

United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Oakland Baptist Church

Other names/site number: DHR ID# 100-0211

Name of related multiple property listing:

African American Churches in Virginia (VDHR# 500-0010, NRHP MC100012675)

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 3408 King Street

City or town: Alexandria State: VA County: Independent City

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Virginia Department of Historic Resources</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
--	-------------------------------

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MID-19th CENTURY/GOTHIC REVIVAL

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: BRICK
Roof: ASPHALT

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Oakland Baptist Church sits on a small parcel of land on the southwest side of King Street, situated in an urban setting, west of the Old Town Alexandria Historic District. The parcel contains a single building, the church, which was constructed in 1940 following a 1931 fire that destroyed original church building. A 1999 expansion introduced fellowships and classroom spaces that are consistent with the original building materials and form. The original core 1940 church building is constructed of brick and includes pointed arch transom, lancet style-stained glass windows and prominent projecting front tower.

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Narrative Description

Setting

Oakland Baptist Church (OBC) – Located on a 0.43 acre parcel at 3408 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia is a two-story brick masonry structure located at the intersection of King Street and West Braddock Road in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. It sits in a suburban, landlocked setting surrounded by mixed-use buildings and roadways, with no significant landscape features. It sits in a suburban, landlocked setting surrounded by mixed-use buildings and roadways, with no significant landscape features. The church’s immediate surroundings include a small grassy area to the east of the original church building with a small brick sign and to the west is a driveway that provides access to a rear parking area. The rear parking area provides access to some of the newer rear additions to the church. One side of the parking area features a concrete retaining wall with a tall chain link fence marking the boundary of the church parcel from a neighboring business.

Detailed Description

Exterior

The original 1940 Oakland Baptist Church is a two-story, brick Gothic Revival influenced building with a front gable roof, main entry and a single front brick tower situated at the southeast corner of the façade. The brick on the original core is laid in seven course American bond on all elevations of the original building. The east elevation includes the 1999 addition, slightly differentiated in roof height and window pattern but visually compatible with the historic sanctuary.

The facade of the 1940 church building features the main entrance, accessed via a prominent set of wide concrete steps supported by stepped brick side walls. The main entry is a set of modern glass double front doors, covered with a flat roof structure supported by two square posts. Just above the main entry are three arched stained-glass windows with a round or bullseye window above. All of these features are encompassed within a brick half arch. All the arched components are painted white to accentuate the gothic inspired design. There is a louvered vent situated in the front gable, topped with soldier course of brick painted white with a line of header bricks painted white underneath. The tower on the northeast corner features fenestration in the form four narrow 12 light fixed rectangular windows each topped with a soldier course of brick, painted white and a row of header bricks as a lintel painted white. On the top of the steeple, there are paired windows on each of the elevations of the tower. These windows also include fixed lights and are topped with a rounded arch with brick lintels. The lower southeast corner of the tower features a limestone cornerstone.

Oakland Baptist Church

Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA

County and State

The facade of the 1999 addition includes one tall arched window surrounded in concrete with divided lights next. Between the window of the new addition and the 1940 tower is a mounted cross, painted white and the name of the church spelled out. The west elevation of the 1940 church building includes a series of large arched fixed light windows with smaller rectangular multi-light windows below them. This series of windows is symmetrically placed along the west elevation. The east elevation of the 1940 church building is now mostly obscured by the 1999 addition. The east elevation of the addition includes 3 elongated windows evenly spaced along the wall, all with divided lights and arched surrounds. There is one smaller arched window between the larger window and what is the secondary entrance to the building. Towards the rear of the building, the east elevation continues with two stories, with small narrow windows symmetrically placed along the brick façade. There is another glass double door handicap accessible entry on the lower level, near the secondary entrance. The 1999 section is compatible with the original building while still being distinguishable as a modern addition.

