

Land Carroll & Blair's Carter Land completes purchase settlement helping City's effort to purchase Freedom House

City of Alexandria Completes Purchase of Freedom House to Preserve Historic Museum

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On March 25, the City of Alexandria completed the purchase of the Freedom House Museum from the Northern Virginia Urban League (NVUL). This purchase will allow the City to preserve and interpret this National Historic Landmark and ensure it is open to the public for future generations.

"Freedom House is vital to telling Alexandria's story," said Mayor Justin Wilson. "What happened at 1315 Duke St. had a terrible and lasting impact on America. "Freedom House encourages us to speak truth to power and delve deeper to confront the hard, honest truths about race, class and equity in this country."

Museum staff plan to expand the footprint of the museum beyond the current basement exhibit, starting with a series of changing exhibitions that relate to the history of the site. This will provide time to conduct research, plan exhibits and programs, and restore the building, which was once part of the headquarters for the largest domestic slave trading firm in the United States. From 1828 to 1861, five successive firms forced thousands of enslaved adults and children from the Chesapeake Bay area into the slave markets of Natchez, Miss., and New Orleans by foot or ship.

"As a nation, we must continue to uncover and elevate more stories that are fundamental to the founding of America," said Brent Leggs, executive director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. "Many of these stories inform our understanding of American slavery and our shared past, while also informing our understanding of the often-overlooked places of African American sacrifice and resilience. We applaud the City of Alexandria and Northern Virginia Urban League for their collaborative efforts to ensure that Freedom House stands as a place of learning, reconciliation and healing. We are proud to partner with Historic Alexandria to develop a stewardship plan for this exceptionally rare remnant of the slave trading business in the U.S."

The City and NVUL have collaborated for the past two years to ensure that the Freedom House Museum is open to the public on a regular basis. The City's Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) began operating the museum in February 2018, while the property remained under the ownership of NVUL. Since that time, more than 2,000 visitors, including school, church and group tours, have visited the site. Over the last two years, visitation and educational resources expanded and fundraising for the site began. To ensure there is a continued commitment to the mission of the NVUL, the organization remains in residence at Freedom House.

"The Northern Virginia Urban League is pleased that Freedom House will be preserved for future generations," said Diane McLaughlin, chair of the board of directors of NVUL. "The agreement between the NVUL and the City of Alexandria protects not only the site but permits

NVUL to continue its mission of empowering minorities and other disadvantaged communities by giving them the opportunity to secure parity, economic stability and civil rights.”

The historic structure, originally built in 1812, will require a full restoration that complies with the terms of the easement held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. Research and exhibition design meetings have started with initial new exhibits planned for the late summer. OHA plans to hold “Community Conversations” to share research progress and restoration plans as well as to solicit input on the interpretation of the site.

“OHA staff understand the importance of recognizing the thousands of adults and children who passed through the site to unknown horrors and unceasing labor in the Deep South,” said Audrey Davis, director of the Alexandria Black History Museum. “Enslaved labor built America and drove its economy. We must never lose sight of the humanity of those who had no voice.”

The Freedom House Museum will participate in ACT for Alexandria’s annual [Spring2ACTION](#) giving day on April 15, 2020. Donations will support the upcoming building restoration and exhibition development.

The Freedom House Museum is currently closed, to maintain social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. For schedule updates, to make a donation or more information, visit alexandriava.gov/FreedomHouse.

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