

TEAM PROJECT REPORTS



PRESERVATION LEADERSHIP TRAINING

**Fredericksburg, Virginia
September 14 - 21, 1996**

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TEAM TOPICS

Team Project Overview

The Team Project gives PLT participants an opportunity to build upon their work experience and apply the lessons of PLT educational sessions in solving practical problems. Participants work with each other to seek suggested solutions to problems facing the host city. Working in small groups, the individual teams will address a variety of community issues--each with a preservation element. The exercise will hone skills in teamwork, analysis, fieldwork, time management, and public speaking. During the week, participants will interact with the community, local officials, civic leaders and fellow team members. Participants will draw upon their own experiences and perspectives from other locales to develop suggestions for the individual team topic assignments.

The project will culminate Friday evening with each team making a presentation to the public of its observations and recommendations, and will be followed by a short reception. Though accepted participants generally bring significant volunteer and/or professional experience in preservation to the team topic process, it must be remembered that they will be working on a limited time frame and their suggestions will not reflect the same opportunities for research that might be expected from a consulting team.

We would like to recognize and sincerely thank the following individuals for serving on the PLT Advisory Council which assisted in so many ways during the advanced preparation for the PLT, planning of the Team Topics, selection of Resource Leaders, and recommendations for Interviewees:

Bill Beck, President, Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc.
David Berreth, Chair, Historic Attractions Council
Susan Jefferson Ford, Heritage Resources
Jervis Hairston, City of Fredericksburg Dept. of Planning & Econ. Development
Renee Harrison, Executive Director, Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc.
Caroline Hayden, Spotsylvania Preservation Foundation, Inc.
Charles Hearn, President, Mary Washington Hospital Foundation
Karen Hedelt, City of Fredericksburg, Dept. of Econ. Development & Tourism
John Hennessy, Ast. Supt., Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park
Dana Herlong, Herlong & Associates
Scott Howson, Councilman, City of Fredericksburg
Barbara Kirby, Stafford County Historical Society
Debby Klein, Fredericksburg Fine Arts Commission
Martha Leicester, Supt., Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park
John Pearce, Center for Historic Preservation, Mary Washington College
Anne W. Rowe, President, Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center
Charles S. Sharp, Chair, PLT Advisory Council
Thomas Taylor, Regional Chamber of Commerce
John Tippet, Friends of the Rappahannock
Kelly Youles, The Kenmore Association

TEAM TOPICS

Historic Growth and Development

The City of Fredericksburg has evolved from eight distinct and significant periods of development. This history is a microcosm of the national experience and encompasses everything from Native American settlements to the development of interstate highways.

A European period of exploration and settlement began in 1608, when a voyage by Captain John Smith introduced African and European settlers to local native tribes. By 1676 land grants were shifting settlement patterns to European based models. A tobacco-growing culture developed and slavery provided the workers for this labor-intensive activity.

In 1728 the Virginia House of Burgesses ordered the construction of a port on the Rappahannock to inspect, store and ship the tobacco to England. This port called Fredericksburg grew with warehouses, docks, homes, shops and taverns to eventually become a prominent trading center, the county seat, and the hub of a prosperous plantation economy. One of the most important plantation houses is Kenmore, home of George Washington's sister and Fielding Lewis, built around 1776.

The second phase began in the mid 1700's when many of the English colonies began to object to government from and taxation by England. By 1774 Fredericksburg citizens joined other cities and towns in resisting English rule. When war came, the Fredericksburg area contributed a sizeable contingent to the Continental Army commanded by George Washington. In addition, arms manufacturing made this city a leading supplier of war material.

The American Revolution, and the War of 1812 prompted a shift in local maritime activity from European to domestic trading. During this time agriculture in the Rappahannock Basin became more diversified and was no longer dependent on tobacco as the sole commercial crop. The buildings that survive from this era are concentrated in the central business district with others scattered throughout Fredericksburg.

The new Federal Constitution did not designate Fredericksburg as port-of-entry to receive goods from Europe and the future of the city was seriously threatened. The solution was the construction of a series of canals, locks and dams to bring crops from the upper river farms and plantations to Fredericksburg for trading. The development of railroad technology severely undercut the value of the canal system for transportation, and Fredericksburg gradually developed manufacturing facilities that took advantage of the water power of the canals. The city remained an active regional center, but other cities such as Alexandria and Richmond had better transportation links and prospered much more during this fourth period.

