

## Preliminary Archaeological Assessment Response

Date Received:    Date of Reply: 01-17-2023

Street Address: Fort Ward Park 4301 W. Braddock Rd., Alexandria, VA 22304

Applicant:

Phone:

### COMMENTS:

Because of steep slopes, the playground at Fort Ward Park is difficult for users to access. To make the playground more accessible, the City initially identified five possible locations for relocating the playground in the park (Figure 1). After evaluating the five locations, and hosting several public meetings, a consensus was reached with community stakeholders on two potential locations. One location (designated Option Area B) is located to the west of the existing playground on the top of a slope, and the other (Option Area D) is located on the west side of the park near the amphitheater (Figure 1).

Protection for cultural resources was built into the Fort Ward Management Plan that the City adopted in 2015 (<https://www.alexandriava.gov/parks/fort-ward-park-and-museum-area-management-plan>). Alexandria Archaeology reviews all ground disturbing projects proposed for Fort Ward as outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the park under Guidelines for Ground Disturbance Resources. Based on past archaeological and historical research, the park is divided into color-coded “cultural resource sensitivity areas” that identify both Civil War and Fort Community resources (Figure 1). Note that both Area B and D are in green shaded areas which technically require only a courtesy notification before work can begin. The City, however, has taken additional measures given the broader cultural sensitivity of Fort Ward, especially to descendants of The Fort Community. As such, Alexandria Archaeology has undertaken a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment for Areas B and D, a step usually associated with yellow and red shaded areas (Figure 1).

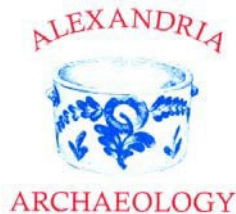
The following short narrative evaluates the archaeological potential for both locations. For research purposes, the park has been divided into 35 research lots. Option Area B is located within Research Lots 1 and 2, and Option Area D is in Research Lots 31 and 32 (Figure 2).

### Option Area B

Option Area B is located on the east side of the park, on the top of a slope overlooking the existing playground site (Figure 1). There is a potential for this location to have several different types of historical or archaeological sites: 1) Indigenous resources; 2) Civil War resources; and 3) Fort Community resources.

#### 1. Indigenous Resources

Fort Ward Park is located in northwest Alexandria in what is considered an upland setting. At



an approximate elevation of 250 ft. AMSL, the property presents a variety of potential settlement zones including those adjacent to water courses, a broad upland terrace, and contexts of varying degrees of slope in between. One archaeological site (44AX36) dating to the Indigenous period has been previously identified on the Fort Ward property, a small grouping of chipped quartz in a displaced context in one of the fort ramparts. Although Indigenous peoples almost certainly camped temporarily throughout the area as they collected resources and hunted game, the property has been heavily used beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. An archaeological shovel test survey conducted in 2012 did not turn up any Indigenous artifacts in the vicinity of Option Area B. As such, the potential for intact, significant Indigenous sites to be encountered within Option Area B is low.

## **2. Civil War Resources**

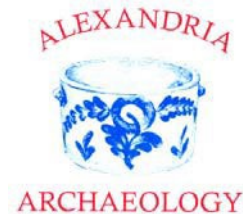
Option Area B is situated outside the interior of Fort Ward (Figure 3). However, this location is near a Civil War rifle trench that extends off the north bastion of the main fort to the northeast. Playground construction would not directly impact the rifle trench but placing the playground in this location could change foot traffic patterns in the park that might inadvertently encourage park users to climb on and erode this fragile resource. To address this concern, a buffer zone of thick shrubs will be established between the north end of the playground and the rifle trench to discourage activity there.

During a park-wide archaeological shovel test survey in 2012, archaeologists excavated test holes at 30 ft. intervals throughout the park, including in Option Area B. Shovel testing turned up no Civil War-period artifacts in this area. However, a metal detecting survey was conducted in and around the rifle trench near Area B (Figure 5; metal detected targets represented by green circles). This work identified a broad scatter of Civil War artifacts such as unfired Minie balls, and a few uniform buttons. These materials were diffuse and were not concentrated in one location to suggest a campsite but were generally spread along the rifle trench itself. Because of the sloping landform, the potential for identifying intact Civil War encampments or activity areas in Option Area B is low.

