



**Fort Ward Historic Park
Draft Interpretive Plan
September 13, 2018**

Table of Contents

Executive Summary/Introduction 2

Background 2

Site 3

Project Scope and Goals..... 4

Project Schedule..... 4

Audience..... 5

Visitorship..... 5

Stakeholders and Community Members..... 6

The Story..... 8

Intangible Resources..... 9

Interpretive Elements 10

 1. Museum Enhancements 11

 2 and 3. Orientation Stations 11

 4. Home Frame Structure 12

 5. Community Gateway 13

 6. Commemoration Space 13

 7. Existing, Updated, and New Waysides..... 14

 8. Historic Site Markers 15

 Educational Programming..... 16

 Brochure 17

 Mobile Web Element..... 17

Bibliography and References 18

Appendix A: Meeting Notes and Dispositions 19

Appendix B: Public Meeting Surveys and Stakeholder Responses 20

Appendix C: Mobile Web Functionality and Wireframes 20

Executive Summary/Introduction

This Draft Interpretive Plan provides an overview of the project scope, goals, and progress at this stage of Interpretive Planning. Overview themes, interpretive elements, and goals for visitor experience have emerged from a culmination of research, site visits, planning meetings, and stakeholder and community surveys. The document will cover a series of interpretive elements, and includes detailed notes from previous meetings as well as survey data, which appear in an additional Appendix. The document should be reviewed in conjunction with the Draft Concept Design drawings package, dated July 20, 2018. More detailed discussions of the following overarching topics appear in the remainder of this Plan:

Goals

This document outlines deliverables for the remainder of the Interpretive Planning and Concept Design period and for the final product, and includes an updated project schedule for the duration of this phase of work.

Audience and Visitor Experience

Successful interpretive plans require an understanding of how the suggested elements will work within the space, as well as how the typical visitor will experience the site. Throughout this document, visitor experience will be considered in all contexts. Specific emphasis continues to focus on an overarching visitor experience, which manifests both in the ways visitors interact with the many features of Fort Ward Historic Park and in how the interpretation creates a cohesive narrative for their visit(s).

Overarching Themes

The project team and stakeholders have developed an overarching theme, Bastions of Freedom, to be reflected throughout the entirety of the site. This has helped to establish a unified history of Fort Ward, including both the Fort as a military installation and integral part of the Defenses of Washington but also as a home for those who lived in “The Fort” community. The Bastions of Freedom narrative is outlined in more detail later in this document.

Interpretive Elements

This document will provide an in depth discussion of each of the proposed new interpretive elements, and how they fit within the context of the overall theme and envisioned visitor experience. Again, please refer to the companion drawings package, which provides visuals and drawings that further describe the proposed interpretive elements.

Background

Preserved and operated by the City of Alexandria’s Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RCPA) departments, Fort Ward Historic Park is a unique resource, preserving and interpreting key aspects of the city’s history. In addition to its role in preserving national history as part of the Civil War Defenses of Washington, the site represents the local community’s complex social history. Fort Ward is a nexus of powerfully universal and intensely personal narratives that, together, signify both the ideals and the struggles that characterize the legacy of the American Civil War in United States history.

Fort Ward is the best-preserved of all the forts that comprised the Defenses of Washington during the Civil War, and it is the only one of these sites featuring consistent interpretation. Since the park was established in the 1960s around the centennial anniversary of the Civil War, interpretation—including reconstructions, replicas, museum exhibits, and programs—has focused primarily on that historical period of significance. In recent years, additional interpretation of the “The Fort” community has increased.

The goal of this project is to generate an Interpretive Plan that, as described in the project’s initial request for proposals, continues to “expand interpretation at the Park to cover the full range of its history, especially with regard to the African American experience” and the postwar “Fort” community. Fort Ward’s Civil War history will remain, but new interpretive elements will explore the complicated legacy of that pivotal era by including multiple perspectives surrounding the war and post-war community. A Conceptual Design of new interpretive signage, self-guided materials (including a digital component), educational program suggestions, and a printed brochure are also part of the scope, and interpretive suggestions are detailed later in this document. The City has budgeted for the completion of the project, with a phased schedule for implementation of the selected design elements over the coming years.

