

City of Alexandria | Office of Historic Alexandria

Five Year Strategic Plan FY 2020-2025

Mission, Vision, Values, Goals

Updated November 2022

City of Alexandria

Mission

Working together to foster a thriving Alexandria

Vision

In 2022, Alexandria is a historic, inclusive city of kindness, with distinct, vibrant and safe neighborhoods, a well-managed government, flourishing arts, culture, and recreation, a strong economy, thriving children and youth, active and secure older adults, environmental sustainability, healthy residents of all ages, and multimodal transportation

Values

- Respect
 - We are open-minded and treat all people with dignity.
- Integrity
 - We are thoughtful stewards of the public's trust.
- Teamwork
 - We do great things together.
- Continuous Improvement
 - We challenge ourselves to learn and grow.



Office of Historic Alexandria

Mission

The Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) preserves and shares Alexandria's past to enrich the present and inspire the future.

Vision

To infuse Alexandria's rich and complex history into the fabric of the community.

Values

- Equity
 - Engages in scholarship and research-driven content.
 - Acknowledges that history is complex and embraces dialogue.
- Community
 - Offers compelling and innovative research-driven experiences for both residents and visitors.
 - Builds community by fostering understanding and civic value.
- Collaboration
 - Actively seeks community partnerships and input.
 - Offers resources for community projects, planning, and decisions.

Goals

Embrace the diversity of our community, both past and present

We are committed to sharing the diverse stories of our past in meaningful ways with our changing community.

- **Expand Alexandria’s African American history interpretation throughout OHA**
 - Implement Fort Ward Interpretive Plan
 - Develop phased approach to funding and implementing interpretive elements. ✓ (*April 2019*)
 - Coordinate related departments and establish plan for interpretive trail. (*Apply for FY25 CIP funding in Fall 2023*).
 - Maintain active connections with the descendant community and other stakeholders.
 - Evaluate all OHA public programming to ensure it incorporates and respects the diverse stories of our community
 - Family: Seek new ways to build relationships with the diverse families of Alexandria
 - *Tested winter kit 2021 while closed for Covid*
 - *Partnership with Beatley Central Library—Storytime with Alexandria Black History Musuem, begun summer 2021*
 - School:
 - Develop ABHM and Freedom House school program(s)
 - Review and update existing school programs to better share stories of various races, genders, and social class.
 - Organize teacher workshops that highlight local African American history
 - *Developed presentation on local African American History Nov. 2021*
 - Align with the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Commission on African American History Education recommendations.
 - Adult: Evaluate programs, lecture series, and symposiums for content and balance
 - Equip staff and volunteers to better engage a diverse community and share African American history
 - Create training materials that provide information about Alexandria’s African American history and its connection to broader themes told across the city. ✓ (*January 2022*)

- Participate in ACPS Cultural Competency training to bring museum educators and local teachers in line with language using to engage students.
 - Schedule Race and Identity training for staff and volunteers that ties into OHA’s interpretive work *(February 2020, May 2020, 2021 Core Team work, March 2022)*
 - Complete and make available to the public the following on-going projects that highlight Alexandria’s African American history
 - Develop walking tours in partnership with the African American Heritage Trails Committee. *(North Trail completed October 2020, South Trail expected February 2023)*
 - Finalize the Freedmen Cemetery Archaeology and History reports, making the information available online and in brochure form. *(expected Fall 2023)*
 - Catalogue the Moss Kendrix collection and make it available online. *(Scanning underway with 2021 IMLS grant)*
 - Research the Apothecary’s archival collection of manumissions and publish findings.
- **Understand and incorporate community needs in all areas of OHA exhibitions, museum sites, and collections**
 - Continue and expand Oral History program ✓ *(Full time position hired May 2022)*
 - Seek ways to collect oral histories and material culture at community events.
 - Continue to enlist and train volunteers and community members to collect oral histories.
 - Develop a plan to make oral histories more accessible to the public.
 - Develop long-range plan for the Alexandria Black History Museum, with a focus on community needs and access
 - Develop long-range plan for Alexandria’s History Museum at The Lyceum
 - Undertake survey of community to determine the future of the museum and space usage
 - Develop a plan to redesign the space based on community input and museum needs
 - Continue to update Alexandria Archaeology Museum’s exhibits and infrastructure. *(Exhibits phase 1 completed, phase 2 expected May 2023. Infrastructure phase 1 complete, phase 2 expected FY24)*
 - Review collections plans to ensure the diversity of Alexandria’s history is actively and intentionally collected within the scope of each site.
 - Develop acquisitions committee and department-wide collections plan
- **Establish the Freedom House Museum as a City Museum**
 - Acquire the site ✓ *(March 2020)*
 - Explore membership in the International Coalition for Sites of Conscience ✓ *(Joined March 2020)*
 - Complete Historic Structures Report ✓ *(October 2021)*
 - Develop master plan for various spaces and uses in the historic structure *(Vendor selected October 2022)*
 - Create fundraising plan and grants based on long-range plan for site
 - Research and create interpretive plan based on new research *(Part of the master planning process)*

