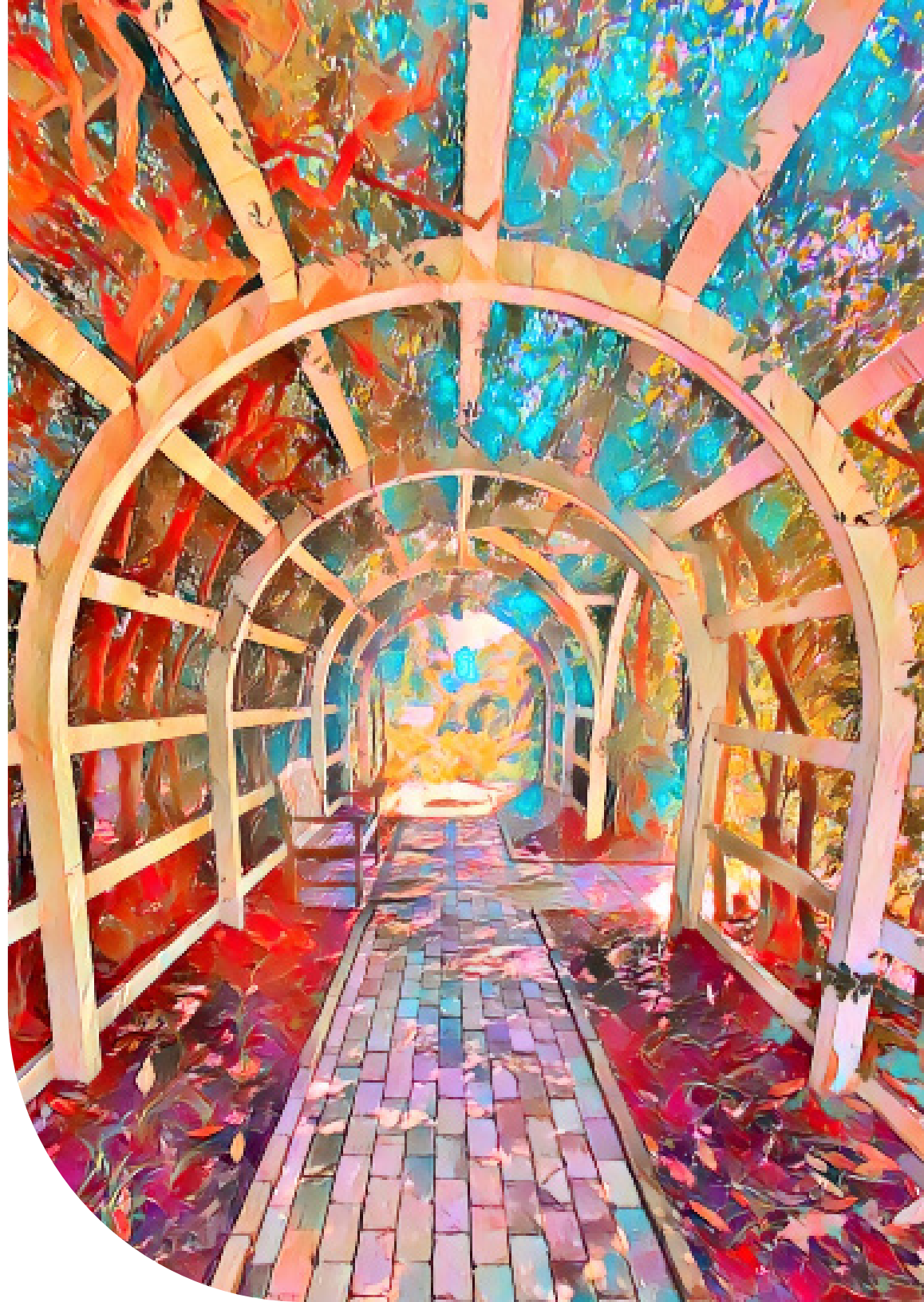


VIRGINIA BEACH
Historic Houses
Interpretive Plan 2023

*Paving
the
Path*
FORWARD





Overview

Thoroughgood House Garden Arbor

As the landing site for our country's first settlers, the foundations of the country began right here. The historic houses in Virginia Beach tell the dynamic and complex story of the area's growth and change, the diversity of Virginia's heritage and the rich history of the United States.

This interpretive plan represents a fresh, collaborative new start and an exciting path forward to the future.

Located in historic Virginia Beach, the Thoroughgood, Lynnhaven, and Francis Land houses tell the dynamic and complex story of the area's growth and change. Managed by the Virginia Beach History Museums as part of the City of Virginia Beach's Cultural Affairs Department since 2019, the three historic houses are supported by an active staff and community volunteers. Each home boasts historic gardens maintained by city staff, the Master Gardeners, and Virginia Beach gardening clubs.

The Virginia Beach History Museums hired History Associates Inc. (HAI) to research and develop a new, dynamic interpretive plan to improve the sites' visibility and interpretive materials.

Although the project was initially delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it resumed in the spring of 2021. Before active planning resumed, History Associates reviewed records on each site's history and researched the programs, tours, and other interpretive options offered by other similar organizations.

Interpretive planning is a collaborative process. Throughout the process, the project team worked to determine what was achievable and what options should be prioritized based on public and stakeholder feedback.

The plan is a guide.

TIMELINE

1

CONTRACT AWARDED TO HAI

February 2020

Virginia Beach History Museums partnered with key stakeholders to draft the Request for Proposals. History Associates Inc. (HAI) wins the contract, and plans are made for work to begin the following month.

2

BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND BENCHMARKING

March 2020

With the COVID-19 pandemic delaying the site visit and initial workshops, the project team researched each house and conducted benchmarking with similar sites.

3

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP AND SITE VISITS

May 2021

HAI interpretive planners traveled to each of the houses to learn more about tours, programs, and current restoration work. The team led a two-day workshop with staff and stakeholders to identify key goals, themes, objectives, and audiences.

4

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Summer 2021

HAI and City staff held a public meeting and distributed a survey for members of the public to provide insights and ideas about each site.

5

RECOMMENDATIONS WORKSHOP

July 2021

HAI conducted additional stakeholder conversations and returned to Virginia Beach to meet with staff about recommendations for the plan.

6

DRAFTING AND REVISION

Fall 2021 to Spring 2022

HAI wrote the first draft of the plan and submitted it to Virginia Beach staff. The team responded to comments and made requested revisions.

7

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND FINAL EDITS

Fall 2022 to Spring 2023

The document was presented to the public. Feedback from the public was incorporated into the final document.

KEY *Ideas*

FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CONNECTED PEOPLE, CONNECTED STORIES, CONNECTED HISTORY

These sites are a microcosm of the larger story that stretches from the beginning of our nation to the development of what Virginia Beach is today. Supply chains, transportation, water and land travel, commerce, and the socio-cultural context of these families are connected to the stories of the houses.

THE JOURNEY FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

These houses must tell the stories of enslaved individuals. There are unique and different stories at each house. These include stories of enslavement, but also stories of resistance, freedom, and resilience. The programming should highlight that African American history relating to these houses and Hampton Roads generally did not end with emancipation but continues today.

AN EVER-EVOLVING STORY

Virginia Beach's story is vast, complex, dynamic, diverse, and ever-growing. The houses should feature dynamic interpretive offerings that can be expanded or connected to other sites and stories to further connect visitors to the area's history.

TAKE THE "HIDDEN" OUT OF HIDDEN TREASURES

Stakeholders and the public noted that these sites were "hidden treasures" and expressed the hope that more people would learn about the sites and visit more often, turning the sites into visible resources that are valued by the entire community. The recommendations in the plan should help attract new audiences and connect more people with the houses and their stories.

GOALS & Themes



GOALS

Goals guide interpretive planning efforts at a site. They represent what site staff and stakeholders wish to achieve and what future efforts should be geared toward. During the planning process, four distinct goals emerged:

BUILD AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

Staff and stakeholders should engage in continued efforts to build and strengthen community relationships and partnerships and improve communication between stakeholders.

ATTRACT AND ENGAGE A WIDER AUDIENCE

Staff and stakeholders should collaborate to attract a wider audience and to create engaging and immersive experiences that appeal to different backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles.

TELL INCLUSIVE, ACCURATE, AND DIVERSE STORIES

The programs, tours, and events offered at all three sites should tell inclusive, accurate, and diverse stories that highlight the entire community and the full history of the community (both good and bad).

DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE

Improve infrastructure at all three sites to better serve both staff and visitors and to create a strong foundation for the sites' future plans.

THEMES

Interpretive themes are the key messages visitors should understand after visiting the sites. A good theme statement should reflect a site's resources and values; connect tangibles and intangibles; and answer the question: "so what?" Themes should reflect what makes each house unique, the key stories or possible messages at each house, and the takeaways they want visitors to have after visiting.

The project team outlined the following theme statements to guide interpretation at the three houses:

INTERPRETATION THEME *Recommendations*



Community Connections

The Thoroughgood, Lynnhaven, and Francis Land houses are intricately connected to the story of the local community in all its complexity and diversity—from the original Indigenous settlement to today.



Diverse Stories

The people who lived and worked in these three houses—men and women, adults and children, free and enslaved—shaped these buildings' legacies. The history of these houses cannot be fully understood without knowing their stories.



Daily Life

Daily life at these three houses reflected the social and economic situations of the inhabitants and workers and provide key insights into the past.

INTERPRETATION THEME

Recommendations



Architecture

The Thoroughgood, Lynnhaven, and Francis Land houses highlight the evolving architectural styles of the 18th and early 19th centuries, providing insights into changing tastes, technologies, labor practices, and materials.



Rise of a Country

The stories of these homes, and those who lived and worked here, are intertwined with the creation of the United States and the successes and challenges of the country's birth and later history.



Environment

The houses provide insight into the long history of the region and its inhabitants' efforts to manage, control, and survive their environment—from the Chesapeake and Nansemond presence to modern sustainability efforts by the city and its partners.

APPROACH TO *Recommendations*

Recommendations are grounded in goals and connected to themes and target audiences. Recommendations are not a wish list. They should be realistic, achievable, and sustainable. As part of the planning process, the project team directed stakeholders to adopt a “pie in the sky” attitude. From these insights and dreams, the team began to determine what was realistic and achievable for the historic houses and their partners, gradually working toward a tailored list of recommendations that can help the sites meet the goals described earlier in the plan while being cost-efficient and achievable given current staffing and budgeting realities.

