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Historic St. Mary's City
Fort to 400 Commission

ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2026

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Respectfully submitted to the Governor of Maryland and the General Assembly
by the Historic St. Mary's City Fort to 400 Commission

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Maryland Department of Commerce
401 East Pratt Street | Baltimore, MD 21202

November, 2026

Maryland

Wes Moore, Governor | Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

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Purpose and Vision

The Commission was established to plan, produce, and facilitate Maryland's 400th anniversary commemoration in 2034. Its vision is a historically accurate, inclusive, and dignified commemoration that helps residents and visitors understand Maryland's founding and provides lasting public benefits. (See Appendix for details on the Commission's purpose, membership, and duties).

FY26 Plan of Action

The Plan of Action below continues the work set out in the Commission's 2022 plan and carried forward in the FY25 annual report. It summarizes the actions, benchmarks, and recommendations included in both reports and documents their status during FY26, July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The Commission will consider its next steps and any additional actions, benchmarks, or recommendations at its next meeting.

Action Item	Benchmark	Recommendation	Status
Create 501(c)(3) to manage fundraising and execute all activities around the celebration of Historic St. Mary's City and Maryland in general.	Formation of a 501(c)(3) organization.	Use the Maryland 250 Commission as a case study to move the Fort to 400 Commission forward and create a logical succession plan for transitioning the Maryland 250 Commission which sunsets in 2027 into the Fort to 400 Commission which sunsets in 2035. By doing so, the following actions should be taken. I. Hire an Executive Director to develop and deliver a business structure (see below), create committees, and write a strategic plan to successfully implement deliverables through 2034. II. As with the Maryland 250 Commission, the Fort to 400 Commission should work with Commerce and interagency partners, including the Office of the Attorney General as needed, to identify and implement an appropriate business structure that is able to accept private funding and execute public-private goals. This could be through the creation of a 501(c)(3) (as	Recommendation delayed to FY27.

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Action Item	Benchmark	Recommendation	Status
		recommended by the Commission's report), through creation of a public-private partnership, or through identifying an existing 501(c)(3) or public-private partnership entity which is able to fundraise and execute funding in support of the Fort to 400 Commission goals. III. Present the recommendation of Commission's new strategy and structure to the Governor's Office as background for appointing a new Chair.	
Discuss staffing for the Commission.	Recruitment for an Administrative Coordinator by the Maryland Department of Commerce will align with the creation of the 501(c)(3) organization.	The statute designates that the Department of Commerce receive staffing assistance from the Maryland Historic Trust and the Maryland State Archives. Therefore, escalate the Administrative Coordinator position to an Executive Director position that physically resides with the Maryland Historic Trust which is where the Maryland 250 Commission resides. This will allow the new Executive Director to create working relationships with the Executive Director of the Maryland 250 Commission as well as all three managing agencies.	Recommendation delayed to FY27.
Formation of Committees	The Commission decided to create several committees including Development and Sponsor Relations; Resource Stewardship; Visitor Experience; Education; Curriculum; Events; Transportation and Capital Infrastructure; Marketing;	Pause identifying members of the committees until the Executive Director is hired and can lead the process.	Recommendation implemented.

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Action Item	Benchmark	Recommendation	Status
	Operations and Management. As of October 2025, a limited number of committee chairs and members have been identified but have not yet been invited to participate.		
Chair Brian Norris and Vice Chair Dr. Julie Schablitsky resigned from the Commission.	Commerce began the process of recruiting a new Chair and Vice Chair.	Commerce has made a recommendation to the Governor's Office who appoints the Chair.	Recommendation implemented.
Upon appointment of a new Chair, conduct at least two meetings in FY26.	Plan no less than the two statutorily required meetings of the Commission.	Conduct no less than the two statutorily required meetings of the Commission.	Recommendation delayed to FY27.

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Closing Statement

FY26 was a year of transition for the Commission. The Chair and Vice-Chair positions became vacant, no Commission meetings were held, and the vacancies constrained progress on several priorities in the 2022 plan of action. The State's focus on the America 250 commemoration also shaped the environment in which the Commission operated. Stakeholders statewide expressed that they lacked capacity to engage in preparations related to the Commission while supporting America 250 activities.

