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Alexandria
COMMUNITY MEDIA

Survey shows OHA museums are essential

In October 2024, the Office of Historic Alexandria was selected through a competitive process to participate in the American Alliance of Museums' Social Impact in Practice survey.

Led by the American Alliance of Museums and funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the survey is a national initiative. The Social Impact in Practice survey aims to measure the social impact of Alexandria's museums by assessing changes resulting from visits to OHA museums.

The Office of Historic Alexandria conducted its survey from April through August 2025, with participants visiting three OHA museums. In fall 2025, the Office of Historic Alexandria analyzed data with assistance from the Office of Analytics, Innovation and Data.

The results of the survey demonstrated that OHA museums:

- Enhance quality of life by offering accessible, meaningful experiences;
- Support community co-

hesion through shared understanding and dialogue;

- Advance educational goals by teaching inclusive history;
- Contribute to economic vitality by strengthening Alexandria's identity as a unique historic destination; and
- Promote social resilience by encouraging empathy, reflection and civic pride.

The results quantified how OHA's museums play an essential role in shaping an informed, connected and culturally vibrant community. Participants left with a greater understanding of Alexandria's complex history, increased appreciation for city resources, and a stronger sense of identity and civic engagement.

For example, 21% of the survey participants had not visited a Historic Alexandria museum or attended a program prior to their participation in the project. One participant with a greater appreciation of OHA Museums after the survey wrote:

"From a city resident, I am awfully proud of how the city tell the story about Alexan-



PHOTO/JEFF HANCOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

The 2022 return of the Prettyman Hose Carriage to the Friendship Firehouse Museum.

dria. The people, the places, the events. It also made me realize the depth of the collection of artifacts that the city has."

Another noted the importance of curation, saying their participation in the survey:

"Made me think about how museums are not homogenous and how differently museums can cater to their audiences. ... Museums are much more than just the information they provide, but the people that work in them and how the people

in the museum and the people you visit with can impact your experience."

Historic Alexandria will leverage these findings to inform strategic planning, strengthen promotion of its historic sites and guide operational and programmatic improvements based on the study's recommendations.

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