Recommendations are flexible and should be assessed and adjusted over time based on changing conditions and stakeholder and visitor feedback. The options presented in this plan are not meant to limit or bind the Virginia Beach History Museums. As defined by the National Park Service, interpretive plans should reflect current conditions and options as necessary. Future ideas for programs, tours, and events should not be rejected because they are not discussed in the plan.

The following recommendations are organized by type and location. To ease future planning, these recommendations are subdivided by priority level. High priority recommendations may be implemented within the next one to four years. Medium priority recommendations may take five to seven years and low priority recommendations may need eight to ten years to accomplish. Please note that these categories are flexible and are included to help prioritize and structure these options.



Interpretive Plan Public Meeting, Sep. 2022

TARGET *Audiences*

Audience targeting helps define both the background and motivations of potential visitors. While all visitors are welcome at the houses, the audiences targeted in this report were chosen for focused attention because they may be inadequately served by existing interpretative programming or need different strategies for engagement. Every visitor is unique, and no two visitors will approach a tour, exhibit, or program in the same way. Visitor targeting is meant to guide the development of interpretive programming—not exclude visitors from programs or experiences they might be interested in.

Millennials and Generation Z

Younger generations represent a growing share of the population and a potential audience for the historic houses. Working to build connections with this group will ensure that the sites remain relevant and valuable to the community in the future.

School Groups

All three historical houses have hosted numerous school tours and programs over the years, including the SAPLINGS program. The houses should work to remain relevant to schools as the community continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

African American Tourists and Locals

All three houses have significance to African American history. Ensuring that the sites are welcoming to visitors through inclusive interpretation, relevant programming, and professional visitor services will help ensure that houses are valuable to all visitors and connect with a growing tourism market.

Military Personnel, Families, and Veterans

Virginia Beach is located near multiple military installations and the houses all have connections to military history. Reaching out to these groups offers the opportunity to reach a large audience and potentially foster future collaborations.

Out-of-Town Visitors

With over 10.1 million overnight visitors and 8.9 million day visitors coming to Virginia Beach before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, out-of-town tourists represent a significant potential audience.

Local Community

The three historic homes have been supported and preserved by the community, and each house should continue to develop programs and offerings that appeal to local residents—whether first-time visitors or frequent guests.

School Group at the Thoroughgood Education Center



VISITOR *Experience*

The museum visitor experience is shaped by many factors to include the visitor's physical, intellectual, and emotional experiences.

During the public input process, staff and stakeholders agreed on what that they want the visitor to know, feel, or do both during their time spent at the site and after they leave.

Engage with history and think critically about the past.

Visitors to the sites should be able to learn about the sites and be encouraged to ponder what they experience and ask questions about the past. Site staff should be empowered to respond to these questions and facilitate deeper engagement with the site.

Learn accurate and inclusive history.

The content presented at the sites should be based on the most recent scholarship and updated as necessary. This includes both physical content and information received from guides and programs. The information presented should highlight the diversity of the historical experience in Princess Anne County, going beyond just telling visitors about the families who owned the houses by incorporating new facts and content relating to African Americans, Indigenous communities, women, and other often overlooked histories.

Talk about their experiences with others and return to the houses or visit other houses and partner sites.

Visitors should leave the houses feeling excited about their visits and eager to engage further and share their experiences with others. This could include leaving a review or following the Virginia Beach History Museums on social media, returning to attend a special program, visiting one of the other historic houses in Virginia Beach, or becoming involved at the sites.

Feel represented and welcome at the houses, encounter stories that connect to their experiences and interests.

Tours and programs should make meaningful connections to today and allow visitors to connect the past to their own lives. Staff and volunteers at the sites should actively work to ensure that all visitors feel welcome and that the content makes the past relevant to visitors today as well as future visitors.

Experience the houses with all their senses and empathize with the past.

Visitors should have multiple ways to engage with the sites. Whenever possible, multisensory experiences should exist for visitors to learn about the past. All interpretive experiences should seek to promote empathy for the challenges and threats that people in the past faced and illustrate the differences and similarities between life in the 21st century and life in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Understand the historical context of these houses and why they are important.

The historic houses' programs and tours should engage and encourage visitors to delve into the rich history of these three sites that are woven into the fabric of early American history. Tours and programs should answer the question of "so what?" and guests should get a sense of how the houses fit into the larger story of Virginia Beach and American history.

Know where to go and how to visit safely.

Would-be visitors should be able to easily plan a visit to each of the sites and have information about programs, hours, and directions readily available. Upon reaching their destination, the site should be accessible and easily navigable, and visitors should be able to easily reach a staff member or volunteer to ask a question or request assistance if necessary.

Engage with these historic homes with their families, school classes, or other community social groups.

Visitors should be able to pick from a variety of programs and tours based on what best suits their interests and needs. A variety of individual, school, and community-based offerings should exist to serve the Virginia Beach area and enhance the houses' value to the community. Programs should be updated as necessary based on both changing community needs and visitor feedback.

Marketing Strategies

Research and conversations with key stakeholders emphasized the need to transform the Virginia Beach Historic Houses from "hidden gems" to widely known historical treasures. A key part of this effort relies on improved marketing strategies targeting the general public and increased communication with key partners. The options described in the coming pages represent key opportunities for spreading the word about the Virginia Beach Historic Houses.



Educational Program at the Lynnhaven Colonia Educational Center

OUTREACH

Recommendations

Research and conversations with stakeholders emphasized the importance of communication with key partners and the need to provide greater outreach to the public through social media. The options described below represent key opportunities for building relationships with partners and the public about the Virginia Beach Historic Houses.

Throughout the planning process, site staff, stakeholders, and members of the public expressed a clear goal, to help connect both the community and out-of-town visitors with these hidden gems. The recommendations found in this plan represent the first steps for making this goal a reality but will require sustained commitment and partnership between site staff and major stakeholders.

Update General Marketing Strategy

General materials including brochures, posters, and fact sheets can be distributed throughout the city and the broader Hampton Roads area. Partnerships with local hotels, travel associations, and the American Bus Association will ensure that the materials reach visitors to the area.

At a minimum, the materials should include brief descriptions of each of the houses and their history along with hours of operations, directions, and standard tour and program offerings. A QR code can provide details about seasonal or special programming. Alternatively, special inserts can be placed in the brochures to highlight seasonal events for potential guests who are not as comfortable with technology or do not have

access to a smartphone. The materials should feature colorful pictures and easy-to-read fonts. For the materials, accessibility, and ease of reading take precedence over detailed historical content.

Priority: High

Update Targeted Marketing for Schools

Discussions with stakeholders revealed that many teachers and educators in Virginia Beach are unaware of the educational offerings available at the historic houses and how these sites can help teachers fulfill local and state learning objectives. A mailing list subscription could offer direct access to individual teachers statewide and would help reach teachers who could visit for school bus trips and field trips. A brief attractive brochure and digital marketing to teachers could provide information on school programs.

Priority: Immediate

Update Targeted Marketing for Out-of-Town Visitors

The Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau noted that “history” is one of the top five reasons that tourists visit Virginia Beach. Throughout Virginia, heritage tourism is big business with over 42 million visits to historic sites in Virginia pre-pandemic, and over \$7.7 billion spent each year by heritage tourists. The Virginia Beach History Museums should work with the Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for reaching out-of-town visitors. This should include a focus on experiences, such as the smartphone app tours, that tie the three houses and other Virginia Beach historic sites together. The strategy should also discuss how to use the historic sites to reach out to potential visitors who might not be very interested in history, such as highlighting the nature trails and nearby waterways around the houses.

Priority: Low

Attract and Engage a Wider Audience

Staff and stakeholders should collaborate to attract a wider audience and to create engaging and immersive experiences that appeal to different backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles.

Priority: Medium

Build and Strengthen Partnerships

Staff and stakeholders should engage in continued efforts to build and strengthen community relationships and partnerships and continue to improve communication between stakeholders.

Priority: Immediate

Tell Inclusive, Accurate, and Diverse Stories

The programs, tours, and events offered at all three sites should tell inclusive, accurate, and diverse stories that highlight the entire community and the full history of the community (both good and bad).

Priority: Immediate

Increase Social Media Presence

Many other organizations, including the White House Historical Association and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, employ social media staff to share key stories and objects from their collections. The posts, typically 200 to 300 words for Facebook and 50 to 100 words for Instagram, can help highlight notable and/or underrepresented people, events, and themes and show off artifacts that might not be suitable for display in the houses.

Priority: Medium

Increase Use of History Museums E-Newsletter

The Virginia Beach History Museums should continue to send quarterly e-newsletters to discuss upcoming events and programs for the quarter and highlight opportunities for volunteers.

Priority: Immediate



White House Historical Association Facebook post about Mary McLeod Bethune. Credit: White House Historical Society

Establish Descendants Groups

Many historic sites connected to the institution of slavery are working to establish ties with the descendants of those who were enslaved there. Conversations with site staff indicate that they are working to build relationships with the descendants of people who were enslaved at the Thoroughgood House and Lynnhaven House. Moving forward, the staff should work to create a descendants' advisory committee that is comprised of descendants of people enslaved at all three houses. The advisory committee will provide recommendations on interpretive programming and exhibit content.

Priority: High

Continue Indigenous Consultation

Best practices in museums and historic sites promote collaboration with local Indigenous people on programming and reviewing exhibit content. Conversations with a representative of the Nansemond Indian Nation indicate that they are interested in reviewing new content relating to Nansemond history to ensure that their perspective and viewpoints are properly represented. Site staff should continue to prioritize collaboration with the Tribe and work with the Tribe to identify a team of experts who are willing to provide content review and coordinate with the Virginia Beach History Museums as the need arises.

If the Tribe is willing, Virginia Beach History Museums staff or cultural programming staff could also partner with the Nansemond Nation to host demonstrations and lectures. While a formal Pow Wow requires sustained investment and coordination, smaller events and programs can help build the foundations for potential future partnerships and larger events. For all events, Virginia Beach History Museums should conduct pre-planning with the Nansemond Nation to ensure that there



Students at the Francis Land House

is enough notice to properly organize and orchestrate an event. Future discussions should be deliberate and constructive to ensure that both sides receive an adequate return and financial compensation for their time and effort.

Priority: High

Develop Targeted Marketing for Veterans and Active-Duty and NATO Personnel

A multilingual brochure can be distributed to NATO to highlight programs and tours along with the Virginia Beach Historic Houses' history. The brochure can also discuss what language the programs are offered in and how visitors can arrange for tours in the language they speak when they visit.

A special brochure geared to active-duty military can be distributed at local military bases to highlight the programs offered at the houses, including those that focus on military history. They can also highlight any military discounts offered by the houses for particular events including a Fleet and Family Services promo day.