Interior

The sanctuary features a rectangular nave, hardwood flooring at the perimeter, pews arranged in parallel rows, a raised pulpit and choir area along with clear stained-glass windows. The sanctuary of the 1940 building had an open wood-framed ceiling with hard wood floors and carpeting. It also contained a designated choir loft. Photos of the original sanctuary are limited but the structural integrity and several characteristics of the original design remain, including basic pew designs, the choir location, ceiling design and the double door entry into the sanctuary. Today the sanctuary has neatly aligned pews, with a center aisle leading to a raised pulpit. The choir area retained the loft and pulpit design and the original windows, originally colored stained glass are now clear stained glass. The 1999 renovation introduced an addition on the left side of the sanctuary, while preserving the windows in the steeple and added a pointed frame around the tower steps. The bell tower remains unchanged from its 1940 construction and so does the west wall of the interior of the sanctuary. In 1999, as noted previously, the church was renovated where the fellowship hall and classrooms on the lower level were added. The church today can be accessed from the east side or the King Street side (original entry)

Integrity Statement

Oakland Baptist Church has seen substantial surrounding development since it was constructed in 1940 but even in 1940 this area of Alexandria was considered suburban and the setting and location remains consistent, reflecting the historic character of the neighborhood. Additionally, the immediate environment around the church maintains compatibility with the church's historic context. The original design of the 1940 church remains obvious in its form and massing, symmetrical façade and west elevation and the vernacular adaptations of gothic design elements found in the windows and the above the front entry. ‘

The property has good integrity of workmanship and feeling with evidence visible in the masonry work, window detailing and structural framing and most of the renovations tried to respect these features to remain compatible to the original building. Though the sanctuary has

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

evolved, it still continues its historic function and its association remains intact as its continued role in local history, continuing to serve as a center of worship and for community activities.

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1940-1975

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Oakland Baptist Church is being nominated under the “*African American Churches in Virginia*” Multiple Property Documentation cover document (MPD). The church holds deep cultural, historical and communal importance to “The Fort” community, a post war settlement founded by formerly enslaved people. “The Fort” community emerged on the site of the dismantled Civil War-era Fort Ward and became an important African American village. Oakland Baptist Church grew from early worship gatherings in a brush arbor beginning in 1888, later relocating to its current site on King Street in 1893. The 1893 church was destroyed by fire in 1931 and later rebuilt in 1940. Established by members of the African American community—many of whom were formerly enslaved—the church evolved into a vital institution that anchored the post-Civil War community. The “Fort” neighborhood fostered community cohesion, religious life, education, and mutual aid during an era of segregation (Jim Crow) and civil rights advancement. These themes align with key historic contexts documented in the African American Churches MPD, including Reconstruction era community formation and the growth of independent Black religious institutions. The period of significance for the church begins in 1940 and ends in 1975. This period encompasses: the rebuilding of the church (1940); its role during segregation and civil rights activism; its service to families displaced by urban renewal; and continuation of community identity during periods of demographic transition. Originating in 1888 from “The Fort” community, a settlement of formerly enslaved African Americans, the church became an essential spiritual and social anchor. Areas of Significance include Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History. As a religious institution, Oakland Baptist Church meets the requirements for *Criteria Consideration A* because its historical significance extends beyond religious doctrine. The church that stands today continued to be a core community center for African American Alexandrians; it supported education, social welfare, and civic organization and it preserved cultural identity for descendants of “The Fort” community.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage: African American and Social History

Oakland Baptist Church is a cornerstone of Alexandria’s African American community. It served as a spiritual, cultural, and social hub during a time of segregation and systemic inequality. The church provided a safe space for worship, education, and community organizing, reinforcing identity and resilience. The church holds profound ethnic importance as a cornerstone of African American heritage in Alexandria, Virginia. Its significance emerges from its origins, its role within a historically Black community, and its continued preservation as a site of African

Oakland Baptist Church

Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA

County and State

American cultural memory. The church was established by African American residents of “*The Fort*”, a community formed by formerly enslaved people who settled at the site of the dismantled Civil War–era Fort Ward. This makes Oakland Baptist Church an institution deeply rooted in the African American post-Emancipation experience.¹

