



**MEMORANDUM**

*Colchester*

**TO:** Timothy J. Baroody, City Manager  
**FROM:** Kate Schwartz, Historic Resources Planner  
**DATE:** November 5, 2019 (for the November 12, 2019 meeting)  
**SUBJECT:** Plan for Relocation of the Slave Auction Block

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**ISSUE**

In response to the City Council's June 11, 2019 decision to relocate the Slave Auction Block to the Fredericksburg Area Museum (FAM), this memorandum details the course of action proposed for implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Direct staff to proceed and execute the plan to relocate the block.

**BACKGROUND**

The block is situated in the sidewalk at the northwest corner of the intersection of William and Charles Streets in downtown Fredericksburg. The site has been the catalyst for a larger conversation about race, history, and remembrance as well as the interpretation of African-American history in Fredericksburg that began in August 2017. This conversation led Council to a vote on preservation of the slave auction block in its current location, and to undertake an energized effort to tell a more complete story of the City's history. After some discussion the City engaged the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), an organization that worked with participants in an extensive year long series of community conversations. City Council accepted the Final Phase III report from the ICSC and requested the Memorials Advisory Commission to work on telling a more complete history on May 14, 2019. Then on June 11th, after participating in many of the community conversations, the City Council voted 6-1 to relocate the block from its current location to inside the Fredericksburg Area Museum.

**RELOCATION PLAN**

City staff members have worked with Dovetail Cultural Resource Group and the FAM on the logistics of relocation in response to the City Council's vote to move the block by the end of the calendar year. This plan is divided into several major action steps with a target date for relocation occurring in December 2019. The steps are as follows:

**1. *Consultation and Review***

Prior to the physical relocation of the block, a number of preliminary steps are in progress to ensure that Fredericksburg can continue to interpret and understand the historic significance of this object. Recent archaeological investigations of the block resulted in the finding that the block is not individually eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, but is a secondary resource associated with the United States/Planter's Hotel. City staff has engaged staff from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) in consultation on the relocation of the block. VDHR staff has confirmed that relocation will render the block no

longer a contributing resource in the National Register Historic District; however, they understand the sensitivity of the site and stand by the City's decision regarding removal and further interpretation. They are willing to continue to engage with the City in discussion as needed. Interpretation and displays at the block site and at the FAM will help to convey the original context of the site.

As the block is an historic object located within the City's local historic district overlay, a certificate of appropriateness (COA) must be granted for removal from the original site. An application was submitted in July and was considered by the Architectural Review Board in a public hearing on August 12, 2019. At that time, the Board did not take action due to concerns over the procedure for an application predicated on a vote of action by the City Council. At the September 9, 2019 meeting of the ARB, the City Attorney requested a work session with the ARB to continue discussion and seek consultation on the proposed action. The work session was held on September 23 and, at that time, the City Attorney gave a brief presentation providing background on the City Council's process since 2017 and a number of considerations for the ARB. A thorough discussion was held regarding Board members' individual views on the matter, the criteria under consideration, and possible courses of action. At the October 14, 2019 ARB meeting, a motion to deny the relocation was made, but failed with a vote of two in favor, one opposed, and four abstentions. Public comment was received at all four meetings of the ARB that included this topic. The Board's 90-day review period ended on October 20, 2019 and the COA is now under consideration by the City Council on appeal.

The City will rely on the FAM's expertise in the display and interpretation of the block inside its facility, but it is recommended that the historic association with the Planter's Hotel be made clear and that the sandstone be protected utilizing the best practices in material conservation. The Memorials Advisory Commission has begun the process of exploring long-term permanent interpretation of the block site as part of their charge to tell a more comprehensive story of Fredericksburg's African American history.

