

Alexandria Times

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Rehabilitating the Freedom House Museum

Harnessing the Power of Place is this year's National Preservation Month theme, designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. National Preservation Month started as National Preservation Week in 1973.

In 2005, the National Trust expanded the celebration from a week to the entire month of May to allow for a fuller appreciation of buildings and spaces of historical significance in American history.

In 1946, Alexandria established the Old and Historic District, making it only the third district established nationally for historic preservation. The city's commitment to historic preservation continues today at sites such as the Freedom House Museum at 1315 Duke St.

The Freedom House Museum is what remains of a large complex dedicated to trafficking thousands of Black men, women and children from 1828 to 1861. Slavery, race-based laws and racial terror erased and diminished African American history and contributions from the national narrative. This museum honors the lives and experiences of the enslaved and free Black people who lived in Alexandria and those trafficked through our city.

The Office of Historic Alexandria is currently rehabilitat-

ing the exterior of the Freedom House Museum on Duke Street. The building has seen a lot of changes since its last use as a slave pen in 1861.

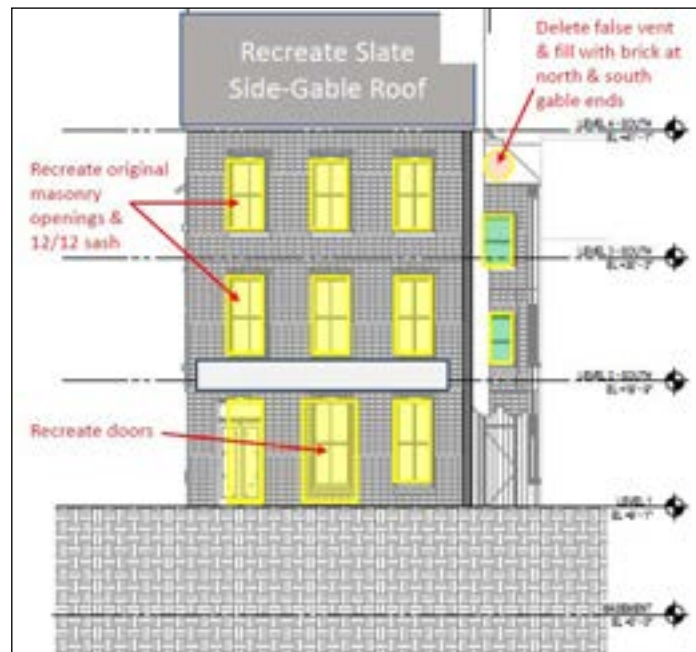
The goal of the rehabilitation work is twofold: first, to stabilize and protect the building, and second, to return the early portions to their pre-Civil War appearance, which helps tell the story of the domestic slave trade to its fullest.

Extensive historical documentation of the building guides this work. The Historic Structures Report, finalized in 2023, and the Comprehensive Plan, finalized in 2024, recommended the rehabilitation process.

Key goals of the rehabilitation project include:

- Sealing the exterior building envelope;
- Modifying the current front roofline to a side gable roof;
- Returning the second entryway to the front façade
- Adjusting the west elevation window openings to be consistent with Civil War-era photographs;
- Spot repointing the brick; and
- Renewing windows, woodwork and siding.

Oak Grove Restoration Company is responsible for the rehabilitation on behalf of the City of Alexandria and plans to complete the work



PHOTO/FREEDOM HOUSE AT 1315 DUKE STREET COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A front elevation drawing of Freedom House.

by December 2025. This project is funded through private donations, Commonwealth of Virginia funds and a Save America's Treasures grant from the Historic Preservation Fund administered by the National Park Service.

On Monday, Freedom House closed to visitors until the front façade restoration is completed and the doors can be installed. This part of the process may take up to six weeks, depending on the hardware.

During this period, Freedom House will honor existing tour requests and take additional group tour reservations on a case-by-case ba-

sis. The construction crew will work with Freedom House to ensure confirmed groups can enter through the front of the building.

For more information on Historic Preservation in Alexandria, please visit alexandriava.gov/Preservation. For tickets to the Peeling Back the Layers Tour at Gadsby's Tavern Museum please visit shop.alexandriava.gov. For more information on the Freedom House Museum, please visit alexandriava.gov/FreedomHouse.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.