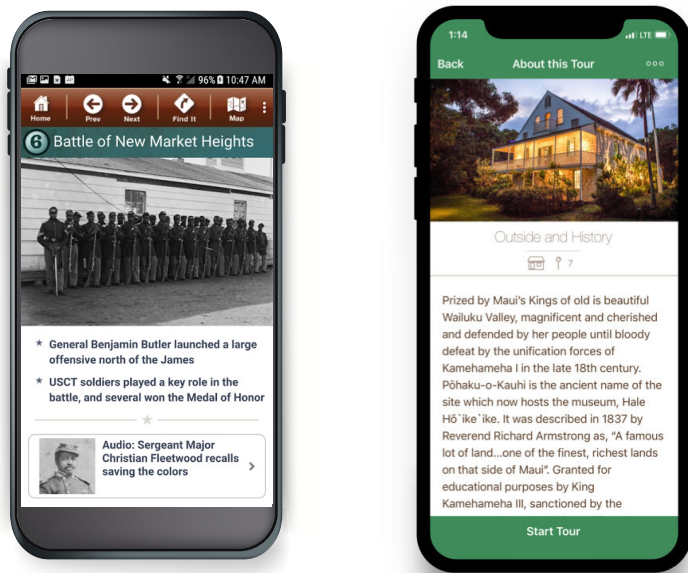
Priority: Medium

GENERAL *Recommendations*

Offer Wi-Fi

The growth of technology-based interpretive media means that each site must also have the required technical infrastructure required to support it. Many historic sites—including Mount Vernon, Monticello, and Colonial Williamsburg now offer free Wi-Fi, as do several public-facing Virginia Beach agencies such as the Virginia Beach library system. Offering Wi-Fi throughout the grounds of each site will ensure connectivity and give visitors a chance to download an app or augmented reality (AR) experience without having to use cell phone data.

Priority: Immediate



Mobile apps can help link
different sites *together.*

Credit: American
Battlefield Trust

Produce Smartphone Application "App"

A Virginia Beach History Museums smartphone app offers an ideal opportunity to provide expansive, informative, and updatable content about the three historic houses and can be expanded to include all of the historic sites in Virginia Beach, including the Princess Anne County Training School/Union Kempsville High School Museum (PACTS). Many organizations—including the National Park Service and the American Battlefield Trust—employ smartphone apps to link dispersed sites together and provide a sense of cohesion and uniformity. The app can include tours, plant and vegetation guides, maps and navigational information, information about nearby sites, and multimedia. The selected app platform should be flexible and updatable to address future changes at the houses.

Audiences: Millennials/Gen Z, School Groups, Local Community, Out-of-Town Visitors, African American Tourists, and Locals

Themes: All

Priority: Medium



Charlotte, NC's Brooklyn Neighborhood

Develop Augmented Reality (AR) Programming – AR Tour

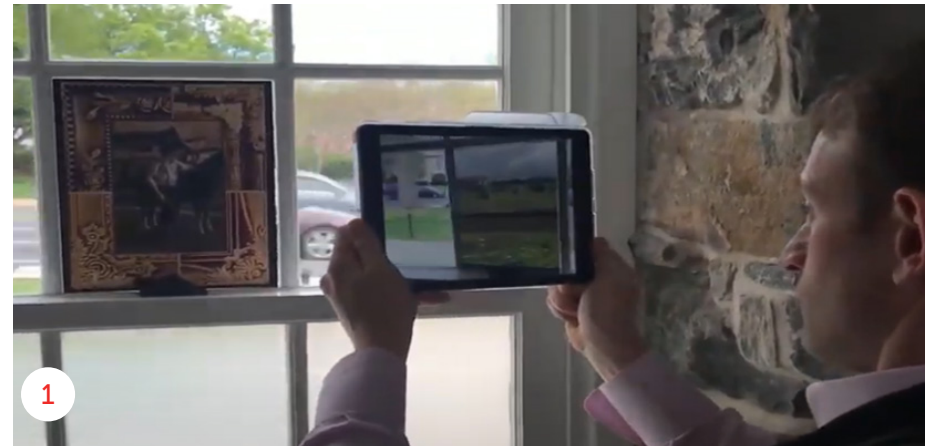
In recent years, many sites have embraced augmented reality (AR) technology as a way to help connect visitors to the past. Over time, the price of these technologies has decreased significantly, allowing even smaller sites to offer engaging AR programming. For Virginia Beach, an immersive AR tour should be built in stages, starting with the Francis Land House and Princess Anne County Training School/ Union Kempsville High School Museum (UK/PACTS). The experiences should be accessible on smartphones. While some sites have invested in dedicated AR technology, these can be expensive to maintain and require upkeep and ongoing service. An app, whether integrated into the smartphone tours described above or developed as a separate experience, avoids this issue and can be used by visitors even when the sites are not staffed.

Using their smartphones, visitors will be able to use AR to “transform” individual parts of the houses and grounds to more closely resemble their historical appearances. These will be stylized views that will be easy to render. When applicable, a 3D model of an important artifact relating to a particular stop can also be displayed. The scenes will help visitors understand how the sites have grown and changed over the decades. Each of the tour stops can also feature a stylized illustration of someone who lived and worked at the site, who will then speak to the visitor about their experiences, revealing the stories of those who lived at these sites through the years.

Audiences: Millennials/Gen Z, School Groups

Themes: Community Connections, Daily Life, Diverse Stories, Environment, Architecture

Priority: Immediate



1 & 2: Lockkeeper's House
Washington, DC

3: Errwood Hall, Buxton, UK

4: Dubai Soil Museum



INFRASTRUCTURE *Recommendations*



Thoroughgood House Formal Garden

Enhance Groundskeeping Activities

The site's gardens have great potential to become major attractions for visitors. Incorporating additional plant materials and elevating the quality of the existing gardens can drive visitation and enhance programming. To complement the work of the dedicated volunteers from the Master Gardeners and local gardening clubs, a dedicated groundskeeping crew for all historic and cultural sites would provide enhanced landscaping and uniformity and ensure that best practices are followed. This could include expanding the existing gardens, diversifying the featured plants, and adding enhancements to the gardens which could be made into products to sell in a possible gift shop, such as apple orchards to support cidermaking.

Priority: Medium



"Bonfires and Brews" event

Improve Lighting

Evening events at the three sites need adequate lighting to facilitate visitor comfort and reduce the risk of injury. For the houses, a mixture of strategically placed floodlights/spotlights, LED strip lights for pathways, and uplighting for directional viewing throughout the sites, along with the use of temporary light bulbs on a wire that can be set up and taken down, should be sufficient for lighting these outdoor events.

The exterior lighting on the grounds should help visitors see how to go from one location to another at each site and provide increased safety after dark. The lighting should foster a warm welcome when guests enter the front door at each site to attend special events, programs, and private rentals, and highlight interesting landscape or architectural features.

Priority: High

WAYFINDING AND ACCESSIBILITY

Recommendations

Getting to and moving around each site is a critical part of the visitor experience. A hidden house can be overlooked, skipped, or forgotten. Challenges to navigating around the site can make visitors less likely to return for other programs or recommend it to friends and family. Conversations with staff and stakeholders indicate that more could be done to improve wayfinding and accessibility at each of the houses. Several targeted improvements that can help improve the experience are featured on the following pages.

Develop and Install New Waysides

Currently, visitors interested in learning about the sites must visit during one of the houses' guided tours or staffed programs. New waysides will give visitors additional options to learn about the houses at their own pace and provide visitors who arrive after hours with a way to engage with each site's history. The new waysides should feature information

that complements the content provided during house tours while also offering additional information about each house's architectural features, history, and relation to the larger landscape. The waysides should be easy for first-time visitors to locate, but strategically placed to minimize any impact on the viewshed.

Priority: High



Martin House, Buffalo, NY



Ambridge, PA



Atlanta History Center

Improve Orientation and Directional Signage

Staff and stakeholders agreed that current signage for the sites is inadequate and makes navigation to each of the houses difficult. Larger, more colorful entry signage outside each of the houses should replace the outdated brown signs. More frequent signage on nearby roadways should be installed to help advertise the sites and help visitors reach the houses. The main signage outside each of the houses should follow a consistent design aesthetic to visually connect the houses together. The signs on the roadways should be large enough to be easily read by drivers but not large enough to become visually distracting or obtrusive.

Priority: Immediate



Tour of Thoroughgood House

Translate Tours

With a diverse community and the NATO Allied Command nearby, there is a need to offer tours and program materials in multiple languages. These services can help guests feel included and more welcome at these sites, increasing the chances that they will return for future visits and feel valued by the Virginia Beach History Museums. Offering these services should be an ongoing process, starting by working with existing staff and volunteers to identify individuals able to give tours in different languages or translating printed materials that can be offered to visitors.

Priority: High



Lynnhaven House in Spring

Develop Accessible Tour — Budget Option: Photography Tour Binder

Raised steps outside the entrance to each site and the stairs inside each of the historic houses present challenges to guests using walkers or wheelchairs. The sites should provide ways for visitors with disabilities and limited mobility to view the interiors and interpretation of these sites. Tour binders—employed by sites like Mount Vernon—are a cost-efficient option that can be created by staff and volunteers and can be easily updated when needed. Visitors unable to take tours can browse binders of images of each room in the building as well as important artifacts accompanied with interpretive text. This budget-friendly option should be replaced by a more comprehensive digital tour later, discussed later in the plan.

Priority: Medium



Restoration Work at Francis Land House

Install Handrailing in Thoroughgood and Lynnhaven Houses

The Lynnhaven and Thoroughgood houses were constructed before the passage of modern accessibility laws, and their layouts present issues for visitors with mobility challenges. Installing handrails at key points in each of the houses would not only make the spaces more accessible but would also address safety concerns related to navigating cramped and narrow staircases.

Priority: Medium

Develop Accessible Tour — Digital Option

A 3D digital tour can be a valuable tool to both improve accessibility and expand the historic houses' digital footprint and offsite access. The process involves using a 360-degree camera to take a complete photograph of each room in the house. These images, as well as any additional artifact or exterior photographs, are then compiled in a digital tour format and accompanied by interpretive text. The tour can be viewed on a computer or, if the visitor is on-site, on a phone or tablet.

