

# News Release

For immediate release



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## City of Fredericksburg to advance work on ‘telling full story’

*City Council allocates \$205,000 toward African American history*

**FREDERICKSBURG, VA – August 12, 2020:** Fredericksburg City Council on Tuesday took an important step toward more fully recognizing and representing Fredericksburg’s full history. Council voted to spend \$205,000 on an array of projects focused on local African American history, including:

- Installing historical markers on two significant sites. The first is a former commercial wharf at the end of Canal Street run by a late 18<sup>th</sup> century African American entrepreneur and American Revolution participant, John DeBaptiste. The other is the site of the former Greyhound Bus Depot at Princess Anne and Wolfe streets, which was a stop on the historic Freedom Riders journey in 1961.
- Making improvements to the corner at Charles and William streets where the Slave Auction Block was previously located, allowing for a more appropriate interpretation of the Auction Block’s historical relevance in a manner that is suitable in explaining the original location. Allocated funds will also help pay for a new exhibit at the Fredericksburg Area Museum, where the Auction Block will be displayed later this year in a manner representative of its true history and impact.
- Revamping and updating materials at the Fredericksburg Visitor Center such as brochures and the welcome video to capture the City’s history and share the complete and authentic story with greater understanding.

Fredericksburg City Manager Tim Baroody also announced Tuesday that Angela Freeman, who has been serving as the City’s Business Development Manager, will help coordinate the work in her new position as the City’s Diversity, Equity and Economic Advancement Officer.

Council’s vote Tuesday followed important measures taken in the past couple of years, including honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with the naming of the Fall Hill Avenue bridge over Interstate 95 and recommending that the Virginia General Assembly rename Jefferson Davis Highway statewide. Moving forward, the City will continue efforts to engage the community in a deeper conversation in order to advance Council’s newly adopted Racial Equity Plan.

“As our community grows in diversity and looks to our future, I am proud of how we have taken on honest and important conversations to create a more-welcoming Fredericksburg,” said Fredericksburg Mayor Mary Katherine Greenlaw. “We are truly a better community when we come together, get to know each other and recognize the important contributions of all. I am confident the changes we are making are contributing to an inclusive future for Fredericksburg.”

The City of Fredericksburg will also work with the University of Mary Washington to appropriately tell the story of the local Civil Rights Movement. That will involve Fredericksburg tourism staff and several UMW departments collecting and telling firsthand oral histories from people who lived in Fredericksburg during segregation and integration. UMW's James Farmer Multicultural Center, the Simpson Library's Special Collection and University Archives, and the departments of American Studies, Historic Preservation and History will all be involved.

“The James Farmer Multicultural Center, along with other UMW academic departments, are excited to be partnering with the City of Fredericksburg’s Tourism office on highlighting the rich Civil Rights history within the City of Fredericksburg,” said Christopher Williams, assistant director of the James Farmer Multicultural Center. “We look forward to continuing our partnership on future African American history projects.”

The City will also continue to research and represent the important contributions of other African Americans such as Urbane Bass, John Washington, Mildred Loving, Joseph Walker and Jason Grant, to name just a few.

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