

City of Alexandria | Office of Historic Alexandria

Three Year Strategic Plan FY26-28

Expanded from Five Year Strategic Plan FY20 -25

Mission, Vision, Values

City Council & City Manager Priorities 2025-2027

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY: EMPLOYEE ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

How do we develop a culture that attracts and retains diverse talent in the public service sector and ensure our employees feel valued?

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY: ELIMINATE COMMUNITY DISPARITIES

How do we increase stability, mobility, and pathways to prospering for Alexandrians?

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITY: ECONOMIC STRENGTH

How do we increase the economic strength of the city and its residents to ensure future financial stability by further diversifying the tax base and increasing revenue?

CITY MANAGER PRIORITY: STREAMLINE ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

How do we create structured, efficient frameworks & workflows that support the organization's operations, enhance productivity, and ensure consistency in achieving goals?

CITY MANAGER PRIORITY: IMPROVE & INNOVATE

How do we improve existing processes and services while introducing new, creative solutions that drive efficiency and adaptability?

Mission

The Office of Historic Alexandria 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.*

- **Demonstrate commitment to telling Alexandria's and America's full history.**
 - Manage the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project
 - Generate long-range plan for project that includes staffing and fundraising needs
 - Expand efforts with Alexandria's interfaith community
 - Identify ways to support and expand active student participation in ACRP
 - Complete research that reveals racial injustice after the Civil War
 - Ensure all exhibits include diverse stories and perspectives
 - Review collections plans to ensure the diversity of Alexandria's history is actively and intentionally collected within the scope of each site
 - Expand research to present and publish highlighting lesser-known stories of marginalized communities
 - Write scope of work and fund a city-wide historic interpretive plan that will assist with identifying gaps and developing priorities for new interpretive signs, documentary studies, and future storytelling
 - Review online materials and wayfinding signs to identify legacy language and gaps
 - Create priority list for replacement of these signs
 - Continue to identify gaps in collections and develop plan with strategies to address these gaps
 - Initiate long-range planning for the Alexandria History Museum at The Lyceum
- **Equip staff to better interpret our diverse stories and interact with a diverse community.**
 - For 2025, schedule all-staff training on LGBTQ+ inclusive language and interpreting African American history
 - Develop training plan for 2026 and 2027 to include accessibility trainings
 - Train staff and volunteers on ways technology can assist interactions with visitors who speak languages the staff does not
 - Train staff and volunteers on ways to improve experiences for blind and low vision visitors in our museums
 - Build Staff Language Guide
 - Complete Language Guide for Interpreting Slavery
 - Identify future additions
- **Improve Accessibility across the sites.**
 - Develop community partnerships to improve our accessibility initiatives
 - Complete an Accessibility Assessment for public sites and create a plan for implementation
 - Repair ADA-compliant walkway at Fort Ward in partnership with RPCA
 - Expand interpretive elements and training to increase accessibility for blind and low vision visitors, beginning with the Apothecary Museum
- **Expand language access across the work of the department.**
 - Make exhibits available online with on-site instructions for language access

- Create bilingual exhibits beyond the Alexandria History Museum
- Make community outreach materials available in the four major languages of Alexandria
- **Continue supporting and expanding Oral History Center.**
 - Build relationships with key community members who can advocate for/introduce Historic Alexandria to potential memory-keepers in community
 - Maintain a public presence at community events to increase awareness of Oral History Center
 - Develop consistent training and oversite of community volunteers transcribing oral histories
 - Launch training for community members to assist with collecting oral histories
 - Plan for future physical space for the Center
 - Work to include in budget at least one additional FTE to support the work
- **Implement Fort Ward Interpretive Plan.**
 - Finalize marking and signage for Cemetery spaces (RCPA funded)
 - Finalize and install museum exhibit orientation panels (RCPA funded)
 - Write scope for rifle trench preservation work (RCPA funded)
 - Advocate for future CIP funding to scope and install interpretive trail
- **Implement Freedom House Museum Comprehensive Plan.**
 - Continue Capital Campaign to fund Comprehensive Plan phases
 - Develop a research design that accounts for current research, remaining research questions, and exhibit goals as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan
 - Reanalyze previously excavated archaeological sites associated with the Domestic Slave Trade into the Digital Archaeological Archive of Comparative Slavery
 - Work with Department of General Services to write RFPs for Comprehensive Plan phases