Priority: Medium

Develop Audio Description Tour

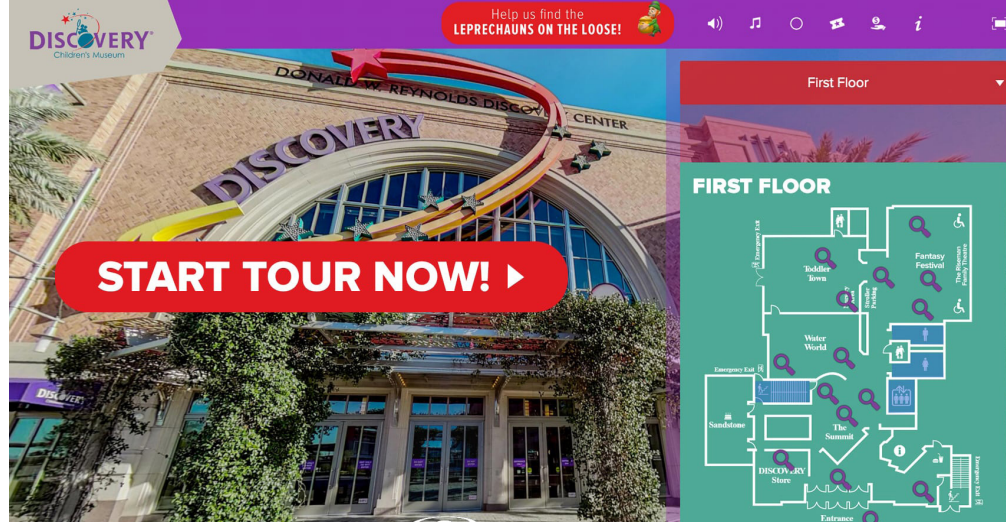
Audio description tours can help visitors with visual challenges to connect with a site's resources and history and help a site work toward universal accessibility. At the Virginia Beach History Museums, an audio tour would provide interpretation of the grounds of each of the three houses. Strategically placed beacons sync with the tour device to let visitors know to stop and listen to the description.

Priority: Low

Improve Surfacing on Paths

At Thoroughgood House, rubberized mulch is used on some of the pathways. This material blends in with the natural environment but is still firm enough to comfortably transport wheelchairs and strollers. The walkway materials should be extended to reach the house and the outskirts of each of the gardens. Within the gardens, a section of the shells should be removed to place a horizontal path through the garden that will allow access to the plants. The shells on the other paths should remain as research suggests that they are historically accurate. The paths at the Lynnhaven House and the Francis Land House should also be updated to feature the rubberized mulch present at the Thoroughgood House.

Priority: Medium



Virtual tour of Morven Park. Users can click on key objects for additional information. Credit: Frameless Technologies



Thoroughgood House Tour



Education Program at Francis Land House

Train Staff on Sensory-Friendly Programs

Providing a welcoming environment to all visitors is an ongoing process. To engage with the neurodiverse, the Virginia Beach History Museums should partner with organizations that specialize in sensory-friendly programs and provide training to staff members interested in these types of events. While this process occurs, the History Museums can engage a sensory-friendly performing ensemble or inclusive-practice storytellers while working to develop its own programming.

Priority: Low

Develop Sensory-Friendly Programming

After providing training to staff, Virginia Beach can develop sensory-friendly mornings or evenings to create a more welcoming environment for the neurodiverse. These programs occur outside of normal operating hours, and guests can either participate in special events or explore the sites and grounds on their own. There is a designated area where guests experiencing sensory overload can decompress. Many sites, including the Smithsonian and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, also offer detailed descriptions of what guests can expect, called “social



Education Program at Francis Land House

narratives,” and maps showing areas with high amounts of visual or auditory noise. Feedback is solicited from guests and families to continuously improve the program. Before the event, staff should receive specialized training on sensory-friendly programming and communication strategies.

The Virginia Beach History Museums offer ideal locations for hosting sensory-friendly mornings. Each month, a different house can host an event with site staff reaching out to schools, social organizations, and awareness groups to promote the events. Site staff should work with local educators to develop the pre-visit materials and email them out to interested participants. If needed, staff can start these programs by focusing on one house and then gradually add programs for the other two houses. The Virginia Beach History Museums should also develop social narratives and sensory maps applicable to regular programming for guests who choose to visit during regular hours.

Priority: Low

WORKFORCE TRAINING AND OPERATIONS *Recommendations*

Workforce investments in both staff and volunteers are a critical part of the success of the Virginia Beach History Museums. With the staff and volunteers increasingly tackling historically complex and controversial topics, proper training will be a key part of both ensuring guest and staff satisfaction. Investing in human capital offers many benefits to the sites and builds on the training currently offered.

Implement Cultural Competency Training

As the Hampton Roads area continues to diversify, staff must be able to understand cultural cues and view situations from multiple cultural lenses. Training will be a key part of ensuring that all members of the community feel welcome, and this should be a high priority.

Any cultural competency training should focus on best practices for understanding potential differences in viewpoints and behavior. Staff should understand how to behave in uncomfortable situations and how they can properly resolve misunderstandings. At the same time, the training should emphasize that site staff must continue to see both visitors and fellow staff as individuals and that no group is monolithic.

Priority: Immediate

Implement Customer Service Training

Many historic sites, including Mount Vernon, have worked to incorporate aspects of customer service best practices into their employee and volunteer training programs. While proper understanding of historical content will continue to be the priority, key practices for guest engagement—including maintaining a courteous atmosphere, reading nonverbal cues, and diffusing difficult situations—would improve guest satisfaction and help employees and volunteers feel more confident in their work.

Priority: High

Public Program at Lynnhaven Colonial Education Center



Update Period Clothing and Uniform Policy

The responses from stakeholders and the public indicate that there is a strong desire for guides and volunteers to continue wearing period-accurate clothing for tours and programs. Period clothing offers many interpretive benefits, including providing opportunities to discuss fashion, textile materials, and social history.

Period clothing lends itself to two different forms of interpretation—first and third-person. First-person interpretation involves an employee or volunteer portraying an individual from the past and acting as though they are still living in the time period portrayed, and involves statements including, “I am...” or “I believe...” Sites such as Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon employ first-person interpretation, and many independent contractors offer first-person interpretation of historical figures—both well-known and obscure. First-person interpretation offers opportunities for greater guest immersion for visitors but typically requires more training than third-person interpretation.

Third-person interpretation, while involving period clothing, requires the interpreter to remain in the 21st century. Interpreters will use phrases like “I am dressed in the clothing of...” or “my outfit is one that...” While not as immersive as first-person, third-person interpretation offers greater flexibility to the interpreter: they can reference recent events, do not have to possess an encyclopedic knowledge of an individual’s life, and do not have to present challenging or controversial beliefs from the past as their own. Currently, tours at the Virginia Beach History Museums are given by guides utilizing third-person interpretation.

Update Period Clothing and Uniform Policy (continued)

Given the staffing needs and goals of the three houses, this plan recommends that tours continue to utilize third-person interpretation. This offers the benefits of period costumes without the time required to fully immerse staff and volunteers in a historical figure’s life and story—something not currently feasible due to limits on staff time. For specific

VBHM Volunteer and Student at Lynnhaven Colonial Education Center



Update Period Clothing and Uniform Policy (continued)

Given the staffing needs and goals of the three houses, this plan recommends that tours continue to utilize third-person interpretation. This offers the benefits of period costumes without the time required to fully immerse staff and volunteers in a historical figure's life and story—something not currently feasible due to limits on staff time. For specific

programs, staff can hire contractors trained in first-person interpretation. Virginia Beach History Museums can consider utilizing specifically scripted first-person roles in special programs in which audience interactions are limited. The Virginia Beach History Museums should also continue to contract with reenacting and living history groups to come to the sites and provide programming.

Conversations with site staff indicated that not every staff member will be comfortable wearing period clothing. For that reason, period clothing should be optional for employees to wear. Successful interpretation requires that a guide be comfortable in their role, and that comfort should not be sacrificed for guests to see someone in wearing period clothing.



An interpreter utilizing third-person interpretation to engage visitors at Harpers Ferry. Credit: National Park Service

Non-period clothing at historic sites varies considerably. Some sites only require employees to wear business casual dress with nametags, while others have a full uniform—either a polo or a long-sleeve collared shirt. This report recommends that the Virginia Beach History Museums adopt a standard uniform consisting of a collared shirt emblazoned with the organization's logo. Employees should pair the shirt with color coordinated trousers or a skirt. The museum should also offer a sweater for cooler weather and a heavy coat for winter use. Both the sweater and the coat should include the organization's logo.

Priority: Medium



Public Program at Thoroughgood House

Encourage Greater Volunteer Engagement

The Thoroughgood, Lynnhaven, and Francis Land houses would not be able to operate without their committed volunteers—from the guides who give tours of the site to the support provided by the Master Gardeners, gardening clubs, and the Friends of Virginia Beach Historic Houses. Conversations with staff and stakeholders indicated a desire for volunteers to play a greater role in support of the sites. While city regulations prevent volunteers from handling money, there are other opportunities for their participation. In addition to giving tours, volunteers can serve as front desk attendants, help decorate for the holidays, and provide feedback on programs.

For volunteers who assist with the operations of the houses daily or weekly, either working directly for the History Museums or with an associated group, having proper motivation is crucial. The Virginia Beach History Museums should create clear descriptions of volunteer duties so that all parties understand what is expected of volunteers. These documents should reiterate that the volunteers are meant to complement the existing paid workforce—not supplant it. Paid staff should continue to be involved in the training of volunteers, including clearing them to give tours. The Virginia Beach History Museums should also develop a system for rewarding volunteers for time well spent. This could include recognition for volunteering a certain number of hours or discounted admission to special programs or events.

Priority: High



Volunteer and Student at Lynnhaven Colonial Education Center

THOROUGHGOOD HOUSE

Recommendations

Conversations with the site staff and volunteers, and observations by the project team, indicate that the core visitor experience of the Thoroughgood House is strong.

This report recommends that future visitors continue to pass through the visitor center before beginning their tour.

Visitors will continue to have the opportunity to view the orientation film and museum exhibits before or after the tour.

The tour guide will meet the visitors at the visitor center and then walk them over to the house.

The tour will continue to cover the early 18th century, with a focus on the Thoroughgood Family, the Indigenous persons who first called the land home, and the enslaved people who lived at the site.

After the tour is completed, visitors will have the opportunity to explore the grounds with the aid of the app and signs discussed earlier in the plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Period of Interpretation	1700s through the 1780s. Gardens include plants from throughout the house's history.
Primary Configuration	House furnished with 18th-century objects and reproductions. Self-guided grounds tours; guided tours are required for seeing the house's interior.
Temporary Configurations	Objects moved around as necessary for special events. Temporary structures like tents are set up for outdoor events.
Regular Programing	House Tour, Enslaved Perspective, Focus Tours
Special Programing	History Happy Hour, Ghost Stories and Folklore of Virginia Beach, Battle for the Chesapeake, Revolutionary War based on family's extensive war history.