## ***2. Excavation and Removal***

Dovetail Cultural Resource Group has developed a scope of work to perform additional archaeological excavation at the block site at the time of relocation to ensure thorough documentation. Dovetail completed an initial study in 2018 (report dated January 2019) that included excavation around approximately one-quarter of the block. The planned additional study will allow archaeologists to investigate the majority of the remaining circumference of the block and thoroughly document the block and its location, including measured drawings or 3D scanning. Public Works staff will stabilize the block by wrapping it with straps attached to weights placed adjacent to the curb and will be on site during the study to assist as needed. Archaeologists will perform the excavation work with the dual goals of studying the block and freeing it from the ground without damaging its integrity.

The archaeological work is expected to generate some public interest, so Dovetail proposes to create informational boards to display on the sidewalk. Staff from the City and FAM will be on site to speak to bystanders as well. The Public Works Department will coordinate lane closures and other needed traffic control measures to protect the work zone during the archaeological work, removal, and transportation phases. Traffic control will include both

vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Fredericksburg Police will provide security as deemed necessary and appropriate during the removal process.

With consultation from professional museum designers, Public Works staff will design and construct a custom moving pallet for the block. Once the archaeological study is complete, Public Works staff will lift the stone from the ground while professional archaeologists remain on site to monitor. The removal process is expected to be completed in one day. Once loaded on a custom-designed pallet, the block will be transported to a temporary location for weighing and cleaning prior to installation in the museum. The sidewalk will be repaired by Public Works staff immediately after the block's removal by filling the void with compacted stone, repairing the brick sidewalk, and installing temporary placeholder materials while permanent interpretive materials are under consideration.

**3. *Cleaning, Transportation, and Conditioning***

Dovetail staff will coordinate with Public Works and the FAM to clean the stone with water and mild detergents. An appropriate cleaning procedure for the sandstone has been determined by Dovetail in consultation with staff from VDHR and the Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory. The stone must be allowed to fully dry before it can be moved into the museum to ensure the care and conservation of the other objects and displays at the museum. No moisture can be introduced to the museum environment. The block will be moved offsite for approximately two weeks for this environmental conditioning. Further cleaning may be necessary, and the block will be allowed to dry completely. Once dry, Public Works crews will be responsible for transporting the block to the FAM.

**4. *Museum Move-in and Loan Agreement***

Using the custom pallet, the block will be moved into the River Gallery on the ground floor of the museum. The FAM is developing plans for the long-term display of the block in this gallery. The museum will be closed to the public during January and February 2020 for its annual reconfiguration of exhibits, but several opportunities for access will be provided prior to the gallery re-opening on March 1. These preview, or "hard-hat" tours will provide an opportunity to share the process of exhibit development and ensure visibility of the block.

The transfer of the block to the museum is structured through a loan agreement which provides the terms of display and future review. The loan term is set at 20 years with a review every five years. The loan agreement includes conditions regarding accessibility and interpretation, and states that the FAM will continue or expand opportunities for free admission and after-hours access. If the location of the block inside the museum needs to be shifted in the future, City staff will assist as available.

**5. *Site Interpretation***

Interpretation of the block site after relocation is proposed to occur in several phases:

1. Phase 1 – complete by December 31, 2019
2. Phase 1A – complete by July 1, 2020
3. Phase 2 – complete in approximately one to two years

## ITEM #11D

Permanent interpretation of the block site will be developed through the efforts of the Memorials Advisory Commission and will take some time to design. This Phase 2 design work is part of an extensive collaborative process that builds on the work of the ICSC and will include many community stakeholders, as well as a liaison from the ARB and technical assistance from the National Park Service. The Phase 1 design is intended to mark the location of the block in the interim and improve the infrastructure (Phase 1A) of the site.

**Phase 1:** At the time of the block's removal, a bronze medallion approximately the same diameter as the block will be placed in the sidewalk to mark the location. This medallion will be level with the sidewalk surface and its surface will be blank, allowing for inscription, reuse, or replacement later. Additionally, a wayside panel will be placed at the block site. The panel will be the same design as those throughout the downtown so that it can be reused after the permanent interpretive materials are installed. The panel itself will highlight some aspects of the site's history and describe the current process in which the City is engaged. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but to ensure that the site remains visible and that information is readily available to the public. This work is planned for December 2019.

