West End by Bike – Cue Sheet

6 miles, mostly trail and low traffic, some moderate traffic.

Start at Downshift (416 Campbell Ave SW)

Head west on Campbell Ave SW

#1 – Jefferson High School, Campbell Ave SW & 6th St SW

#2 – RAM House, 824 Campbell Ave SW

Right on 12th St NW

#3 – Commodore Inn, 1201 Patterson Ave SW

Right on Salem Ave NW

#1. Open in 1924, 19,000 students graduated from Jefferson High School during the 50 years it was open. Alumni and community support saved the building, pouring millions of dollars of donations and passing a bond issue for renovations. Today, the Jefferson Center houses offices and businesses, hosts community events in the Fitzpatrick Hall, and performances in the Shaftman Performance Hall.

#2. Roanoke Area Ministries (RAM) converted the former Our Lady of Nazareth Catholic Church (constructed in 1926) into a day shelter for the homeless as part of Mayor Noel Taylor's 1986 initiative for the homeless.

#3. The Commodore Inn, a local restaurant and bar, opened in the 1930's. Efforts are underway to restore the unique neon sign, which is in storage. (More info here)
#4 – Acorn Banking Company (1019 Salem Ave NW) and Acorn Drug Store (1020 Salem Ave NW)

Left on 10th St NW

Left on Loudon Ave NW

Right on 11th St NW

#5 – 11th Street Building (601 11th St NW)

Right on Grayson Ave NW

Left on 10th St NW

Right on Lick Run Greenway

#6 – Brown Robertson Park, 913 Shadeland Ave NW

Right on Wells Ave NE

#4. Banker, real estate agent, herb doctor, clairvoyant-- Dr. John Henry Pinkard (1865-1934) operated the Acorn Small Loan Company and a drug store across the street on Salem Avenue. A tall man in a long black coat with a gold-tipped cane, the "yarb doctor" was the wealthiest African American in Roanoke, building homes and giving loans to African Americans during segregation when they were not allowed to use white banks or live in white neighborhoods.

#5. Possibly once the Wright Hotel, the 11th St building marks a turning point in the Northwest as it follows West End in the revitalization focus. Peacemakers approached Garland Properties about investing in the Northwest, and identified a property owner willing to sell. When complete, the lower level will have retail and the upper level residential. Garland Properties commissioned the mural by Kamila Love, which includes The Peacemakers logo.

#6. Shadeland Avenue and its nice homes were destroyed in the flood. Mrs. Brown was a taxi driver and Mrs. Robertson operated a day care. Both women drowned in the flood. (Source: Roanoke Times)
Left on Henry St NW

#7. Henry St, Wells Ave to Centre Ave

Turn around and go north on Henry St NW

Left on Loudon Ave NW

Right on Gainsboro Rd NW

Left on Gilmer Ave NW

#8. Oliver White Hill, 401 Gilmer Ave NW

Left on 5th St NW

#7. David Ramey Sr (1939-2017) documented Henry Street, the vibrant center of African American Gainsboro in many captivating illustrations. African American performers including Duke Ellington and Ella Fitzgerald, banned from white hotels where they performed, stayed in Henry Street hotels such as the Dumas. Desegregation combined with urban renewal doomed most of the buildings, but Henry Street is returning to life with new...