Several of the metal detected finds included a type of bullet known as Williams cleaners. These bullets were issued to Union soldiers in their cartridge boxes and were intended to be fired every tenth shot to clean the bore of the rifle. Soldiers disliked them because they were inaccurate, and often they would pick out the cleaner bullets from their cartridge boxes and discard them. This appears to have occurred along the rifle trench, and elsewhere in the park. Of the 20 unfired Minie balls recovered within the park, 11 of them are Williams cleaner bullets.

## **3. Fort Community Resources**

Several dozen resources related to The Fort neighborhood have been identified at Fort Ward Park (Figure 4). However, at the proposed location for Option Area B, neither historical research nor archaeological survey indicates the location of a dwelling or activity area associated with The Fort community. Most of Option Area B is situated within Research Lot 1, a 4.98-acre parcel that passed through the hands of several owners but was never developed. According to the chain of title for this lot, the Hooff family owned it as a portion of a 115-acre piece of property, then as 32 acres owned by Lillian Poor Johnson and Harry T. Poor (1899-1919), and T.F. Dodd (1919-1921). Dodd sold 10.7 acres of the property to James Walter Craven (1921-1926) who subsequently sold it to George Garrett,



Robert R. Dye, and Robert P. Dye (1926-1938). Eventually Edith Garrett inherited the land (1938-1960) and sold it to the Trustees of the Free Methodist Church of Alexandria (1960-1962) who held it for two years and then sold it to the City of Alexandria. None of the owners from Hooff to the Methodist Church developed the property and it remained vacant.

The proposed Option B area also may extend into Research Lot 2 (0.47 acres) (Figure 2). The Hooff family owned this portion of the property until selling it as part of a 10-acre parcel to Burr and Harriett Shorts in 1884. The Shorts built their home several hundred feet to the south in the center of their 10-acre property. Upon Harriett Shorts' death in 1919, the family land was subdivided into smaller parcels, with the northernmost 0.47 acres (Research Lot 2) going to Searles (Charles) McKnight. McKnight's widow Mary Jackson McKnight sold the 0.47 acres to George Garrett in 1927. The land then went through the same sequence of ownership as Research Lot 1 above. At no time in that chain of ownership is there evidence that Research Lot 2 was developed or built upon.

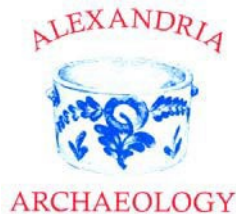
During the archaeological survey of the park in 2012, archaeologists encountered general park debris throughout the 4.98 acres in Research Lot 1 and the 0.47 acres in Research Lot 2; but again, no evidence of concentrations of artifacts to indicate the location of dwellings, outbuildings, or activity areas associated with The Fort community (Figure 5; shovel test holes represented by burgundy circles with the number of artifacts recovered from each on the upper right of the circle). The area between the existing playground and the proposed playground at Option B is steeply sloped, with a change of elevation of approximately 25 to 30 ft. This type of landform generally is not conducive for habitation unless major grading occurs. The fact that no one chose to build a conventional home in Research Lot 1 or 2 is likely because of the steep slopes.

## Option Area D

Option Area D is located on the west side of the park, to the south of the amphitheater, and along the boundary with St. Stephens/St. Agnes School (Figure 1). As with Area B, there is a potential for this location to have several different types of historical or archaeological sites: 1) Indigenous resources; 2) Civil War resources; and 3) Fort Community resources. Research Lots 31 and 32 pertain to Option Area D.