Judy Belk, the daughter of Mrs. Maydell Belk also gives an account of her early days and knowledge of “*The Fort*” Community.² The congregation began worshipping as Oak Hill Baptist Mission in 1888, meeting first in a *bush arbor*, and later moving to its permanent location in 1893. This organic, community-built origin reflects a collective assertion of Black religious autonomy and identity.³ Historical markers and documents emphasize that the church and its cemetery, which is located on a separate parcel and was previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2018 (DHR# 100-5339) remain enduring symbols of a distinctive, self-sufficient African American community. Despite displacement pressures and the transformation of Fort Ward into a historical park, Oakland Baptist Church survived as both a spiritual and cultural center.⁴ The church fostered a strong sense of ethnic identity, cohesion, and mutual support, functioning not just as a religious institution but also as a guardian of African American social values, family structure, and community norms.⁵

From the 1940s through the 1970s, Oakland Baptist was more than a place of worship. It was a gathering space for families, youth, and neighbors to learn, organize, vote, and care for one another during segregation and the Civil Rights era. Pastors and lay leaders worked side-by-side with local residents to support students, expand opportunities, and foster dignity in the face of discrimination. The church’s leaders and families helped shape Alexandria’s path toward desegregation and equal rights.⁶ During the period of significance, the church was central to major social changes, including the Civil Rights Movement. It hosted meetings, supported advocacy for equal rights, and fostered leadership within the African American community. Churches like OBC were often the backbone of grassroots activism and were central to community organizing and civil rights advocacy during mid-20th century. Evidence of the church’s involvement is communicated in a marker constructed to convey the work of one of its members in the civil rights era, Mrs. Maydell Belk.⁷ The church was not only a worship center but also set social and moral standards for the community. The Deacon Board played a significant role in regulating community conduct and supporting family life, as illustrated by early 20th-century testimonies and oral histories.⁸

The church remains one of the most enduring physical and cultural landmarks tied to this historically Black community. Furthermore, the surviving features serve a multigenerational purpose by linking present-day congregants to the legacy of their ancestors. Many founding

¹ <https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/historic/info/archaeology/trailsignoaklandbaptistchurch.pdf>

² [oral-history-belk-judy-2024.pdf](#)

³ [The Oakland Baptist Church Historical Marker](#)

⁴ [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

⁵ [Ibid](#)

⁶ [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

⁷ [Plaque Honors Families Who Integrated Minnie Howard](#)

⁸ [Oakland Baptist Church | Franconia History](#)

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

families still maintain connections to the church, and the continued presence of the historic structure—despite modern additions—creates a physical dialogue between past and present. Its endurance through hardships, including displacement pressures associated with Fort Ward’s redevelopment, underscores the deep-rooted resilience of the community. The fact that the church and its cemetery “survive” in spite of these challenges amplifies their symbolic value as repositories of historical memory.⁹

During the 1940s through the 1960s, Oakland Baptist’s pastors, deacons, and members provided leadership and guidance within the community—morally, socially, and politically—while navigating wartime challenges, discriminatory housing policies, school segregation, and local civic inequalities. The church continued to serve as an anchor for families displaced from “*The Fort*” community due to mid-century urban development and park construction. Its sustained social and spiritual presence through 1975 reflects the continuation of its historic role before major renovations in 1999 altered its physical form. The church’s *physical* and *social resilience* took on heightened importance during the Civil Rights period, particularly as “*The Fort*” Ward redevelopment displaced residents and disrupted community continuity. Oakland Baptist Church remained one of the few surviving institutions of that historic community, providing a foundation for identity, heritage preservation, and spiritual life.

African American Churches Role-Jim Crow & Civil Rights Periods (1940-1975)

During the Jim Crow and Civil Rights eras (1940–1975), Oakland Baptist Church functioned as far more than a religious center; it served as a self-governing body, a community enforcer of moral conduct, and a vehicle of social order and resistance against racial segregation and political disenfranchisement. African Americans in Alexandria faced limited access to civic institutions, legal representation, and economic opportunity. African American churches, including Oakland Baptist Church, filled this void by developing internal systems of governance, adjudication, and moral guidance. Oakland’s Deacon Board exerted a formalized authority that shaped community norms, resolving interpersonal disputes and enforcing codes of conduct well into the mid-20th century.¹⁰

