

Gloria Sitton

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From: Permanenttouristindc <permanenttouristindc@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2020 3:29 PM
To: Gloria Sitton
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Alexandria citizen's thoughts on future of Franklin & Armfield "Freedom House"

February 11, 2020

City Council
Alexandria, Virginia

Dear Alexandria City Council,

I write today to rejoice at the purchase and to encourage the prudent planning and development of the Freedom House as a vital and enduring legacy of our City of Alexandria.

By profession I am a Tour Guide who has lived in the west end of the City of Alexandria for decades. I have also been appointed by City Council to sit on the Historic Alexandria Resource Commission. I am only writing as a citizen.

To me it is difficult to overestimate the importance of this site. The domestic trade in enslaved humans happened right here!

I am friends with the owners and many of the guides who, night after night, walk bus loads of students from around the USA on the Ghost Tours. The buses drop off and pick up from King Street near City Hall and I do not begrudge their commerce. But a central story of our beloved city is missed.

I would like to see city planners to create safe places where these buses can pick up and drop off near 1315 Duke Street. (I commend Citycouncilman Chapman for creating his Manumission Tours.)

But the Freedom House building could be most effectively used as a central point for many Alexandria tours, whether they are predominantly about race or not. We are always walking over our collective history, "red in tooth and claw," and rarely, if ever, realize it.

If this museum were open daily instead of a few hour on weekends, and promoted skillfully, so much more money can be raised for the preservation, interpretation, training and advertising for this building (beyond the \$2.4M promised in Governor Northam's FY20-21 budget) .

I look forward to discussion and planning to support sustainable operations for decades.

Hopefully there will soon be an opportunity for the entire community and other stakeholders to openly discuss the future of this site acknowledging its importance in Alexandria, the regions and the nation's history.

Respectfully,

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You are capable of more than you know. Choose a goal that seems right for you and strive to be the best, however hard the path. Aim high. Behave honorably. Prepare to be alone at times, and to endure failure. Persist! The world needs all you can give.

E. O. Wilson

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