The Civil War from 1861 to 1865 placed Fredericksburg on the key North-South corridor between the Union capitol in Washington and the Confederate Capitol in Richmond. The four local battles which took place in the region, and their aftermath left the area devastated and recovery was slow.

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The late 19th and early 20th centuries' recovery included the resumption of milling and manufacturing, better transportation systems and a renewed interest in construction, renovation and preservation.

The period from World War I to World War II saw the continued growth of Virginia's urban centers and Fredericksburg shared in the prosperity. The shift to automobile transportation dramatically expanded the network of streets and highways throughout the region. Yet there was also continued reliance on rail travel and shipping. The latter mode of transportation brought a great deal of activity through Fredericksburg during World War II.

The current phase in the life of Fredericksburg is impacted by governmental activity on a national level, catalysts include legislation in the fields of housing, interstate highways, civil rights and environmental policy. All these affected the greater Fredericksburg area, but despite these outside factors, downtown Fredericksburg continues to attract businesses and residents to its traditional and historic setting.

The Region Today

The City of Fredericksburg must be considered in context with its neighboring localities of Spotsylvania and Stafford Counties. The region is both one of the most historic, and now one of the most rapidly growing areas in the nation. With the recent availability of commuter rail service to Washington, D.C., and easy access to the state capitol of Richmond, the area has become a development hot spot. Projections for growth in the region anticipate as much as a 16% increase in population in the next twelve years.

Growth brings new revenues, but also results in new pressures on fragile natural and historic resources, as well as new demands on government -- all at a time when state and federal funds continue to shrink. Preservation as a slow-growth solution to these pressures has increasingly found itself competing with more aggressive viewpoints. The ongoing need for compromise in efforts to resolve these issues, continues to require preservation-minded individuals to recognize that historic preservation IS economic growth.

According to a recent study by the Preservation Alliance of Virginia, "Historic preservation *is* economic growth, and the singular underlying reality is that preservation means dollars in the pockets of Virginians in every corner of the Commonwealth." ¹ According to the study, four key measures of economic prosperity are directly--and positively--affected by historic preservation:

- Private Commercial Investment
- Job Creation
- Heritage Tourism
- Property Values

¹Preservation Alliance of Virginia, *Virginia's Economy and Historic Preservation: The Impact of Preservation on Jobs, Business and Community*, Staunton, VA, 1995.

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This is no more true than in the Rappahannock Valley where Fredericksburg and its neighbors in Stafford and Spotsylvania Counties are blessed with many layers of history and heritage resources. Yet, perhaps the heritage issues facing the area have been viewed too narrowly as preservation needs rather than in the broad sense of economic opportunities. With this as a focus, evaluate the following topics in light of the relationship between historic preservation and economics.

Team #1--A River Runs Through It

Resource Leaders

John Tippett, Friends of the Rappahannock
Susan Jefferson Ford, Heritage Resources

The Rappahannock River is the tie which binds the many political and organizational interests of the Fredericksburg, Stafford and Spotsylvania area. Each locality has an impact on the river, and also benefits from it. Sensitive development of the riverfront as a tourist and recreational location could contribute to the quality of life for residents in the Rappahannock River Valley area, and could also entice visitors to explore the region further. Currently, however, there is only one access point to the water's edge at the town dock. Furthermore, though the river has numerous historic resources along or near its edge, there is no historical interpretation. Prior redevelopment designs have been articulated, but as yet have not been implemented.

Review the previously developed design schemes for a Riverfront Park. Evaluate the opportunities presented by the river and its historic resources. Develop an action plan for the riverfront and its historic resources. How can area leaders convert ideas into action? How will the localities need to work together to accomplish this goal?

TEAM TOPICS

Team Topic #2--Putting Our Best Foot Forward in the Historic District

Resource Leaders

Tom Smith, Real Estate Committee Chair, Historic Fredericksburg Foundation, Inc.

