of graduate students from two schools at the University of Virginia, the School of Architecture and the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, and we have undertaken this project in completion of a course on community research and engagement methods, taught by Barbara Brown Wilson, Associate Professor of Urban and Environmental Planning. We are interested in applying our diverse academic skillsets and disciplines—in planning, landscape architecture, and policy—to further the goal of equity in the built environment. To that end, we offered our services to a community partner, Jordy Yager, to contribute to his and the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center’s (JSAAHC) project Mapping Cville.

The Mapping Cville Project started in 2018 when the JSAAHC and Yager, a freelance journalist, received a grant from the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation to map the inequities in Charlottesville from the past to the present. Over many years, the decisions of individuals, corporations, institutions, and different levels of government have shaped the built environment of Charlottesville, and many of those decisions have contributed to very different experiences for white and Black Charlottesville residents, perpetuating inequities throughout the region. Further, Mapping Cville aims to analyze and catalog these actions, decisions, and mechanisms to understand previous actions and how to proceed with efforts to redress present and past injustices. However, there are decades of actions that need to be evaluated to complete this goal. As a result, the Mapping Cville team needed to expand its current capacity and enlist the support of our team of UVA students.

For our contribution, Yager and Mapping Cville asked that we sift through archival research of the minutes of Charlottesville’s City Council in the years 1920 through

1924, and highlight issues related to infrastructure. Our team has reviewed and processed those minutes, noting the petitions, resolutions, appropriations, ordinances and more. In so doing, we learned much about this period of great growth and change in Charlottesville, during which both critical infrastructure and Jim Crow monuments and practices were rapidly being established. This paper not only outlines the methodology employed to reach these learnings, but also integrates our primary research with qualitative, quantitative, and spatial analyses to form a multi-dimensional account that adds to the body of knowledge already accumulated by Mapping Cville.

## Methods, Data, and Process

We applied a mixed methods approach to our engagement with Mapping Cville, complementing our archival research with additional research on the city and region. That additional research made use of other primary sources such as Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia, archives from *The Daily Progress*, demographic data from the decennial census, historical fire insurance maps from Sanborn, some secondary sources and community resources such as [cvillepedia.org](http://cvillepedia.org).

### Common Council Minutes

First, we accessed the minutes of the Common Council through the JSAAHC with permission from UVA Law Library, in the form of digital images of the physical book kept in City Hall. The group divided up data collection responsibilities and assigned page numbers from the archives over weekly timetables. Each group member was then responsible for collecting data on infrastructure petitions, reports, and allocations, which were then recorded in Google Sheets. The data collected on each event includes the date, area of the city, type of infrastructure, participants involved, type of action, relevant text, address of petitioner, and address of the proposed intervention. The archives often did not contain relevant location data as named estates sufficed for the location or the intervention would improve an entire street, area of the city, or city as a whole. In these circumstances, the group recorded the area of the city and address of proposed intervention as the name of the street, neighborhood, or "City of Charlottesville". If the event did not contain location data or the location could not be extrapolated from the text, the area of the city and address was recorded as "?". Without a reference to the location, the imperfect source has resulted in data that is structurally missing or missing at random.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Manski, "Identification Problems in the Social Sciences and Life," in Harvard University Press, 2nd ed., 1999, 13–40.

## Process

Figure 1: Example of data collection table

A1	Date						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Date	Researcher	Page #	Area of City	Type of Infrastructure	Who is Involved	Type of Action (Petition, Ordinance, Allocation, etc.)
2	12/15/1924	Maddy	287/288	n/a	*Colored School	School Board	Resolution
3	10/14/1920	Linnea	106	Ivy	water improvement		Ordinance
4	7/14/1921		124	Confederacy	*not infrastructure		Appropriation
5	2/12/1920	Geremia Di Maro	84	10th and Page	A store and dwe	Mr. J.H. North, Council, Buildings and Grounds	Application Referred
6	4/28/1923	Alexandra Poses	197	Downtown	Acquisition	City Council, Ferguson	Resolution

Once all group members completed the data collection, the events with relevant location data were combined into a master sheet with addresses that could be geolocated for future mapping purposes. Entries unrelated to infrastructure but contained significant historical context needed to understand those times were deducted from the master sheet. This set contained mentions of race, appropriations to ex-confederate soldiers, and demands for the entire City of Charlottesville. The remaining addresses were then used to correctly determine the corresponding intervention location, often using the Sanborn Map of Charlottesville.<sup>2</sup> In some instances, the street or building mentioned does not exist or goes by a different name. To find the location, the group used archival maps and searched for records with reference to the associated topographical features, infrastructure, and/or businesses.

We reviewed and streamlined all fields so that trends could be effectively identified and settled on pursuing the following fields:

<sup>2</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Charlottesville, Independent Cities, Virginia. Sanborn Map Company, Feb, 1920. Map. [https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08995\\_007/](https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08995_007/).

- **Types of infrastructure** improvements were grouped into water, sewer, gas (line and tank), street-light, sidewalk, and street surface. Important items removed from the infrastructure type included education, property-level permits, land acquisitions, income/pensions, and health allocations.
- The **participants** involved frequently consisted of petitioners, the City Council, the City Manager, or another governmental official or group.
- The **petitioner** was generally a resident or group of residents; the City Manager was the expert and administrator; and the governmental bodies requested, approved, or delegated authority to impact their representative geographies or voting constituencies.<sup>3</sup>
- **Allocation** amounts were aggregated by neighborhood and infrastructure type from the archival text. The entries that were not allocations or grants received a x. Once the dollar value of the request was entered, the duplicates were highlighted and searched for double entries. All true duplicates had one of the entry dollar values replaced with a x. The accuracy and completeness of the dollar values was vital to understanding the distribution of funds among neighborhoods and toward specific infrastructure types.

After aggregating and cleaning all entries, our group then began our analysis, using PivotTables to manipulate and assess trends within the data. Later, as a team, we discussed individual findings, gathered questions, and researched the relevant topics.

[Tools: Google Sheets, ArcGIS Pro, Design Software (Illustrator, etc.)]

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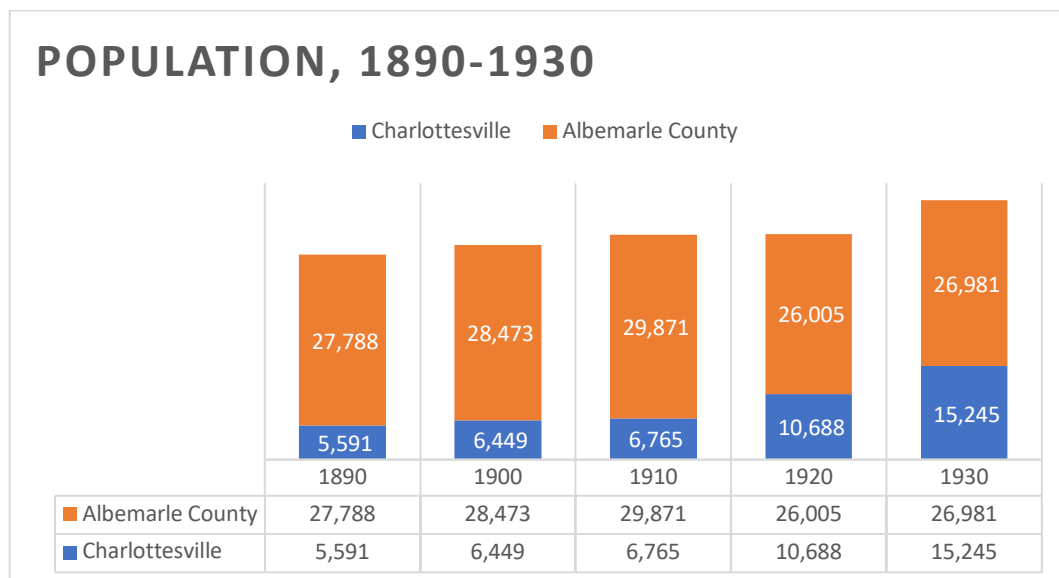
<sup>3</sup> "City Council," Government, City of Charlottesville, n.d., <https://charlottesville.org/677/City-Council>.