**Phase 1A:** By the end of the fiscal year, the City will complete infrastructure improvements that include creating sidewalk bump-outs at each of the four corners of the intersection. This effort will result in an expansion of the sidewalk surface and narrowing of the pedestrian crossings, improving the safety of the site and allowing more space for the Phase 2 interpretation efforts.

**Phase 2:** Within the next two years, the Memorials Advisory Commission will oversee a process to design permanent interpretive materials for this site.

### ***IMPLEMENTATION COST***

Public Works staff estimates the cost for this work, including the installation of an interpretive wayside panel and sidewalk medallion, at approximately \$3,000. The scope of work for archaeological investigation and assistance from Dovetail's field crew is estimated at \$7,852. Financial assistance will also be provided to the FAM for the exhibit design.

### **CONCLUSION**

At this time, the City Council is asked to endorse this proposed course of action and authorize the City Manager to proceed. Specific supplementary documents are also included for review, including conceptual design materials for site interpretation and the scope of work for archaeological investigation.

### **Attachments:**

1. Aerial and street views
2. Current views
3. Panel design mock-up
4. Near-term concept rendering of the intersection
5. Preliminary engineering for bump-outs
6. Archaeology scope of work



AERIAL



VIEW LOOKING NORTH FROM WILLIAM STREET



Current Views



Current Views



November 12, 2019  
Regular Meeting  
Resolution 19-

**MOTION:**

**SECOND:**

**RE:            Approving the Relocation Plan for the Slave Auction Block**

**ACTION:      APPROVED: Ayes: 0; Nays: 0**

On June 11, 2019, the City Council voted to relocate the slave auction block from the corner of William and Charles Streets to the Fredericksburg Area Museum for display.

On July 9, 2019, City Council directed the City Manager to develop a relocation plan to effect this move.

The City Manager has prepared a relocation plan that involves removal of the auction block and cleaning of the auction block by Public Works crews under the supervision of a professional archaeologist, and for the delivery and installation of the auction block at the Fredericksburg Area Museum under the supervision of the Museum Director. This work is to begin in December 2019.

The City Manager's plan effects the direction of City Council and meets with its approval.

Therefore, the City Council hereby approves the relocation plan and authorizes and directs the City Manager to carry it out.

**Votes:**

**Ayes:**

**Nays:**

**Absent from Vote:**

**Absent from Meeting:**

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***Clerk's Certificate***

*I certify that I am Clerk of Council of the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia, and that the foregoing is a true copy of Resolution No. 1x- , adopted at a meeting of the City Council held Date, 201x, at which a quorum was present and voted.*

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***Tonya B. Lacey, MMC***  
***Clerk of Council***

# A WITNESS TO HISTORY



“THERE IS PROBABLY NO RELIC IN FREDERICKSBURG THAT CALLS BACK MORE VIVIDLY THE DAYS OF SLAVERY...”

-LOCAL HISTORIAN S.J. QUINN, 1908

A sandstone block stood on this corner for over 170 years as witness to the auctions of enslaved people. It was placed here in 1843, for use when the adjacent hotel, originally known as the United States Hotel and later as the Planter’s Hotel, was built.

Documentation such as these newspaper advertisements has been found for at least 12 sales of men, women, and children at this street corner, occurring from 1847-1862.

**20 NEGROES FOR SALE.**  
BY virtue of a decree of the Circuit Court of Spotsylvania county, rendered on the 10th of October, 1861, in the case of White, &c. vs. White, &c.; the undersigned, Commissioners, will sell at  
**PUBLIC AUCTION,**  
for CASH, in front of the Planter's Hotel, in the town of Fredericksburg, on  
**Tuesday 18th. day of February, 1862.**  
**TWENTY LIKELY NEGROES, MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN.**  
WM. S. BARTON,  
WM. A. LITTLE,  
CHAS. HERNDON,  
Commissioners.  
feb1—td.