### 1. Indigenous Resources

Fort Ward Park is located in northwest Alexandria in what is considered an upland setting. At an approximate elevation of 250 ft. AMSL, the property presents a variety of potential settlement zones including those adjacent to water courses, a broad upland terrace, and contexts of varying degrees of slope in between. One archaeological site (44AX36) dating to the Indigenous period has been previously identified on the Fort Ward property, a small grouping of chipped quartz in a displaced context in one of the fort ramparts. Although Indigenous peoples almost certainly camped temporarily throughout the area as they collected resources and hunted game, the property has been heavily used beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. An archaeological shovel test survey conducted in 2012 did not turn up any Indigenous artifacts in the vicinity of Option Area D. As such, the potential for intact, significant Indigenous sites to be encountered within Option Area D is low.



## **2. Civil War Resources**

Option Area D is situated outside the interior of Fort Ward (Figure 3). During a park-wide archaeological shovel test survey in 2012, archaeologists excavated test holes at 30 ft. intervals throughout the park, including in Option Area D. No Civil War-period artifacts were encountered in shovel test holes in this section of the park. During the Civil War, this location was within field of fire on the west side of Fort Ward, and therefore would have been maintained as open land for purposes of defending against an attack from the west. Therefore, the potential for Civil War resources to be location within Option Area D is very low.

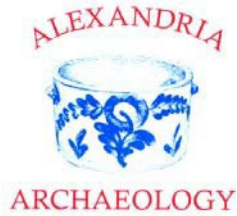
## **3. Fort Community Resources**

The proposed location of Option Area D overlaps with Research Lots 31 and 32 (Figure 2). James F. Jackson purchased 11.5 acres of land in 1894 that encompassed the western half of what is now Fort Ward Park (Research Lot 31). At the time of purchase, the 11.5 acres was vacant. The Jackson family built a house fronting on West Braddock Road and established a small family-community cemetery, located approximately 400 ft. to the north from the house, tucked up on the sloping rampart of the Civil War fort. Jackson died in 1923, and his property at Fort Ward eventually passed to a grandson, Garnett Ashby, in 1925. Ashby subsequently sold most of the Jackson land in the late 1920s to George Garrett, a developer. In 1913 the Jacksons sold John H. Peters 0.75 acres of land located in the southwest corner of their 11.5 acres (Research Lot 32). The Peters family held the lot until selling it to the City in 1960.

The proposed location of the Option Area D playground places it at the northern end of Research Area 32, the lot owned by the Peters family from 1913 to 1960 (Figure 6). The main house built and occupied by the Peters was located on the other end of the lot to the south, adjacent to a second house built by Frank Lewis in the mid-1920s, and later acquired by the Peters family in 1935. Archaeological shovel testing in 2012 at 30 ft. intervals throughout the area demonstrated a dispersed scatter of artifacts, mostly concentrated on the south end of the lots where the houses once stood (Figure 7). Both the Peters and Lewis houses were destroyed when the bus loop for the adjacent private school was built in the 1960s. Within the area where the playground is proposed, artifact density dropped considerably as compared to the south end of the lots near the houses.

## **Archaeological Potential of Option Areas B and D**

Based on historic maps, documents, and a 2012 archaeological survey of Fort Ward Park, neither Option Area B nor D appears to be in an area of the park that will impact significant archaeological resources. Nevertheless, once a final location for the playground is chosen, Alexandria Archaeology will develop an archaeological monitoring plan that will guide the oversight of all ground disturbing activity.



