



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA  
Project Implementation

# Douglass Cemetery Stormwater Project and Burial Permit

October 29, 2025





# Agenda

- Introductions
- Project Background – History
- Project Background – Conditions
- Stormwater Project Design
- Maintenance of Traffic Plan
- Burial Permit
- Project Schedule
- Gravestone Conservation
- Public Comment on the Burial Permit
- General Questions

# Introductions



- Office of Historic Alexandria
- Department of Project Implementation
- Descendant Advisory Group, Friends of Douglass Cemetery
- Social Responsibility Group



# Project Background - History

A force of workmen [is] employed in opening up the walks, grading the ground and grading an entrance at the new Douglass Memorial cemetery for colored people, on the western outskirts of the city. The owners of the property preparing to erect a monument in the center of the cemetery to the memory of Fred. Douglass.

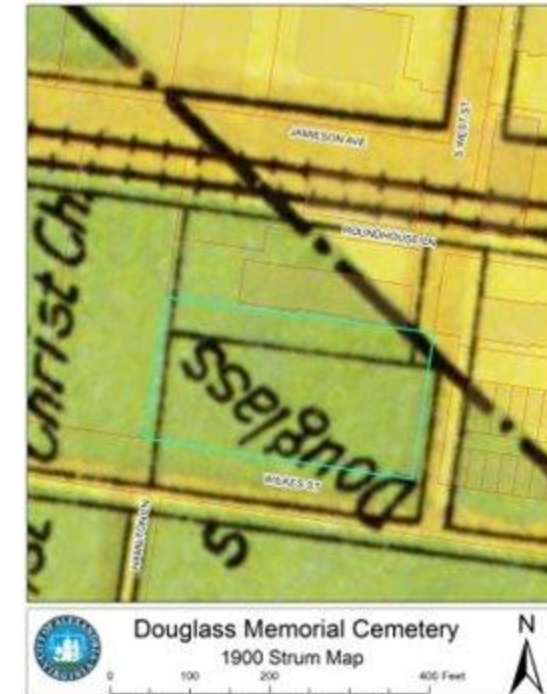
*Alexandria Gazette, October 18, 1895*

The Douglass cemetery, the new burying ground for colored people, which has been established here recently, was a day or two ago conveyed by the Washington owners to a board of trustees, consisting of Revs. Porter, Waring, Fields Cook and W. B. Dulaney and M. B. T. Murray, all colored, who will have control of the land in the future and who propose to make the cemetery a very handsome one. The trustees have organized by electing Rev. Porter president; Rev. Fields Cook, vice president, and M. B. T. Murray, secretary and treasurer.

*Alexandria Gazette, February 26, 1896*

- Established in 1895 as a non-denominational, African American Cemetery in memory of Frederick Douglass (1818-1895).
- In use through 1975 when it was closed.
- 2,256 documented burials
- Headstones: 605 (including footstones and other markers)
- Many burials are unmarked.
- First known burial: 1896. Last known burial: 1975
- City maintained property since 1976

Cemetery boundaries shown in blue.  
Earliest map of the cemetery.