As of June 30, 2026, the appointment of a new Chair has remained pending, and the Department of Commerce is planning to proceed with staff recruitment in FY27 Q2. The Commission's immediate priorities for FY27 are to restore its leadership and staff capacity, resume regular meetings, and review the 2022 plan of action to set practical implementation steps and benchmarks. The Commission should hold at least two meetings during the fiscal year, consistent with its statutory responsibilities, and determine the sequence for advancing its organizational, fundraising, education, preservation, and commemoration work.

Progress will require timely action to fill the leadership vacancies and continued staff support from the Department of Commerce. With that capacity in place, the Commission can renew its work toward a historically accurate, inclusive commemoration of Maryland's founding and the lasting public benefits envisioned in its mandate.

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Appendix A – Commission Background, Membership, and Duties

Background

The Historic St. Mary's City Fort to 400 Commission (Commission) was established by Chapter 688, Acts of 2021 (Senate Bill 946), to plan, produce, and facilitate materials, events, and activities commemorating the 400th anniversary of Maryland's founding in 1634. The Commission is authorized through September 30, 2035.

From the outset, the General Assembly envisioned a historically accurate, inclusive, cohesive, and dignified commemoration that helps residents and visitors understand Maryland's founding and its meaning. As such, the Commission coordinates planning, supports the preservation and interpretation of related historical and cultural resources, encourages educational and public programs, and promotes lasting public benefits and economic development opportunities in and around St. Mary's City.

Membership

Nineteen members constitute the Commission. The Governor appoints five members, and the Senate President and House Speaker each appoint two members. One member each represents the Commission on African American History and Culture; the Commission on Indian Affairs; the Historic St. Mary's City Commission, the Maryland Rediscovery 400 Initiative; and St. Mary's College of Maryland. Five members serve ex officio.

During FY26, the Commission's Chair and Vice-Chair positions became vacant. Commerce began recruiting successors, but both positions have remained unfilled as of this report. The Commission's other members have remained unchanged.

Commission Members as of 6/30/26:

- **Appointed by Governor:** Michael R. Alderson, Jr.; Mary A. Harms; Barbara A. Ives; Dr. Tuajuanda C. Jordan; Julian Blacklock Wills III
- **Appointed by Senate President:** John D. (Jack) Bailey; Arthur Ellis
- **Appointed by House Speaker:** Brian M. Crosby; Marc A. Korman
- **The Secretary of Budget and Management or the Secretary's designee**: Jake Weissmann
- **The Secretary of Commerce of the Secretary's designee**: Harry Coker, Jr.
- **The Secretary of Natural Resources, or the Secretary's designee**: Josh Kurtz
- **The Secretary of Planning, or the Secretary's designee**: Rebecca Flora
- **The Secretary of Transportation, or the Secretary's designee**: Kathryn "Katie" Thomson
- **Representing Historic St. Mary's City Commission:** Dr. John L. Seidel, Executive Director
- **Representing Maryland Rediscovery 400 Initiative:** Lucille Walker, Executive Director, Destination Southern Maryland
- **Representing Commission on African American History & Culture:** Chanel Compton, Executive Director, Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum

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- **Representing Maryland Historical Trust:** Elizabeth Hughes, Director/State Historic Preservation Officer
- **Representing Commission on Indian Affairs:** Vacant
- **Hilary Dailey** - Tourism Program Specialist, Calvert County Department of Economic Development
- **Ashley Chenault** - Chief of Tourism, Explore Charles County

Commerce Staff Support:
Cynthia D. Miller, Director, Strategic Partnerships and PR, Maryland Office of Tourism Development

Duties of the Commission include but are not limited to:

- Coordinate planning and implementation of activities and events commemorating the 400th anniversary of Maryland's founding.
- Promote identification, documentation, and preservation of historical and cultural resources related to the founding.
- Assist in protecting, improving, and developing educational and interpretive institutions, sites, and museums.
- Ensure development of a model social studies curriculum on the founding of Maryland.
- Promote commemoration nationally and internationally.
- Ensure activities, events, and products provide lasting value and public benefits.
- Secure support and financial resources, including formation of an appropriate legal entity.
- Coordinate economic development opportunities in and around St. Mary's City.
- Perform other actions necessary to carry out the Commission's purpose.