**Contact Archaeologist**

Signature 

Date: 01-17-2023

**City Archaeologist**

Signature 

Date: 02-17-2023



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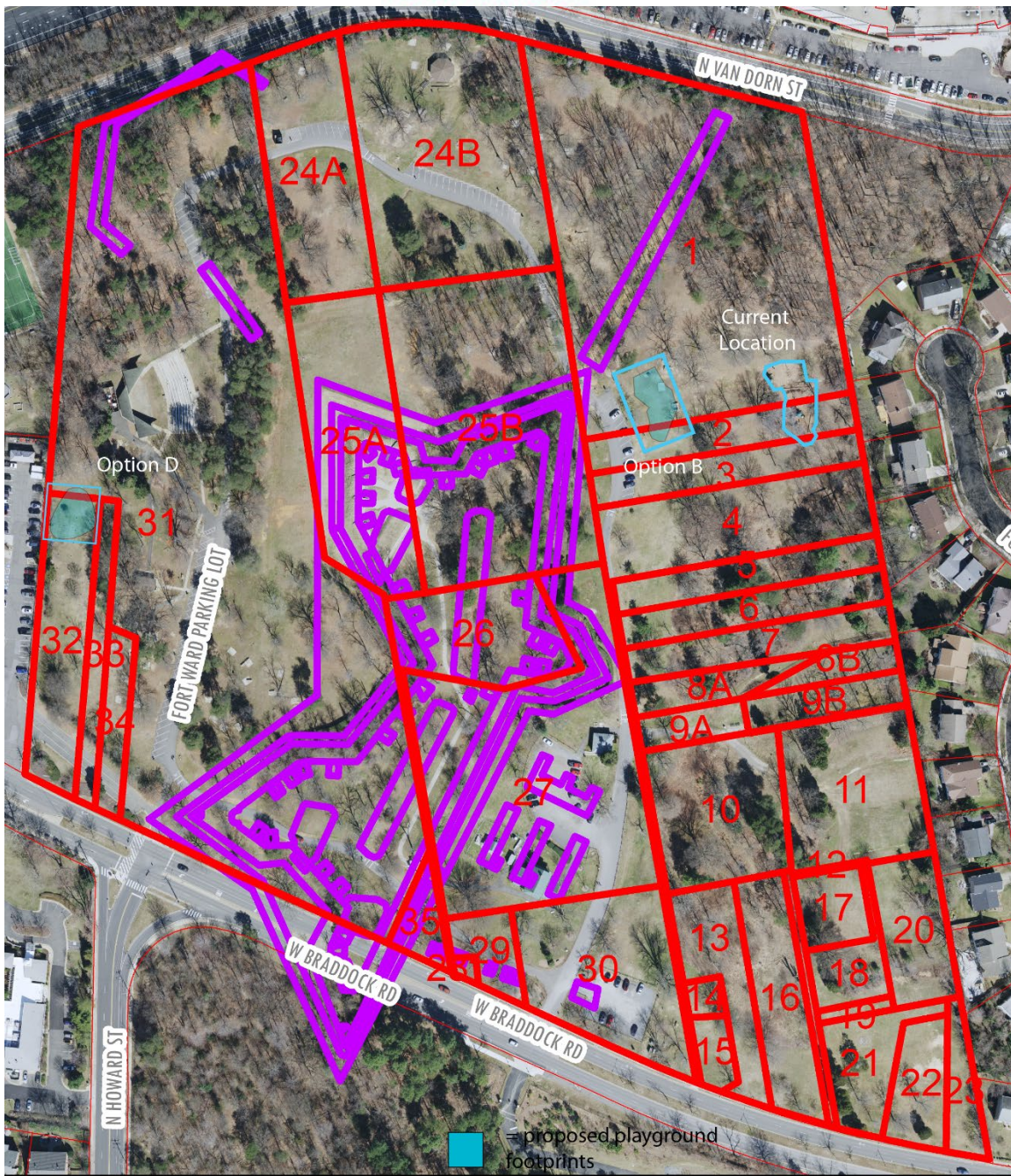
## Fort Ward Park Playground Accessibility



Figure 1. The five alternative locations for the re-located playground at Fort Ward, as presented at a July 2022 public meeting, overlaid on an archaeological sensitivity map.



Figure 2. Research lots within the bounds of Fort Ward Park, with proposed playground locations overlaid.



## Fort Ward Park

### Original Fort Elements [in purple]

Figure 3. Option Areas B and D in relation to the identified Civil War resources (purple) at the Park.