The church’s *physical* and *social resilience* took on heightened importance during the Civil Rights period, particularly as “*The Fort*” Ward redevelopment displaced residents and disrupted community continuity. Oakland Baptist Church remained one of the few surviving institutions of that historic community, providing a foundation for identity, heritage preservation, and spiritual life. African American churches across the South—including Oakland Baptist Church—served as essential institutions for Black survival and activism during segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. Their functions can be understood in several interrelated categories. Across the South, Black churches operated as political headquarters during the Civil Rights Movement. Oakland Baptist Church hosted meetings, strategy sessions, and civic groups. In many instances, according to oral accounts, the Pastor often acted as de facto political representatives for

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

communities barred from official power. Congregants coordinated transportation, fundraising, and outreach for activism.

Oakland Baptist Church, served as a historic sanctuary for an African American community facing relocation, functioned within this broader framework of civic resistance and representation.^{11 12} Oakland Baptist Church just as many African American churches during that period maintained cultural memory and communal identity during an era defined by segregation and enforced racial hierarchies. These roles were central to resisting the erasure of African American heritage in Alexandria.¹³

Oakland Baptist Church supported members with emergency funds, job referrals, and community networks. Oakland's history of self-building—members constructing the sanctuary with their own hands—reflects the economic solidarity typical of African American congregations of the era.¹⁴ Churches offered strength amid oppression. Through preaching, communal worship, and collective prayer, African Americans sustained hope and dignity while facing systemic racism. Oakland maintained traditional and contemporary worship practices, accessible teaching and prayer communities and theological commitment to perseverance and justice. These practices reinforced emotional resilience and commitment to social survival.¹⁵

Oakland Baptist Church as a Sanctuary of Governance and Social Structure (1940–1975)

Between 1940 and 1975, Oakland Baptist Church was not simply a religious institution—it was a governing body, social regulator, cultural preserver, and space of refuge for African Americans living through the most oppressive decades of segregation and the transformative era of the Civil Rights Movement. Surviving displacement, maintaining moral order, fostering self-sufficiency, and sustaining a politically disenfranchised community, Oakland Baptist Church exemplifies the profound role that African American churches played in shaping community governance, social structure, and resistance to racial inequality.

1. Origins in an African American Community After the Civil War

Oakland Baptist Church traces its roots to 1888, when African American residents of ““The Fort” “” community—formed on the former site of Civil War-era Fort Ward—began worshipping as the *Oak Hill Baptist Mission* in a simple bush arbor. This early worship space symbolized both hardship and resilience.¹⁶ By 1893, the congregation relocated to a permanent site at 3408 King Street in Alexandria, Virginia—establishing the church that continues today.¹⁷

2. A Center of Self-Sufficiency, Community, and Moral Guidance

¹¹ [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

¹² [Oakland Baptist Church | Franconia History](#)

¹³ [Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery – DHR](#)

¹⁴ [We Built Our Own Place: Oakland Baptist Church](#)

¹⁵ [Our Story — Oakland Baptist Church](#)

¹⁶ [Ibid](#)

¹⁷ [Ibid](#)

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

The church rapidly became a social, spiritual, and civic anchor for African Americans in Alexandria during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Public historical markers emphasize that the church and cemetery stand as symbols of the self-sufficiency, integrity, and longevity of this distinctive Black community.¹⁸

The church's Deacon Board, led early on by founder John Wesley Casey, enforced a strong moral and social code that shaped community life well beyond church walls—an important example of African American governance and social structure during segregation.¹⁹

3. Rebuilding, Growth, and Architectural Changes

A devastating 1931 fire destroyed the original structure, but under the leadership of Rev. Howard Barnes and Rev. Samuel T. Moore, a new building was constructed in 1939–1940. Congregation members themselves physically built much of the new sanctuary—an act reflecting deep communal investment and perseverance.²⁰

4. Role During Segregation and the Civil Rights Era

Between 1940–1975, Oakland Baptist Church played a vital role as a spiritual, social, and civic center for African Americans during segregation and the Civil Rights movement. Prominent members—such as Clara Shorts Adams, William Carpenter, Maggie Hall, and others—contributed leadership and community organization that supported African American advancement in Alexandria.

