Phase IB archaeological testing at 511 Oronoco Street (DSUP #2013-0016) was undertaken by R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc. on May 12, 2015, on behalf of Y-12 Investments, LLC. The work followed completion of the Phase IA Summary Documentary Study for the redevelopment of four properties in Block 104 (Goodwin and Associates, Inc. 2013) and was pursuant to the Scope of Work for Archeological Trenching generated by Alexandria Archaeology (dated January 29, 2014). All aspects of the investigation complied with applicable federal, state, and local standards, including those outlined in the City of Alexandria’s Archeological Ordinance No. 3413 (1989), the City of Alexandria Archaeological Standards (Alexandria Archaeology 1996) and the Secretary of Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation (USDI NPS 1983).

The Phase IB project area encompassed one residential address (511 Oronoco Street) situated at the southeastern corner of City Block 104 in Old Town Alexandria Virginia. The property was bordered by Oronoco Street on the south, North Pitt Street on the east, and by residential townhomes on the north and west and has been used as a surface parking lot since the mid-twentieth century. Planned development within the parcel will include construction of residential townhomes and the installation of supporting infrastructure. A previous Phase IA documentary study and archeological assessment indicated a moderate potential for archeological deposits or features within the parcel addressed as 511 Oronoco Street (Williams 2013).

The objectives of the current Phase IB study were to determine whether potentially significant archeological resources were present within the portion of the development area addressed as 511 Oronoco Street, to assess the potential impact of the proposed construction on those resources, and to make appropriate management recommendations. The archeological testing determined that the parcel addressed as 511 Oronoco Street had been severely disturbed by parking lot construction during the mid-twentieth century and that only isolated, basal remnants of pre-modern cultural features and deposits remained. The two mechanically excavated trenches placed within the study area revealed the parcel originally had sloped gently down to the west and that it had been graded and filled at least once prior to the final phase of grading for installation of the parking lot. Cultural deposits in Trench 1 were limited to the western end of the trench, where the natural topography sloped gradually downward and the basal extent of the deposits had not been impacted by mid-twentieth century grading for the parking lot.

Cultural deposits in Trench 1 were examined through the excavation of a 0.5 x 0.5 m (16.4 x 16.4 ft) test unit. Although these deposits yielded mid-nineteenth century artifacts and appeared to have developed naturally, they also yielded ca. 1900 construction materials. This suggested that the landscape had remained open to deposition through at least the turn of the century. Historical research indicated the lot had been occupied by the Quinn family from ca. 1870-ca. 1910; prior to this period, the lot appears to have been vacant, undeveloped land. While it is possible the land was used for refuse disposal prior to Quinn’s development of the parcel, the assemblage is domestic in nature and most likely is associated with his occupation. In addition to the cultural deposits in Trench 1, two historic features were identified in Trench 2. Feature 2-01 was the base of an indeterminate historic pit, and Feature 2-02 was a utility trench. Both features were of unknown age.

Although the cultural deposits identified in Trench 1 most likely were associated with the ca. 1873 development and occupation of the property by Edward Quinn, these deposits appear to be isolated within portions of the historic landscape that were naturally low-lying. This low-lying landscape did not extend into Trench 2, which historically had been graded to subsoil
and contained no evidence of the historic lot surface. Geotechnical soil borings indicated deep fill deposits across the remainder of the project area. Due to the isolated nature of the deposits and the extensive mid-twentieth century grading of the property, the potential for additional intact cultural deposits related to the nineteenth century development and occupation of the property is very low.

Due to the low potential for additional cultural deposits related to the pre-modern development of the project area, no further archeological investigations are recommended for 511 Oronoco Street, located in the City of Alexandria, Virginia.