**PUBLIC SALE OF VALUABLE NEGROES.**  
ON Tuesday the 3rd day of January 1854, the subscriber will sell at public auction, for cash in front of the United States Hotel in Fredericksburg **46 Negroes**, most of them young, valuable and likely. Among them are two brick layers, a shoemaker, a boy now learning the cooper trade, and several good house servants,  
**JOHN SEDDON,**  
Committee.  
Dec. 12, 1853. (ts)



Photograph, c.1910s  
Courtesy of Lou Brent

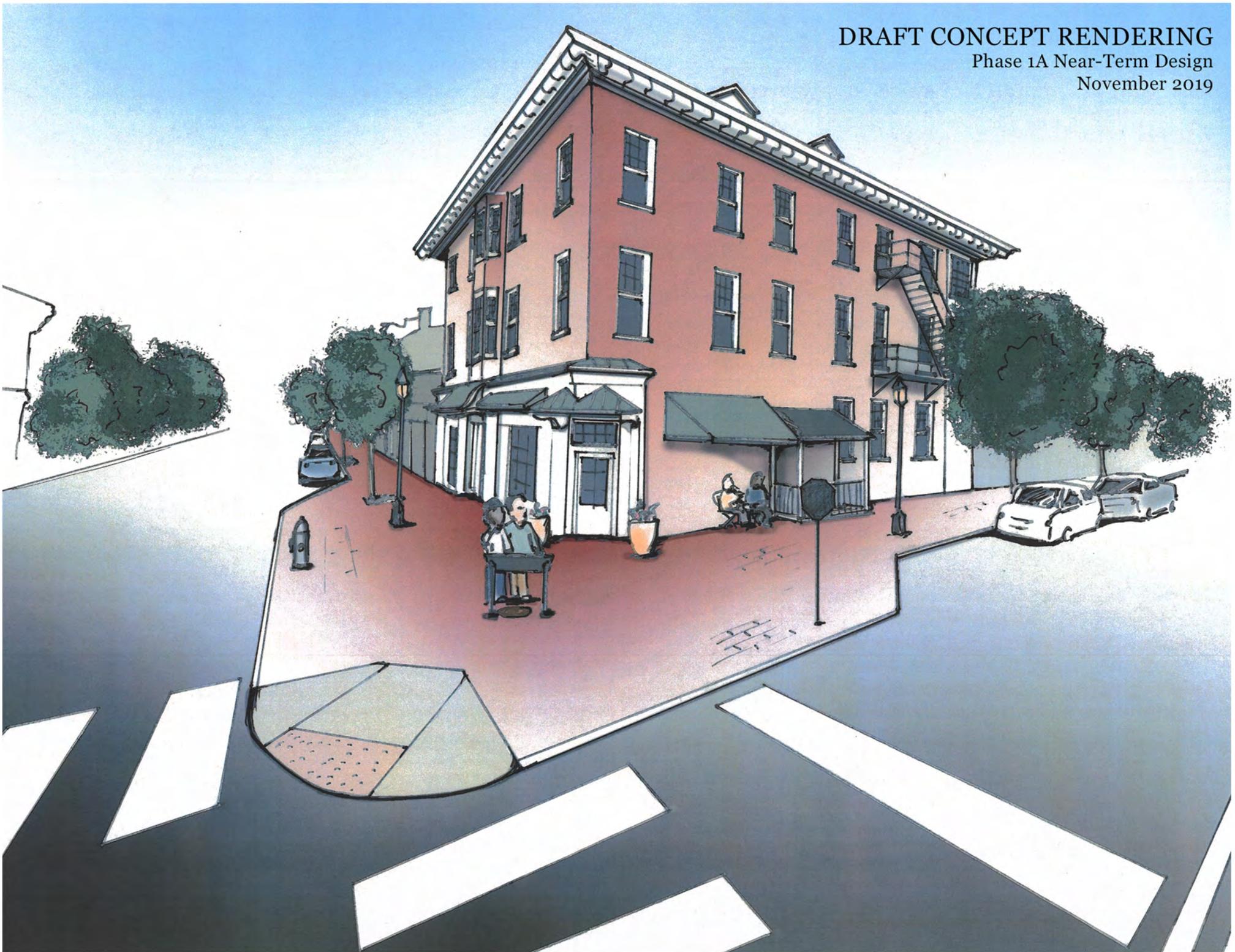
Throughout the years, the auction block has been a controversial reminder of the city’s dark days of slavery. In 2017, a member of the City Council urged city officials to find a new location for the block, calling it “a relic of time gone by—a time of hatred and degradation—on a main thoroughfare of our city.” After extensive study and public engagement, the City Council voted to move the block to the Fredericksburg Area Museum. The block was relocated in December 2019.

