

Historic Alexandria Resources Commission (HARC) Annual Report September 2014 to June 2015

Introduction

HARC advises the City about the preservation of historic sites and buildings, artifacts, and records from loss or deterioration and promotes citizen and tourist use of historic sites and the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

Officers

Between September 2014 and June 2015, the following served as officers of HARC: Bill Hendrickson, chair; Tal Day, vice chair; and Elliot Bell-Krasner, secretary. In June 2015, the following were elected for the 2015-2016 year: Bill Hendrickson, chair, and Elliot Bell-Krasner, vice chair. No one volunteered to serve as secretary, and Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) director Lance Mallamo agreed to serve in that role until a volunteer could be found.

HARC actions and priorities

During the past year, HARC focused on a number of areas and issues, including the following:

City Waterfront Plan

HARC continues to be concerned about the degree to which the history and art and elements of the Waterfront Plan will actually be implemented. We are following the progress of the plan very closely. This year, Al Cox of the City's planning staff provided HARC with an update on the implementation of the history-related aspects of the plan.

Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Draft Management Plan

HARC strongly supports the plan's principles for preserving the park's historic nature and character. Chairman Hendrickson testified at a City Council hearing in support of the management plan, which the Council adopted.

Ramsey Homes Public Housing

HARC unanimously opposed the demolition of these historic homes by the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority. HARC voted to recommend to the Alexandria Archeological Commission that the homes be placed on its Endangered list.

Historic alleyways project

The city's alleyways are an essential part of its fabric and play a significant role in defining its character, landscape, and social and developmental history. Yet they are overlooked assets. HARC has been encouraged by the research being done by the Alleyways Working Group, and voted to recommend the inclusion of historic alleys in the Archeological Commission's Endangered List.

Del Ray Historic Sites

HARC learned about research funded by the city into the historic and architectural merit of 15 Art Deco and Streamline Modern buildings in Del Ray and the fact that the property owners of only three of these buildings have agreed to allow the City to submit nominations for National Register status. HARC is especially concerned about one of these, 1800 Mount Vernon Ave., where a proposal would demolish the building and replace it with a much larger residential and retail building. HARC voted to nominate this building for the Archeological Commission's Endangered List.

OHA budget

HARC reviewed OHA's budget proposal and voted to support the list of fiscal year 2016 budget priorities developed by the OHA staff. HARC was pleased that the City Council approved a deputy director position for OHA and funding for updating the exhibits in the Archaeology Museum in the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

HARC continues to support changing the half-time research position to full-time status. HARC is also concerned about the lack of funding for maintenance at Freedmen's Cemetery.

Immigration Alexandria: Past, Present, and Future

HARC is enthusiastic about this recently initiated OHA project, which is examining the history of different immigrant groups in Alexandria from the 1850s to the present.

Presentations at HARC meetings

HARC heard a number of presentations on the city's history and related issues, including the following:

Tom Hulfish, former Chair, Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review, on the changes that have taken place at the BAR and the board's current challenges

Director Mallamo of OHA provided a review of OHA's strategic plan for 2012-2016 and said he would like to begin work on the 2017-2021 plan.

Patricia Washington, the president and CEO of the Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association and a HARC member, gave a talk on African-American heritage travel and opportunities in this area for Alexandria.

Audrey Davis, director of the Alexandria Black History Museum, discussed accomplishments regarding the commemoration of African-American history in Alexandria.