Develop Furnishings Plan

All furnishings in the house, including any original and reproduction pieces, should reflect interiors using the circa 1763 inventory and other records. To assist in this process, the site should develop a furnishings plan that details each piece of furniture.

The plan should feature both a discussion of how the house's spaces were furnished historically, and how each room should be furnished. As defined by the National Park Service, "the ultimate goal of any furnishing project is to create an authentic furnished historic exhibit for interpretation." The objects in the room can be period pieces or reproductions—either is suitable as long as the furnishings advance the goal of interpretation.

The plan should also account for how the objects in the space will be protected from both the elements and accidental damage by visitors. Consider replicating original paneling in the hall, kitchen and chamber to restore it to 1763 appearance.

In the future, reproduction acquisitions will be grouped into four categories: substitutes from the collection for missing pieces; accurate reproductions based on existing examples; faux replicas of pieces missing from the collection; and non-site-associated period objects. Priority will be given to displaying or using collection objects to create accurate reproductions or replicas over acquiring non-site-associated objects. Utilizing period-appropriate reproduction furnishings similar to those that would have been used in the historic house would allow more interactive engagement, giving more context to life in that time period for visitors while avoiding potential damage to artifacts.

The quilt currently on display in the house should be appropriately conserved and replaced with a duplicate or alternate quilt, if needed.

Priority: High

Update Exhibit Room Entrance

To make the exhibits in the visitor center more accessible and inviting to visitors, the site should replace the current industrial-style doors at the exhibit entrance with glass doors that are American Association of Museums acceptable. This change will encourage visitors to enter the space.

Priority: Medium

New History Waterway Trail

Audiences: Local Community, Families, Visitors

Themes: Rise of a Country, Environment, Diverse Stories, Community Connections

The a new history trail, which should follow the water line and be marked with waysides, should highlight the various uses of the waterway throughout history, with a focus on the Indigenous, European, and African American story.

Priority: High

North Delaware Riverfront Greenway



Recreated Eastern Woodland Structures Study

Audiences: Local Community, Families, Visitors

Themes: Rise of a Country, Environment, Diverse Stories, Community Connections

Archeological evidence suggests that the land where the Thoroughgood House now stands was once home to the major village of Apasus, which served as a capital for the Chesapeake nation. Working in consultation with both the Nansemond Tribe and the Thoroughgood Civic League, the Virginia Beach History Museums should study the possibility of potentially recreating some of the historic structures that might have existed in the nearby area.

Building these structures will require careful consultation and deliberation. Staff will need to ensure that they have enough support to both maintain and interpret the structures. Full collaboration with the Nansemond tribe is vital. The final study should lay out several options for staff, stakeholders, and the community to discuss further. If reconstruction of physical structures is ultimately ruled out, augmented reality could be used to recreate these indigenous spaces and structures.

Priority: Low

Study Feasibility of New Kayak Launch

Audiences: Local Community, Families, Visitors

Themes: Rise of a Country, Environment, Diverse Stories, Community Connections

Installing a kayak launch offers an excellent opportunity to improve Thoroughgood House's community relevance and offer visitors to new ways to explore the area's history. A physical space to launch and dock kayaks, free to the public, gives visitors a new way to reach the site, and will aid in facilitating programs like Battle for the Chesapeake. Other sites, including Menokin Plantation in the Northern Neck of Virginia,



Watercolor by John White depicts the village of Pomeiooc in the North Carolina coastal plain.

provide a kayak launch as a resource for visitors, providing an incentive for visitors to both visit and revisit the site.

The kayak launch would require installing a pier into the waterway and additional parking. The City of Virginia Beach would need to obtain all necessary permits and complete studies before proceeding. Staff may wish to partner with a local scouting group or civic organization to help construct the launch. Signage at the Thoroughgood House parking lot should direct visitors to the kayak launch and make it clear that the launch is accessible even when the house is closed. A separate parking lot, closer to the kayak launch should also be developed, so that visitors do not have to carry their kayaks all the way through the Thoroughgood House grounds.

Priority: Low

Continue Current Tours and Programs

In 2021, the site gradually began to reopen after being closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Among the programs offered in addition to the standard house tour is the Enslaved Perspective tour. This relatively new offering focuses on the experiences of enslaved people at Thoroughgood House and has been a well-attended tour since debuting in Summer 2021. Moving forward, the tour should be offered as part of the regular programming as often as possible. Many former sites of enslavement, including Mount Vernon, Monticello, and Montpelier, offer daily programming specific to the institution, and many guests expect such programs to exist when they visit. Likewise, the Focus Tours, which feature deep-dives into specific topics, should also be continued.

Priority: High

Special Seasonal Programming

In addition to regular programming, the site should consider updating the house's decorations and interpretation for a few weeks out of the year to show how the house would have looked during the Christmas season, a family wedding, and adding tours with a Revolutionary War interpretation based on the family's extensive Revolutionary War history and to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the war in 2025-2033. These special, limited-time interpretations of the house should be accompanied by both free and ticketed programming.

Priority: Medium



Colonial Christmas Celebration

POSSIBLE NEW PROGRAM AND TOUR CONCEPTS

New Tour Concept — Ghost Stories and Folklore of Historic Virginia Beach

Audiences: Millennials/Gen Z, Schools, Local Community

Themes: Community Connections, Daily Life, Diverse Stories, Rise of a Country, African American Tourists and Locals, Military Personnel, Families, and Veterans

This seasonal program would use the time around Halloween to dive into the history of folklore and ghost stories in the Virginia Beach area. Building on the current ghost tour program, this new tour would involve a guide leading guests around the property and discussing strange or supernatural events associated with the house and the area. The event would allow the Virginia Beach History Museums to take advantage of the popularity of ghost tours and Halloween events, as well as the Thoroughgood House's reputation for being a haunted site.

Conversations with site staff and stakeholders indicated a desire to balance sharing ghost stories with retaining historical authenticity. The status of ghost tours within the historic sites field remains contentious, with concerns raised that they trivialize the past or feature stories that lack documentation. For that reason, the focus of this tour would be on sharing documentable stories of people in the past having what they believed to be supernatural experiences.

Guides should be able to point to the specific documents or accounts that they drew each story from. Furthermore, guides will focus on how each story reveals insights into the culture and beliefs of the time when it was documented. At the end of the tour, guides can tell a story of any strange or paranormal things that they have witnessed at the house and prompt visitors to think about how these more recent stories reflect modern-day America. Guests should be encouraged to roam the grounds and explore for themselves and should leave the program with a better understanding of the past, along with some chilling stories.

Priority: Medium

New Tour Concept — Susannah Thorowgood's World

Audiences: Schools, Local Community, Out-of-Town Visitors

Themes: Rise of a Country, Daily Life, Diverse Stories

This tour would focus on the women of Thoroughgood House and their stories, struggles, and achievements in the 18th century. Using the story of Susannah Thorowgood and her efforts to ensure her family's success, the tour would discuss the challenges facing Susannah as well as the similarities and differences between her story and those of women in different social classes in the Colony of Virginia.

Priority: Medium



Storytellers at the Thoroughgood House

New Tour Concept — The Long Road to Revolution

Audiences: Schools, Local Community, Out-of-Town Visitors

Themes: Rise of a Country, Daily Life, Diverse Stories

To accompany the upcoming semi-quincentennial of the American Revolution, this tour would interpret the Revolutionary War experience in the Hampton Roads area, with a focus on the Thoroughgood House. Content will discuss the challenges facing those who called the area home about whether to stay loyal to the British Crown or join the Patriots. The tour should discuss the military, political, and social context of the American Revolution in Southeastern Virginia.

Priority: Medium

New Tour Concept — Battle for the Chesapeake

Audiences: Military Personnel, Families, and Veterans, Schools, Local Community, Out-of-Town Visitors

Themes: Rise of a Country, Environment, Diverse Stories, Community Connections

The waters around Virginia Beach have been a site of conflict for centuries. This tour would discuss the history of naval warfare in the area, including conflicts between the Powhatan Confederacy and other tribes, pirate activity, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. The tours would focus on both the military aspects of these conflicts and the civilian experience, including how the British and later the Union navies offered opportunities for enslaved individuals to secure their freedom. When possible, the tour would include information about those who lived and worked at the Thoroughgood, Lynnhaven, and Francis Land Houses, and their participation in these conflicts.

This specialty tour would be offered in two formats. One would be a walking tour based at the Thoroughgood House. The tour will run from between 45 minutes to an hour with stops leading from the house to the Lynnhaven River.

The other format will be a guided boat trip, using either pontoon boats or visitor-provided kayaks or canoes along the Lynnhaven River and out



Revolutionary War Encampment at Thoroughgood House

to the Chesapeake Bay. This paddling-style eco-tour has been employed by other sites, including Everglades National Park, to better connect visitors with aquatic resources and their history. Before implementation, the Virginia Beach History Museums should work with an expert to determine how choppy the waters typically are and what level of skill is required to participate in the tour. The expert can also determine in which parts of the year the tour should be offered. The tour reflects the fact that many of the area's inhabitants throughout history used the waterways as a critical avenue to travel around the area. The length of the program would vary depending on whether the Virginia Beach History Museums decides to go with kayaks/canoes or pontoon-style motorized boats, but regardless, the tour will probably last for several hours.

Due to the effort involved, the tour should be created in stages. The walking tour would be designed and unveiled first. Then, depending on interest from the public, plans for the guided boat tour would move forward. After the guided boat tour is established, staff would work with local reenactment groups and actors to perform scenes and demonstrations at various stops along the tour. The final version of the program would be a unique multi-faceted experience that highlights the compelling story of the area and how its waterways influenced the course of history.

Priority: Medium

LYNNHAVEN HOUSE

Recommendations

As the Lynnhaven House has been undergoing renovations over the past couple of years, the house presents an opportunity to transform the visitor experience and public programming.

Conversations with staff and stakeholders indicated that one goal of the site is to create a distinct experience that will stand on its own and not be overshadowed by the other two houses managed by the city. Lynnhaven House has a unique history and the interpretive programs at the site should reflect that.

Staff and volunteers have the unique opportunity to build on previous work and create a series of dynamic programs that can engage visitors with the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Period of Interpretation

1720s through the 1780s. The 1830s for Nat Turner's Shadow and Freedom's Future programs.