Today, Oakland Baptist Church remains a religious home for a multi-generational African American community. A steward of the cemetery and its historical interpretation. A recognized heritage site featured in Alexandria's public history markers and the Alexandria Heritage Trail²¹ The church's enduring presence underscores its significance as one of Alexandria's longest-standing African American institutions. Oakland Baptist Church is historically significant because it originated as a post-Civil War African American religious and social institution; symbolizes resilience, self-determination, and community-building; documents generations of African American life through its church and cemetery; survived relocation pressures, fire, reconstruction, segregation, and modernization. It has a traditional structure characterized by a gable roof and symmetrical design elements. The building exhibits a modest yet dignified presence, reflecting its historic and community-oriented function.

A hub of Education, Moral Formation, and Social Cohesion Throughout the 1940s–1970s, Oakland Baptist Church provided its members with more than religious instruction. Sunday School leaders, teachers, and deacons shaped the social expectations of youth and adults,

¹⁸ [The Oakland Baptist Church \(Historical Marker\) | Franconia History](#)

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

²¹ [The Oakland Baptist Church \(Historical Marker\) | Franconia History](#)

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

modeling communal responsibility and discipline. The church also fostered intergenerational ties, as many founding families maintained active membership for decades.^{22 23}

Oakland Baptist Church contributed to a network of informal social services, including care for the sick, burial support through its cemetery (*founded c. 1897 and continuously stewarded by the church*), and shared labor. Burial grounds provided sacred continuity, marking familial lineages erased in other parts of Alexandria through displacement.²⁴

Women played a critical role in sustaining Oakland's social infrastructure. Even before 1940, women like Matilda Wood and Mollie Nelson helped establish the church, and their legacies—as organizers, caregivers, and spiritual leaders—set foundations for mid-century social life. Their impact continued into the decades of Jim Crow and Civil Rights, when women's committees and auxiliaries strengthened community survival strategies.²⁵

Historical Background

This property is significant because of its historical context, significant themes, associated events, people and cultural patterns. The church/building helped to sustain and maintain the life and relevance of the African American community. During the pastorate of Rev. Barnes, Oakland prospered and grew in numbers. There were many faithful people who worked with him including William (Bill) Terrell and Wesley Casey who served as Chairmen of the Deacon Board respectively. Rev. Barnes' first son in the ministry was Rev. James Adams who served diligently in the Sunday School, but died before his ordination.

According to Mrs. Elizabeth Douglas, one of the faithful members of the Oakland Baptist Church and descendent of "The Fort" Ward Community.

"They weren't what you call builders, but they helped to build the church. Rev. Barnes, he had been sick. And in 1939 he was getting back on his feet pretty good. And Rev. Moore, he was helping him to finish the church up there as well. And then the fellas from the Episcopal High School and Seminary, when they had a breakfast break or a lunch break, they would come down here and help."²⁶

Mrs. Douglas was expressing how the community helped to rebuild OBC.

The current leader of OBC, Pastor Larry R. Fox continues to provide the guidance that is needed for the church and community. The church continues to serve as a spiritual hub and inspiration for the community. Pastor Fox began shepherding OBC in 1922. He celebrated his third anniversary in September 2025.

²² [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

²³ [Oakland Baptist Church | Franconia History](#)

²⁴ [Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery – DHR](#)

²⁵ [We Built Our Own Place: Oakland Baptist Church](#)

²⁶ Ibid

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Early Governance & Institutional Authority

The Deacon Board exercised substantial authority over congregational and community life. As documented in historical accounts, the Board enforced a strict moral and social code extending well beyond Sunday worship. During the mid-20th century, its appointed officers supported pastors in supervising the church’s temporal, physical, and spiritual needs. This governance role was formalized so formalized that in earlier decades, members even testified in civil courts about their disciplinary procedures—underscoring the church’s recognized authority within the Black community.^{27 28} Oakland Baptist Church continued a long tradition of collective decision-making and self-reliance during segregation. The Between 1940 and 1975, Oakland Baptist Church served as a principal institution of governance, social cohesion, and cultural survival for the African American community known as “*The Fort*” in Alexandria, Virginia. Originating in the late 19th century and physically expanded through community labor in 1940–41, the church became a central sanctuary for African Americans navigating the Jim Crow era, mid-century urban development pressures, and the transformative Civil Rights Movement.²⁹