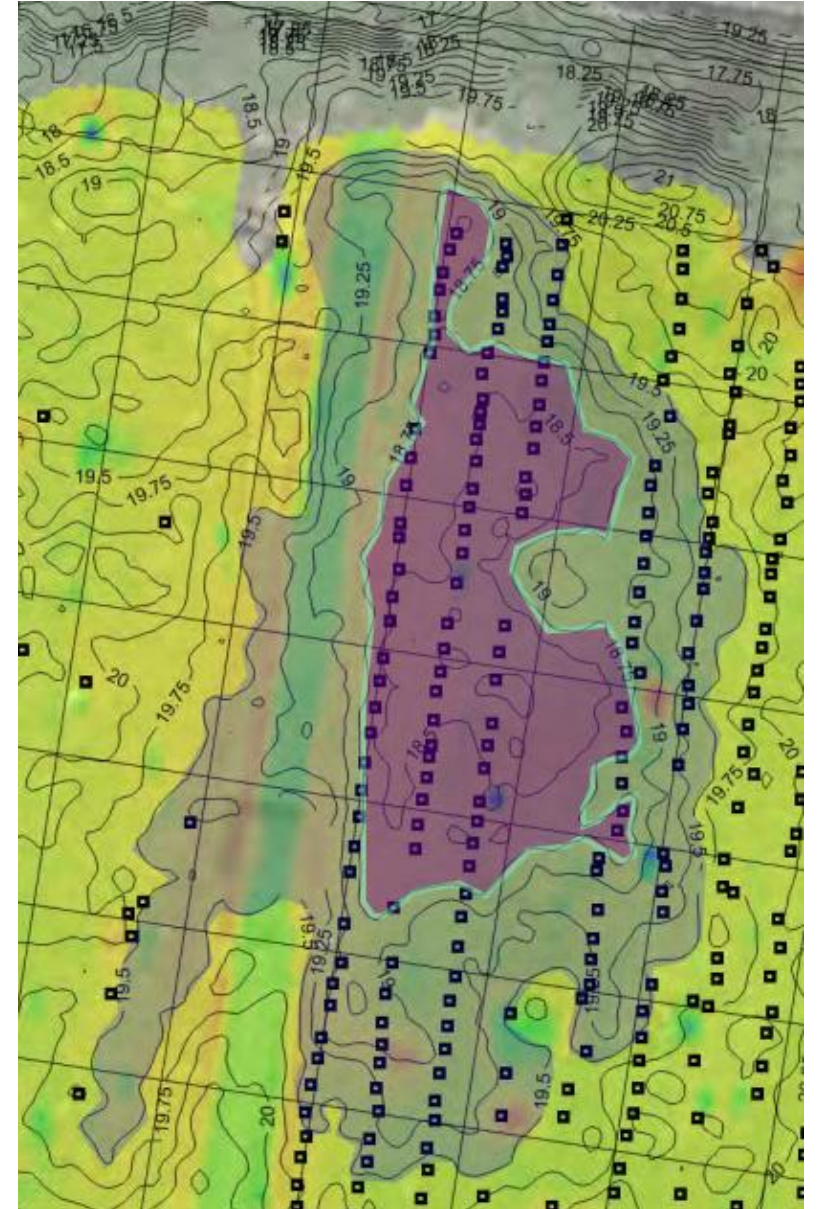




# Project Background - Conditions



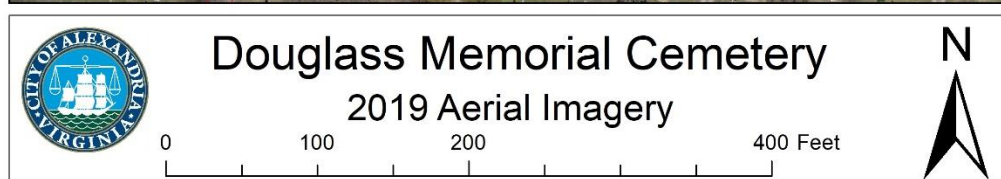
Source: City. Oct 2021







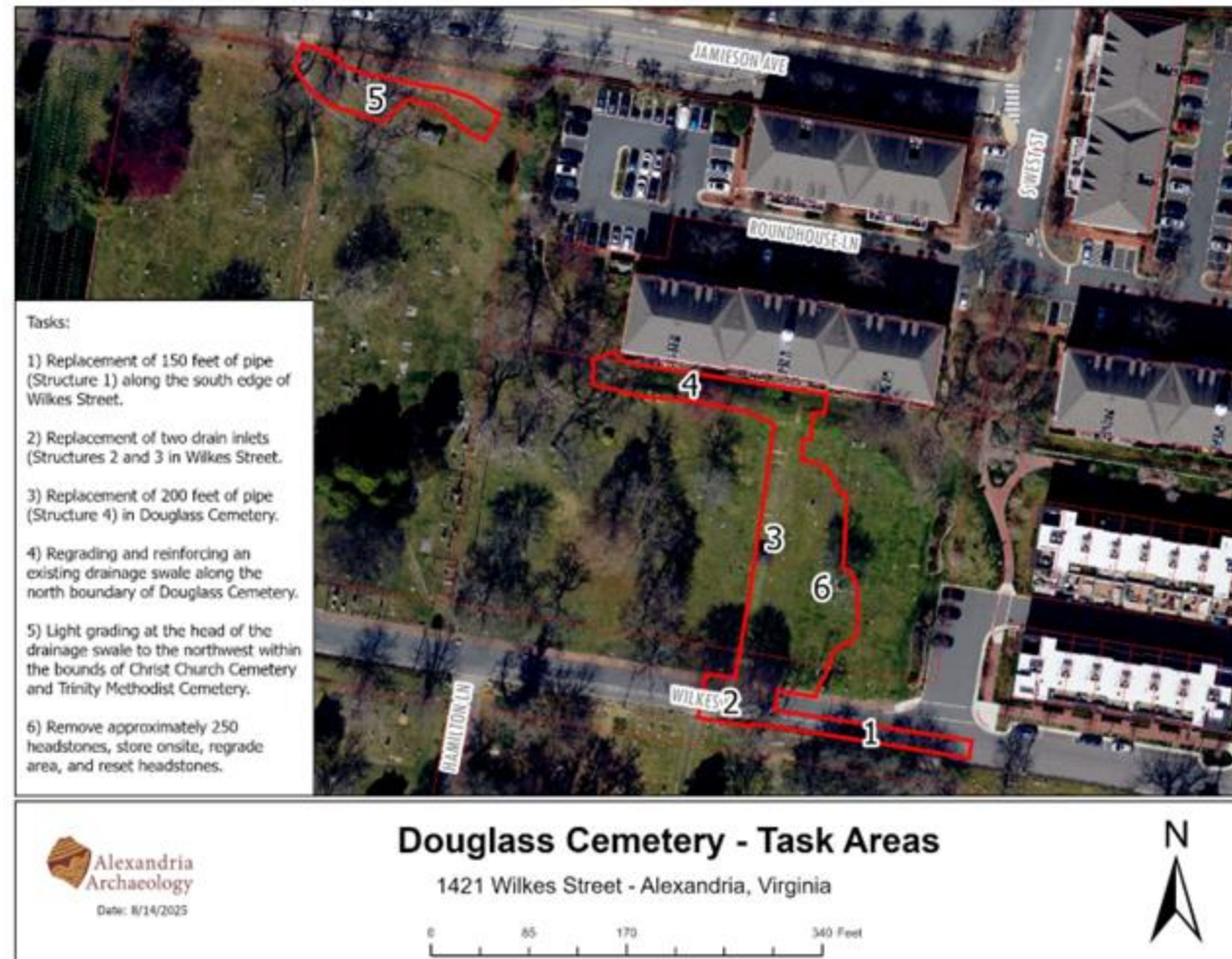
# Project Background - Conditions



- Jacobs Engineering studied the issues.
- Aging, clogged, and undersized stormwater pipe does not properly convey water to and through the cemetery.
- Slope of swale does not promote drainage and water run-off.
- Low spot fills with water during rain events with no overland relief.
- Ownership: in November 2023, the City received a quitclaim deed for one-quarter interest in Douglass Cemetery.



# The Design



- The grading permit (construction plan) has been approved.
- The project is currently in the bid phase.