Instill a sense of place

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

- **Implement Archaeology Protection Code.**
 - Oversite of code for major projects, including Waterfront Robinson Terminal North, Fort Ward, ACPS school renovations, Alexandria West redevelopment, and Potomac Yard
 - Oversite of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for major projects, including Waterfront flood mitigation and ARHA redevelopment projects
 - Partner with other departments to anticipate and plan for future development projects
 - Continue to raise awareness through the Backyard Archaeology campaign
 - Develop plan to inventory and complete conditions assessment of archaeological collections
 - Develop plan for off-site storage of some boxed archaeological collections due to maximum capacity
- **Infuse the City's redeveloping waterfront with Alexandria's history.**
 - Work with the Department of Project Implementation to interpret waterfront history through future construction projects
 - Develop plan for storage and exhibition of the Carlyle Warehouse
 - Follow 5-year monitoring plan of the three ships from Robinson Landing

- Develop plan for conservation, study and exhibition of artifacts from waterfront development locations, encompassing the lives of residents, Black and white, free and enslaved
- **Develop plan for return of AX229 - Hotel Indigo ship.**
 - Finalize permanent location to install the ship
 - Develop exhibition for ship installation.
- **Expand storytelling throughout the City.**
 - Conduct a conditions survey of Wayfinding signs across the city working with Department of Transportation and Environmental Services Wayfinding Sign Coordinator
 - Intentionally track locations of outreach to ensure opportunities across the City and develop plan to reach lesser-visited areas
 - Be recognized as a valued partner in events throughout the City, as seen in invitations to return and growing relationships
 - Develop new outreach table materials and activities that align with a rotating exhibit that will be open at least one year
 - Develop method to request Historic Alexandria's presence at an event
 - Advertise our availability to participate in events
 - Improve staffing model to expand ability to attend increased number of events using volunteers and local students on contract
- **Strengthen partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools.**
 - Develop work group of local teachers, with incentives for participation
 - Offer events specifically for teachers
 - Actively introduce Historic Alexandria and our City's historic resources to new teachers
 - Develop short videos and resource sheets available online for teachers
 - Launch new education website that improves access for teachers and students
- **Actively engage the community in planning and co-creation through Community History Initiatives.**
 - Create Plan for a coordinated Descendant Engagement Group (Fort Ward, Arlington House, Freedom House, Douglass, Freedmen, Lynching, and additional community members)
 - Colored Rosemont
 - Write Scope of Work for Documentary Study
 - Secure funding to complete
 - Alexandria's historic and African American cemeteries
 - Implement plans to mitigate stormwater issues at Douglass Cemetery, undertake the community history project, and fully restore the sacred space in partnership with the Descendant Advisory Group, Friends of Douglass Cemetery, Social Responsibility Group, other stakeholders, and City departments
 - Serve as lead City department to coordinate cleanup activities and advise on best practices in cemetery preservation and maintenance
 - Implement regular maintenance plan at Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery Memorial and African American Heritage Park for bronzes and art
 - Submit a National Register nomination for the Wilkes Street Cemetery Complex
 - Create annual funding priority list for Commonwealth's Grave Funds draws
- **Preserve historic structures and landscapes that are under City's care.**

- Create long-term comprehensive plans for care, safety, and maintenance of buildings through CIP process in partnership with General Services
- Work with Office of Climate Change to improve energy efficiency of historic structures, work towards climate resilience in our operations, and begin proactive planning for future climate impact
- Complete redesign of Murray-Dick-Fawcett House, Lloyd House, Lyceum, and Alexandria Black History Museum gardens to create sustainable, native gardens that align with City's Climate Action goals
- Work with General Services to rebid out for list of pre-qualified historic preservation contractors or companies (including CRM firms) to be used as needed for projects in partnership with Purchasing Division
- Participate in the City Hall renovation project to ensure collections are cared for and history is both documented and represented in the final product
- **Implement Murray-Dick-Fawcett House Comprehensive Plan.**
 - Generate phased approach to Comprehensive Plan recommendations
 - Develop and implement fundraising plan to accomplish the phases

