

# Florida State Parks Foundation to receive additional \$200,000 toward Fort Mose reconstruction from St. Johns County

*New funding brings total raised for Fort Mose historic reconstruction to nearly \$2.8 million*

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, October 4, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners voted Tuesday to allocate \$200,000 from the county's Tourist Development Tax Reserve toward the 1738 fort reconstruction project at Fort Mose Historic State Park.

The architectural rendering of the 1738 fort reconstruction project at Fort Mose Historic State Park. The project will break ground in January 2024.

The allocation, which comes two years after an initial \$50,000 allocation from the county, represents a major step toward realizing the decades-long dream of constructing a representation of the 1738 Fort Mose on park property, which sits only a few miles north of the St. Augustine Historic District.

Fort Mose – America's first site of freedom – was the first legally sanctioned free African settlement in what is now the United States. The park is now a National Historic Landmark and a Site of Memory of the UNESCO Slave Route Project

"We are incredibly grateful for the support that the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners has put behind this amazing project," said Julia Gill Woodward, CEO of the Florida State Parks Foundation. "St. Johns County is home to one of our nation's most inspiring sites of courage, perseverance and freedom, and this reconstructed fort will further enhance the county's status as a world-renowned destination for historians, educators, students, nature



Members of the Florida State Parks Foundation and the Fort Mose Historical Society spoke on behalf of the 1738 fort reconstruction project at the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 3, 2023.

enthusiasts and others.”

“Fort Mose is an amazing resource for Florida, for the United States and for the entire world, and it is located right here in St. Johns County,” said Charles Ellis, president of the Fort Mose Historical Society. “As a 40-year resident of this area, I am so thankful that our county commissioners have seen the value in this project and chosen to support it in such a generous way.”

The Fort Mose Historical Society first set a goal to reconstruct a representation of Fort Mose in the mid-1990s. The Florida State Parks Foundation joined the effort in 2019, and, in 2022, earned a grant of \$933,500 from the Florida African American Cultural and Historical Grants Program to aid in construction costs.

Additionally, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Recreation and Parks, which manages Fort Mose Historic State Park, has contributed \$1.1 million from its fixed capital outlay budget.

The Foundation has since generated support from a wide variety of generous donors, including:

- \$250,000 from St. Johns County (including Tuesday’s allocation).
- \$100,000 from the Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation.
- \$97,872 from the Augustine Amphitheater’s Fort Mose Jazz & Blues Series.
- \$50,000 from the Lastinger Family Foundation.
- \$50,000 from Florida Power and Light.
- \$50,000 from The Bailey Group.
- \$50,000 from Wells Fargo.
- \$50,000 from Florida Blue.
- \$30,000 from Northrop Grumman.
- \$25,000 from The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

Total secured funding for the 1738 Fort Mose reconstruction project is currently \$2.78 million. The Foundation is still seeking partners for an additional \$300,000 for construction and associated expenses. Groundbreaking for the project is scheduled for January 2024, with expected completion later that year.

“The overwhelming support for this project shows just how much it resonates with community leaders in St. Augustine and beyond,” said Foundation President Tammy Gustafson. “Once complete, this fort reconstruction will further the story of Fort Mose, which has been under-told for centuries, to gain its rightful place among the world’s most moving stories of freedom.

“We thank St. Johns County and all of our partners for their commitment to Fort Mose and honoring the legacies of the people who nearly 300 years ago braved the dangerous journey to

northeast Florida and called it home.”

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