## Part I: Race and Politics in a Growing Charlottesville

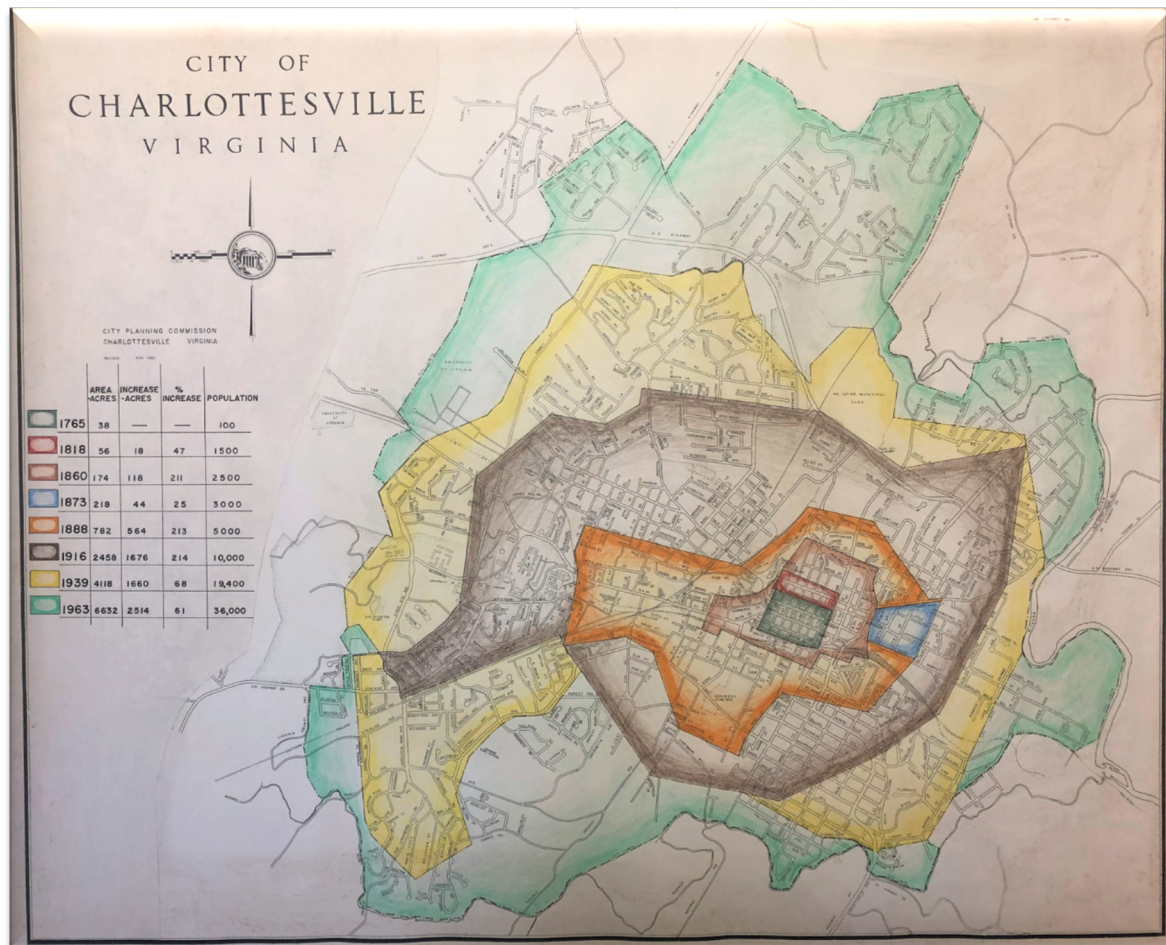
The population of the Charlottesville and Albemarle area grew consistently from 1890-1930. Figure 2 illustrates the City-County Population breakdown of Charlottesville and Albemarle from 1890-1920. The 1920 census indicates that at the start of the decade, the City of Charlottesville had a total population of 10,688 and grew to 15,245 residents by 1930, an increase of 42.6%<sup>4</sup>. The population of Charlottesville in 1910 was a total of 6,765 people, and of those residents, 5,524 (37.3%) were African American and 4,236 (67%) were white. By 1920, only 27.6% of the Charlottesville population was Black and approximately 71.4% was white indicating that while the overall population was increasing, the share of White individuals were also increasing while Black individuals in Charlottesville were decreasing. This population growth simultaneously triggered land expansions throughout the City to accommodate the growing communities in the area. In 1916, the city greatly expanded its borders by annexing land from Albemarle County, following earlier annexations of portions of the areas known as Fifeville and Fry's Spring. Figure 3 shows the progression of Charlottesville's territorial expansion from 1765-1963.

Figure 2: Charlottesville-Albemarle Population Change, 1890-1930. Source: U.S. Census



<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Virginia population estimates from 1910-1930

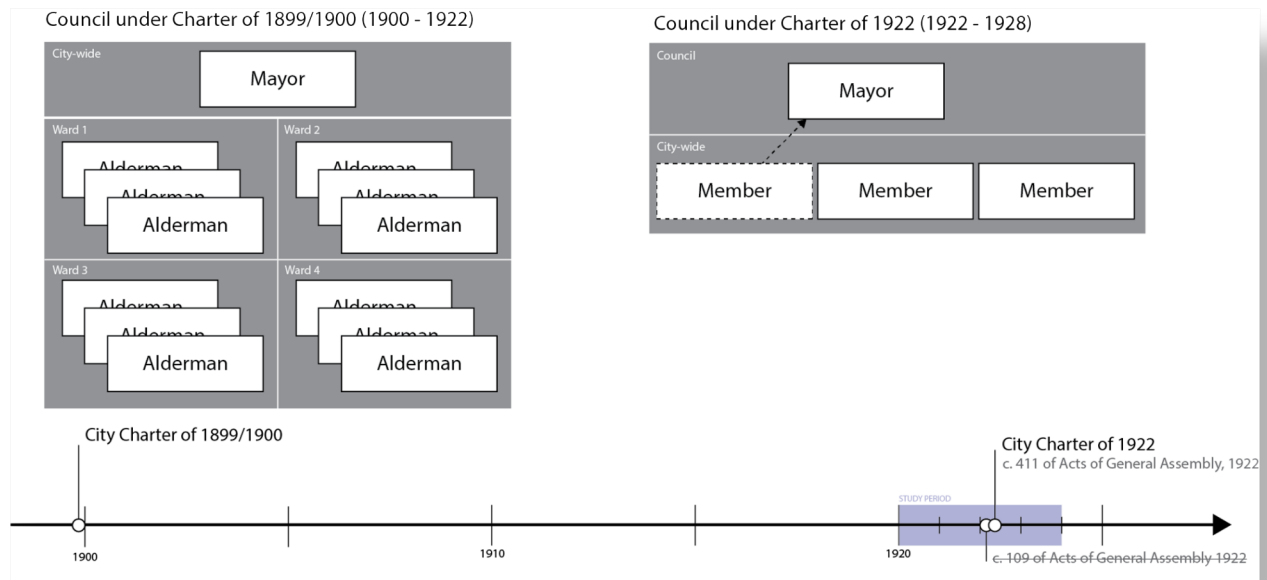
Figure 3: Charlottesville Land Annexations, 1765 and 1963, via Annexation - Cvillepedia,"  
www.cvillepedia.org



