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The Alexandria Heritage Trail will pass behind the Torpedo Factory along the city's waterfront. The 23-mile trail consists of previously existing paths and streets.

New guide to accompany opening of Heritage Trail

23-mile path to highlight Alexandria's history

By **NIKKI WERKING**
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Area residents and tourists soon will have another resource to help guide their exploration of Alexandria's natural landmarks, historic institutions and lesser-known attractions.

As part of its celebration June 1 of National Trails Day, the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology will release a new walking and biking guide to accompany the opening of the Alexandria Heritage Trail.

The 23-mile trail loops around Alexandria, with 10 smaller circles branching out to cover the entire city. Each segment consists of previously existing paths and streets — all highlighting historic parts of the area that is now the city of Alexandria, said City Archaeologist Pamela Cressey, guidebook editor.

"Each trail took on its own character," she said. "It's a way of connecting the past and making a unifying statement about each of the areas."

The city of Alexandria, Alexandria Archaeological Commission and the nonprofit Friends of Alexandria Archaeology collaborated in the planning of the trail and guidebook, which took about four years, Cressey said. The Friends of Alexandria Archaeology absorbed most of the book's production costs, spending less than \$5,000, she said.

The guidebook, "Walk and Bike the Alexandria Heritage Trail: A Guide to Exploring a Virginia Town's Hidden Past," will include maps, illustrations, street directions and histories of more than 100 points of interest along the trail. Highlighted sites vary from natural landmarks, such as the Alexandria Canal and Winkler Botanical Preserve, to historic institutions including the Lyceum and Fort Ward.

"The trail takes people to nooks and crevices of

the city that they don't even know are there," Cressey said. "People forget the sites are there because they are so busy driving and rushing. They don't know that there is history all around them and under their feet."

The guidebook also will include separate side treks that highlight sites important to historic individuals and groups, Cressey said. Treks include locales such as Jones Point, where archaeologists found a 9,000-year old stone spear point, and Park Fairfax, where visitors can see the homes of former Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

Alexandria Archaeology volunteer Brook Andrews said the book will be a resource for both visitors and residents.

"The idea is to educate locals and tourists holistically on Alexandria history while giving them opportunities to explore the waterfront and other areas," Andrews said.

To celebrate the opening of the trail and publication of the guidebook, the Friends of Alexandria Archaeology will host a series of events June 1 at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Cressey will sign copies of the book at 9 a.m. She will lead a three-mile walking tour of the trail at 10 a.m. Alexandria Archaeological Commission member Chan Mohrney will lead a 15-mile bike tour of the trail at the same time. Tours of the memorial's excavation site will be held at 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Capital Books Inc. will print 5,000 copies of the guidebook, which will be available in local bookstores for \$11.95 each after June 1.

Cressey said she hopes the tours and guidebook will help give people a greater appreciation for Alexandria's history.

"Many people come and live here without realizing the richness of the history," she said. "We want to make it accessible for everyone."