- Establish site within the larger trajectory of the slave trade (domestic and trans-Atlantic) at the local, regional, and national scale.
- **Implement Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and Community Remembrance Project**
 - Create a timetable for meetings, soil collection, marker, and pillar installation. ✓ (*January 2020*)
 - Hold public meetings and offer programs to foster community engagement
 - Apply to EJI to formally start the process to “claim” Alexandria’s lynching pillar ✓ (*November 2021*)
 - Install markers at both lynching locations ✓ (*McCoy installed April 2021, Thomas installed August 2021*)
 - Hold public remembrance ceremonies to acknowledge Alexandria’s history of racial terror ✓ (*August 2021, April 2022*)
 - Work with the EJI to “claim” lynching pillar through required essay contest and soil collection projects (*Soil project completed September 2022, Essay Contest scheduled for February 2023*)
 - Offer “pilgrimage” opportunities to Montgomery, AL for the community, with sponsorships. ✓ (*October 2022*)
 - Partner with other city entities/support’s city’s committee to “Equitable Alexandria”

Instill a sense of place

We contribute to the unique character that makes Alexandria attractive to residents, visitors, and businesses.

- **Infuse the City’s redeveloping waterfront with Alexandria’s history**
 - Create Waterfront Interpretive Plan
 - Using FY21 CIP funds, hire a firm to create the interpretive plan (*Planned for FY23*)
 - Implement wayfinding signage in new interim waterfront park ✓ (*Installed FY22*)
 - Develop marketing plan to include social media and city website to share information related to waterfront history and archaeology
 - Complete research to place Alexandria’s early seaport history in the local, national, and international context. ✓ (*Consultant hired June 2020, Phase IA report due December 2022, final report due December 2023*)
 - Develop and continue to implement conservation, study, and preservation and/or exhibition of new archaeological discoveries from the waterfront
 - Carlyle Warehouse ✓ (*First round of materials returned in FY22, remaining materials returning in FY23*)
 - AX229 - Hotel Indigo ship (*anticipated return: 2025*)
 - Three Ships ✓ (*documentation completed: 2021, “ponding” for long term storage May 2022*)
 - Thousands of artifacts from waterfront development locations, encompassing the lives of residents, black and white, free and enslaved

- **Implement Archaeology Protection Code**
 - Oversight of code for major city projects, including Waterfront, Fort Ward, and CSO/RiverRenew
 - Partner with other departments to anticipate and plan for future development projects
 - Revise, update, and implement archaeology standards and policies
 - Collections policy
 - Archaeology standards
 - Disaster plan
 - Field and lab manual
 - Digitization/metadata protocols

- **Expand interpretation in publicly accessible areas throughout the City**
 - Continue to create wayfinding interpretive signs throughout the city, including
 - Duke Street corridor signage (*Funded through ARPA, to be completed by December 2024*)
 - Civil Rights sites (*Funded through ARPA, to be completed by December 2024*)
 - New development and trails
 - Wayfinding signage outside museum sites
 - Parker Gray historic district
 - Arlandria/Del Ray/Rosemont/West End
 - Design and install exhibits at City Hall and Union Station ✓ (*March 2020*)
 - Install plaque at the WWI Monument by Union Station ✓ (*March 2020*)
 - Be intentional about participating in events outside of Old Town
 - Explore pop-up exhibits or traveling exhibits about local history