To further understand the context of the time, the structure of City governance is important to note so as to discover the procedures for government action on infrastructure that may have changed around that time. Under the City Charter of 1899/1900, the General Assembly of Virginia established a mayor-council government for the city of Charlottesville, effective July 1, 1900, and of the twenty-one powers specifically ascribed to the city government in its first charter in 1899/1900, at least five expressly related to establishment of infrastructure, including streets, gasworks, waterworks, electric-light works, and sewers. In the latter Charter of 1922, the powers enumerated for the city government grew more sophisticated, reflecting the evolving needs of a growing city. Beyond the more advanced infrastructure authorities, the

Charter of 1922 reformed the structure of the government (see Figure X), and the references to suspected fraud and foul play in both that law and previous attempts to reform the council point attest to the politically tense time. Race played a large role in those tensions.

Figure 4: Charlottesville City Council Structures



Though Democrats dominated state politics in the early 1920s, even the Virginia Republican party began to make explicit shifts toward their preference for white members by becoming a “lily white” party, distancing them from embracing African American membership to the Virginia GOP. This declaration was solidified further by the Virginia GOP, giving a state-wide proclamation of being a “white man’s party.” In Charlottesville and Albemarle County, similar sentiments were made prevalent by Republican leadership, who were verbally against the appointment of African American electoral judges and published these sentiments in local newspapers. Their appointments, however, were defended by the Electoral Board and further supported by noting that the local Charlottesville Republicans were predominantly Black.

Similar trends continued when it came time to assemble the delegates for the 1922 Republican Congressional Convention, so much so that the Black delegates elected from Chairman L.W. Cox’s city convention to represent the City were refused a place at the

larger convention while R.N. Flannagan's "lily white" elected representatives were welcomed. These racially charged tensions seeped into local politics, especially in regard to women's suffrage in Charlottesville. All women were given the right to vote through federal constitutional amendment in 1920, however, the biased process and rules for registration substantially limited the number of Black women who were able to vote in the city. Despite these obstructive efforts, three Black women were successful in registering themselves to vote in the early 1920s despite the elaborate and frivolous restrictions.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, in 1924, the state of Virginia passed the Racial Integrity Act and the Eugenical Sterilization Act which were both concerned with ensuring that the races not only did not intermarry, but that Black individuals were not allowed the opportunity to reproduce.<sup>6</sup>

The erection of physical monuments throughout Charlottesville further attest to the political and racialized climate of the time. The Confederate statues constructed in Charlottesville from 1921-1924 were heavily celebrated and honored two of the state's most revered generals, Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee. The statue of Stonewall Jackson was revealed October 19, 1921 and the celebration to entertain the Confederate generals in Jackson Square was funded by the City for a cost of \$3000. The Jackson Statue was mentioned four times in City Council meetings to discuss the appropriation.<sup>7</sup> The statue of Robert E. Lee was revealed May 21, 1924 and was also heavily attended by Confederate generals for the same cost. The City mentioned the unveiling three times between 1922-1924 before the event. The statue itself was funded by Paul G. McIntire. The petition for the event funding viewed the equestrian statue of General Lee as a "pleasure as well as privilege" to fund and an "appropriation which will gladden the heart of every Citizen of Charlottesville."<sup>8</sup> The statement assumes that the whole public supports the Confederacy, eliminating, of course African Americans, who received their freedom due to the Union victory.

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<sup>5</sup> "White Supremacy & African-American Resistance in Charlottesville, Va 1920-1925," The Politics of Disenfranchisement (The Virginia Center for Digital History, 2021), <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/afam/politics/timeline.html>. The women who voted were Mrs. Maggie P. Burley, Mamie J. Farwell, and Mrs. Alice Grady

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=99ef8e2413294a87ade8fde5b9c99df1>

<sup>7</sup> "City Council Minutes - \$3000 to Jackson Unveiling | Charlottesville Statues," [statues.law.virginia.edu](http://statues.law.virginia.edu), September 1, 1921, <https://statues.law.virginia.edu/node/621>.

<sup>8</sup> B Linney, "Request for Robert E. Lee Statue Unveiling" (City of Charlottesville, April 12, 1923).

Ultimately, decisions regarding the future of Charlottesville were not made in a vacuum; there were critical influential factors that shaped the City's current state. The drastic population growth witnessed during this time necessitated expanded adoption of infrastructure throughout the city, and these critical decisions would be made in the context and with the influence of an increasingly segregationist, racialized political environment.

## Part II: Urbanization, Petitions, and a Water Supply Crisis

During the early 1920s, the Common Council wielded the power to build those pieces of infrastructure in Charlottesville, and the minutes of the council are full of requests for street paving, sidewalks, streetlights, water and sewer connections, and gas lines.

In 1920, only a quarter of Charlottesville's streets were paved.<sup>9</sup> This team's analysis of City Council meeting notes from 1920-1924 found over 80 instances related to street paving or repairs and over 60 relating to sidewalks. Virginia's rate of car ownership skyrocketed during the 1920s, going from 145,350 cars in 1920 to 386,664 in 1930.<sup>10</sup> As the number of cars on the road increased, demand for paving also increased. In contrast to historic road construction methods such as cobblestones, the asphalt that was most popular in the 1920s provided a smooth surface that increased the speed and comfort of car travel. The speed of cars brought an end to the traditional model of shared streets, so this time period saw an increase in the popularity of sidewalks as well. In Charlottesville, sidewalks were usually constructed at the request of the homeowner, with the city taking on a portion of the cost of construction. The proliferation of automobiles also demanded availability of fuel, which is evident in the requests for gas tanks in City Council minutes from this time.

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<sup>9</sup> "Category:1920 - Cvillepedia," [www.cvillepedia.org](http://www.cvillepedia.org), February 23, 2016, [https://www.cvillepedia.org/Moores\\_Creek\\_Wastewater\\_Treatment\\_Plant](https://www.cvillepedia.org/Moores_Creek_Wastewater_Treatment_Plant).

<sup>10</sup> Virginia Department of Transportation. *A History of Roads in Virginia "The Most Convenient Ways."* Commonwealth of Virginia, 2006.