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

- **Ensure collections and archival materials are digitally organized and accessible online.**
 - Launch PastPerfect web edition
 - Generate a priority list of collections to digitize for PastPerfect online and implement
 - Utilize Content Manager software to organize Archives and Records boxes and documents
 - Utilize software to make collections of Archival documents available to the public (APEX or Laserfiche or another public-facing database)
 - Identify grant to fund digitizing FOIA dense section of Archival documents for public research and internal research
 - Implement Re:discovery database at Archaeology
 - Digitize historic documents that illustrate changes to the city's landscape to improve GIS mapping project
- **Coordinate America250 Anniversary in 2026.**
 - Lead Alexandria's 2026 commemoration committee, working in partnership with Alexandria historic sites, patriotic organizations, and other interested organizations
 - Actively participate in state-wide and regional planning committees
 - Complete research the early history of Alexandria, particularly the decades around the Revolutionary War
 - Develop a series of articles that can be used for Historic Alexandria Quarterly, *Out of the Attic*, and online
 - Develop giveaways and shop products for the commemoration
 - Provide opportunities for other City Departments and partners to access giveaways, similar to Alexandria275 product distribution

- Establish interpretive plan for the 250th that includes public programming, social media, printed articles, and exhibits
 - Ensure diverse representation in the presentation of Alexandria's Revolutionary War history
 - Ensure opportunities to engage with these activities are accessible to residents throughout the City
- Publish updated Historic Alexandria Guidebook that includes more expansive, inclusive view of City's history
- Open four exhibits in conjunction with the 250th anniversary
 - *Pandemics* at Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum (opening September 2025)
 - *Aboard Ship with the Jack-Tars of the Union Navy* at Fort Ward (opening October 2025)
 - *Female Entrepreneurs* at Gadsby Tavern Museum (opening March 2026)
 - *Stories of US: Collections Capture Our History* at The Lyceum, Coldsmith Gallery (opening May/June 2026)
- Execute participation in Sail Virginia 2026 Affiliate Harbor June 10-15, 2026
 - Recruit businesses to join in programming efforts
 - Establish marketing in partnership with local and regional partners
 - Establish event plan and fundraising plan with program teams
- **Increase visitation to Historic Alexandria Museums.**
 - Develop strategies to bring in more tourists in partnership with Visit Alexandria
 - Work with other city departments to advertise services and events to residents
 - Evaluate success of DASH passport
 - Strategically offer additional open hours based on City visitation data
 - Improve Plan Your Visit sections of departmental website
 - Streamline updating for changes in hours
 - Include accessibility information
- **Intentionally use online media to interpret history and expand reach.**
 - Create videos for social media and website that expand on-site interpretation
 - Reformat website experience to improve ease of use
 - Review website accessibility for both screen readers and Google Translate
- **Expand public programs to reach new audiences and generate additional revenue.**
 - Intentionally incorporate Civics Education into programs and initiatives
 - Identify ways to repurpose existing or past programs for new use in the 250th and beyond
 - Expand offerings for homeschool families
 - Targeted offerings
 - Training for education staff
 - Develop higher-ticket programs that can assist with fundraising goals
 - Develop and implement plan to intentionally build relationships with ARHA, Senior Services, Alexandria Libraries, and RPCA
 - Leverage communication plan and marketing strategies to increase ticket sales

