

**Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
Annual Report
July 2023 – June 2024**

Summary of Accomplishments

The mission of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission is to advise the City in the preservation of historic sites and buildings, artifacts, and records from loss or deterioration; and promote citizen and tourist use of historic sites and the Torpedo Factory Art Center. Within these guidelines, HARC's membership completed the following activities during its 2023/24 year.

HARC Policy and Membership Accomplishments

- During FY2023, HARC's meetings focused on a wide range of issues (as detailed below). Emphasis was placed on discussion of issues relevant to the HARC mission and goals. Deliberations consistently addressed (1) whether HARC positions should be communicated to other organizations relevant to historic preservation and other areas of concern and (2) whether actions should be taken.
- HARC worked with AAC and PRAC to send a letter to the City Manager on behalf of OHA to fund a new collections off-site storage facility.
- Frequent discussion of Zoning for Housing, pertinent to its impact on historic resources.
- Discussion of the issue of amateur "bottle digging" excavations of resident privies and wells with no permit or conversation with Alexandria Archaeology.
- A Strategic Plan was crafted by Vice Chair Sean Ferguson collecting the input from the August HARC retreat.
- The Ad-Hoc Proposed Street Naming Committee (co-chaired by Linda Lovell and Mark Farkas) completed their work in August 2023 and HARC approved the final list of recommended names and supporting information that were selected to be sent to the City's Naming Committee. This was a major undertaking of HARC and attracted some minor media coverage.
- HARC composition changes were discussed and forwarded to City Council for approval and subsequently approved by Council.
- The Commission agreed to cancel the December 19, 2023 meeting owing to holiday travel.
- The January 16, 2024 meeting and the May 21, 2024 meetings were canceled due to lack of a quorum.

- HARC is interested in the Department of Project Implementation (DPI)'s work on waterfront flooding mitigation, and plans to hear more about flood mitigation and particularly the pump house proposed for the foot of Prince Street.
- A presentation was provided by Gretchen Bulova and Al Cox on the Exterior Restoration Plan for 1315 Duke Street, returning the South façade to the period of significance.
- An Alexandria Archaeology Commission (AAC) update was provided by Ivy Whitlach, AAC chair, including information on Archaeology Month, the 2023 Ben Brenman Award, and the new electric van being used by Archaeology staff.
- Section 106 for Waterfront Implementation Project The City of Alexandria, along with the National Park Service, sent letters to potential interested parties, including HARC, the AAC, and the Waterfront Commission, in early June. These letters announce the initiation of consultation with interested people and groups as part of the Section 106 process of the National Historic Preservation act. Section 106 gives the public the chance to weigh in on projects like the waterfront implementation before a final decision is made.

HARC Member Activities

- HARC held a retreat on Saturday, August 5, 2023, at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. The agenda included: recognition of former HARC members, one guest speaker, identifying strategic priorities and action items. The guest speaker was André Béliveau, M.A. in Government, Johns Hopkins University, and he addressed how to more effectively engage elected leaders for advocacy.

Goals for 2024-2025

- Discussions have been held regarding new member onboarding, and ways to help people get active. One idea is to provide a list of acronyms for new members.
- Better integrate the needs of OHA into HARC activities.
- Diversify HARC's advocacy methods, introducing the following tactics when appropriate.
- Improve internal HARC operations.
- Continue HARC's commitment to preserving historic sites and structures.
- Ensure HARC addresses the needs of Alexandria's other historic resources, including but not limited to artifacts, records, and intangible cultural heritage.
- Ensure HARC serves historic resources in addition to those in Old Town.
- Increase HARC's visibility and connection to the public and community associations.

Leadership

- Officers for the upcoming year were elected at the November 2023 meeting: Shawn Eyer will serve as Chair, Sean Ferguson as Vice-Chair. Roberta Stevens was elected as Secretary. After Sean Ferguson stepped down as Vice-Chair due to relocation, Christopher Brownlowe was subsequently elected to that position in June 2024.
- List term expirations and new members, with month they were appointed.
 - Russell Simonaro (appointed Nov 2023)
 - Barbara Marvin (appointed Oct 2023)
 - Mia Mulrennan (appointed March 2024)
 - David Kovalik (appointed April 2024)
 - John Patrick (appointed April 2024)
 - Catherine Weinraub (term ended Oct 2023)
 - Danny Smith (term ended March 2024)
 - Linda Lovell (term ended Feb 2024)
 - Martha Raymond (term ended March 2024)
- During the course of the year, membership included the following individuals:

Bailee Barfield	Deborah Osborne
Carol Black	John Patrick
Christopher Brownlowe	Martha Raymond
Donna DeBlasio	Rebecca Rose
Shawn Eyer	Tim Rose
Mark Farkas	Gail Rothrock
Sean Ferguson	Lisa Schumaier
Kate Gillis	Tom Schultz
David Kovalik	Russell Simonaro
Laura Lieberman	Danny Smith
Linda Lovell	Roberta Stevens
Barbara Marvin	Steve Stuart
Mia Mulrennan	Ivy Whitlatch
- Gretchen Bulova and OHA acted as the staff liaison to HARC during the course of the 2023/2024 year.