Requests for connections to and extensions of gas lines also appear in the meeting minutes from 1920-1924. Gas stoves and heating were replacing coal during the early 1920s due to their relative cheapness, convenience, and cleanliness.<sup>11</sup> While heating and cooking were transitioning towards gas, lights across the United States were being electrified. Streetlights were another popular request to Charlottesville's City Council in the early 1920s. Sanitation and drainage infrastructure also expanded in Charlottesville at this time. Sewer connections to houses were a common request, and the City began to develop a robust system that handled both stormwater and sewage. The City did not have a sewage treatment plant until the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> Water connections were also commonly requested, and water mains were extended as the City struggled to find a reliable water source for its expanding population. In fact, these requests were being continuously made within the context of a looming water crisis that the City was desperately finding solutions for.

### Water Supply Crisis

During the early 1920s — and indeed for at least a decade prior — the City of Charlottesville was experiencing a dire water supply crisis that significantly affected how the City's government approached infrastructure development and funding during the time period of analysis. In August of 1923,<sup>13</sup> City Manager Boyd A. Bennett delivered a detailed report to the City Council laying out in stark terms the extent of the City's water supply shortage, describing it as a rapidly deteriorating situation that had been affecting Charlottesville for nearly a decade at the time. "[There is] an existing inadequacy of the probably maximum supply of water available for general city consumption," Bennett wrote. "A condition which has been gradually growing since 1914 until the acute situation reported August 6, 1923 was reached."

However, the City's sudden water crisis wasn't necessarily the result of poor infrastructure or a failure to invest in water pumping stations and distribution systems.

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<sup>11</sup> "The 1920s: Ushering In The Modern Age Of Heating," ACHR News, November 5, 2001, <https://www.achrnews.com/articles/87034-the-1920s-ushering-in-the-modern-age-of-heating>.

<sup>12</sup> "Moore's Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant," [www.cvillepedia.org](http://www.cvillepedia.org), April 16, 2019, <https://www.cvillepedia.org/Category:1920>.

<sup>13</sup> "A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville," Charlottesville, Va.; P.225



In fact, the City had undertaken a significant expansion of existing water infrastructure in 1909, just over a decade prior to Bennett's report. Bennett identified the cause of Charlottesville's water crisis as neither poor infrastructure, or a failure to invest in infrastructure improvements, but an extreme increase in demand in the City due to a rapidly growing population that outstripped the infrastructure improvements made in 1909 in just 5 years, as Bennett writes:

*In this connection, it might not be amiss to call to your attention that the supply or storage capacity of the water system has not been enlarged since 1909 but that the population has increased approximately 100%, so that during this period of rapidly growing consumption, the available maximum supply has remained stationary thus the point was reached in 1914 when the reserve provided in the 1909 enlargement was equalled by the added consumption.*<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, Charlottesville's population had roughly doubled between the 1890 and 1920 Census, rapidly increasing from 6,765 residents in 1910 to nearly 11,000 by 1920. As such, Bennett wrote that the City's water consumption must either be reduced or its supply significantly increased, ultimately concluding that consumption could not be reduced any further than it already was in 1923. In the preceding years, Bennett and the City Council had implemented a slew of restrictions and prohibitions on water usage in Charlottesville and set forth numerous rules and regulations for what types of uses did and did not constitute essential uses of the City's very limited water supply.<sup>15</sup> Bennett writes further:

*Pursuant to suggestions in the report of August 6, 1923, every reasonable restriction has been adopted and enforced against the use of water for other than necessary purposes," Bennett wrote. "In fact, the use of water for certain purposes many believe are very necessary, has been prohibited in order to conserve the constantly depleting supply for the unquestionably essential*

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<sup>14</sup> "A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Va.; P.227

<sup>15</sup> "A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Va.; P.228

*domestic and fire protection uses. As a result of these measures the consumption has been reduced approximately 40 thousand gallons a day.*<sup>16</sup>

During the fall of 1923, several civic groups and organizations in the Charlottesville area inundated *The Daily Progress* with pleas for residents to conserve scarce water resources by reducing their consumption as much as possible. "DON'T WASTE WATER! Waste now means ruin later," one such plea read. "The situation is critical... Visit the reservoir and see how little is left for urgent need... Saving is our only salvation."<sup>17</sup> However, these measures — while effective in conserving large quantities of the City's water supply — were ultimately unable to counteract the ever-growing burden imposed upon the supply by a rapidly increasing population and demand for more water. In fact, the situation was at times so dire that the City struggled to ensure the immediate availability of water supply for essential services, such as fighting fires.

Even with these stringent water usage restrictions in place, data from the early 1920s shows that the City's water usage was quickly approaching a crisis scenario as even its reserve supply rapidly dwindled. In September of 1922, Charlottesville's water supply sat at about 260 million gallons, decreasing to just under 120 million gallons by July of the following year — a cumulative loss of nearly 140 million gallons or about 450 thousand gallons per day. During this time, the vast majority of the City's water supply originated from its sole pumping station at nearby Maury Creek, pumping nearly 80 million gallons of water during 5 months in 1923. However, according to Bennett, there was another problem as well: the quantity of water being supplied from Maury Creek was not consistently able to provide this rate of water return nor was the pumping station always able to be operated in order to fill the original Sugar Hollow storage reservoir in western Albemarle County for reasons that are unclear. Moreover, evaporation — possibly due to drought conditions — seems to have played at least some role in the City's water supply shortage, according to Bennett.

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<sup>16</sup> "A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Va.; P.229

<sup>17</sup> "Sugar Hollow Reservoir: A Cool Drink of Water," Phil James, [The Crozet Gazette](#) Jan.13, 2010



Regardless, even if the Maury Creek Pumping Station had been able to consistently produce a maximum of 16 million gallons of water per month between September of 1922 and July of 1923 and environmental factors contributing to water supply loss were not a factor (adding 80 million gallons to the July 1923 total of 120 million), it seems as though there would have still been a net loss of more than 65 million gallons, or about 280,000 gallons per day, based on a statistical analysis conducted by Bennett.

Bennett was also critical of the City's own prior inaction on the quickly worsening water supply crisis and remarked that it should come as no surprise, given an earlier report commissioned by the City to assess its water supply infrastructure and capacity need more than three years prior, which was conducted by engineering consulting firm Hazen, Whipple & Fuller. Even in the spring of 1920, the firm found a similarly dire situation in terms of Charlottesville's growing water consumption and shrinking capacity: Between 1914 and 1920, the firm estimated that the City experienced a net loss of an estimated 255 million gallons of stored water, or about 116,000 gallons per day. Bennett reports:

*It follows in the light of actual experience, that the consumption cannot be decreased in sufficient quantity to more than delay a possible water famine and that permanent relief can only be secured by increasing the supply," Bennett wrote. "That it is further evident from this report that the Administration then in charge of the City not only foresaw the certainty of the present water shortage situation which has reached an acute stage and is growing more critical each day; but likewise, judging by the nature of the report had also concluded that relief could be had only by increasing the supply.<sup>18</sup>*

As is likely clear from Bennett's stern words for prior iterations of Charlottesville City government, he was not the City Manager at the time he is referencing above, and although the exact details are unclear, his surprisingly direct criticism may be at least somewhat political in nature.