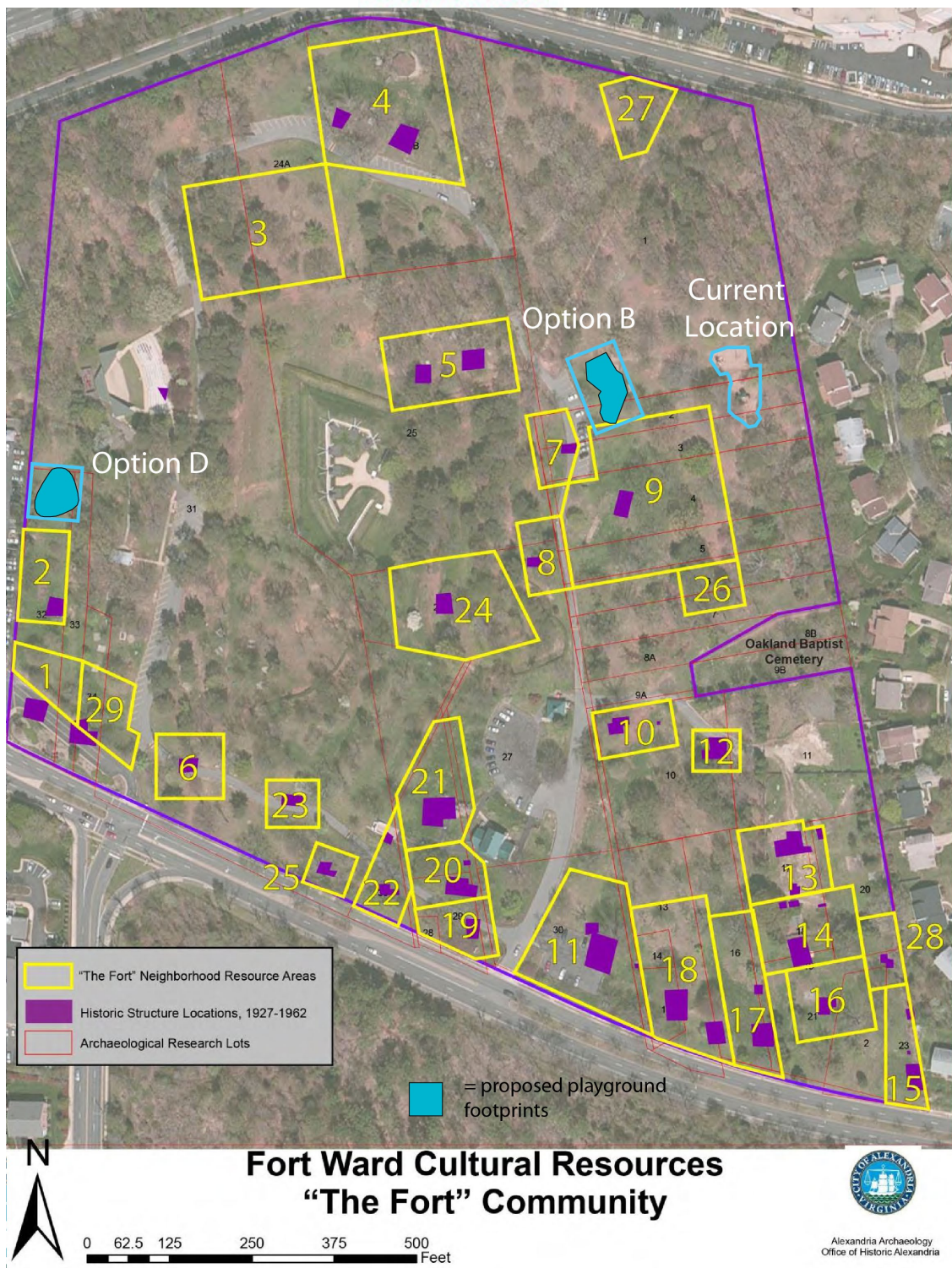


Figure 4. Locations of The Fort community resources in the park.



Figure 5. Locations of shovel test pits (light purple circles) and metal detector hits (green circles) in and around Option Area B.