Erik Nelson, City of Fredericksburg, Dept. of Planning & Economic Development

The City of Fredericksburg has survived many assaults on its historic town center, including the economic downturn that began 20-25 years ago. Today, it is a thriving community with commercial services and shops within easy walking distance of residential areas in the town center. The retail community prospers because it in many ways reinvented itself to support the tourism industry. Merchants in the historic district of Fredericksburg generally view tourism as an economic engine for the community. Related to this is a sense that historic authenticity is an important key to keeping the engine running.

Fredericksburg's approach to protecting historic authenticity has relied on the tradition of district designation under a local preservation ordinance. Yet, in any community over time, the sense that a district has been "saved" can erode the energy and attention that are so important to sustaining the district. Attention can be diverted to economic growth in outlying areas, while vacant structures in the historic core go unoccupied, or enforcement of agreed-upon preservation regulations seems less important.

With these factors in mind, evaluate Old Town Fredericksburg. Has historic designation reached its full potential? How can preservation principles applied City-wide contribute to the ongoing vitality of Fredericksburg's quality of life, and encourage continued retail and tourism appeal? Questions to consider include: How does the district look? Has district regulation contributed to proper upkeep? What image is being projected? What do visitors see? Is signage and interpretation contributing positively to their experience? How do merchants and residents perceive the historic district? Are the current regulations and guidelines conducive to living in and conducting business in Fredericksburg? Are support materials user-friendly? What opportunities do you see? Identify short-term and long-term recommendations.



**Preservation Leadership Training
National Trust for Historic Preservation**

THE RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT
Fredericksburg, Virginia

Team Members

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September 20, 1996

THE RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

Over the past five days, the River Team has visited with many of you here in the audience tonight. We've talked with you over coffee and bagels, at your office, and over drinks in the evening. Now, we want you listen carefully to what we heard. And be forewarned ... We did not make up any of these comments you are about to hear.

- "The River is one of the cleanest rivers in the State."
- "The River is so brown and muddy, why do you want to focus on the River?"
- "The River floods all the time. The City needs to add a flood wall."
- "Don't worry about the River flooding. It only happens occasionally."
- "The City backs up to the River. It doesn't face the River."
- "Your team project is the River? What's the problem with the River?"
- "Stafford, Spotsylvania and the City hate each other. They will never talk to each other about a plan for the River."
- "We need to demolish the Embrey Dam."
- "Dismantle the old wooden crib dam, and preserve it."
- "We have never taken advantage of the River the way we should."
- "All the history in this town focuses on the Civil War."
- "We need to cut down the trees in order to see the River."
- "You can't cut down the trees, or the banks will erode."
- "The City has a plan for the River."
- "The plan for the Riverwalk is collecting dust."
- "The town hates people on bicycles."
- "Stafford's biketrail will go from Chatham to Belmont. There's even talk of it going to Ferry Farm."
- "Best thing the City ever did was buy the River easements from VEPCO."

- "We spent all our money on the City dock, and a flood swept it away."
- "I stay away from history."
- "I jumped into the River to save Cessie Howell's dog, and boy was it cold."
- "The River is our friend,.... as well as our enemy!"
- "Pour concrete walks."
- "Keep the walks natural."
- "The City ignores the River."
- "The City *MOONS* the River!"
- "There is an easement problem. The City doesn't want to force the issue."
- "The City needs to force the issue. It owns most of the Riverfront anyway."
- "The River is important, it provides the City drinking water."
- "The River is the reason the City is here."
- "In future years, the River will be the greatest asset the City has."

So. What should you do?

In an effort to help the City and surrounding Counties find ways to better utilize the River and its historic, cultural, scenic and environmental resources, our Team has developed an outline which identifies four areas of focus for your community. The City has already made excellent strides in this direction. To expand on what has been done already, we suggest that the City and surrounding Counties consider the following actions.

First of all, think for a moment about the River and its history.

• Native Americans fished in the River. • George Washington threw a silver dollar across the River. • Boats picked up tobacco on city docks at Falmouth and Fredericksburg. • The Northern Army of the Potomac crossed at the River on pontoon boats. • Water from the lower canal provided power to the Bridgewater Mill, and later the City's new carbon arc streetlights. • Passengers boarded steamers bound for Baltimore. • Today, rubber ducks and tubers bob down the River.

