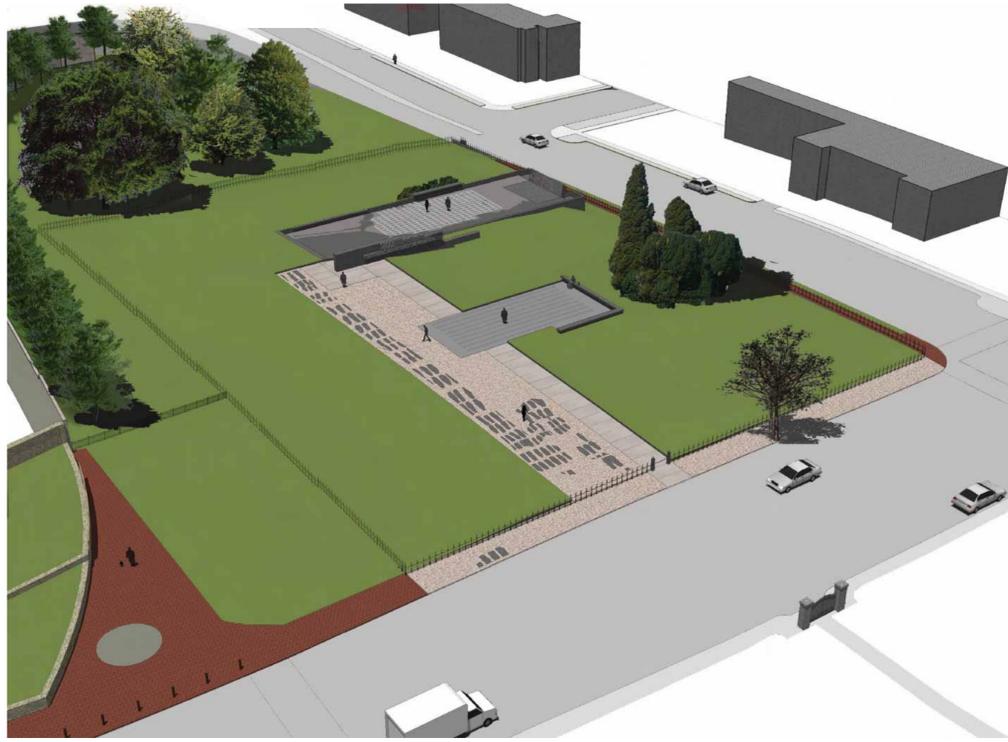
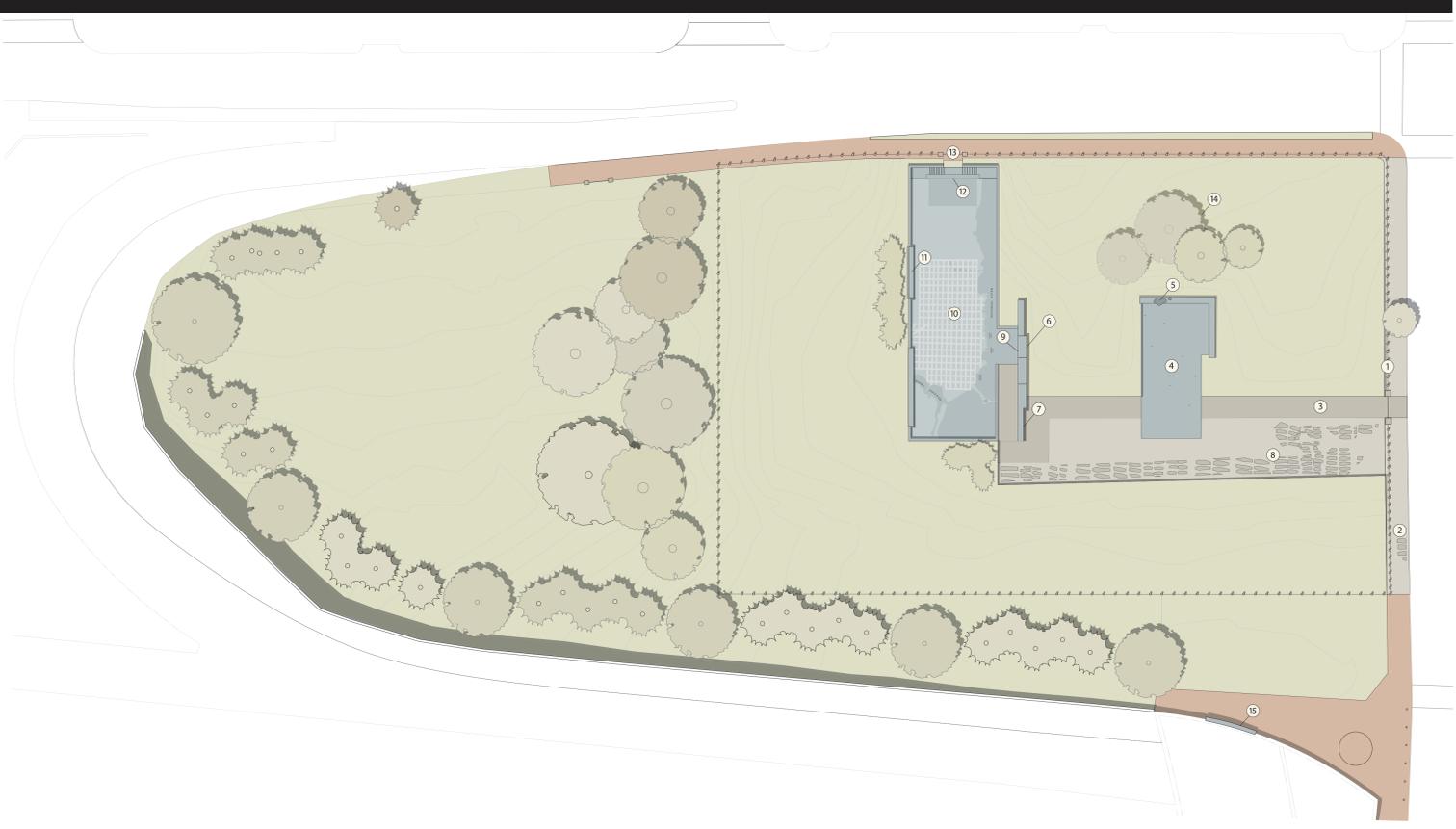