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<sup>18</sup> "A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Va.; P.233

### The Sugar Hollow Reservoir and Moore's Creek

Nonetheless, the City Manager's urgent call for there to be an increase in water supply for Charlottesville was still very much rooted in the dire reality of the water crisis, and he called for the Council to take immediate action in addressing it. More specifically, he highlighted a section of the engineering firm report that identified Moorman's River in western Albemarle County as the most feasible site to construct a small dam and a new water pumping station to supplement the existing one at Maury's Creek in order to significantly increase supply. Drawing from a watershed that stretched across the Blue Ridge Mountains from Jarman's Gap to Brown's Gap, the decision was soon thereafter made by the City to construct a pumping station at Sugar Hollow near the confluence of the south and north forks of that mountain stream<sup>19</sup>. Other alternatives were also considered in the report such as the Rivanna River, Ivy Creek, and Moore's Creek, although each was ruled out by the firm for a variety of environmental or cost-related factors. For the construction of a new pumping station and pipeline to the closest water retention reservoir Bennett estimated the total cost to be about \$650,000 in 1923, or roughly \$10 million in 2021 dollars. Bennett wrote:

*With a pipeline from Moorman's River, water from surplus capacity above the rate of consumption would be delivered to the reservoirs when they were not full, and the water held in them would be used to maintain the supply during times when the natural flow of Moorman's River was not sufficient. The present reservoirs could thus perform a most useful service.*<sup>20</sup>

While Charlottesville's City Manager and Council eyed a long-term solution to its water crisis in Moorman's River, City leadership still sought a more immediate solution to temporarily remedy its quickly depleting water supply. In October of 1923, in consultation with the City Attorney, the Council moved forward with condemnation

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<sup>19</sup> "Sugar Hollow Reservoir: A Cool Drink of Water," Phil James, [The Crozet Gazette](#) Jan.13, 2010

<sup>20</sup> "A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Va.; P.234

proceedings for the rights of an S.P. Maury — the owner of a mill on Moore's Creek — to the flow of the creek about a quarter mile south of the mill in order to quickly draw water from the site to supplement the Maury Creek pumping station. The Council unanimously adopted a resolution at a special session in October to do as such:

*Whereas the present City's water supply has become grossly inadequate, and in spite of pumping all the water available from Maury's Creek, our supply is rapidly approaching exhaustion and must be supplemented immediately in order to avoid a water famine, and whereas it will take about a year in which to construct the proposed system to get water from Moorman's River... the only available supply that can be secured at once is from Moore's Creek, a short distance south of the City pumping station of Maury's Creek.<sup>21</sup>*

Charlottesville's water crisis is only one of the well-documented historical events that were affecting the City during this time. There were various events occurring simultaneously during this time and, regardless of their permeance throughout local town history, have been recorded through the infrastructure investments pursued in the early 1920s.

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<sup>21</sup> A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Va.; P.230

## Part III: Where the Money Actually Went

After our research team garnered a deeper understanding of the social, political and environmental events happening throughout the City of Charlottesville, the data was assessed to see how these events matched to infrastructure allocations and investments. Our team assessed water-related infrastructure decisions in detail by organizing water allocation uses to evaluate how and what actions were being taken in response to the water crisis at the time. Next, our team wanted to see how investments were allocated spatially throughout neighborhoods in the City of Charlottesville and especially in areas that were historically Black neighborhoods. Then, for an overview, our team assesses major infrastructure priorities during that time through an analysis on the type of projects that were pursued during the early 1920s.

### Major Water Infrastructure Spending

Charlottesville voters went to the polls November 6, 1923 and overwhelmingly backed a referendum to allow the City to issue the first of two \$500 thousand bonds for the explicit purpose of financing an overhaul of its water supply infrastructure and distribution system. Afterward, the City was legally able to move forward with the process of issuing a bond to remedy the City's water crisis and later did so for the Moorman's River Project.<sup>22</sup> The initial dam built was only three feet in height, and its purpose was to divert a portion of the stream's flow nearly 14 miles to the City's filter plant. By early 1925, the new pumping station had a daily average output of 2.5 million gallons of water, providing a surplus to Charlottesville's water supply for the first time in more than a decade. After WWII, the City would ultimately partner with the National Park Service in the construction of the 67 ft Sugar Hollow Dam to establish the reservoir that most are familiar with today.<sup>23</sup>

The above account of Charlottesville's water supply crisis between 1920 and 1924 offers only a glimpse into how the City's government was thinking about and funding infrastructure improvements during this time, but it is clear that infrastructure spending

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<sup>22</sup> A report by the City Manager on the matter of the City's dwindling water supply (1923)," Meeting Minute Book of the Common Council of the City of Charlottesville, Charlottesville, Va.; P.236

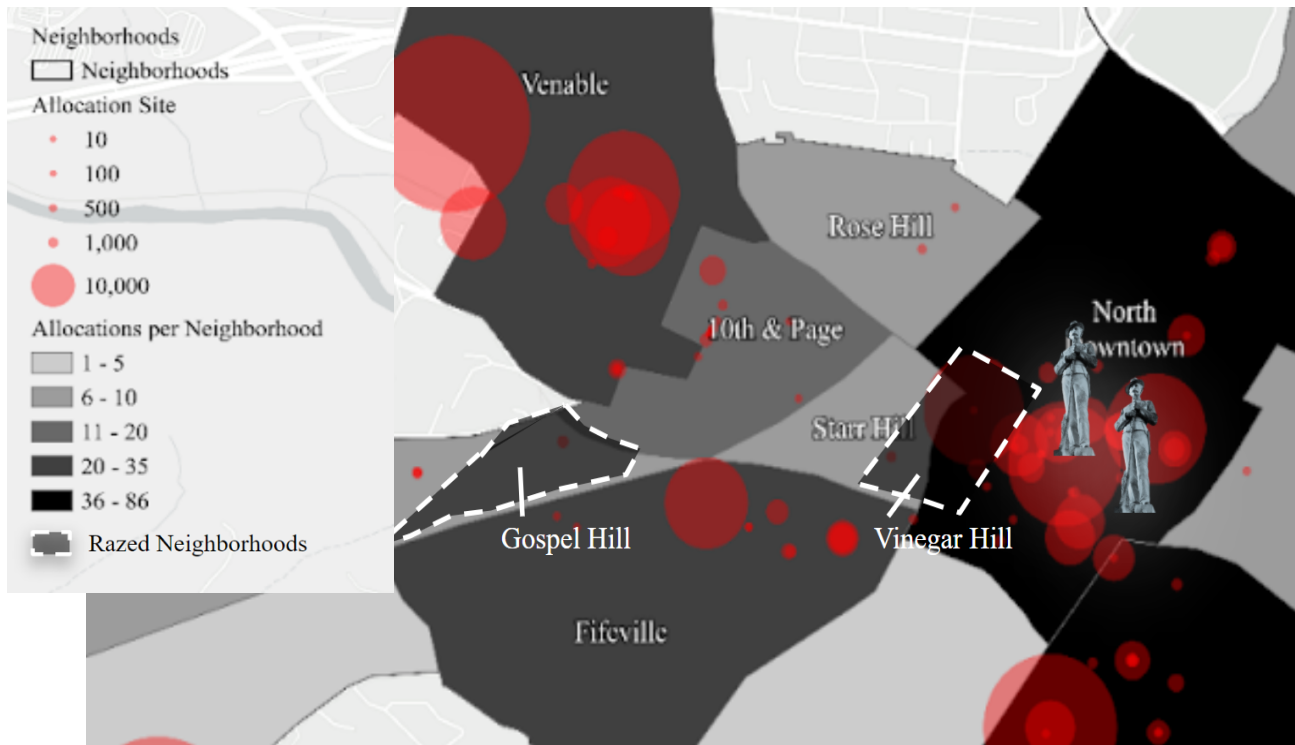
<sup>23</sup> "Sugar Hollow Reservoir: A Cool Drink of Water," Phil James, [The Crozet Gazette](#) Jan. 13 2010

requiring significant sums of money was at the forefront of the local government's agenda. To be sure, this sentiment was no doubt driven by an immediate and urgent water crisis that was facing the city at the time, but it was also a part of a much larger trend of infrastructure spending on streets, gas, electric, sewage, and other improvements. These funding allocations and petitions for infrastructure improvements reflect the evolving needs of a growing city, although the City's urgency in implementing these infrastructure upgrades was not felt equally across Charlottesville's neighborhoods. For a more in-depth view of these monetary water infrastructure allocations, see Figure 7.