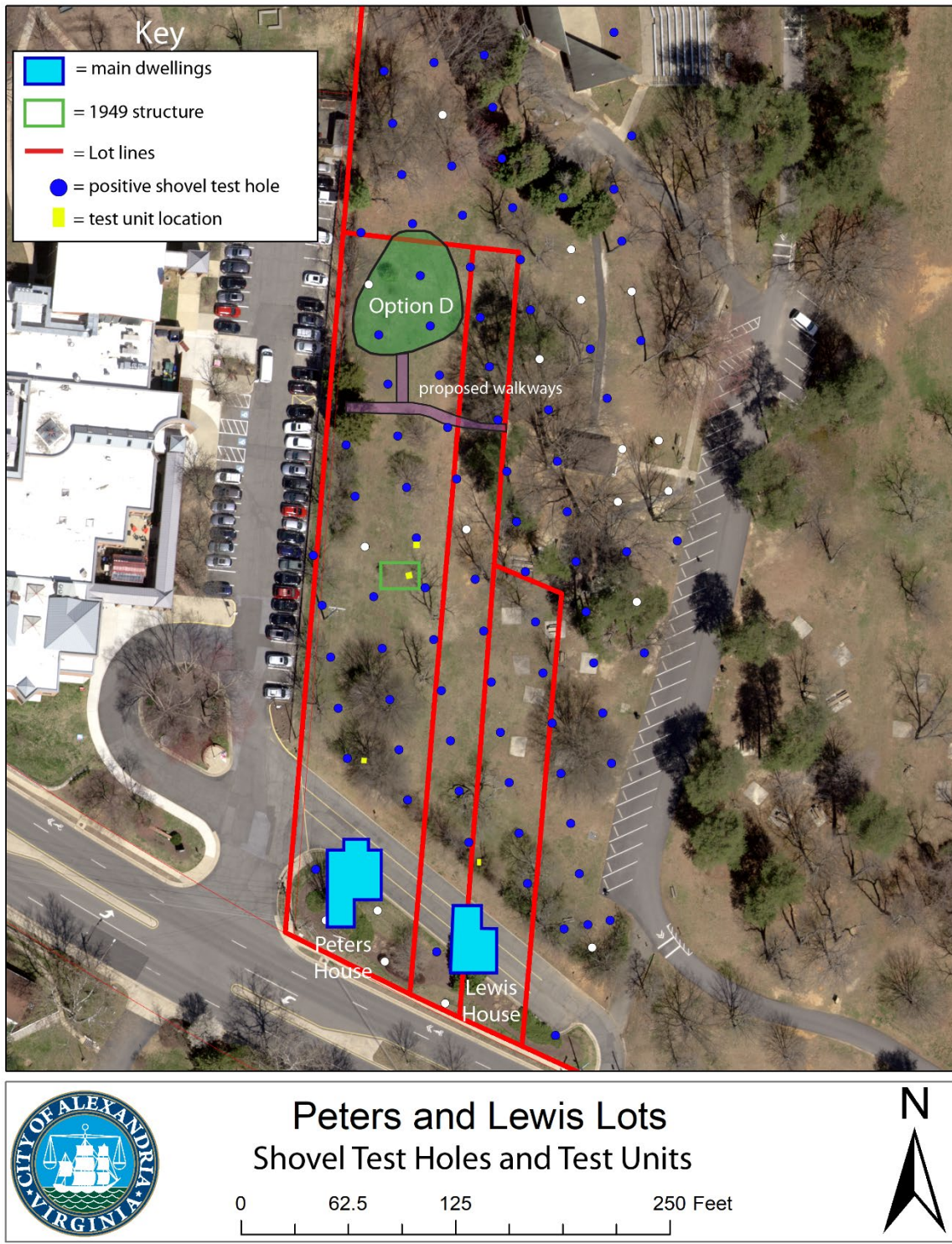


Figure 6. Locations of shovel test holes at Research Lots 32, 33, and 34.