The City of Fredericksburg is establishing methods to tell a more comprehensive story of our community, both at this site and citywide, which will amplify underrepresented voices and enhance the inclusiveness of public spaces. Interpretation of this auction block site is currently in design, and will incorporate information from oral histories, archival research, and recent archaeological investigations.

DRAFT CONCEPT RENDERING

Phase 1A Near-Term Design

November 2019









*Knowing the Past—Building the Future*

August 5, 2019

David King  
Director of Public Works  
City of Fredericksburg  
715 Princess Anne Street  
P.O. Box 7447  
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22404

**Re: Revised Proposal/Archaeological Testing and Cleaning of the Auction Block,  
Fredericksburg, Virginia**

Dear Dave:

Dovetail Cultural Resource Group is pleased to submit the enclosed revised proposal for archaeological work in association with moving the object known as the auction/slave block in Fredericksburg, Virginia. This scope of work is designed to meet all requirements set forth during our July 24, 2019 meeting on the project and augmented based on our August 5, 2019 meeting, including archaeological studies surrounding the block, cleaning the block, and working closely with all involved parties to sensitively and carefully complete the project goal of object removal.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or Brad Hatch at 540-899-9170 or via email at [kbarile@dovetailcrg.com](mailto:kbarile@dovetailcrg.com)/ [bhatch@dovetailcrg.com](mailto:bhatch@dovetailcrg.com).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kerri S. Barile".

Kerri S. Barile  
President

## **PROPOSED SCOPE OF SERVICES**

The following will be performed by Dovetail Cultural Resource Group (Dovetail) on the auction/slave block in Fredericksburg, Virginia. In November 2018, Dovetail completed limited archaeological studies and archival research on the object at the request of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the City of Fredericksburg (the City). Results of this study were published in a report that was issued in January 2019. Concurrent with, but not related to, this work, the City held an extensive outreach campaign to gather data on public sentiment about the block and recommendations on the future of this object. Based on the public dialogues, City Council voted in June 2019 to remove the auction/slave block from its original location at the corner of William and Charles streets and place the object in the Fredericksburg Area Museum (FAM).

The logistics of the move were the subject of a July 24, 2019 meeting between the City, FAM, and Dovetail. During that meeting, it was decided that additional archaeology would be completed around the auction block immediately prior to block removal, with the archaeological studies functioning as the excavation to remove earth surrounding the block base. Once the block is exposed, Dovetail will then clean the object with the aid of the City to help rotate and lift the object during this process. During our August 5, 2019 meeting, the timing of the excavation and cleaning was augmented to assure safety and an expedited process.

