

**Fort Ward Park and Museum Area
Interagency Annual Report for FY2026
(July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)**

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 FY2026.

RPCA:

Playground Accessibility Project. In August, the City awarded the Invitation to Bid for the playground construction. The contractor began construction in November 2025 with an anticipated summer 2026 completion. The contractor experienced some delays due to inclement weather in January and February and was able to make up days through weekend work and other efficiencies. At the end of the fiscal year, the project was 90% complete. The demolition, grading, stormwater management facilities, playground, plantings, reforestation area, ADA parking, ADA ramp and site furnishings were installed. Walkthroughs are anticipated July 2026.

Natural Resources Management Natural Resources coordinated contract work for management of natural areas within the park, including a meadow mowing in May 2026. That same month, city horticulturists conducted vegetation surveys across four subplots, finding that 46.8% of the recorded vegetation consisted of invasive species and 53.2% of native species. In June, contract work continued along the perimeter of the park with mechanical removal targeting invasive species, supported by limited, selective chemical treatments. Annual fall vegetation surveys will continue to monitor the effectiveness of these management methods.

Urban Forestry Management

Throughout the year, Urban Forestry staff along with contractors addressed storm damage and conducted ongoing tree maintenance. In addition, they coordinated with the Alexandria Beautification Commission to provide an updated plaque for the Arborist Memorial, which was installed in March 2026. Furthermore, native trees were planted around the memorial and in the reforestation section behind the newly renovated playground.

Fort Ward Accessible Parking Improvements. This project will provide an ADA compliant parking space in each vehicular parking area. Construction of the ADA parking spaces in the museum parking and amphitheater were completed. The work included asphalt repaving, drainage improvements, and ADA parking space striping and signage. Alexandria Archaeology monitored the construction.

OHA:

Archaeology. Alexandria Archaeology has continued to consult with City staff on ground disturbance activities and projects in Fort Ward Park that could potentially impact sensitive

historical resources on the Park grounds. This year, these included the Playground relocation project, ADA Park improvements project, new fiber optic installation, installation of the Jackson Cemetery Memorial, and collaboration on text for three interpretive markers for Fort community burial areas.

Interpretive Plan and Park memorial projects. Several significant projects related to the recognition and interpretation of Fort community burial areas were accomplished.

- The Jackson Cemetery Memorial was finalized and installed in early 2026. OHA staff collaborated with Jackson family descendants to fulfill this project.
- Three identification markers were developed and installed to interpret and recognize the Old Grave Yard, Adams burial plot and Clark burial area.
- An interpretive marker for the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery was installed to replace the original marker that was damaged during winter snow removal.

Interpretive signage was designed according to the new design template adopted by the Fort Ward Interpretive Plan process.

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

Museum and historic area projects. Significant accomplishments included:

- Implementation of a new seasonal landscaping contract to assist with annual maintenance and preservation of the historic fort and Fort community burial areas. OHA staff continue to supervise and monitor mowing maintenance in historic areas of the Park.
- Staff began the process of obtaining quotes for the replacement of deteriorated gun platforms and a damaged 6-pounder gun carriage in the restored Northwest bastion.
- Staff consulted with RPCA natural resources staff on invasive vegetation in the historic fort.
- OHA staff coordinated with RPCA urban forestry staff on replacement of a memorial tree near the Museum dedicated to Col. Edward Boyer, a founding member of the Friends of Fort Ward.
- The Museum opened two new exhibitions: "Aboard Ship with the Jack-Tars of the Union Navy," in conjunction with the U.S. Navy's 250th anniversary, and "Buglers & Brass Bands: Soldier Musicians in the Civil War." Both feature objects from the Museum's extensive Civil War collection.
- Objects from Fort Ward Museum's Civil War collection were featured in OHA's 250th anniversary exhibition, "Stories of U.S.: Collections Capture Our History," which opened June 11 at Alexandria's History Museum at The Lyceum. The exhibition includes a section, "Collecting Stories," which features excerpts from oral history interviews with residents of the Seminary neighborhood.

Support from the Friends of Fort Ward. The Museum's friends group sponsored the annual Civil War Christmas in Camp event, and a Civil War musical performance by the 8th Regiment Green Machine Band on Armed Forces Day in May to accompany the opening of the Museum's

new Civil War music exhibition. The organization also provided funds for a Museum exhibit on the Fort community, planned for FY2027.

DGS:

General Services oversaw the replacement of a new HVAC unit for the Museum, and repair and partial replacement of Museum gutters damaged by winter storms. DGS staff also oversaw installation of protective UV film on the Officers' Hut windows.

TES:

No significant projects this fiscal year.