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

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

- **Exceed AAM accreditation standards for preserving collections and archival materials.**
 - Complete deaccession survey across all sites to ensure all objects adhere to collections plan
 - Generate a plan to secure a new storage facility for the Historic Alexandria collection, archaeological collection, and City Archives in partnership with General Services
 - Work to include in budget at least one additional FTE to support curatorial work.
 - Develop schedule for updates and upgrades to permanent exhibitions and infrastructure
 - Establish plan for rotating exhibits in partnership with Historic Alexandria Leadership Team
 - Development of a Digital Asset Preservation Plan
- **Implement State Regulations for the City's Archives and Records Management Program.**
 - Implement City-wide Records Management Training.
 - Systematic training for all city staff in partnership with Department of IT and City Attorney
- **Continue to improve administrative processes for a flexible and dynamic museum system.**
 - Create a central repository for research resources using departmental digitization/metadata protocols
 - Improve HR procedures within department:
 - Establish consistent onboarding procedures for all new staff
 - Establish consistent offboarding procedure for outgoing staff
 - Establish emergency plans across all sites
 - Review of existing emergency kits and creation/replenishment as needed
 - Create facilities overview sheets for each site
 - Implement facilities training for each site
 - Establish plan for regular review of emergency materials and procedures for sites
 - Establish plan for transition from OHAShared to SharePoint
- **Provide for ongoing professional development for all staff**
 - Establish professional development policy for paid conferences and workshops that ensures equitable access and distribution of funds across all levels of staff
 - Create a mix of in-person and virtual/video trainings that ensures all staff are able to stay up-to-date on core research, operational changes, and other best practices
 - Operationalize a plan that ensures continuation of these opportunities
 - Expand internal communication on SharePoint site (*IT's Drupal training videos an example of use of SharePoint for training and information*)
 - Ensure access for all staff to SharePoint to improve document and information sharing
- **Implement departmental communications plan.**
 - Activate plan to help increase ticket sales to events and increase visitation to museums
 - Use social media to engage the public beyond Historic Alexandria's physical sites
 - Create a marketing plan specific to Alexandria250 to attract tourists and group visits to Historic Alexandria museums

- **Plan and secure diverse long-term funding and resources for sustainability.**
 - Develop priority list of funding needs related to conservation priorities, special events, additional staff and base needs and funding goals
 - Achieve a sustainable balance of contributed, earned, and public annual operating income
 - Expand ALXHistoryLovers and 1749 Society membership
 - Cultivate donor relationships for departmental priorities
 - Continue to cultivate museum stores that promote site missions while providing added revenue
 - Expand rental program that provides added revenue
 - Seek social gatherings and business rentals to increase current rental program
 - Seek external sources to support prioritized initiatives
 - Develop annual grant calendar
 - Federal, state, local, non-profits, and family foundations
 - Build relationships with the business and corporate community for partnership opportunities
 - Launch legacy giving program
 - Work in partnership with Friends Groups to better support Historic Alexandria's mission and priorities.
 - Set a quarterly meeting schedule for Friends Presidents to build relationships
 - Work to include in budget expanding administrative staffing and increasing the rental coordinator's FTE to full time
 - Publish Historic Alexandria Quarterly to communicate to donors and encourage increased giving
- **Share knowledge, research, and best-practices.**
 - Activate communication plan to share latest research, collections items, and educational opportunities through various media forms
 - Write, publish, and/or present scholarly research in Historic Alexandria Quarterly and other media
 - Continue to advise and be recognized as a resource for City staff in other departments
- **Liaise with Commissions and Committees to support the work of the City.**
 - Assist the Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission on easement oversight
 - Partner with Commissions to support history and history initiatives in the City
 - Collaborate with Committees to advance community engagement programs
- **Utilize information from evaluations to inform decisions.**
 - Share results of AAM Museum-Goer Survey to help guide decisions across department
 - Share results of AAM Social Impact Study with community and City government and develop plan to incorporate into marketing and address areas needing improvement
 - Utilize Timing and Tracking at Museums to inform future work
 - Expand collection of guest surveys
- **Operationalize Volunteer and Intern Programs**
 - Carry out volunteer program.
 - Establish consistent onboarding and tracking procedures across the department
 - Assess volunteer roles across the department and develop new job descriptions as needed
 - Develop ongoing training and socializing opportunities that build more cohesive program
 - Carry out internship program

- Identify funding sources to maintain set number of paid internship opportunities each year
- Create curriculum for museum studies interns that includes group field trips, interviews, etc. in addition to their projects
- Build the project list (ongoing and temporary) for future interns a semester in advance so can actively advertise and recruit based on projects

Strategic Plan Notes From FY2026-2028

Updated from FY2020-2025

Strategic Plan Notes From FY2020-2025

This plan was developed in collaboration with Historic Alexandria's stakeholders in FY2019, for implementation in FY2020. Updated April 2022.

Formally adopted by City Council May 10, 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
Historic Alexandria 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