- **Create a field trip program in partnership with ACPS that provides an equitable field trip experience for all 2nd grade students in ACPS.**
 - Establish workgroup of local teachers, with incentives for participation (*Funded FY23, Targeting Summer 2023 for teacher collaboration*)
 - Identify topics/themes 2nd grade teachers say they would like additional support in
 - Gather collections items and research related to the classroom content identified by teachers
 - Develop workgroups of ACPS and OHA staff who will create the field trip program

- **Preserve historic structures and landscapes that are under City's care**
 - Work with General Services to create long-term comprehensive plans for care, safety, and maintenance of buildings through CIP process
 - Work with Purchasing to create a list of pre-qualified historic preservation contractors or companies to be used as needed for projects ✓ (*March 2022*)
 - Assist the Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission on easement oversight
 - Complete the 10-year building study and develop action plan for Gadsby's Tavern Complex ✓ (*May 2021*)
 - Establish long-term preservation plan for Murray-Dick-Fawcett House (*part of the master planning process*)

- Seek additional resources to survey, study, interpret, and preserve Alexandria’s historic African American cemeteries.

Use history to spark curiosity and reflection
We encourage life-long learning for all ages.

- **Ensure collections and archival materials are accessible online**

- Utilize PastPerfect software to make collections available online.
 - Themed and/or site specific
 - Gadsby’s Silver ✓ (*July 2020*)
 - Carlton Funn Collection ✓ (*July 2020*)
 - Sanabria ✓ (*July 2020*)
 - Black Lives Remembered ✓ (*February 2021*)
 - Parker-Gray School Collection ✓ (*July 2020*)
 - Moss Kendrix Collection (*Scanning underway with 2021 IMLS grant*)
- Utilize Laserfische software to make archives available online.
 - Apothecary (*seeking funding to complete project through Mortar & Pestle Society*)
 - Irwin collection
- Digitize historic documents that illustrate changes to the city’s landscape.

- **Exceed AAM accreditation standards for preserving collections and archival materials for generations to come**

- Purchase, customize, and migrate archaeological collections data into new software program
- Work with General Services to secure a new storage facility for the OHA collection, archaeological collection, and City Archives.
- Continue timely accession and appropriate housing of collections
- Maintain current inventory of collections
- Conduct a deaccession survey by 2024 across all sites to ensure all objects adhere to set collecting plans

- **Contribute to City commemorations and annual events**

- Black History Month (February)
- Women’s History Month (March)
- Preservation Month (May)
- Pride Month (June)
- 1939 Sit-In with Alexandria Libraries (August)
- Archaeology Month (October)
- Virginia Cider Festival (November)
- City of Alexandria 275th Anniversary (July 2024)
- American Independence 250th Anniversary (July 2026)

- **Begin planning for America250 Anniversary in 2026**
 - Research the early history of Alexandria, particularly the decades around the Revolutionary War.
 - Actively participate in state-wide and regional planning committees (*OHA director - appointee to the State Commission through 2027*)
 - Share research with the community through public programming, social media, and printed articles.
 - Establish annual Symposium in partnership with Emerging RevWar to bring latest research to the area ✓ (*Third Annual: September 2022*)
 - Create an Alexandria 2026 commemoration plan, in collaboration with all Alexandria historic sites and attractions
 - Seek City Supplemental Funding beginning in the FY24 budget (*requesting funds in the FY25 budget*)

- **Provide mission-driven experiences for tourists visiting City Museums**
 - Develop new tour and training plan at Gadsby's Tavern Museum ✓ (*March 2020*)
 - Develop interpretive plan for the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House (*part of the master planning process*)
 - Finish the ADA Compliance Assessment for the department and create plan for implementation
 - Create and evaluate public programming and special events that tie to OHA's mission and provide products for tourism marketing campaigns
 - Participate in the AASLH Visitor Counts program ✓ (*program discontinued in 2020, participated in AAM Museum-goers survey in 2022*)
 - Rebrand museums for easier identification as City sites and more effective marketing campaigns.

