



October 8, 2024

Good evening, Madam mayor, Councilors, City staff, and members of the public:

I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation and the countless residents that have long-time advocated for the preservation of our City's historic built environment and the diverse array of stories embodied within it for generations here.

Since 1955, HFFI has advocated for preserving the places and spaces that add value and meaning to our daily lives as a cultural backdrop for a multitude of activities in our city. As humans, we sometimes take the tangible cultural inheritance from our predecessors for granted. When something becomes familiar and commonplace, we forget how easily it can be lost.

But our city is truly unique and distinct. We have celebrated our history, our people, and our sense of place in an ever-changing world for centuries and cherish the ways in which it connects us to the bigger picture. Fredericksburg residents past and present have chosen to be good stewards of all of our history, not just its mansions and battle-worn vistas.

Since the 1990s, our City's strategic and comprehensive plans prioritized the need to "continue to protect the unique character and historic integrity of the downtown as a neighborhood as well as adjoining neighborhoods." Every plan and long-term vision for the City's future has acknowledged our shared responsibility to steward Fredericksburg's historic resources and character.

As early as 2017, City planning staff and hired consultants began recommending Conservation Districts as a zoning tool to aid in the conservation of our older, distinct neighborhoods. It has been so oft repeated that an ordinance to provide residents with this option is truly past due. Charlottesville passed their first Conservation District ordinance in 2009, while Preservation professionals and UMW Preservation students have been preparing surveys to support this work for decades. So, if City leaders are willing to explore the option for data centers, surely, they can do the same for the taxpaying citizens already vested in Fredericksburg's past, present, and future.

HFFI has heard from enough residents and neighborhood leaders to merit the investment of our limited resources in this effort. We are working to engage the larger community in a conversation about preserving the distinct parts and pieces that comprise Fredericksburg and the potential for Conservation District zoning to help accomplish some of the City's long-standing planning goals.

We'd like to invite members of the public, local leaders, city staff, and residents from across the city to join us on October 14th at 5:30 pm in the downtown library theater to discuss these important issues and exchange ideas as neighbors with a shared interest in stewarding and preserving what matters to them in the built environment.