This proposal includes tasks associated with Dovetail's involvement in the auction/slave block removal process, including project coordination and several planned meetings, designing interpretive posters to be installed during the excavation to disseminate information to the public, archaeological excavations surrounding the block as discussed during the July 24 and August 5 meetings, and cleaning the object using best archaeological curatorial practices as possible. Artifacts found during the fieldwork may be retained depending on their recovery location and through consultation with the City. They will be processed as appropriate at our Fredericksburg lab and an addendum report outlining the process and results of the work will then be authored. Note that no background review or archival research will be completed as part of this project as they were done as part of the VDOT/City project in 2018. Additional details on these tasks are outlined below, followed by a cost schedule and a list of project assumptions.

### **Project Coordination and Poster Design**

Dovetail will closely coordinate with the client regarding the project. This coordination includes attendance at up to three meetings, emails and telephone calls to discuss the field schedule and removal process, and working with the City on public media releases, as requested. This scope does not include formal study coordination with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR) or the Fredericksburg Architectural Review Board (ARB) but these tasks can be added upon request.

In addition, the team will design an interpretive poster describing the archaeological process and work at the auction/slave block. Two copies of the poster will be produced to display during the excavations to help disseminate information to the interested public. They will be mounted near the dig site during the excavation. A draft of the poster will be sent to Kate Schwartz, City Preservation Planner, and Sara Poore, Executive Director of the FAM, for review. A final version will be printed once their edits are incorporated.

## **Archaeological Excavations and Artifact Cleaning**

Prior to any subsurface fieldwork, the team will use a GPS unit or a laser transit/total station to map the exact location of the center of the auction/slave block. This data will then be used by the City to place a new bronze marker at the site once the stone is removed. In addition, the City will brace the stone using straps with anchors/weights located in William Street adjacent to the extant curb. The purpose of the strapping is to assure that the block remains in place when soils surrounding the block are removed.

The City will then remove the brick sidewalk surrounding the block, leaving the grey underlaying composite material in place. The archaeological team will remove the grey material as Stratum I from the exposed area; this material will not be screened to retrieve artifacts as it is a modern material deposited around 2000 when the brick sidewalk was installed and removed/replaced in November 2018 during the previous archaeological testing of the block. Once the grey material is removed, the team will excavate the backfilled soil located in the 2018 test unit placed east of the block. This will then remove all disturbed soils.

The remaining field time will be spent archaeologically removing the soil surrounding the block. The exact parameters of the excavation will be determined in the field, but a minimum of a 1.5-foot radius will be removed to the east, north, and west of the block. The soils immediately to the south of the block, between the block and the curb, will be left in place. The existing historical marker will be removed and set to the side for delivery to the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc. (HFFI) by the City, as requested. Through removal of the original test unit and the current excavations, approximately 90 percent of the matrix surrounding the block will be removed archaeologically (Figure 1). All soils removed during the excavation will be excavated in natural levels. Where natural levels exceed 4 inches (10 cm), arbitrary 4-inch (10-cm) levels will be excavated to provide vertical control of the recovered artifact assemblage. All soils will be screened through 0.25-inch (0.6-cm) mesh. Excavation will stop once the brick pad under the stone is completely exposed. Additional excavation may occur once the block is removed from the brick pad depending on project schedule and dialogues with the City but exposure of the complete brick pad will allow for stone cleaning and removal prior to further excavations, if completed.

A sample of cultural material recovered during the investigation will be collected and bagged according to provenience. This includes diagnostic artifacts that will be important to understand the chronology of block installation and use. Repetitive, modern, or non-diagnostic materials will not be kept but will be noted in project records.

The entire process will be thoroughly documented through notes, photographs, hand-drawn maps and GPS points. This includes the size of the excavation area, exact location of the block in relation to the archaeological findings, any archaeological features that are uncovered during the process, and details on relational data in the surrounding area that may inform the archaeological analysis.

Upon completion, Dovetail will be on site to monitor moving of the block by City staff and any hired moving group, as appropriate. Archaeological deposits below the block may be explored after the block is removed.

