

Press Release - September 16, 2008

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FMFADA outlines action steps for implementation at September board meeting

September 16, 2008. Fort Monroe, Virginia. ... Three years and counting until the Army's moving day on September 14, 2011. It's a timetable that's getting lots of attention since Governor Timothy Kaine approved the reuse plan on August 20, 2008.

Bill Armbruster, Executive Director, Fort Monroe FADA explains the change of pace; "There is nothing like a deadline to keep you motivated. It is a bit like the night before Christmas, when you have to put together the gifts that need some assembly, there is a desire to get it just right but you have the added pressure of a finite deadline. The Commonwealth of Virginia is getting the gift of an historic town with a moated fort, set on 570 acres of land with breathtaking waterfront views but there are a lot of moving parts that have to come together before we can open the package for all the people who want to live, work and visit Fort Monroe."

The next Fort Monroe FADA board meeting on September 19, 2008 will be held at the Bay Breeze on Fort Monroe at 1 p.m. The meeting includes a two-hour workshop given by Bay Area Economics (BAE) and project structural engineers Kimley-Horn on economic impacts of decisions made about Fort Monroe. And, the Army will present their schedule of work for environmental clean-up. The critical path for the environmental clean-up has been in process for some time. The Army, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the FMFADA's environmental consultant, Matrix Design Group, will work together to ensure an efficient schedule.

Armbruster will brief the FMFADA board on other projects in process. These include the design standards developed by restoration architects Hanbury Evans Wright and Vlattas of Norfolk. The FMFADA will begin work to plan its public programs by initiating an interpretive master planning process.

The task of this multi-month process is to explore the national significance of Fort Monroe's history and natural resources and plan programs that will enrich public audiences who will come to the site after the Army leaves. Recommendations about the design standards and interpretive master planning will be presented by Kathleen Kilpatrick, Chairman of the Historic Preservation Advisory Group, a panel of nine experts appointed to advise the Fort Monroe FADA on historic preservation and public programs.

Documenting history to plan for future http://www.fmfada.com/press/articles/oct17_2008.php

Architects say inventory of historic structures at Fort Monroe should be finished today.

By MARK ST. JOHN ERICKSON
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FORT MONROE - Much of the future look and feel of this historic Army post might have been determined over the past few days by a team of preservation architects surveying its most significant structures. Armed with cameras, detailed plans and lengthy written descriptions, the group hopes to complete its meticulously annotated inventory of more than 170 buildings and thousands of different architectural features today.

Then it will transform its data on the current condition of these structures into comprehensive standards for both preserving the built landscape of this National Historic Landmark District and introducing any new construction.

Both sets of standards are required by the Army, the Commonwealth, the Fort Monroe Federal Area Development Authority and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as part of their agreement for the federal hand-over of the 570-acre property to the state in 2011.

"We want to set fairly rigid standards so we can preserve the historic character and ambience of the fort. Certain things will be non-negotiable — there will be no demolition or new construction inside the fort," said Gregory Rutledge, a historic architect with Norfolk architectural firm Hanbury, Evans, Wright, Vlattas + Company, which is conducting the work.

"But we also want to make these standards feasible. We want them to generate enthusiasm among people interested in coming in and looking for opportunities for development. We don't want to make them so tight that we scare people away."

Among the hallmark structures attracting special attention from the architectural team are Old Quarters No. 1 — the 1819 house that ranks as the earliest non-fort building inside the walls — and the Carpenter Gothic-style Chapel of the Centurion built between 1855 and 1858.

Quarters No. 17 served as Robert E. Lee's home when the future Confederate general — then a lieutenant in the Army engineers — helped supervise the completion of Fort Monroe and the beginning of nearby Fort Wool between 1831 and 1834.

What makes the historic landscape at Fort Monroe unusually distinctive, however, is not just its landmark structures but also the dense, widely varied collection of other architecturally significant buildings that have cropped up in and outside the fort's walls over the years, Rutledge said.

That inventory ranges in date from the early 1800s to the early 20th century and includes structures varying from 100 to 84,000 square feet in size. It also features high-style Beaux Arts office buildings and Colonial Revival dwellings as well as Victorian-era barracks and simple vernacular structures — all of which could provide opportunities for distinctive adaptive reuse projects.

"Every major building campaign the Army undertook is represented here. We have at least seven or eight major architectural styles — and lots of minor variations on those styles," Rutledge said. "So there's a lot of work to do."

Once completed, the standards will not only establish the requirements for builders and developers seeking historic preservation tax credits for adaptive reuse but also the benchmarks for new construction.

In addition to providing firm guidelines in such areas as building size, materials and style, they'll also lay down the grid and scale of any new streets as well as both the density of any new construction and the nature of the surrounding landscape.

The standards will vary depending on the character of each of the post's five different management zones, with the strictest rules governing development inside the historic fort and the "Historic Village" on the southwest.

"Some people are terrified that once the hand-over in 2011 comes, developers are going to come in and build the place out. But that's not our goal," Rutledge said. "We're trying to define the character-defining features — the distinctive architectural and landscape features — that we don't want to lose."