# The Design

Swale Improvements

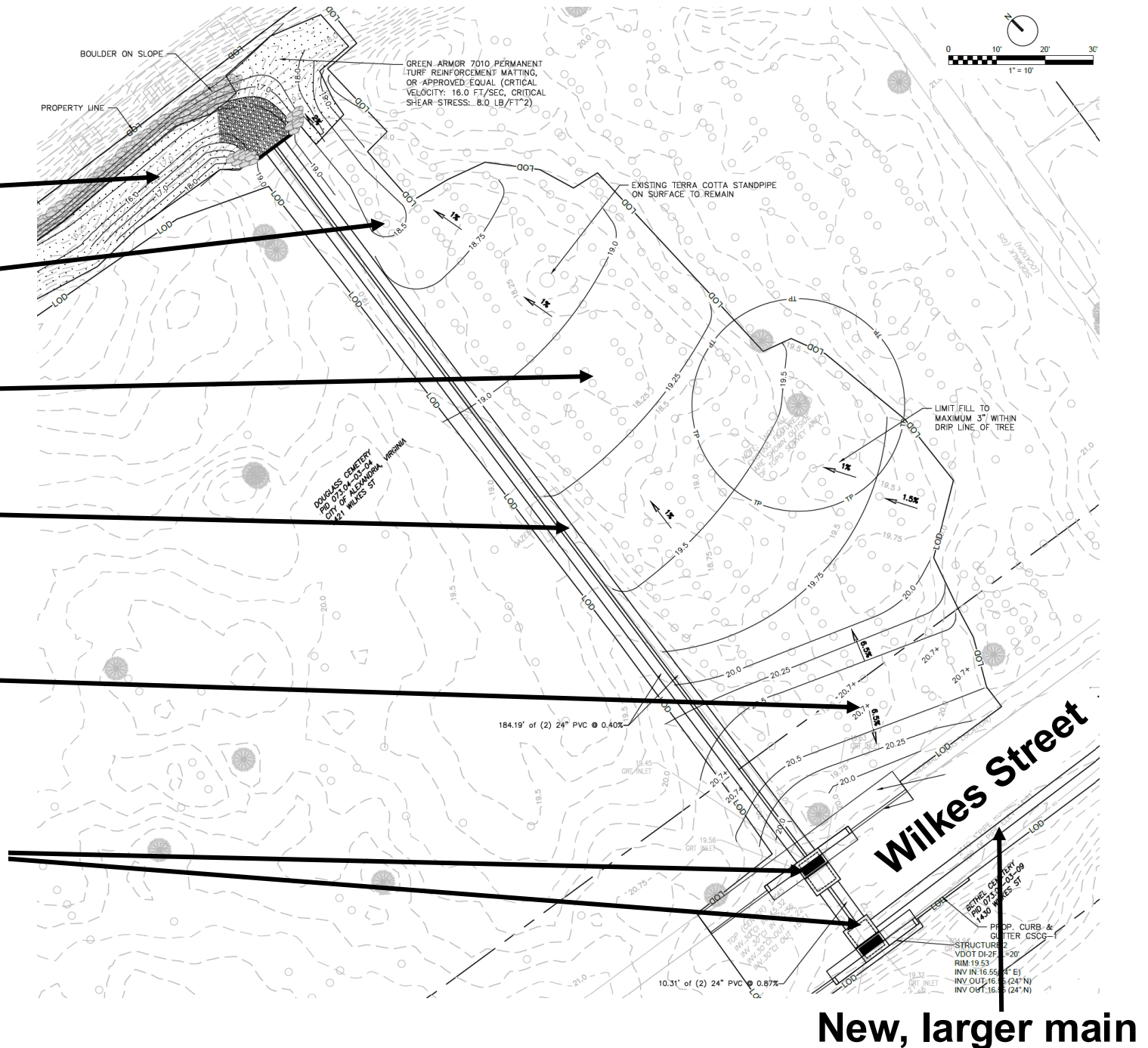
Create Overland relief

Re-grade (Fill Only) -  
eliminate ponding

Replace two storm pipes

Create a high point to  
prevent water flowing  
from Wilkes St

Replace two storm inlets

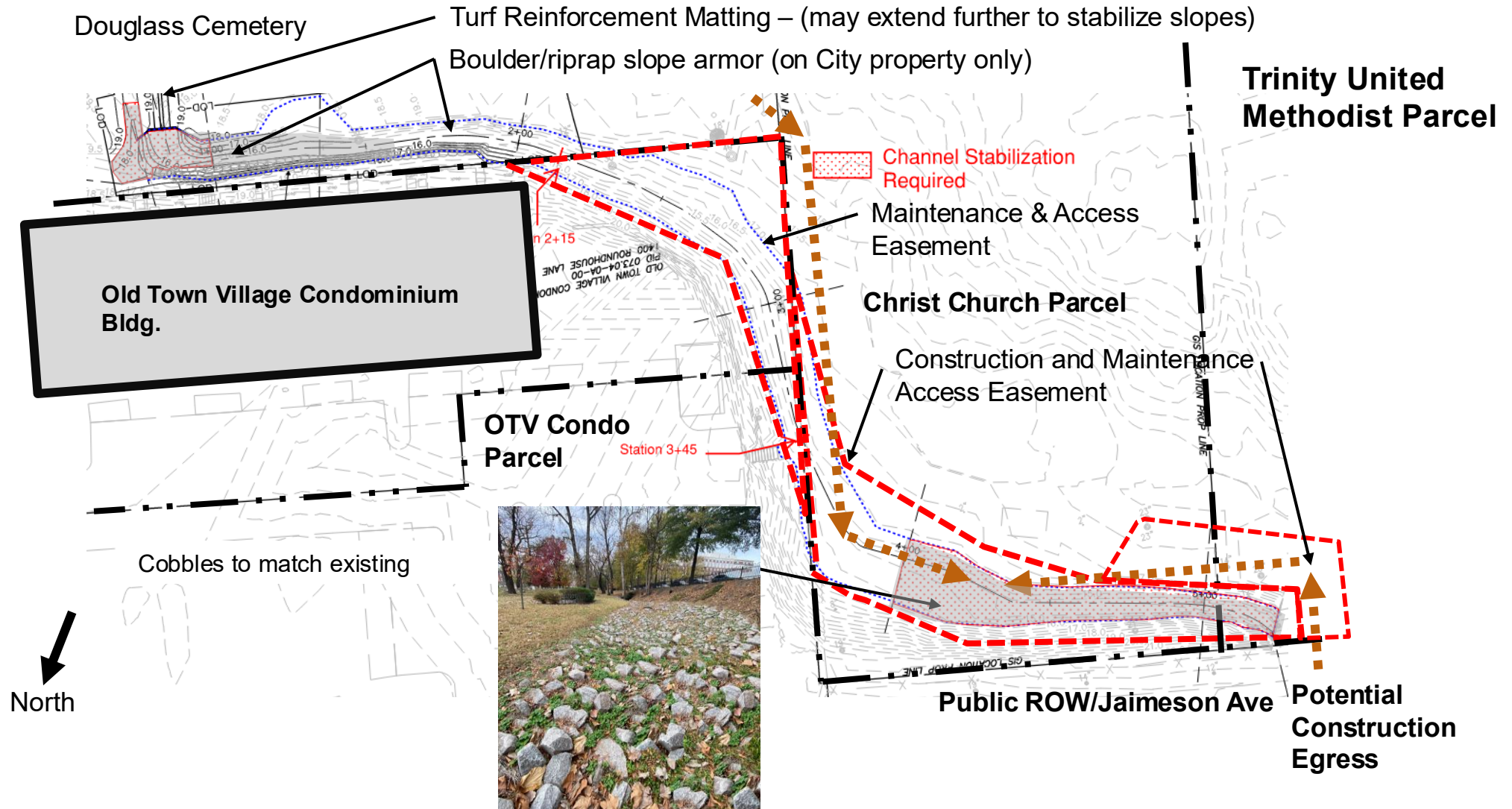






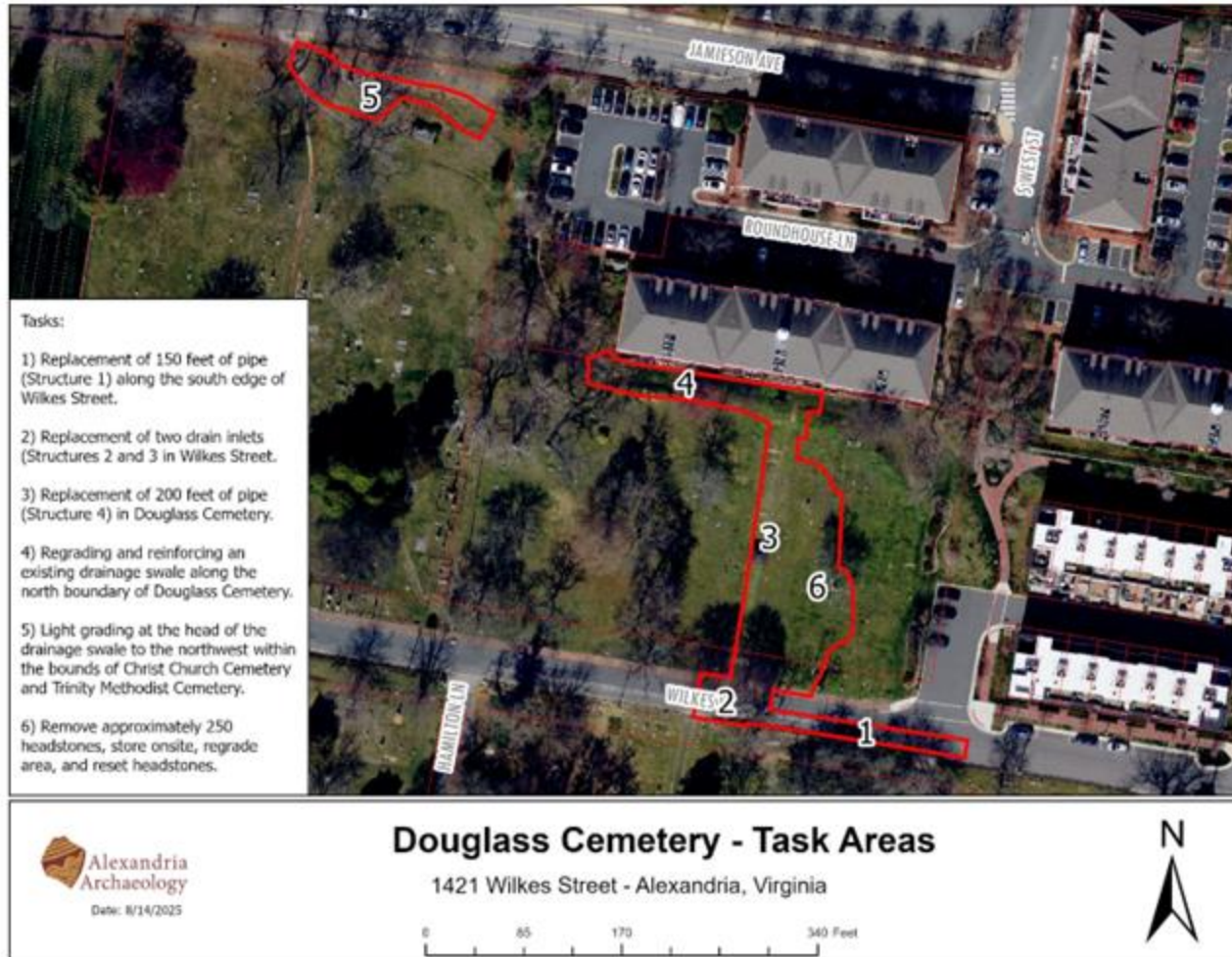
# The Design - Channel Stabilization

## Easements and Partnerships





# Maintenance of Traffic Plan



- Plan forthcoming
- Goal is to maintain vehicular traffic in Wilkes Street
- Engineers recommend keeping one lane open on Wilkes at all times and close the other for construction
- Contractor will provide a traffic control plan





# Burial Permit

- Previous archaeological testing and existing stormwater pipes suggest discovery of intact burial is unlikely.
- Confirmed that the current pipe probably installed in the 1970s in an existing ditch.
- Recommended archaeological monitoring during construction.
- However, in the unlikely event that a burial is found, and out of an abundance of caution, we have applied for a Burial Permit from the Department of Historic Resources. See copy.
- Directs archaeological actions if a burial is discovered.