Primary Configuration

Furnishings in the house are strategically placed and guided by a formal furnishing plan. Most of the house will be furnished using existing inventory. In the Great Room, augmented reality is used to populate the space and explain key architectural details.

Temporary Configurations

Stage set up outside the house for theatrical performances. Tents for special events.

Regular Programing

House Tour, Nat Turner's Shadow

Special Programing

History Detectives, Freedom's Future

Other Recommendations

Cottage improvements

Update Visitor Flow and House Experience

When the house fully reopens, visitors will park in the main parking lot. As recommended earlier, new signage will direct them to the history boardwalk. As visitors walk toward the house, waysides will provide descriptions of Virginia Beach's natural and human history before the construction of Lynnhaven House. When visitors arrive at the Lynnhaven House itself, they will be met by an interpreter—either staff or volunteer—who will greet them and lead them on a tour through the space.

The majority of the house will be furnished using the existing inventory. As with the Thoroughgood House, a furnishings plan should be created to identify what artifacts and reproductions should be used in each space. The Great Room will be sparsely furnished and will be used to highlight the architecture of the home, with some interior elements being displayed. The rope bed, currently on display at the Thoroughgood House, will be displayed in the Great Room.

For visitors who wish to see the house furnished, an AR experience viewable on a smartphone or tablet will allow them to see virtual furniture and artifacts overlaid on the actual rooms. Visitors will be able to cycle through furnishings from different eras, highlighting how the house changed over time, and the different uses of the space. The AR app will be a key tool for sharing important yet delicate objects such as the Thelaball Family Bible. Site staff will keep a tablet that visitors can use if they do not have access to a smartphone.

The kitchen will include reproduction tools, herbs, and cooking ingredients. Small movable wooden waysides on the outside of the home will provide context for the key architectural features of the home and the histories of those who lived and worked there.

After leaving the house, guests will visit the herb garden and the gravesite area. Strategically placed waysides at both locations will allow visitors who do not have a smartphone app to learn more about each resource. Guests will exit the site by passing through the administrative building, which will be open to guests to provide restrooms. Panels mounted on the walls will discuss aspects of Virginia Beach's history after the time period of the Lynnhaven House.

Priority: Medium



Lynnhaven House Public Tour



Revolutionary War Reenactment Cooking Demonstration



Historic Kitchen at Jamestown Settlement

Build and Operate 18th-Century Kitchen

Food and culinary history represent a potentially powerful way to connect visitors to the past. Organizations like the Smithsonian have worked food history and culinary demonstrations into their interpretive programming as a way to both tell untold stories and reach new audiences. Food historians like Michael Twitty have used culinary history and foodways to expose audiences to new insights and stories of African American history in both slavery and freedom.

Creating a space for historic cooking demonstrations at Lynnhaven House offers multiple opportunities, but will require detailed planning on the part of staff and partners.

The final vision for the kitchen could either be a separate building, constructed in 18th-century styles and based on surviving kitchens from other sites, or an outdoor cooking area with a fire and a beehive oven. Both options would require research to ensure that their construction does not impact archeological resources. The team would also need to ensure that any construction also respects historic easements and local building codes. When the site is operating, any staff operating the cooking area would need to follow all applicable safety rules for both themselves and visitors. Site staff would need to consult local laws and regulations about serving food to visitors and make determinations about what samples, if any, would be available.

The programming at the cooking space should go beyond simple demonstrations by tying into the major themes identified in this plan and the broader story of Virginia Beach. The programming should not shy away from controversial or sensitive topics. Site staff could offer the sites to culinary historians for demonstrations or potential culinary fellowships.

Priority: Low

Rehabilitate On-Site Cottage

The Lynnhaven House grounds currently include a small cottage building. Conversations with site staff and stakeholders indicated that though the building is not of any historic value, there is potential for renovation and readapting its use. It currently requires significant cleaning and repairs. After the required maintenance is completed, the cottage should be operated as a flexible multi-use space. For weddings, it can serve as a bridal suite or perhaps as a cottage for the couple.

The Virginia Beach History Museums might also decide to rent the cottage as a short-term vacation home. Given the location, this house could also be used in the production of theatrical performances as a dressing area, prop storage location, or as part of the stage itself. The cottage could also offer storage space for the Master Gardeners to store their equipment and supplies.

Priority: Medium

Study Building an 18th-Century Smokehouse

In the 18th century, smokehouses helped store meat and were a feature on many farms. Constructing a replica of one that might have stood near the Lynnhaven House offers a chance to expand the interpretation at the site and provide visitors with a greater understanding of what the built landscape would have looked like two to three centuries ago. However, staff would need to carefully study whether they have the staffing and funds to maintain a structure and if they can meaningfully work it into the interpretation.

Before moving forward, site staff should conduct a study on the strengths and weaknesses of investing in a reconstructed smokehouse. Staff should include stakeholders and the public in these discussions. If building a physical structure is ultimately ruled out, augmented reality could be used to provide visitors with interpretation on what the structure would have looked like.

Priority: Low

POSSIBLE NEW PROGRAM AND TOUR CONCEPTS

Implement New School Program Concept — History Detectives

Audiences: Schools

Themes: Rise of a Country, Daily Life, Diverse Stories,

Community Connections, Architecture, Environment

Understanding how historians arrive at conclusions is a key skill for any student and can be applied to other subjects and contexts as well. In this school program, middle and high school students would get a chance to examine primary sources, read different perspectives, and defend the conclusions they reach. Using the concepts outlined by the Stanford History Education Group, program facilitators would help students critically examine sources relating to the history of the Virginia Beach Historic Houses that historians continue to debate.

Priority: Medium

New Program Concept — Nat Turner's Shadow

Audiences: Local Community, Out-of-Town Visitors, African American Tourists, and Locals

Themes: Rise of a Country, Daily Life, Diverse Stories

In the early 1830s, William Boush, the owner of the Lynnhaven House, added a provision to his will to manumit the enslaved people under his control.

Boush's actions stand out given the time period they occurred. After a spate of manumissions following the American Revolution, Virginia lawmakers placed more restrictions on emancipating enslaved people and increased restrictions on free African American residents. Nat Turner's Revolt presented the state with a choice. After harshly crushing the revolt, the Virginia Legislature debated whether to end slavery in the state but instead decided to pass additional laws designed to protect the institution. Despite this, Boush remained resolute. After his death, the newly freed individuals set about building their lives. Some traveled

to Liberia through the American Colonization Society while others remained in the Hampton Roads area, settling in Princess Anne County and Norfolk.

The tour would focus on the experiences of the formerly enslaved and how they built new lives amid an increasingly hostile world. The tour would also discuss the political situation in Virginia at the time, the Lynnhaven House in the 1830s, and the growing radicalization of slaveholders in the nineteenth century.

Priority: Medium

New Theatrical Performance Concept - Freedom's Future

Audiences: Local Community, Out-of-Town Visitors, African American Visitors, and Locals

Themes: Rise of a Country, Daily Life, Diverse Stories

Staff and stakeholders expressed a desire for theatrical performances to return to the historic houses. Lynnhaven House offers wide-open spaces, ideal for setting up a stage and placing chairs for an audience. This plan recommends that the Virginia Beach History Museums commission a playwright and develop partnerships with theatres to create a theatrical production relating to Lynnhaven's history.

Many historic sites offer theatrical events as part of their programming, including Colonial Williamsburg, Ford's Theater, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest, in addition to hosting performances of classic musicals like *1776*, also commissioned its own theatrical production that directly relates to the site's history. Titled "The Day is Past and Gone: A Trilogy of Slave Life at Poplar Forest," the play tells the story of enslaved people at the plantation and was written by Teresa Harris based on documented evidence from the site.

The history of the manumission of the enslaved people at William Boush's house offers an ideal story to build a play around. The story connects with Lynnhaven House and highlights an important but often overlooked period of Virginia's history. The production could dramatize

the freedpeople's efforts to establish themselves in Princess Anne County, their debates about whether to remain in the area or move elsewhere, and their hopes and fears for the future. The play could also dramatize the reaction of Boush's family to his will.

With Lynnhaven House itself as a backdrop, the production will help immerse visitors in the volatile 1830s and uncover how residents of the community navigated the political and social challenges of the time.

Like Poplar Forest, the Virginia Beach History Museums could also offer a Q&A with the playwright, actors, directors, site staff, and historians before or after select performances.

Creating such a production will require a sustained effort. Virginia Beach History Museums start by first contracting with established theatrical troupes to stage established theatrical performances that deal with historical topics. This could include one-actor performances, in which an established living historian gives a performance, or a production by a small theater group, such as Bright Star Theater's "Heroes of the Underground Railroad." Virginia Beach History Museums could also partner with a living history group, such as Sons of Ham, to host a day of demonstrations that are paired with short scenes presented on the stage. Once the staff has gained enough familiarity with staging these productions, they can move forward with commissioning their own show and collaborating with a playwright.

Priority: Medium

FRANCIS LAND HOUSE

Recommendations

The Francis Land House boasts a long and well-documented history that stretches from 1805 into the 1980s. When the house reopens after restorations, the first floor will continue to be used to educate visitors about the early 1800s and will remain furnished as such. The office spaces on the second floor will be transitioned into a series of exhibits focusing on other eras and themes of Virginia Beach's history.

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Period of Interpretation	1800s through the 1980s.
Primary Configuration	The first floor is furnished in early 19th-century style. Exhibits are present on the first and second floor.
Temporary Configurations	Stage set up outside the house for theatrical performances. Tents for special events.
Regular Programming	House Tour, Master Gardeners Tour
Special Programming	Virginia Beach Holidays through the Ages, Sew-cial Sundays, Speakeasy Saturdays
Other Recommendations	Study, design, and build a new visitor center with a museum store and collections space.

Update Visitor Flow

Before the start of restorations, visitors entered through the back of the house via an expansion from the 1950s that includes a small waiting area and exhibit space along with restrooms. When the site reopens this will continue to be used until a new visitor center, as discussed later, is built, at which point the extension will be demolished.

In both scenarios, visitors will be able to enjoy the exhibits, present in either the current structure or in the future visitor center, before meeting their guide for a tour. The guide will then lead them through the exhibit on the first floor of the Francis Land House before leading them through the furnished 19th-century style rooms. After the tour of the first floor is complete, the guide will lead them to the exhibits on the second floors of the house. Visitors will have the chance to explore these exhibits at their own pace. When the guests are ready to leave, a staff member will let them out via the front door. Guests can tour the history trail, garden, and temporary exhibit in the basement on their own.

