



News Release

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Appeal Filed Against Moving the Slave Auction Block

(Fredericksburg, VA) December 13, 2019 - E.D. Cole Building, L.L.C. and Local Holdings, L.L.C. filed a petition in the Fredericksburg Circuit Court on December 10, 2019, appealing City Council's November 12, 2019 adoption of [Resolution 19-100](#), "Granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Relocation of the Slave Auction Block to the Fredericksburg Area Museum." The filing of the petition stayed the effect of the Resolution, effectively blocking the City's plans to remove the slave auction block from the corner of Charles and William Streets until the case can be resolved through the courts.

E.D. Cole Building, L.L.C. is the owner of the commercial building across the street of the slave auction block at 402 William Street. Local Holdings, L.L.C. is the owner of the Olde Towne Butcher shop and The Butcher's Table restaurant at 401 William Street. The petitioners allege that they will lose business income from what they predict will be a decline in foot traffic and a decline in tourist visits to the corner after the stone auction block is removed. Their petition argues that City Council had no legal authority to order the relocation of the slave auction block, and that only the Architectural Review Board could undertake this action.

The approved [plan for relocation](#) of the stone auction block called for its removal by Public Works crews under the supervision of the professional archaeologists of Dovetail Cultural Resources, the cleaning of the stone with water and mild detergents at a City facility, and then, after the stone had fully dried, its transport by Public Works crews to the River Gallery of the Fredericksburg Area Museum for display to the public. The Public Works Department had constructed a custom pallet to accomplish this move. The museum is closed to the public during January and February 2020 for its annual reconfiguration of exhibits, and then re-opens to the public on March 1.

The plan called for interpretation of the block site after relocation to occur in several phases. Under Phase 1, at the time of the block's removal, a medallion approximately the

same diameter as the block will be placed in the sidewalk to mark the location. The medallion will be level with the sidewalk. Additionally, a wayside panel will be placed at the block site.

In Phase 1A, the City will complete infrastructure improvements, including 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 pedestrian crossings, improving the safety of the site and allowing more space for Phase 2 interpretation efforts. The Memorials Advisory Commission is leading a process to design permanent interpretive materials for the site, part of their initiative to help the City “tell the whole story” of African American history in Fredericksburg.

“The City Council’s decision to relocate the slave auction block was made after 18 months of public input sessions, including the year-long community collaboration project led by the [International Coalition of Sites of Conscience](#). Hundreds of residents participated in this effort, sharing their personal experiences and perspectives,” said Fredericksburg Mayor Mary Katherine Greenlaw. Mayor Greenlaw concluded her statement, saying, “City Council has directed the City Attorney to vigorously defend this action, and to bring it to a successful conclusion as soon as reasonably possible.”

The full petition is available [here](#).

For more information on the three year history on Council’s decision to relocate the block please visit www.fredericksburgva.gov

Please feel free to contact the City Manager’s office at 540-372-1010 with questions or concerns.

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