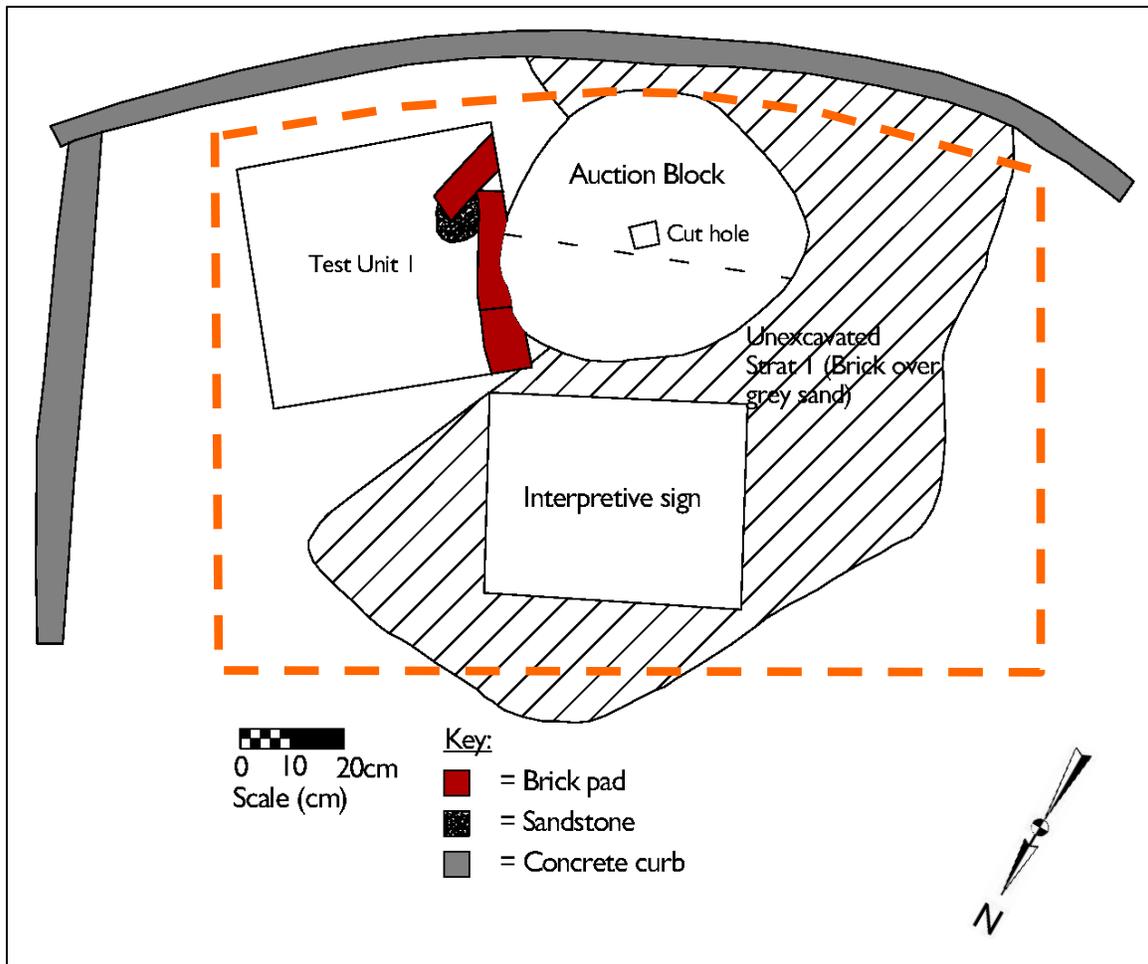


Figure 1: Location of Block, Test Unit 1 (Excavated in 2018) and Approximate Location of Proposed Archaeological Work Dashed in Orange.