Attachments

1. Any notable letters to City Council, date, subject
 - August 22, 2023, Mayor, City Manager and Members of City Council Re: Zoning for Housing/Housing for All
 - October 17, 2023, Mayor and Members of City Council Re: Zoning for Housing/Housing for All
 - October 17, 2023, Mayor Justin Wilson, Town of Potomac
 - November 21, 2023, Mayor and Members of City Council Re: Storage needs (HARC/AAC/PRAC)



Alexandria, Virginia

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission

220 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2521
(703) 746-4554



August 22, 2023

The Honorable Justin Wilson
City Hall
300 King Street, Alexandria VA 22314

Dear Mayor Wilson:

The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, the City Council's Commission chartered to advise the City Council on the responsible stewardship of our unique historic city, is writing to express our concern about the potential imminent threat of the Zoning for Housing/Housing for All project to the Town of Potomac National Register Historic District.

As you are probably aware, the Town of Potomac Historic District was added to Preservation Virginia's Most Endangered Historic Properties List in May. This endangered places program was initiated in 2000 to help raise awareness about threatened historic places in the Commonwealth. The listing for the Town of Potomac National Register Historic District states: "*Today, the 1,840-acre historic district includes a concentration of residences, including an eclectic collection of foursquares, Bungalows (many Sears kit houses), Colonial Revival, Folk Victorian, Mediterranean Revival, modified Queen Anne, and Tudor Revival houses, that are pleasantly arranged in a comfortable pedestrian and development scale.*"

Over 75 houses in the Town of Potomac Historic District have been demolished in recent years. The Preservation Virginia listing identified an immediate threat of such tear-downs and the outsized and out-of-character houses that often replace them.

In addition to that threat, HARC's immediate concern is the fact that the preliminary zoning maps for the Zoning for Housing/Housing for All project showed projections of increased height and density within the boundaries of the Town of Potomac National Register Historic District, particularly along Mount Vernon Avenue.

As staff develops its proposals, which we understand will be released in early September, we urge you to direct staff to respect the historic character of this vibrant and low scale historic neighborhood of the Town of Potomac National Register Historic District.

Sincerely,

Shawn Eyer, Chairman
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission



Alexandria, Virginia

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission

*220 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2521
(703) 746-4554*



November 21, 2023

Mayor and Members of City Council
City of Alexandria

Re: Zoning for Housing/Housing for All

Dear Mayor Wilson and Distinguished Members of Council:

The Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) has great interest in the proposals for Zoning for Housing and Housing for All. We are supportive of affordable housing in Alexandria. We are also charged with advising the City of Alexandria on the responsible stewardship of this unique historic city.

HARC is vitally concerned with the proper administration of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance and its critical role in protecting the historic fabric of our community. To that end, we write to underscore and support the Historic Alexandria Foundation and their letter of November 9, 2023 (pdf attached).

The historic and cultural resources of Alexandria need specific consideration as part of such broad zoning changes. We urge the City to evaluate how the many zoning amendments will affect the City's historic buildings and districts before moving for approval.

We advise you, as City leaders, to postpone the November 28, 2023 Zoning for Housing vote.

Sincerely,

Shawn Eyer, Chairman
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission



Alexandria, Virginia

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission

220 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2521
(703) 746-4554



October 17, 2023

The Honorable Justin Wilson
City Hall
300 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

re: Del Ray and Town of Potomac Historic District

Dear Mayor Wilson:

Thank you for your August 23, 2023, response to the Commission's letter about Preservation Virginia's classification of the Town of Potomac Historic District as one of the state's most endangered historic places. Knowing that you do not support any proposals that would threaten the character of the neighborhood will be encouraging to many in the community who have expressed concerns about the potential for a gradual erosion of the historic fabric in that area.