CONTRABANDS AND FREEDMEN'S CEMETERY MEMORIAL

KEY TO SITE PLAN

- FENCE**
A metal fence encircles the site and features elements symbolic of slavery, the institution that defined and circumscribed the lives of the people buried in the cemetery. Each upright post is topped with a manilla, the main form of currency used in the slave trade. These metal bracelets were originally used as money in West Africa, but by the 18th century, were manufactured by Europeans and Americans and carried across the ocean to exchange for slaves. Ironically, African manillas were also used as burial money, interred with the dead to help meet the needs of the next world. Eighteen hundred manillas, one for every individual buried in the cemetery, are mounted to posts connected by shackle-like bars and chains.
- GRAVE MARKERS AT BRICK PAVING**
Flat stones, in the shape of the graves discovered through archaeology, interrupt the brick paving, suggesting the continuation of the graveyard under Washington Street.
- CARRIAGE PATH**
The carriage path—the original entrance into the cemetery—is demarcated by a path of large-scale stones. A statement is inscribed into the stone: *The Africans—Freedmen and Contrabands—that flooded into Alexandria at the onset of the Civil War encountered sickness, disease and death due to horrible living conditions and poverty in the city. Along this path entered carriages and carts bearing the dead. Of the burials here, over half were children under the age of sixteen.*
- MEMORIAL CENOTAPH**
The first stone plaza is inscribed with the names of the dead buried in the cemetery, organized chronologically by year. Each inscription includes the date of death and the individual's age. The inscriptions are listed in columns, so that visitors can quickly identify by scrolling down the list the ages of the dead and periods of high mortality, such as small pox outbreaks. The US Colored Troops are designated by a small symbol.
- A MOTHER'S VIGIL**
A cast-bronze figure of an African woman, presumably a mother, is shown seated, head bowed. She stares vacantly at the names before her, turned inward in grief. A lantern on the bench beside her serves as an eternal flame. At night, the woman's silhouette can be seen from afar, the flickering glow of the lantern obliquely illuminating the features of her face. A suitable sculptor, such as Ed Hamilton, would be commissioned to complete the work.
- CEMETERY NAME AND DEDICATION STATEMENT**
High relief, cast stone letters emerge from the existing retaining wall. The large text, legible from afar, names the cemetery and bears the following statement: *During the Civil War, 1800 Africans were buried here. Some were free, others had fled north for refuge. Smaller text, meant to be seen upon approach, reads: In the decades following the Civil War, this history was lost and the burial ground desecrated. In 2008, we rededicate this land as sacred ground, a place to honor lives and remember our past.*
- ARCHAEOLOGICAL MAP**
A tactile, bas-relief map of the archaeological site is cast in a stone-like material, appearing to emerge from the long dedication wall. Map features include the concrete pads of the gas station and the office building, the cemetery boundaries, the grave excavations, the carriage path and the surrounding streets, all identified with embossed labels.
- GRAVE MARKERS AT COBBLES**
As visitors move laterally along the path, they cross cobbles and make their way to a second path formed of large stones marking the graves excavated through archaeology. Here visitors begin to notice the varying sizes of the coffin stones, including small stones clearly marking the graves of children.
- INTRO TO 19TH CENTURY ALEXANDRIA**
The land begins to slope on the far side of the retaining wall. A ramp leads visitors down to a second plaza, negotiating the grade change. As visitors walk along the ramp, they encounter quotes describing the contrabands' experience, including Emma Bynum's memories of her flight from slavery and its poignant description by W.E.B. Dubois: *They came at night, when the flickering camp fires of the blue hosts shone like vast unsteady stars along the black horizon: old men, and thin, with gray and tufted hair, women with frightened eyes, shagging whimpering, hungry children: men and girls, stolid and gaunt—a horde of starving vagabonds, homeless, helpless, and pitiable in their dark distress.*
At the bottom of the ramp, visitors read text that characterizes the influx of refugees into Alexandria and describes the lives the refugees made for themselves once here. An 1865 quote by the Asst. Commissioner for the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands for the State of Virginia, rendered in a different font than that used for the refugee quotes, reads: *The difference between your former and your present condition is this: formerly your labor was directed, and the proceeds of it taken by your masters, and you were cared for by them, now you are to direct and receive the proceeds of your own labor and care for yourselves.*