Photo by Michael Johnson



Previous archaeological testing, January 2024.



# Burial Permit

A permit from the Director of DHR is required for archaeological recovery of all human skeletal remains and associated artifacts from any unmarked grave, regardless of the age of the burial or archaeological site or ownership of the property.

The DHR establishes the public process.



**DHR** | Virginia Department of Historic Resources

**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES  
PERMIT APPLICATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF HUMAN REMAINS**

Please print or type all information. If a request does not apply to your project, please print or type "N/A" in the space provided. If additional space is required, please attach as many extra sheets as necessary. Failure to provide a complete application (including requested attachments) will result in denial of the requested permit. Please forward any questions to Joanna Wilson Green (telephone 804-482-6098, email [joanna.wilson@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:joanna.wilson@dhr.virginia.gov)).

**1. APPLICANT'S NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company/Organization/Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone No.: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax No.: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROPERTY OWNER'S NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION** (if different from above)

Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company/Organization/Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone No.: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax No.: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTRACTOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Principal Name/Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company/Organization/Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone No.: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax No.: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. PROPERTY INFORMATION:**

Name/title of property on which excavation will take place: \_\_\_\_\_  
County/independent city: \_\_\_\_\_  
State archaeological inventory number: \_\_\_\_\_  
State architectural inventory number (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_





# Burial Permit

## Proposed Actions:

- If an intact burial is encountered during monitoring,
  - all work will stop immediately.
  - City Archaeologist, Department of Historic Resources, and Descendant Advisory Group will be notified.
- If the burial cannot be avoided due to the location of construction for the replacement stormwater pipe,
  - the burial will be respectfully and carefully excavated.
  - safely, securely stored in the Archaeological Collections Storage room.
  - construction will continue.
  - osteological analyses will take place.
  - reburial will take place in Douglass Cemetery in close coordination with the Friends of Douglass Cemetery.



Howard Wellman, gravestone conservator (2024). Photo by Alexandria Archaeology.



Archaeologist, Rayshelle Holloway, from Gray and Pape (2024). Photo by Michael Johnson.



	2025 Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	2026 Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul
Archaeology										Burial Permit									
Stormwater Design						Permit Approval													
Bid Package							Bid Documents												
Bidding and Construction									Bidding and Procurement			Construction							
Cemetery Preservation																			





# Gravestone Conservation

## Second Round of Gravestone Conservation:

- Starting on October 27 and for about two weeks, gravestone conservator Howard Wellman will be conserving gravestones on the west side of the cemetery.
- The stones that will be treated during this round of work are high priority and many need their original foundations repaired.
- The determination about which stones need conservation is made as part the Cemetery Preservation Plan (2022).
- Funded by the Virginia African American Cemeteries and Graves Fund.
- Additional work will take place Fall 2026.





# Public Comment

Comments or questions on the burial permit should be made now or in writing, and must be received by Friday, November 28, 2025 to applicant's agent or to the DHR representative, listed below:

Eleanor Breen, PhD, RPA  
City Archaeologist  
City of Alexandria, Virginia  
Office of Historic Alexandria/Alexandria Archaeology  
105 N. Union Street, #327  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Email: [eleanor.breen@alexandriava.gov](mailto:eleanor.breen@alexandriava.gov)  
Phone: 703.746.4399

Joanna Wilson Green, Archaeologist-Cemetery Preservation  
Virginia Department of Historic Resources  
2801 Kensington Avenue  
Richmond VA 23221  
Email: [joanna.wilson@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:joanna.wilson@dhr.virginia.gov)  
Phone: 804.482.6098





# Questions?