Perhaps one way that the City might ameliorate some of the concerns would be to communicate a commitment that new structures (including the higher-density projects under consideration) would more stringently adhere to architectural compatibility with their surroundings. Members of our Commission have heard concerns about both the scale and design of some recent and proposed construction. As noted in the Preservation Virginia materials on this subject, the 2015 creation of the *Del Ray Neighborhood Residential Pattern Book* provided a useful tool for new projects, should those involved wish to consult it. Moreover, both for residential and commercial projects, architectural compatibility should be strongly favored if the City wishes to maintain the essential character of the affected neighborhoods.

You noted, and it is certainly correct, that multifamily units are also an important part of the historic fabric of Del Ray and its vicinity. In HARC's view, new and appropriately scaled multifamily units that fit in well with the neighboring structures would best preserve the character of the area, even as some of the historic fabric is lost. However, if historic fabric is replaced with modernist architecture that disregards its immediate context, then concerns may continue to grow. Development that is sensitive to heritage will enhance our community and is likely to be welcomed by most.

Sincerely,

Shawn Eyer, Chairman
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission



Alexandria, Virginia

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission

*220 North Washington Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2521
(703) 746-4554*



October 17, 2023

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of City Council,

On behalf of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC), the Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC), and the Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC), **we request that the City Manager and elected officials prioritize the critical storage needs for Alexandria's important historical documents, collections, and archaeological materials as part of FY2025 general fund and capital improvement budget planning.**

These historic items provide powerful and tangible evidence of the lives of those who lived and labored in Alexandria in the past and allow us to evolve the historical narrative toward previously underrepresented communities in our city's history. As such, it is critical all historical documents, objects, and artifacts are properly stored and preserved for current and future generations.

OHA has twice achieved accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums for their professionalism and museum management. Managing historic buildings and their contents, including a collections storage facility, is crucial to retaining this top recognition. By OHA's account, collections storage will be at capacity by January 2024. We urge you to prioritize funding to extend storage resources for our city's historic collections to avoid the irreversible loss of precious historic treasures that cannot be recouped.

OHA is currently applying for a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant to conduct a storage needs assessment for their collections. This assessment will provide a roadmap for the City that details the specific needs of the many historic collections – including paper, objects, digital records and images, and archaeological artifacts. The study will include HVAC, security, and other important recommendations. We would be happy to share updates on these findings to better equip you with the scope of what is immediately needed for these crucial preservation efforts.

In closing, we urge you to prioritize funding for the City's museum collections through additional storage as part of FY 2025 budget planning. HARC, AAC, and

PRAC are closely following the success of the NEH grant and will prioritize advocacy for OHA collections storage and associated budget requests in FY2025 and beyond.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue for the City's cultural heritage.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shawn Eyer".

Shawn Eyer
Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ivy E. Whitlatch".

Ivy Whitlatch
Alexandria Archaeological Commission (AAC)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lynn Jorden".

Lynn Jorden
Public Records Advisory Commission (PRAC)

Cc: Jim Parajon, City Manager
Emily Baker, Deputy City Manager
Gretchen Bulova, OHA

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) attendance for FY 24

Name	July 2023	Aug. 2023	Sept. 2023	Oct 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2023	Jan 2024	Feb 2024	March 2024	April 2024	May 2024	June 2024
Barfield	X	E	X	X	E	na	na	E	X	E	na	E
Black	X	X	X	X	E			X	X	E		E
Brownlowe	E	X	X	X	E			X	X	X		X
DeBlasio	X	X	E	X	X			X	X	X		X
Eyer	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X
Farkas	E	R	E	R	E			E	E	E		R
Ferguson	X	X	X	X	X							
Gillis					E							
Lieberman	X	X	E	E	E			X	X	E		X
Lovell EndFeb24	X	X	X	X	X			X				
Marvin Apt Oct 23				E	X			X	E	A		X
Mulrennan Ap. March24									X	X		E
Osborne	X	X	X	X	E			X	X	E		X
Raymond End March2	X	R	X	X	X			X	X			
Rose Rebecca				X	X			E	X	X		E
Rose Tim Ap Jan24								X	X	X		X
Rothrock	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		R
Schultz	X	R	X	E	X			A	X	A		A
Schumaier	E	X	X	E	X			X	A	A		X
Simanaro					E			X	X	X		A
Smith En dMarch24	X	X	X	X	X			X	X			
Stevens	X	X	X	E	X			X	X	X		E
Stuart	X	X	X	X	E			E	X	X		X
Weinraub End Oct23	E	E	E									
Whitlatch	E	X	X	X	X			X	E	R		X
Kovalik Ap.April 24										X		X
Patrick										X		E

Ap April 24												
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X= present, E= excused, A= absent, R= remote,

no meetings in Dec , Jan & May