Priority: High

Add New Exhibit Space on the First Floor and Second Floor

The second floor of the Francis Land House previously served as offices for History Museums employees and has not been part of the interpretive experience. Likewise, exhibit space currently exists on the first floor. As part of the suggested restoration, these former office spaces will serve as exhibit spaces to highlight other areas and themes of the house's and Virginia Beach's history. The exhibit spaces will include free-standing panels and artifact cases designed to minimize damage to the historic site. The proposed five rooms feature content on the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Rose Hill Dress Shop, and temporary exhibits that can be rotated out over time.

Priority: Immediate



Greenwich Historical Society Campus

Francis Land House Exhibits

Below are general options for furnishing each of the exhibit spaces of the Francis Land House.

First Floor: House Introduction, Civil War and Reconstruction

The exhibit here, located on the first floor in the current Rose Hill Dress Shop exhibits, will provide an introduction to the Francis Land House, in the years before, during, and after the Civil War, with an emphasis on the journey and struggle from slavery to freedom for the African American inhabitants in the area. The Civil War changed both Virginia Beach and the Francis Land House. During the conflict, the United States government formed Gregory Farm, which included the Francis Land House, for enslaved people to work for wages and receive government services. Although the farm closed shortly after the war, it played an important role in the transition from slavery to freedom. During Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau was active in the area as

African Americans sought to assert their rights and build better futures for themselves and their children in the face of hostility and outright violence.

Second Floor: Rose Hall Dress Shop

For more than half of the 20th century, the area around the Francis Land House remained rural. The Rose Hall Dress Shop played a key role in this community as a place where people would buy dresses for important events. This exhibit will tell the story of this place and feature curated stories from former customers about the impact the shop had on them.

Second Floor: Temporary Exhibits

Two rooms on the second floor should be reserved for temporary exhibits. Given current staffing realities at the Virginia Beach History Museums, funding should be secured for both an exhibit designer and a content specialist who can design each space, write exhibit text, and secure high-resolution images and permissions. The first two exhibits for the space are described below. Future exhibits should relate to the themes and stories present in this plan.

Second Floor: Prohibition, Bootleggers, and Jazz: The 1920s in Virginia Beach

During the 1920s, bootleggers were active in the Norfolk-Virginia Beach area to circumvent Prohibition laws. The exhibit here will discuss the history of Prohibition and bootlegging in Virginia Beach, and how these activities connected with the historic houses.

Second Floor: World War II in Virginia Beach

As the Allies battled the Axis, Virginia Beach felt the impact of war. U-Boats prowled nearby shores; residents adjusted to rationing; workers manufactured ships, armaments, and supplies; and locals volunteered to serve. The exhibit space will tell this story, featuring quotes, accounts, and artifacts from Virginia Beach's collections and donated by members of the community. The exhibit panels will highlight the story of individual soldiers as well as the POWs held near the Francis Land House.

New Visitor Center

The current orientation area's awkward layout and space constraints hinder the visitor experience. A new space is needed to orient guests, provide educational and interpretive space, restroom facilities, a museum shop, and a new collections storage space. The existing modern addition should be removed to better protect the 1805 historic house from further damage.

Visitor Center

The new visitor center will serve as the starting point for the interpretive experience. Visitors would learn about the Francis Land House and Virginia Beach history from the early 19th century to the late 20th century. The new facility would provide for better programming and educational opportunities that would enhance and further the understanding and celebration of this historic site. The structure will also include an event space that can be used for rental opportunities.

Taking advantage of preexisting architectural plans, the new visitor center would include orientation exhibits about the Francis Land House and Virginia Beach history. The goal of the exhibits will be to set the stage, preparing guests for their tour by offering context for what the area was like in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The visitor center will also include classroom space for use with school programs, or for special talks and programs. The building will include collections space and a gift shop.

Unless contradicted by future studies, discussed below, the new center should be built on top of the existing structures' footprint. Site staff should also work to ensure that the viewshed from Virginia Beach Boulevard is unobstructed.

Before work can begin on the visitor center, best practices recommend conducting both a cultural landscape report and a historic structure report. A cultural landscape report would denote the significance, overall condition, and integrity of the Francis Land House and the surrounding historic landscape, and can help ensure that the visitor

center is placed at an appropriate location. A historic structures report would provide additional insights into the house's condition and integrity. It would also highlight any issues that need to be resolved. The two reports should include a discussion of the archeological resources of the site, any lost landscape space, and any altered views or vantage points occasioned by the new visitor center. Design inspiration could come from the adjacent dairy barn that was once on the property.

Museum Shop

Previously, the education center at the Lynnhaven House hosted a small museum store, and staff and stakeholders expressed a desire for the new Francis Land House visitor center to feature a space to sell products related to the Virginia Beach History Museums. Such a space offers an ideal location to sell items, crafts, and beverages connected to the programs and histories of the three locations. Staff and stakeholders expressed a desire to focus on locally-produced items that directly tie into the history of the house and crafts and activities that relate to various programs. While traditional items like candy, magnets, and t-shirts can be included as well, depending on visitor interest, the goal should be to ensure that items meaningfully relate to the houses and their programs. The shop may also feature branded food products made with local partners including honey, beer, and cider.

Managing and staffing such a store, even a small one, will require significant time commitments. With the small staff, the gift store will require support from partners to be successful. Many historic sites, including multiple National Park Service units, provide gift shop space to a nonprofit partner who then donates their profits to the site. The Virginia Beach Historic Houses Foundation and the Friends of Virginia Beach Historic Houses could work together to operate and staff the new museum store. While the store would most likely require a paid gift shop manager, much of the day-to-day work could be handled by volunteers. Best practices recommend that these volunteers receive the same training as employees and be held to the same standards. To retain and encourage volunteers, all gift shop workers should be included in decisions relating to inventory and marketing.

Priority: Medium

Collections Space

Currently, the Virginia Beach History Museums have over 520 objects and artifacts in their collections relating to the three historic houses, and around 170 objects relating to PACTS/UKHS. The city currently pays rent for off-site storage. Building a new visitor center offers the chance to include designated collections storage space, which would ensure that artifacts are properly stored and protected from degradation. While a formal collections plan should be completed before work begins, general recommendations for the space include: dedicated climate controls, cantilever racking, Rousseau drawers, a vapor barrier with thermal insulation, and LED light fixtures. The collections space should also have its own security system.

Priority: Medium

Historic Alexandria Visitors Center



POSSIBLE NEW PROGRAM AND TOUR CONCEPTS

New Master Gardeners Tour Concept

Audiences: Local Community, African American Visitors and Tourists

Themes: Community Connections, Daily Life, Environment

The Master Gardeners at the Francis Land House maintain both an orchard and a Colonial Garden. This tour could be offered on Tuesdays when the gardeners are at the site, could provide the gardeners with a chance to share their work with the public and describe how they maintain the site and the history of the plants present.

Garden tours are used by historic sites like Mount Vernon and Monticello and effectively blend history and horticulture. Site staff should work with the Master Gardeners to develop a 45-minute program that discusses their work, the plants, flowers, and herbs featured in the garden, and the role of enslaved and hired gardeners in the house's history. The tour would help bring visibility to the Master Gardeners' work, attract new visitors, and share a key part of the house's history. Once the tour is established, a companion tour can be established at the Thoroughgood House as well.

Priority: Medium

Oral History Collection

Audiences: Local Community

Themes: Community Connections, Daily Life,

Oral histories are a powerful tool to capture the day-to-day experiences and memories that might not be included in written sources. With former employees and customers of the Rose Hill Dress Shop still living in the Virginia Beach area today, an oral history project will create valuable primary sources, strengthen community collaborations, and provide resources for interpretation. Oral histories from men and women who served in World War II and on the homefront could also be captured.

Other Virginia cities have thriving oral history programs that have been used to document long-standing communities, fill in gaps about former buildings and programs, or highlight day today-to-day in previous decades.

Oral histories in Alexandria, Virginia have been used to help document the history of the Fort Ward Community, a historic African American neighborhood established in the aftermath of the Civil War. These oral histories can be conducted by city staff, trained volunteers, or outside consultants. By establishing its own oral history program for the Rose Hill Dress Shop, the Virginia Beach History Museums can lay the groundwork for future oral history initiatives to document the area's history.

Priority: Medium

Gardens at Francis Land House



Annual Event Concept — Holidays Through the Ages

Audiences: All

Themes: All

Many historic sites conduct holiday programs that use scripted first-person interpretation to help immerse visitors in the past. The Francis Land House offers an ideal opportunity for a program that looks at how previous generations of Virginia Beach residents celebrated the winter holidays. This annual ticketed event would occur in the evening using candlelight lanterns. Initially, this would start as a one-night event but, depending on demand, it could be expanded to include multiple nights in December in future years.

The house would be decorated for the holidays and visitors can enjoy historic holiday treats and drinks. Visitors would travel through the house and encounter actors or site staff portraying individuals who lived in the house in the early 19th century—both free and enslaved. As visitors continue moving through the house and ultimately out onto the grounds, they would encounter other individuals from Virginia Beach's history.



Colonial Christmas Program

Portrayals can change every year, but possible choices are listed below:

- A civilian during the War of 1812 discussing how the British blockade has impacted the holiday.
- A freedman living at the Gregory Farm in the 1860s discussing his first Christmas free from slavery.
- A Union soldier commemorating the holiday far from friends and family.
- A Jewish resident of Virginia Beach celebrating Chanukah in the 1950s.
- A World War I veteran readjusting to civilian life.
- A bootlegger attempting to deliver some alcohol to a Christmas party.
- A worker on the home front during World War II discusses finding time for the holidays.
- A WWII POW discusses his sadness at being away from home.
- An employee of the Rose Hall Dress Shop attempting to finish all of the holiday orders.

Priority: Medium



Lee-Fendall House, Alexandria, VA

New Event Concept – Speakeasy Saturdays

Audiences: Millennials/Gen Z, Local Community

Themes: Community Connections, Daily Life

The Francis Land House’s connection to Prohibition offers the opportunity to partner with a local brewery or distillery for a program devoted to the Prohibition Era. During this program, guests will receive a tour of the house focused on its Prohibition history. Background music from the 1920s will enhance the mood. Guests will receive a free drink at the end of the tour and be able to purchase food and snacks.

Priority: Low

100th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration

Audiences: All

Themes: All

Long term consideration could include focusing interpretation at the Francis Land House on the World War II era include an interactive top-down WWII homefront interpretation commemorating the 100th anniversary of America’s participation in WWII running from 2040 to 2045. This change should be made only after consulting with major stakeholders including City and department leadership, the Friends of the Virginia Beach Historic Houses, the Virginia Beach Historic Houses Foundation, Virginia Beach Historic Preservation Commission, volunteers and garden clubs. If changes are made, interpretation of the house’s 19th century history should still be offered through special programs and exhibits in the new visitor center.