- **Develop programming that fulfills the needs of the local community**
 - Develop outreach programming related to new archaeology discoveries ✓ (*new ship ponding & privy outreach activities*)
 - Build partnerships with community organizations and other city departments who work with the local population
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of existing programs in terms of cost recovery and mission-related success as well as community need
 - Grow the Junior Docent program ✓ (*return to program after Covid, summer 2022. Expanded interpretation to include historic chocolate*)
 - Streamline volunteer recruitment and training for tours and programs. ✓ (*New virtual training for Apothecary & Gadsby, Fall 2021*)
 - Assess operating hours for current museums for site capacity, staffing, and public need. Make recommendations and implement updated plan.
 - Develop a coordinated exhibition schedule at the department's sites and other city venues that reflect OHA's values and goals.

Uphold and advance OHA as a resource for local history, historic preservation,
and museum management

We share our expertise and skills for the good of the community.

- **Create a more flexible and dynamic museum system**
 - Reorganize OHA using City’s Administrative Regulations as guideline
 - Prioritize full time over part time positions
 - Hire a development officer ✓ (*Interviews completed November 2022*)
 - Write new position descriptions ✓ (*November 2021*)
 - Establish workplans for new staff and divisions
 - Establish training procedures for onboarding new staff
 - Establish internal promotion opportunities that encourage staff engagement and retention
 - Establish ongoing professional development opportunities throughout all levels of the organization.

- **Implement State Regulations for the City’s Archives and Records Management Program**
 - Follow state code for records management, retention, and disposal.
 - Implement City-wide Records Management Training
 - Work to secure new location for mandated Archives and Records facility

- **Actively share knowledge, research, and best-practices**
 - Establish a communication plan for sharing latest research, collections items, and educational opportunities.
 - Social Media (*established department-wide calendar for content May 2020*)
 - City Website (*migrated to new City web platform 2022, currently updating content to fit new format*)
 - Weekly and monthly newspaper articles to local paper
 - Write, publish, and /or present scholarly work on waterfront history, archaeology, and historical research
 - Present at local, state, and/or national conferences
 - Continue to advise and be recognized as a resource for city staff in other departments
 - Offer learning opportunities to City employees
 - Be recognized as a valued partner in city festivals and events.

- **Plan and secure diverse long-term funding and resources for sustainability**
 - Achieve a sustainable balance of contributed, earned, and public annual operating income.
 - Continue to cultivate museum stores that promote site missions while providing added revenue
 - Operate the rental program that provides added revenue
 - Seek outside grant opportunities to support prioritized initiatives
 - Analyze fee schedule to ensure appropriate balance of access and cost-recovery.

- Seek funding to assist with preservation of city buildings based on priority list
- Work in partnership with Friends Groups to better support OHA’s mission and priorities
- Develop departmental list of conservation priorities and funding plan.
 - Ship timbers conservation ✓
 - Friendship Firehouse Pumper ✓ (*February 2022*)
 - Apothecary window restoration, rear 107 building 2nd floor
- Cultivate donor relationships for departmental priorities

Strategic Plan Notes

This plan was developed in collaboration with OHA’s stakeholders in FY2019, for implementation in FY2020. Updated April 2022, November 2022.

The stakeholders included:

Alexandria Archaeology Commission
Alexandria Association
Alexandria Caen Sister City
Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission
Alexandria Historical Society
Alexandria Library, Special Collections Division
Alexandria Sister Cities
Alexandria Visitor Center
Athenaeum
Carlyle House Museum
Christ Church
Fort Ward Stakeholders Group
Friends of Alexandria Archaeology
Friends of Fort Ward
Friendship Veterans Fire Engine Association
Gadsby's Tavern Museum Society
George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee
George Washington Masonic Memorial
Historic Alexandria Foundation
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
Inventor's Hall of Fame
Ivy Hill Cemetery
Lee Fendall House Museum
Mortar and Pestle Society
Northern Virginia Urban League
OHA Volunteers
Old Presbyterian Meeting House
Planning/BAR Staff
Public Records Advisory Commission
Recreation, Parks, & Cultural Activities
Society for the Preservation of Black History

St. Paul's Church
Visit Alexandria
Walking Tour Companies