However, water was only one part of the major infrastructure projects that were being undertaken at that time, but one thing is certain: they were not equitably distributed across neighborhoods in the City.

### Mapping Investments

When spatially mapping infrastructure investments throughout neighborhoods in Charlottesville, important observations arise. Figure 4 describes the location of such infrastructure investments by neighborhood in the City. Figure 5 reveals that just a few neighborhoods (Downtown, Venable, Belmont, and the University of Virginia) received a greater portion of the allocations, which were all predominantly white neighborhoods.



*Figure 4 Map of Charlottesville's Neighborhoods and location of Infrastructure Investments. Red bubbles meaning dollar value. Locations from archival research placed into GIS and quantified by their dollar amounts Larger bubbles indicate higher amount values.  
Created by Alexandra Poses*

Further, Figure 6 reveals the largest infrastructural problems facing the city at the time. Water and gas were the recipients of the most allocations as the City of Charlottesville was struggling with a clean water supply issue at the time. Multiple times, \$200,000 of water bonds were requested to create a clean water distribution system to service all city residents. A few of the city's natural water sources were proposed to serve as temporary water suppliers, and Maury Creek was ultimately chosen. In search for a permanent solution, the City simultaneously conducted research, visiting nearby towns and engineers to select the most cost effective and efficient choices to architect the new, permanent water infrastructure. At the time, the use of coal was declining and use of natural gas was increasing; therefore, gas mains were added to the demands of new city streets. Sewer systems were added to the most populated areas and were often associated with petitions pleading for a less unbearable summer.

In the early 1920s, Charlottesville was experiencing a water crisis and had to find a temporary solution, while waiting for a bank to finance the nearly \$1 million requested

in water bonds for a permanent source. The data showed at least seven instances of petitions for a permanent water source and multiple complaints for safe water in 1920 and 1921. Once the water bonds were distributed in 1922, there was \$192 thousand in water lines placed throughout the City and almost \$400 thousand allocated to a new plant. The water crisis undoubtedly marked the time period for Charlottesville locals, but not all residents benefited equally from the City's funding. Fifeville, Preston, 10th and Page, Vinegar Hill, and Gospel Hill received \$0 in allocations for water lines, while North Downtown, Rose Hill, Belmont, the University, and Martha Jefferson received \$54,760. It should be noted that the outlying areas, such as Maury Creek, Moore's Creek, and Observatory Hill, that received funding for water infrastructure represent the water sources, rather than the recipients.

Similarly, the allocations for light and gas infrastructure were unequally distributed, with the 65% of funding dedicated to the Downtown, North Downtown, Belmont, Venable, University, and Martha Jefferson, while the remaining was allocated to Vinegar Hill, Fifeville, Fry's Spring, Ivy, Starr Hill, and Gospel Hill. Representation in City Council meetings also varied, with the neighborhoods receiving the majority of allocations representing over 80% of the petitions. Presumably, the neighborhoods that petitioned for funds had a better relationship with the City Council members and believe that their efforts would be fruitful. In context, 30% of the allocations were sited less than 0.2 miles from the midpoint of the Lee and Jackson Statues. Less than 5% of the allocations were sited in Vinegar Hill, Starr Hill, Rose Hill, and Gospel Hill. While the data has yet to be overlaid with racial prevalence, historical recounts confirm that the neighborhoods receiving the least number of City dollars have the greatest percentage of African Americans.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

