PROJECT SUMMARY

The City of Alexandria plans to build an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant walkway at Fort Ward Historical Park as well as erect enclosures around two historic cemeteries, the Old Graveyard and the Jackson Cemetery. The three projects are funded under a Save America’s Treasures Grant (No. 51-10-ML-2047). The grant monies will help the City of Alexandria enhance the visitor experience at Fort Ward Park. Specifically, the proposed walkway will open up visitation into the reconstructed north bastion of Fort Ward, a place that heretofore has been inaccessible to non-ambulatory visitors. Outside of the fort, the proposed enclosures at the Old Graveyard and the Jackson Cemetery are a crucial step toward ensuring that these two sacred places are properly memorialized for future generations.

The Area of Potential Effect for the proposed ADA-compliant walkway is 5.0 ft. wide and approximately 1,000 ft. long, forming a teardrop shaped loop around the north-central portion of the fort. The final design of the walkway has eliminated the loop and instead it will travel from the fort entrance gate, take a jog through the center of the fort, and lead directly to the north bastion. For the majority of its length, construction of the path will cause disturbance to the existing ground surface for a maximum depth of 2.0 inches. In the center of the fort the path will reach a maximum of 5 inches below grade.

Because of its shallow depth the proposed walkway will displace in most locations only topsoil contexts. In those few places where the walkway construction might penetrate below the topsoil layer, the underlying layer is a re-deposited clay fill that was created during construction of the fort. The proposed walkway will pass overtop a portion of one subsurface feature, a privy that dates to the early twentieth century. The privy feature will remain intact and unharmed by the walkway. We recommend that, as planned, the proposed ADA-compliant walkway will have no adverse effect on any significant archaeological resources.

Twenty graves have been archaeologically identified at the Jackson Cemetery, an unmarked burial ground located at Fort Ward Park. The City of Alexandria is pursuing some funding for an as yet unspecified enclosure to be placed on the west and south perimeter of the Jackson Cemetery. Archaeologists monitored the mechanical excavation of a 4.0 ft. wide trench for a length of 140 ft. along the west and a portion of the south perimeter of the Jackson Cemetery. No grave shafts or subsurface cultural features were observed within the excavated trench. However, completion of the trench around the perimeter of the cemetery is needed prior to placement of any enclosures to ensure that no burials will be disturbed if and when it might be put into place.

Thus far, seventeen graves have been identified within an area known as the Old Graveyard at Fort Ward Park. The City of Alexandria has applied for a grant to provide some funding for an enclosure. Archaeologists monitored the excavation of a 4.0 ft. wide and 265 ft. long trench placed along the proposed boundaries of the Old Graveyard. No grave shafts or subsurface cultural features were observed within the trench. There is a small 10-foot long section of the perimeter that has not been checked. Additional archaeological work or monitoring will be needed in this small section to ensure that no graves will be disturbed by the placement of an enclosure.