



# CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

## AIYANA KNOWLES

### **From your perspective, what happened to Russell City, why do you think it happened, and how did it affect your family?**

My father, and his immediate and extended family were residents of Russell City. I have heard first-hand how devastating the loss of Russell City was to that community. There is significant trauma that lives on for so many families as a result of being displaced or having to relocate without adequate compensation. It's also distressing that so much of history has been lost over the years.

### **What is your connection to the Russell City Community?**

I am a daughter of a Russell City resident. I grew up hearing stories about the community and its deep-rooted history that continued long after families were displaced. One of the ways the spirit of Russell City is kept alive is through the Russell City Picnic. Over the years I've been fortunate to attend and support the planning of the picnic, including this year for the 40th anniversary.

### **What is your background? What meaningful value or expertise can you bring to the committee?**

Professionally, I have almost 15 years of experience in the non-profit and public sectors, with a majority of that being in advocacy, community engagement, and organizing that's centered on social justice and racial equity. I am able to bring a particular set of skills to the group to support the engagement of others on both sides of the table. As a current resident of Hayward, I'm also able to inform and assist in any local actions.

### **Do you have any additional or unique qualifications you would like to share? If so, please list them below.**

I believe it's extremely important to have steering committee members who are able to objectively and thoughtfully engage others in the best interest of the Russell City residents and their descendants. In some cases, this means meeting an older generation where they are, whether that's making phone calls or sending flyers through standard mail so everyone has access to all information.

### **Tell us about your experience working in a team or community-based process.**

Over the years I have managed and been a part of teams that have worked in service of and with the community to create sustainable change. In my career, I've engaged and empowered thousands of community members around education, voting, and COVID-19.



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**What is your purpose for being here? As a member of the committee, what do you want to achieve? At the end of the day, what would you want to see happen and what are you willing to do to get us there?**

I hope that the history of Russell City is able to be documented in a way that honors its residents.

Aiyana Knowles