Regardless of whether the entire house is reinterpreted for the World War II era, Virginia Beach History Museum staff should work to ensure that exhibits and programming are in place for the 100th anniversary of the conflict. This should include new exhibits in the house or visitor center, special tours that discuss the area during the 1930s and 1940s, and special programs deploying trained actors to provide first-person perspectives based on primary sources.

Priority: Medium

Other Special Events at All Sites

The staff of the Virginia Beach History Museums should not be restricted by the interpretive options presented in this document. The planning process revealed that there are many opportunities for future collaborations, events, and festivals that could not be covered in the scope of this plan. Furthermore, offering activities and special events designed for the local and surrounding communities presents an opportunity to create goodwill with site neighbors and local residents.

Ideally, each event would have some connection to the vast and diverse history of the sites. The Virginia Beach History Museums facilities could also be used as a “container” or space to host special events or community events that appeal to various target audiences. These events should be carefully planned and site staff should solicit feedback from attendees to determine which programs to continue.

Possible events include:

- Craft market festivals
- Outdoor concerts
- Outdoor performances of Shakespeare and other shows that would have been performed in the 18th and 19th centuries
- Scottish, Irish, German, West African, and other festivals relating to inhabitants here in the 18th and 19th centuries
- Dance performances that connect to the site’s history in some way



Penticton Scottish Festival, Penticton, British Columbia



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This process would not have been possible without the many city leaders, stakeholders and members of the public who gave their time to provide insights, ideas, and experiences to the project team. Whether representing organizations like the Friends of Virginia Beach Historic Houses, the Alumni of the Princess Anne County Training School/Union Kempsville High School, Virginia Beach Historic Houses Foundation, or speaking as individuals, their ideas guided the development of this plan and provided the genesis for many of the plan's recommendations.

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APPENDIX A: IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERSHIPS

As site staff begins to work on implementing the recommendations, partnerships will play a key part in the funding, design, and implementation of these programs, exhibits, and interpretive offerings. Key stakeholders and their roles are listed below.

Friends of the Virginia Beach Historic Houses

The Friends of the Virginia Beach Historic Houses have supported the mission and activities of the three historic homes for decades, and many of the organization's members have decades of experience volunteering at the homes or serving on one of the predecessor organizations. The Friends will continue to play a key role for the sites moving forward, providing support at events, raising funds, and volunteering. The Friends could also play a key role in staffing the new visitor center museum store at the Francis Land House.

Virginia Beach Historic Houses Foundation

Formed in 2013, the Virginia Beach Historic Houses Foundation raises money to

fund artifact acquisition and educational programs at the historic houses. The Foundation's fundraising abilities and sponsorships will play a critical role in raising funds for the sites and sponsoring events like History Happy Hour and Bonfires and Brews. They will also play an important role, in conjunction with the Friends of Virginia Beach Historic Houses, in managing the operations of the new visitor center museum store at the Francis Land House.

Master Gardeners

The Master Gardeners organizations at all three houses will continue to guide and maintain the gardens, orchards, and natural features. They could also provide interpretation for the Master Gardeners' tour, and, when possible and relevant, for special events. The partnership between the Master Gardeners and the sites is strong, and this plan builds on these foundations.

Garden Clubs

The garden clubs provide valuable service by keeping each of the Virginia Beach gardens in good condition. Under this plan, they will continue to play a key part in keeping up the grounds of the three historic houses.

Civil War Trails (CWT)

By partnering on a wayside describing the Francis Land House's role in the Civil War, the Virginia Beach History Museums will gain access to a network of 1,200 sites and be featured on CWT-produced brochures and maps.

Descendants Council and Indigenous Consultation

Working with both the descendants of the people who lived and worked at the homes, as well as representatives of the Nansemond Nation, will help ensure that interpretive contents at the sites are both accurate and inclusive of various perspectives. Building such a partnership requires trust, understanding and compromise. As Virginia Beach History Museums staff look to build these partnerships, the experiences of Montpelier, Ashlawn-Highland, and the National Park Service offer potential models to follow.

VAM, AAM, and Other Museum Organizations

The Virginia Association of Museums, the American Alliance of Museums, and other museum service organizations represent sources of both expertise and funding for the recommendations.

Members of these organizations can offer advice or recommendations about the creation and installation of particular interpretive offerings, while workshops and conference sessions can provide additional insights. Meanwhile, the Virginia Beach History Museums might be able to take advantage of funding sources, such as VAM's Conservation Studio Grant, to fund various initiatives.

APPENDIX B: FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

There are opportunities for funding some of the recommendations presented in the plan. While funds from the city, the Virginia Beach Historic Houses Foundation, and the Friends of Virginia Beach Historic Houses, other funding opportunities will play a key role in making these recommendations reality, some other potential sources of funds are listed below. The list is not exhaustive; staff and volunteers should monitor other grant and funding opportunities.

Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

The IMLS is a federal institute that works to support museums and libraries across the United States. Distributing grants is a key part of their effort. The IMLS funds everything from exhibits and collections care to professional development for staff. While the specific grants and the amounts offered will vary from year to year, the Museums for America, Museums Empowered, and the Digital Humanities Advancement Grants (DHAG) represent promising sources of potential funding. More information about IMLS grant opportunities can be found here: <https://www.imls.gov/grants/grant-programs>.

Virginia Humanities

Virginia Humanities serves as Virginia Humanities Council and provides fellowships, resources, and grants to organizations in the state. Virginia Humanities also runs the digital Encyclopedia Virginia. The organization's grants can be used for a variety of projects including exhibits, digital media, curriculum resources, oral histories, and research. Notably, they cannot be used for performing arts, programs focused only on children, and building construction, renovation, or restoration.

More information can be found here: <https://virginiahumanities.org/grants/what-we-fund/>, and a guide to applying for grants from them can be found here: <https://virginiahumanities.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Grant-Guidelines-020421.pdf>.

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

The NEA is a government body that provides grants for organizations throughout the United States. While primarily dedicated to the arts, the Virginia Beach History Museums might be able to secure funding for programs that include a performance aspect. More information about NEA's grants can be found here: <https://www.arts.gov/grants>.

National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

The NEH is a government body that provides grants for organizations working within the humanities. It has awarded over \$5.6 billion since its formation in 1965 and represents a potential opportunity for the Virginia Beach History Museums. Grants can be used for exhibits, infrastructure, and digital offerings. More information can be found here: <https://www.neh.gov/grants/listing>.

Knight Foundation

The Knight Foundation is a major philanthropic organization that provides grants to a variety of organizations. While some of its areas of focus are not relevant to the Virginia Beach History Museums, its grants related to the arts and to communities represent potential funding opportunities. More information can be found here: <https://knightfoundation.org/>.

Crowdfunding

GoFundMe, Kickstarter, and other online fundraising websites and tools have enabled museums, historic sites, and other organizations to reach out to the public to help fund key programs. When handled correctly, crowdfunding can not only help raise needed funds but also serve as a marketing opportunity for future programs and exhibits. However, crowdfunding also has drawbacks. Sustaining momentum can be a challenge and the effort itself will need to be continuously promoted, potentially draining staff resources. Various crowdfunding platforms have different rules and fee structures. This article from the Western Museums Association Highlights some of the opportunities and challenges of crowdfunding efforts: <https://westmuse.org/articles/autry-crowdfunding>.

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GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION

Priorities

	IMMEDIATE	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
Wayfinding & Accessibility Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Orientation and Wayfinding • Add WI-FI to All Three Houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add Outdoor Lighting to Thoroughgood and Lynnhaven Houses • Develop and Install New Waysides • Develop Tours and Programming Materials in Different Languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance Landscaping and Gardens to Create an Attraction to Themselves • Develop Accessible Tour Digital Option • Develop Accessible Tour Photography Tour Binder • Add Handrails to Exterior and Interior of Houses • Improve Surfacing on Paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and Conduct Sensory Friendly Tours • Train Staff in Sensory-Friendly Programs • Develop Sensory-Friendly Programming
Workforce Training & Operations Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Cultural Competency and Customer Service Training with Staff and Volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Customer Service Training • Encourage Greater Volunteer Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create New Position Descriptions for Volunteers and Design New Options to Recognize their Service 	
Outreach Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Targeted Marketing for Schools • Increase Use of Virginia Beach History Museums Newsletter • Strengthen and Build Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with Descendants Groups • Continue Indigenous Consultation • Update General Marketing Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Clothing and Uniform Policy • Provide More History Content on Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Targeted Marketing for Veterans, Active-Duty and NATO Personnel
Education Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Augmented Reality Programming • Tell Inclusive, Accurate and Diverse Stories 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop New Program - Ghost Stories and Folklore of Historic Virginia Beach • Produce Smartphone App 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Audio Description Tour

THOROUGHGOOD HOUSE

Priorities

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Furnishing Plan • Translate Tours into Multiple Languages • Create New Historical Waterways Trail • Continue Current Tours and Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace Exhibit Gallery Door • Develop Accessible Tour - Digital Option • Develop New Tour - Susannah Thorowgood's World • Develop New Tour - The Long Road to Revolution • Develop New Tour - Battle of the Chesapeake • Develop New Tour - Master Gardeners Tours • Develop Seasonal Programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Feasibility of New Kayak Launch • Study Feasibility of Recreated Eastern Woodland Structures • Develop Audio Description Tour

LYNNHAVEN HOUSE

Priorities

HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate Tours into Multiple Languages • Create New House Tour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Visitor Flow and House Experience • Rehabilitate On-Site Cottage • Develop Accessible Tour - Digital Option • Develop New Program - History Detectives • Develop New Program - Nat Turner's Shadow • Develop New Theatrical Performance - Freedom's Future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add Historic Cooking Space • Study Building a Recreated Historic Smokehouse • Develop Audio Description Tour

FRANCIS LAND HOUSE

Priorities

IMMEDIATE	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add New Exhibits on First and Second Floors • Develop Augmented Reality (AR) Scenes Tour • Create Oral History Collection - Rose Hall Dress Shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translate Tours into Multiple Languages • Update Visitor Flow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and Build New Visitor Center & Gift Shop • Develop New Tour - Master Gardeners Tours • Develop Annual Event - Holidays Through the Ages • 100th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Audio Description Tour • Develop Accessible Tour - Digital Option • Develop New Program - Sew-cial Sundays • Develop New Event - Speakeasy Saturdays