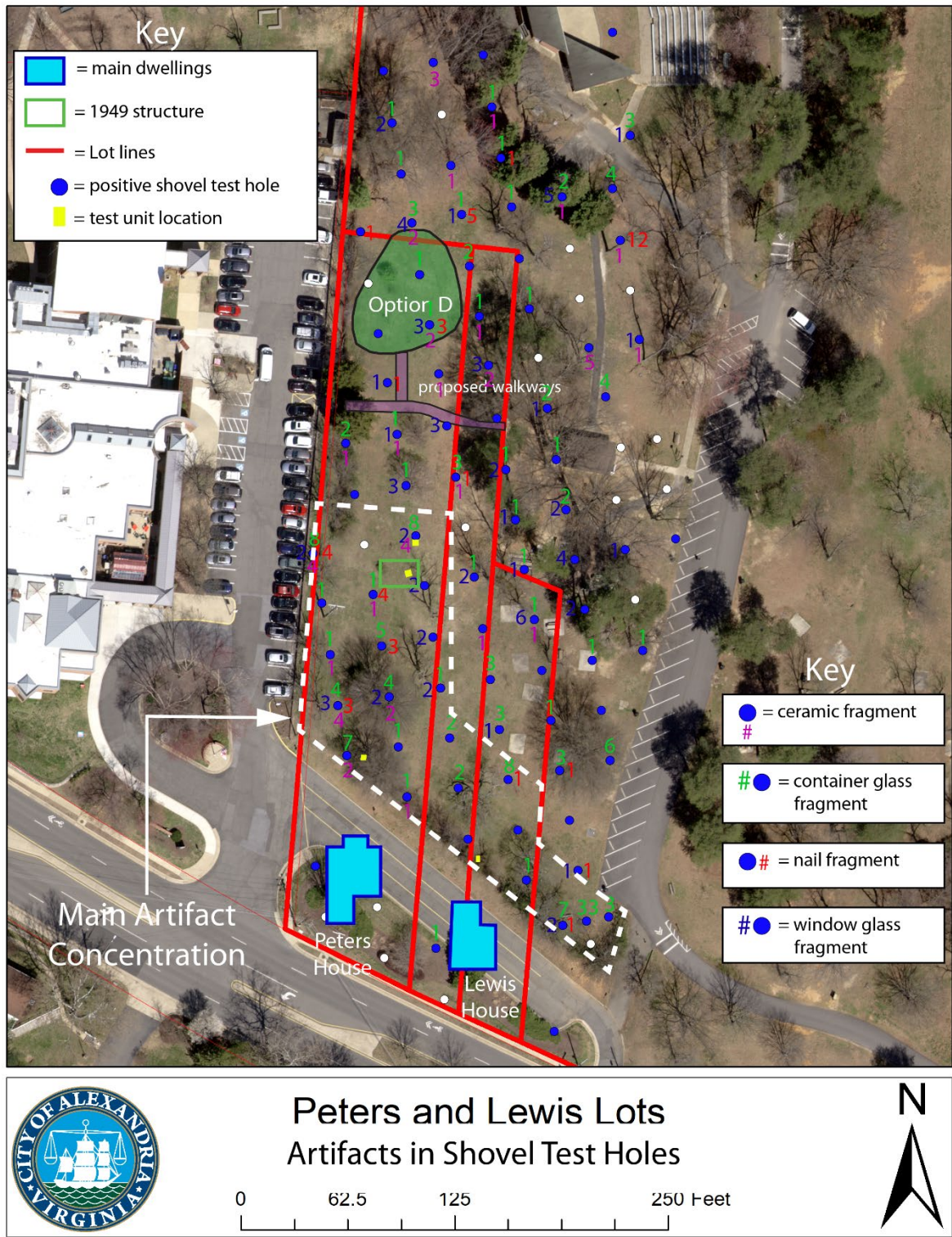


Figure 7. Distribution of artifacts in shovel test holes in and around Option Area D.