## Neighborhood % Allocations

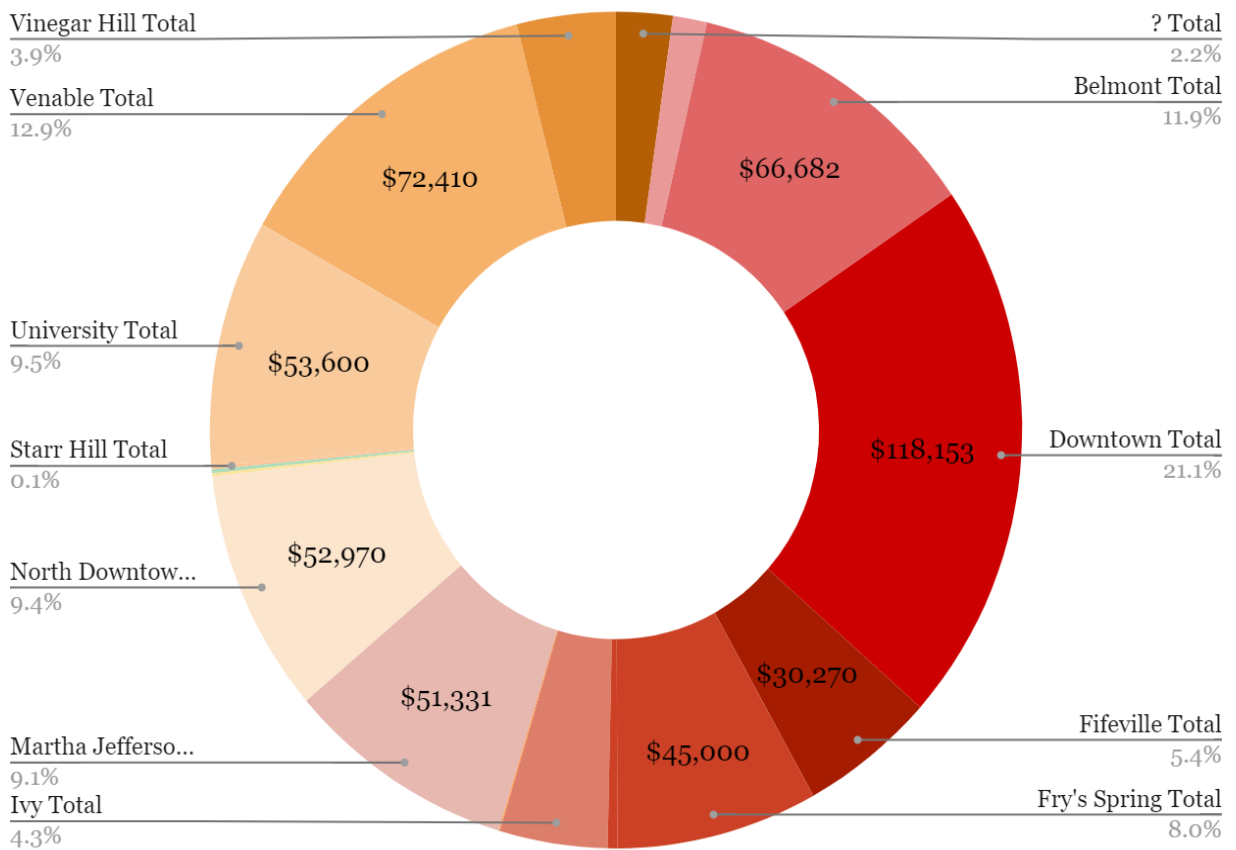


Figure 5: Percent of Infrastructure Allocations by Neighborhood



## Infrastructure % Allocations

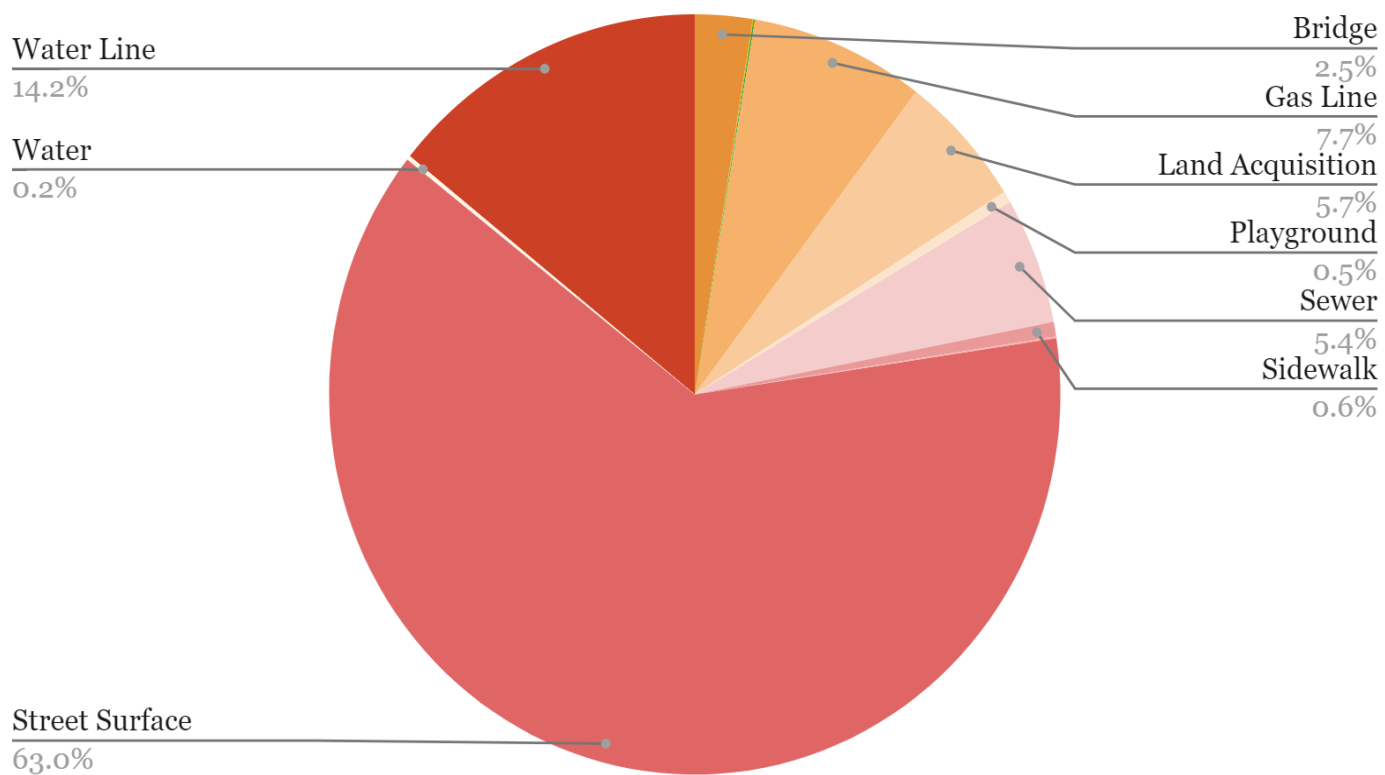


Figure 6: Percent of Infrastructure Allocation by Type of Infrastructure Project

## Water Allocation Uses

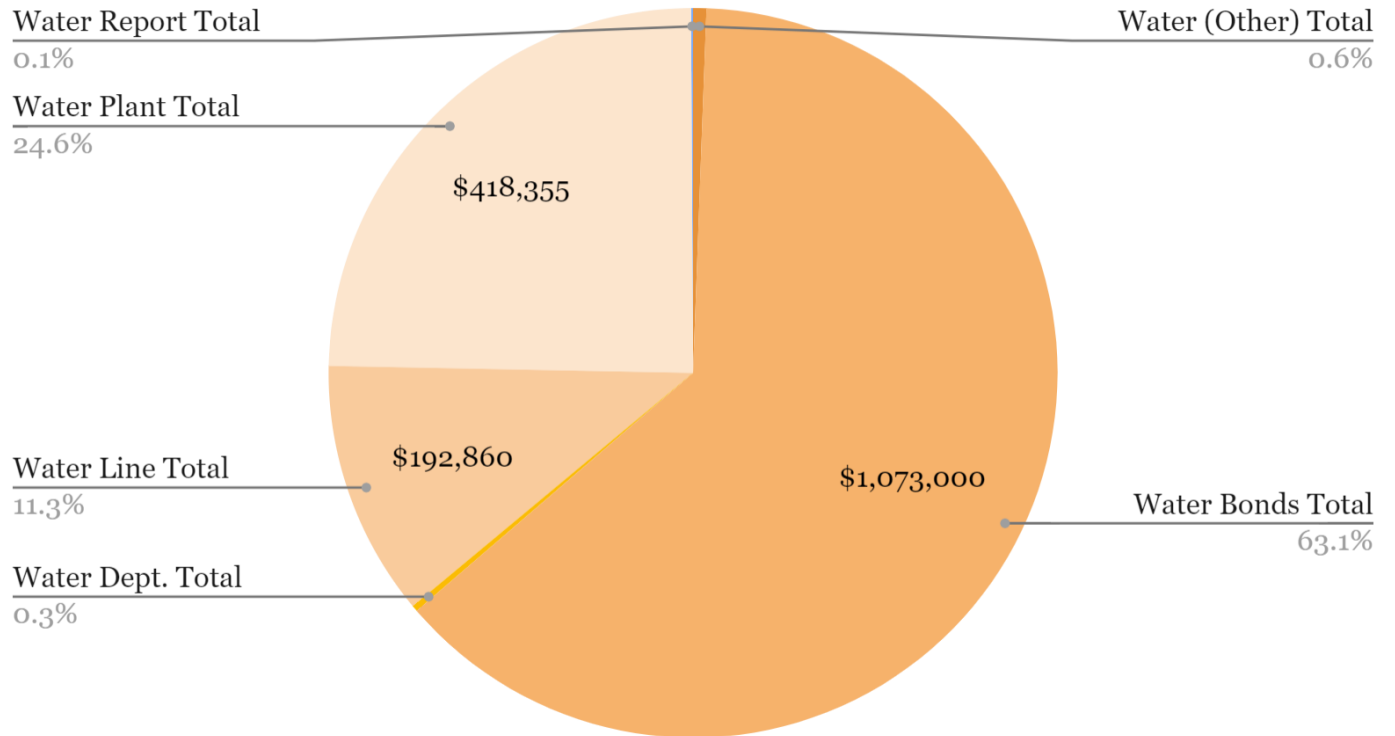


Figure 7: Monetary Water Infrastructure Allocation by Uses

## Conclusion

Public infrastructure allocations were unequally distributed amongst Charlottesville neighborhoods, and the differing rates of investment appear to correlate with racial makeup. This research continues the previous research team's efforts, yet still only scratches the surface of more expansive patterns of how Charlottesville developed throughout the past century. These discoveries provide layers of circumstances that aid to inform the current consequences of city decision-making processes. Through in-depth analyses of archived Charlottesville City Council meeting minutes, this research team cataloged nearly four hundred instances of infrastructure-related petitions, ordinances, resolutions, and appropriations in the city between the years 1920 and 1924.

