

**Fort Ward Park and Museum Area
Interagency Annual Report for FY2024
(July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)**

Introduction: In accordance with the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan, adopted in 2015, and an interdepartmental MOU adopted in 2018 and updated in 2021, representatives from City departments that are responsible for managing Park operations have met quarterly to discuss issues and coordinate projects related to management of the Park's grounds, facilities and historic areas. These departments are: Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA); the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA); Department of General Services (DGS); and Transportation and Environmental Services (TES). This annual report summarizes the accomplishments and status of projects and initiatives for FY2024.

RPCA:

Picnic Shelter Accessibility Improvements. A forest conservation area is proposed to be established south of the picnic shelter area, across the drainage channel. The conservation area fulfills stormwater management requirements for picnic shelter pathways. The area is demarcated with stanchions and conservation signage. In mid-October Dominion Surveyors staked and flagged the perimeters of the conservation area to facilitate the planting of up to 25 native trees within the area. A planting plan was completed focusing on native species to support increased biodiversity.

Playground Accessibility Project. In FY 2024, the consultant was hired to prepare the engineering and permitting plans for the final playground location, known as Option B, which would move the playground to the top of the hill from its current location. Site survey, tree inventory, and geotechnical investigation were completed. Any ground disturbing activity will follow ground disturbance protocols. A community meeting was held in June 2024 to update the community on the development of design. The update included reviewing impacted trees and other site constraints affecting the playground site.

Natural Resources Management. Throughout 2023 and 2024, contractors completed targeted landscape maintenance and restoration work on the grounds of Fort Ward Park. The goal is to improve landscape management practices that are consistent with the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan. In consultation with the Office of Historic Alexandria, RPCA Natural Resources and Urban Forestry Divisions, and Fort community descendants, the work included foliar-treated all non-native invasive plants, Poison Ivy, and brambles in and around the meadow area, along the cemetery fence lines, the ravine and intermittent stream, and the Arborist's Memorial.

Fort Ward Accessible Parking Improvements. This project will provide an ADA compliant parking space in each vehicular parking area. The engineer consultant, Adtek Engineers completed the 100% design plan for the front entrance gravel lot and the museum parking lot. Staff obtained initial cost estimates for construction.

OHA:

Archaeology. Alexandria Archaeology continued to consult on and monitor several ground disturbance projects in the Park and contribute historical information on Fort community historic resource areas.

- **Playground Relocation Project.** Archaeology worked closely with RCPA and community members during the process of choosing a site for relocating the Park's playground.
- **Fort Community Burial Areas Fencing Project.** Archaeology staff helped determine location of post holes and monitored installation.
- **Monitoring Projects in the Park.** Alexandria Archaeology continued to be on-call for monitoring any ground disturbing activities that could potentially impact sensitive archaeological resources in the Park.

Interpretive Plan projects. Work continued on interpretive projects, notably finalizing content for the revision and production of ten new historic fort markers to replace old, deteriorated ones. Interpretive signage was designed according to the new design template adopted by the Fort Ward Interpretive Plan process.

Park Memorial projects.

- **Fort Community Burial Areas Fencing Project:** In accordance with Fort Ward Management Plan goals, OHA staff led planning efforts to research fencing styles and procure a vendor for the installation of permanent metal fencing to protect and further recognize Fort community cemetery and burial areas in the Park. On-site and virtual public meetings were held to inform the community about the project. The fencing project was completed for the Old Grave Yard, Adams burial area, Clark burial site, and Jackson Cemetery in October 2023.
- **Jackson Cemetery Memorial planning:** Staff continued to collaborate with Jackson family descendants on ideas for a Jackson Cemetery Memorial.

Oral History interviews. Oral histories were recorded with three members of the Fort Ward/Seminary community for inclusion in the Oral History Center's collection, managed by OHA.

Museum projects and outdoor preservation/improvements projects.

- A historic landscape specialist consulted with OHA and RCPA on a preservation treatment plan for the Civil War fort's rifle trench earthen remains.
- Fort Ward Ceremonial Gate conservation improvements implemented.
- Fiber optic cable to the Museum was installed.
- A new mowing contract for historic areas of Fort Ward Park was awarded. OHA staff continued to supervise and monitor mowing and maintenance of historically sensitive areas of the Park.
- The Museum opened a new exhibition, "Lewis Cass White: Preserving the Legacy of Fort Stevens," for the 160th anniversary of the historic Defenses of Washington battle. The Museum's significant Lewis Cass White collection was included on OHA's website as part of the department's online collections.

Support from the Friends of Fort Ward. The Museum's friends group sponsored an opening for the Lewis Cass White exhibition, funded the annual Civil War Christmas in Camp event, and a Civil War musical performance by the 8th Regiment Green Machine Band for Civil War Camp Day. The organization also funded the acquisition of a letter for the Museum collection written by a soldier stationed in the Defenses of Washington in 1863 which mentions emancipation celebrations in the area.

DGS:

General Services coordinated with Museum staff on renovations to the Fort Ward Ceremonial Gate, which were completed by historic preservation firm Oak Grove Restoration.

TES:

TES surveyors verified perimeters of Fort community burial areas for completion of the fencing project.