African American churches in the late-19th and 20th centuries functioned as far more than religious gathering places—they were centers of governance, self-determination, social regulation, education, and mutual aid within segregated communities. Oakland Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, founded out of the Oak Hill Baptist Mission and formally organized in 1891, represents a particularly strong example of this cultural institution as a sanctuary of community governance and social structure. The church emerged within “*The Fort*”, a post-Civil War African American settlement formed by formerly enslaved people and laborers who established a vibrant and self-sustaining community adjacent to the dismantled Union stronghold Fort Ward.³⁰

Origins in Reconstruction-Era Self-Determination

Oakland Baptist Church traces its origins to 1888, when members of “*The Fort*” community began worshipping in a bush arbor as the Oak Hill Baptist Mission. This modest beginning reflects a broader regional pattern in which newly emancipated African Americans established independent religious institutions to secure autonomy over worship, education, and communal decision-making. The church moved to its current site at **3408 King Street** in 1893 and remained a focal point of “*The Forts*” cultural, spiritual, and civic life.³¹

As with many African American churches of the period, Oakland Baptist Church provided structure and governance through committees, boards, and member-driven accountability. Testimony from early leaders indicates a highly organized congregational system that governed moral behavior and social conduct, demonstrating the church’s role as a parallel legal and social

²⁷ [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

²⁸ [Oakland Baptist Church | Franconia History](#)

²⁹ [The Oakland Baptist Church \(Historical Marker\) | Franconia History](#)

³⁰ [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

³¹ [Ibid](#)

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

authority during an era of limited civil rights protections. For example, founder **John Wesley Casey**, who chaired the Deacon Board, described how the Board investigated community matters and enforced expectations for member conduct.³²

A Center for Community Governance and Social Regulation

During the early to mid-20th century, Oakland Baptist Church served as a hub of leadership within “*The Fort*” and the surrounding Seminary community. Deacons, superintendents, midwives, tradespeople, and educators affiliated with the church held key roles in shaping community norms, mediating disputes, coordinating charitable support, and upholding a shared moral code.

Individuals such as **Mollie Nelson**, a founder and midwife who “delivered babies all throughout the county,” and the extended **Lewis and Roy families**, whose long service on church boards exemplifies multigenerational leadership, highlight the church’s role in reinforcing networks of social care.³³

The Deacon Board in particular acted as a governing council, maintaining expectations of moral integrity both inside and beyond the church walls. This governance function was typical of African American congregations during Jim Crow, where churches often substituted for civil institutions that excluded or underserved Black residents.

Rebuilding, Resilience, and Spiritual Governance (1931–1975)

The original church structure burned in 1931, and under the leadership of Reverend Howard Barnes and the labor of congregation members, the building was reconstructed, with a second-floor sanctuary completed by 1940. This rebuilding effort—funded, planned, and executed internally—demonstrates further the independence and self-governance that characterized African American religious institutions of the era.³⁴

From the 1930s through the 1970s—years marked nationally by segregation, migration, social discrimination, and later the Civil Rights Movement—the church provided continuity, stability, and spiritual discipline. Leaders such as **Rev. Luther H. Mills**, the longest-serving pastor in church history during the mid-20th century, guided congregants through this period of profound social change, ensuring the church remained a sanctuary for spiritual life while also addressing the community’s physical, economic, and social welfare.³⁵

³² Ibid

³³ [Trail Sign: The Oakland Baptist Church](#)

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Ibid

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Alexandria GIS Division. (n.d.). *Interactive GIS map of Fort Ward Park and cemeteries*. City of Alexandria. <https://www.alexandriava.gov/gis/interactive-maps>