Two neighborhoods we encountered that have changed in name, use, and demographics are Vinegar Hill, which was a historic African American area, razed in 1964; and Gospel Hill, located where the University of Virginia Hospital is today. Vinegar Hill was the largest African American neighborhood in Charlottesville and encompassed 20 acres, bounded by West Main Street, Preston Avenue, and 4th street with over 800 residents and 30 black-owned businesses. It was demolished and replaced with an Urban Renewal project, where the Omni Hotel and Staples currently stand. Gospel Hill was also a predominantly African-American neighborhood razed in the 1960s in the name of Urban Renewal.<sup>25</sup> While the fate of Vinegar Hill was decided by the City Council, the fate of Gospel Hill was sealed by the University of Virginia when parcels of land were claimed for the "public good" to develop the new UVA Hospital.<sup>26</sup> Both neighborhoods serve as examples of African-American communities physically displaced at the hands of two of the city's public entities: the municipal government and the university, the largest landowner.

This evaluation was augmented by investigating major events occurring during that time such as a water crisis, the erection of Confederate monuments, and racial political tensions. Such events helped the team understand the nature of the decisions made and

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<sup>25</sup> Laura Smith, "In 1965, the City of Charlottesville Demolished a Thriving Black Neighborhood," Medium, September 20, 2017, <https://timeline.com/charlottesville-vinegar-hill-demolished-ba27b6ea69e1>.

<sup>26</sup> Cameron Brian, Morgan Feldenkris, and Allie Arnold, "Housing the University," (An "All Politics is Local" Project), accessed April 26, 2021, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=b6c884f9dee140049cd17e4c538874ec>.

which people and neighborhoods were largely prioritized for infrastructure improvements. The data gathered from these infrastructure decisions in aggregate illustrate how disparate the allocation of resources was between white and Black neighborhoods. Continual research on the subsequent years of infrastructure decisions is essential to understand Charlottesville's land use history and overlay neighborhood boundaries to portray how those decisions favor the livelihood of white Charlottesville residents over Black residents. This report and future reports on this topic will continue to build upon community knowledge about existing inequities and how infrastructure decisions can have lasting, generational impacts.

The statues remained reminders of apartheid system of the Jim Crow Era throughout the 20th century and to this day. In February 2017, after the "Unite the Right" rally, the City Council motioned to remove the statue of Lee and to rename Lee Park. The ensuing lawsuit, *Payne v. City of Charlottesville*, was filed three months later and resulted in the state placing a temporary injunction on the statue's removal, and later granted a permanent injunction<sup>27</sup>. After the Black Lives Matter movement gained national attention in the spring of 2020, the state law was amended "to remove the grounds for objection raised by the judge." Today, the statues remain in the newly renamed Market Street Park (previously Lee Park) and Court Square Park as the City Council symbolically denounced Generals Jackson and Lee. The injunction has yet to be lifted. Monuments to the Confederacy were widely erected as instruments of fear, used to remind Black citizens in Southern states of racial stratification and perpetuated lack of opportunity.<sup>28</sup> The City Council proved that racial segregation and White control remained a priority from 1921-1924 and that sending this intimidating message was worth \$3000 in unveiling entertainment costs per statue erected.

There are instances in the archival records, however sparse they may be, of Black Charlottesville locals addressing the need for updates in their place of residence or business. In our final pages of research, we noticed that John Ferris Bell applied to have

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<sup>27</sup> Charlottesville Statues Legal History Research Guide. "Charlottesville Statues About." Research Guide. Accessed April 25, 2021.

[https://statues.law.virginia.edu/about#:~:text=The%20Jackson%20statue%20was%20unveiled,\(now%20Market%20Street%20Park\).](https://statues.law.virginia.edu/about#:~:text=The%20Jackson%20statue%20was%20unveiled,(now%20Market%20Street%20Park).)

<sup>28</sup> Staples, Brent. "Confederate Memorials as Instruments of Racial Terror." New York Times, July 24, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/25/opinion/confederate-memorials-as-instruments-of-racial-terror.html>.

a sidewalk built where his funeral home business was to be located. J.F. Bell Funeral Home was owned and operated by John Ferris Bell, “which continues today as the oldest family-run funeral home in central Virginia and the area’s oldest existing business owned by people of color.”<sup>29</sup> The funeral home originally opened Vinegar Hill around 1917 but moved locations when “around 1925 a local contractor, Charles Cole, built the J.F. Bell Funeral Home with an upstairs apartment for [Bell’s] family. It remains as the main part of the funeral home at 108 6th Street N.W.”<sup>30</sup>

The local impact of John Ferris Bell did not stop at the success of his business. His prolific family legacy in the Charlottesville area can be traced to his daughter Rosamond Bell Jemison who “taught at Jefferson School in Charlottesville for many years,” and the youngest son Raymond’s involvement with the NAACP, local politics, and became the first African American to be elected to the Charlottesville School Board. Raymond was also a trained accountant, the funeral business’ Public Relations Chairman, local advocate for the desegregation of schools and oversaw the integration of schools during his time as a school board chairman.

Today, the J.F. Bell Funeral Home actively works with UVA’s Virginia Center for Digital History to connect local Black residents with their genealogy in a regularly updated public database.<sup>31</sup> We felt it necessary to include this anecdote not only because this business is still open, but because it maintains a crucial role in connecting Charlottesville to its Black history. It is also critical to note that the funeral home’s move out of Vinegar Hill into the adjacent Star Hill neighborhood could have been the decision that saved the business, as the fate of Vinegar Hill as we know it was eventually demolished during the era of urban renewal in 1965.

While the disbursement and generational impact of Black Charlottesville locals were immeasurably affected by urban renewal and racist policies throughout the twentieth

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<sup>29</sup> J F Bell Funeral Home. “About Us | Charlottesville, VA.” Accessed April 26, 2021.  
<https://jfbellfuneralservices.com/about-us>.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

<sup>31</sup> “J.F. Bell Funeral Home Records - Search the Database.” Accessed May 9, 2021.  
[http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/afam/raceandplace/perl\\_scripts/funeral\\_search.html](http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/afam/raceandplace/perl_scripts/funeral_search.html).

century, the future is bright in terms of Black History preservation in the area. With organizations like Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, The Mapping Cville Project, and the Virginia Center for Digital History, the City of Charlottesville is well on its way to unraveling the layers of perspectives that have not yet been properly represented.

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