- MAP OF ALEXANDRIA**
The second plaza features a large map of Alexandria etched in the stone paving, with Hunting Creek, the wharfs along the Potomac River and street grid clearly delineated. The inscribed text identifies street names, as well as places that figured prominently in African American life of the period: freedmen's neighborhoods, the hospital, factories, fisheries, soldiers' barracks, former slave pens and the military cemetery. Additionally, quotes from the period describe life in Alexandria and the struggle to survive. Small circular metal markers identify the locations at which those who are buried in the cemetery lived and/or died. By scanning these markers, visitors notice patterns, such as the outlines of African American neighborhoods or the location of L'Ouverture Hospital. Contemporary Alexandrians who peruse this map will gain a new appreciation for the history embodied in the buildings and streets that surround them.
- INTERPRETIVE RAIL**
Graphic panels inset into a stone rail interpret the lives and circumstances of the Freedmen and Contrabands that made Alexandria home, as well as defining the terms "Freedmen" and "Contraband." African American sites labeled on the map will be keyed to historic photos on the rail, accompanied by descriptions and quotations. The story of the US Colored Troops will also be told here, including the request of the soldiers for the right of burial in Alexandria's military cemetery.
- BAS-RELIEF OF DAILY LIFE**
A long wall at the end of the plaza features a panoramic bas-relief cast in a stone-like material depicting the daily lives and labors of the Freedmen and Contrabands. The sculpture will show stevedores, laundresses, factory workers, nannies, bakers, rope makers and others, set against a broad historic streetscape stretching from the cemetery on the west side of town to the wharves along the river. This scene will form a backdrop for groups that may gather as part of a tour, re-dedication ceremony, outdoor lecture, or other special event.
- SECONDARY ENTRANCE/EXIT**
The existing stairs will be clad with stone and serve as a secondary entrance and exit from the site. The name of the cemetery will be inscribed in the wall facing the street.
- MEMORIAL GROVE**
Several large trees will be planted in the disturbed portion of the site to provide shade and serve as a symbol of renewal and the continuity of life.
- PALEO-INDIANS AT HUNTING CREEK**
A panoramic bas-relief sculpture cast in a stone-like material features a scene that might have been present 12,000 years ago: a group of paleo-period Native American hunters on a bluff overlooking Hunting Creek with elk and deer grazing on grasslands on the opposite bank (now a golf course). An interpretive panel, also rendered in the same stone-like material, features embossed text and a life-size, touchable casting of the Clovis Point unearthed on the site. This interpretive panel will be mounted to the curved wall of the planting bed at the DeKoven.



DESIGN CONCEPT

The Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery must become more than a burial ground. It must serve as a memorial, a reminder not to forget the past. As we reclaim the identities of those buried here—nearly lost to time—we remember who we were as a nation and how far we have come.

The fence encircling the site includes elements symbolic of the system of enslavement that circumscribed the lives of Alexandria's Africans. A sculpted mourner serves as guardian for those who did not live long in freedom, their names inscribed at her feet. The flame of her lantern—symbol of a mother's eternal vigil—illuminates her face at night. Casket-shaped stones in a field of cobbles recall the physical reality of lives cut short by sickness and hardship. Set below the plane of grass as though revealed through excavation, the stones allude to the desecration of the graves and the work done to retrace the bounds of the burial ground. A plaza at the back of the site commemorates the daily struggles of those who worked to overcome and rise above the legacy of enslavement. Alexandria's streets and structures—etched into the paving, sculpted into the plaza wall, and interpreted at the rail—evoke the character of a city shaped by the Freedmen and Contrabands.

As visitors leave the memorial, they take the memory of the individuals buried here beyond the bounds of the cemetery, back into the city in which they once lived, reconnecting their past to our present.