City of Alexandria. (n.d.). *Historic cemeteries of Alexandria*. AlexandriaVA.gov.
City of Alexandria. (2015). *Trail sign: Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery [PDF]*. Alexandria Archaeology. <https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/historic/info/archaeology/trailsignoaklandbaptistchurchcemetery.pdf>

City of Alexandria Planning Commission. (1997, June 3). *Master plan amendment #97-0001; Rezoning #97-0001: Oakland Baptist Church Quaker Lane Apartments [Meeting document]*. Department of Planning & Zoning, Alexandria, VA.
Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d.). *Timeline of the American Civil Rights Movement*. <https://www.britannica.com/list/timeline-of-the-american-civil-rights-movement>

Find A Grave. (n.d.). *Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery*. <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2461058/Oakland-Baptist-Church-Cemetery>

Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society. (n.d.). *Community contributions to "The Fort" Ward History Work Group [Unpublished oral histories]*.

Historical Marker Database. (n.d.). *Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery marker*. <https://www.hmdb.org>

Leonard, R. J. (1991, February 21). *Archaeological site inventory form, 44AX0150 Oakland Baptist Church*. Virginia Division of Historic Landmarks, Research Center for Archaeology.
Oakland Baptist Church. (n.d.). *Oakland Baptist Church*. <https://www.obcalexandria.church/>

Oakland Baptist Church. (1966). *Seventy-fifth anniversary of the Oakland Baptist Church and the twenty-fifth anniversary of its minister Rev. Luther Mills*. Oakland Baptist Church, Alexandria, VA.

Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. (n.d.). *Preserving the legacy*. <https://obccemeteryalexandria.com/>

The Zebra. (2025, March 3). *Plaque honors families who integrated Minnie Howard*. <https://thezebra.org/2025/03/03/plaque-honors-families-who-integrated-minnie-howard/>

The Zebra. (2020, February). *We built our own place: Oakland Baptist Church*. <https://thezebra.org/2020/02/09/we-built-our-own-place-oakland-baptist-church/>

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): DHR ID# 100-0211

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.43

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.822700 Longitude: -77.080340
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property known as Oakland Baptist Church is located at 3408 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22302, occupying a parcel situated at the convergence of King Street, West Braddock Road, and North Quaker Lane. The site includes the historic sanctuary (1893; expanded 1965) and the interconnected office/classroom building addition (1998-1999), forming a unified complex totaling approximately 3,260 sq ft for the sanctuary and 5,193 sq ft for the office/classroom addition.³⁶ The parcel is bounded by: King Street to the south, West Braddock Road to the west, North Quaker Lane to the east, and adjacent commercial and institutional properties to the north. The property is landlocked within A suburban setting and has no rural buffer or undeveloped perimeter.³⁷ The boundary includes the full parcel historically and currently associated with Oakland Baptist Church. This parcel contains the original 1893 sanctuary, subsequent 1965 additions, and the 1998 interconnected office/classroom expansion, all of which contribute to the church's historical significance as a center of African American religious, cultural, and social life.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The described boundary includes all land historically and currently associated with the Oakland Baptist Church at 3408 King Street, comprising: the 1893 sanctuary, the 1965 sanctuary expansion and the 1998 interconnected office/classroom building³⁸

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Facility Assessment

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Iburia Hall Haynes, Ph.D.
organization: Oakland Baptist Church
street & number: 3408 King Street
city or town: Alexandria state: VA zip code: 22302
e-mail: iburiahaynes@aol.com
telephone: 571-331-2637
date: 03/12/2026

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Oakland Baptist Church
Name of Property

City of Alexandria, VA
County and State

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of ____.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.


Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

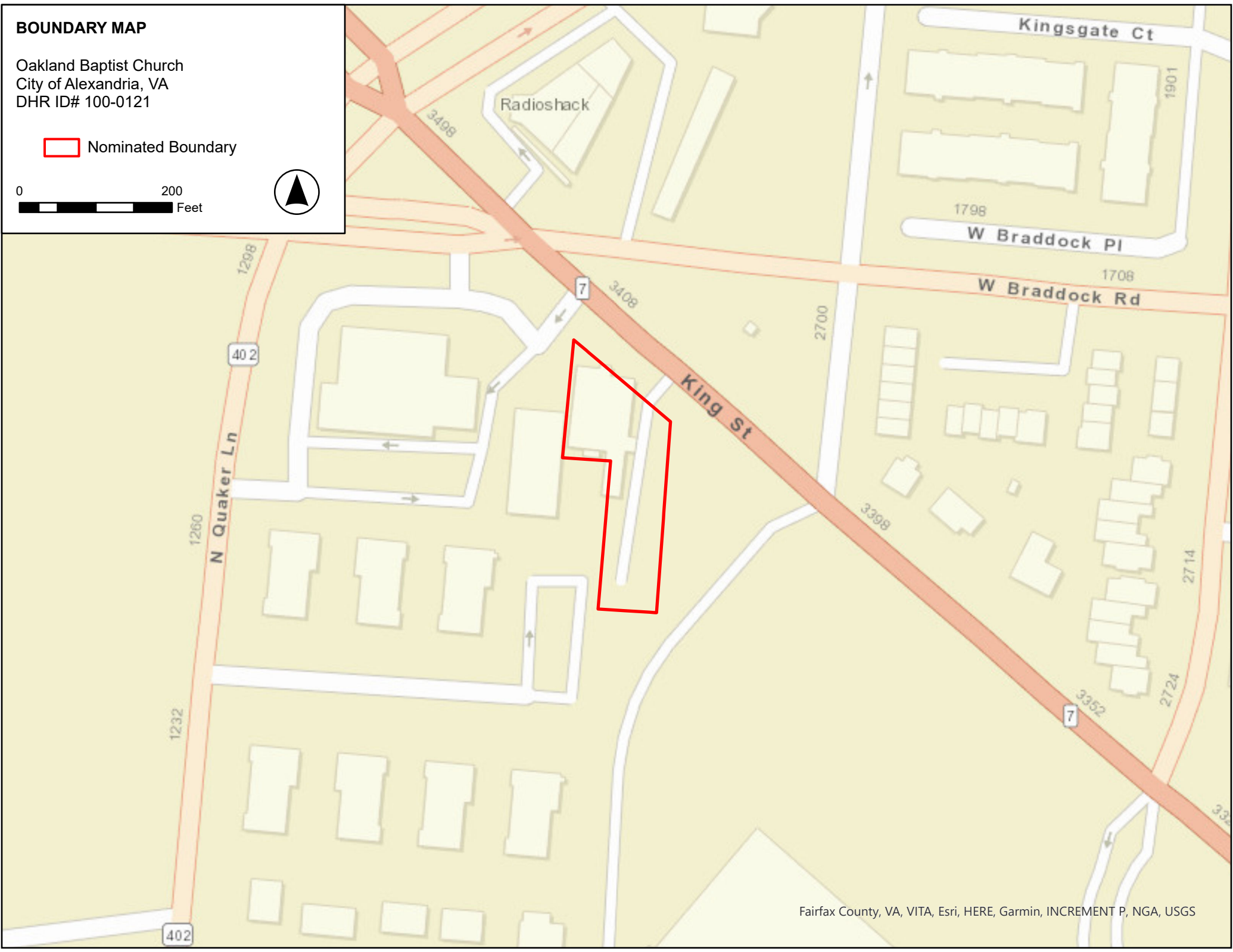
The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

BOUNDARY MAP

Oakland Baptist Church
City of Alexandria, VA
DHR ID# 100-0121

 Nominated Boundary

0 200
 Feet





OAKLAND
BAPTIST
CHURCH





NO
PARKING
FIRE
LANE

FDC



OAKLAN
BAPTI
CHU

5406

15



PLEASE REFRAIN FROM
Smoking
Drinking
Chewing Gum
In the presence
of all guests
Please do not
bring any pets
into the building.
Thank you.

<EXIT>

RESTROOMS
←

EXIT

**PLEASE
REFRAIN
FROM**

- Eating
- Drinking
- Chewing Gum

**in the sanctuary
at all times!**

Also Please Turn Off
Cell Phones & Pagers
During Services &
Rehearsal Hours.

100-114

FIRE
LOCAL