Once the block has been removed and stored in a secure, climate-controlled location for temporary storage, Dovetail will clean the block. This will include the use of water via a hose, if possible, and a combination of Triton X-100 detergent and denatured alcohol applied to the object by hand with soft, natural-bristled brushes. This technique has been used to clean similar archaeological artifacts with great success and is used by the DHR and Maryland Archaeological Conservation Laboratory as a best practice. Dovetail, the

City, and FAM staff will work together to rotate the block as needed to clean all sides while maintaining safety and integrity of the object. Once the cleaning has been completed, the artifact will remain in the temporary storage facility until it is dry and ready to be moved to the FAM.

### **Laboratory Analysis and Addendum Report Production**

It is anticipated that a minimal quantity (up to 10) artifacts will be recovered during the archaeological study. All recovered artifacts will be transported to the Dovetail lab for processing. Lab work will include washing all artifacts, cataloguing the materials, and labeling the artifacts according to site number and provenience. Information on all artifacts will be entered into a relational database. The information obtained from the artifact analysis will be used to determine site integrity and temporal association of the layers. Any artifacts retained for curation will be given to the City at the completion of the project.

Once the excavations, cleaning, and lab analysis have been completed, Dovetail will prepare an addendum report that meets the DHR's standards for cultural resource reports including the methodology used in the investigations, a summary of previous studies on the auction/slave block, the general nature and extent of materials encountered during the current work, and an analysis of the resources in relation to its context. The DHR Virginia Cultural Resource Information (VCRIS) site forms will also be updated for the site, as needed.

Draft copies of the report and forms will be submitted to the City for review and comment. Once this has been accomplished, all edits and comments will be addressed. Four hard copies and two CDs of the final report will be submitted to the client. Additional copies can be provided upon request.

## ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were used to create this proposal:

- Dovetail will have free and clear access to the project area during the fieldwork.
- Archaeological excavations will take up to 12 hours to complete and be done in one day with a crew of two to three archaeologists. Cleaning will take up to six hours with a crew of two lab/curation specialists and be done the day after the excavation and moving the block to temporary storage.
- Dovetail is not responsible for extensions to the schedule caused by circumstances outside of their control such as public disruptions, weather, etc.
- The City will stabilize the block and remove the brick sidewalk surrounding the object prior to excavations. They will be responsible for lifting the block upon completion of the excavation and placing it within the artifact cradle.
- No specialized archaeological studies will be done as part of this work, such as carbon-14 data, ethnobotanical studies, etc.
- The City will orchestrate the temporary storage facility, with water for cleaning available as possible.
- Only unique/diagnostic artifacts will be retained during the field studies (up to 10). Repetitive, modern, and nondiagnostic artifacts will not be collected. Artifacts will be returned to the City upon completion of the work.
- No new archival research will be done as part of this process.
- Dovetail will design and manufacture two interpretive posters to be mounted near the site during the two-day excavation to help keep the public informed during the process.
- Dovetail will not design the bronze marker or National Park Service-style interpretive marker to be placed at the site at the completion of the studies.
- Dovetail will take exquisite care of the block during the excavations and cleaning but has no liability should unforeseen activities or damage occur due to the fragility of the object and/or precarious siting as a result of their actions.
- Once excavation is done, the City and FAM are responsible for moving, storing and exhibiting the block.

## COST SCHEDULE

### Labor:

Project Coordination and Poster Design	\$	1,740.86
Archaeological Excavations and Artifact Cleaning	\$	2,808.46
Laboratory Analysis	\$	363.91
Addendum Report Production	\$	2,569.30

### Direct Costs:

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Total</i>
Mileage	\$0.54	25	\$13.50
Copies- 8.5 x 11	\$0.10	100	\$10.00
Final Report (each)	\$3.00	4	\$12.00
Final Report (CD)	\$2.00	2	\$4.00
Postage	\$10.00	1	\$10.00
Poster Printing	\$60.00	2	\$120.00
Block Cleaning Supplies	\$200.00	1	\$200.00

Total Direct Costs \$ 369.50

**Project Total \$ 7,852.03**