Site

Under the auspices of the City of Alexandria, the 42.75-acre Park on West Braddock Road is maintained and operated by the Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities department. The Office of Historic Alexandria administers its historical features, Museum, interpretive programs, and promotion/marketing. Both organizations help manage the capital improvement process. Marketing and promotional work are done by Museum staff through OHA and VisitAlexandria, working closely with regional partners like the Civil War Trails Association. The community and friends groups are key partners in ongoing activities at the site.

The 36.5-acre historical section of the park includes:

- Remains of earthworks, trenches, and other archaeological evidence from the Civil War period
- The reconstructed Northwest Bastion with replica cannons
- The Museum (with its ~4,000-artifact collection), Officer’s Hut, and restroom complex built to represent Civil War-era structures
- 3 Cemeteries (marked and unmarked), numerous houselots and associated features and other archaeological evidence (the most recent being the original school/church/residence evidence uncovered in the former maintenance yard) dating to the post-Civil War African American community known as “The Fort”
- Registered Native American archeological sites
- Landscape features, such as Schoolhouse Lane
- Interpretive and wayfinding signage and paths of varying materials

The entire Park complex is open to the public and offers numerous recreational opportunities, including walking paths, a playground (slated for relocation within the grounds), and picnic/event facilities. For many visitors, Fort Ward is seen primarily as a leisure park, though public awareness has begun to shift, reflecting the active role stakeholders have taken in park preservation and promotion.

Project Scope and Goals

The **scope** of this project includes the following deliverables:

- A Comprehensive Interpretive Plan
- A Concept Plan for an Interpretive Trail in the Park that may be implemented in phases
- A printed brochure to accompany the new Interpretive Trail features
- Recommendations for other self-guided interpretive materials to include a digital/AV approach
- Recommendations for development of programs and educational materials for K-12 educational use
- A detailed breakdown of costs for implementation of the above items

This phase of the project, the Draft Interpretive Plan and Concept Design, includes the following deliverables:

- Recommendations for implementing the Preferred Thematic Alternative
- A Draft Exhibit Interpretive Plan
- A summary of stakeholder meetings and input leading up to this Phase
- A further developed site plan, including locations of waysides, site markers, and updates inside the museum
- An updated project schedule and budget

Interpretive materials and plans support these overall **goals**:

- Interpret relevant themes and stories pertaining to Fort Ward's history and its layered past as revealed in the landscape
- Identify and design tools and methods to interpret the Park's natural and cultural resources
- Increase public awareness and appreciation of the Park's historical significance on a local, regional, and national level
- Augment and update the existing Civil War defense story and add interpretation of other aspects of history, especially the postwar African American experience

Project Schedule

This chart outlines the schedule for the remaining deliverables, which will fulfill the remaining steps in the planning/concept design phase of work. Completion of this contract is currently scheduled for March 2019. The delays from the original completion date (12/18) are largely the result of accommodating the important feedback the team has received from stakeholder groups.

This Draft Interpretive Plan includes a finalized overarching theme, further design development, as showcased in the presentation materials, and additional interpretive elements detailed in this material. Implementation (production, fabrication, and installation) of the components will take place in phases after the current scope and are not part of this contract, with the exception of the Printed Brochure, for which an initial run will be produced. Note that design-to budgets for each element are an important piece of our deliverables.

Phase III—Draft Interpretive Plan	July 2018 – November 2018
Deliverables	Timeframe
Draft Concept Design and Interpretive Plan Presentation	July 20, 2018
Client Review and Feedback on Draft Presentation	August 8, 2018
Stakeholder Meeting #3, presenting Draft Presentation, revised per review and discussion	September 13, 2018 21-day review period
Client Comments and Approvals	October 2018
Phase IV—Final Interpretive Plan	November 2018 – March 2019
Deliverables	Timeframe
Final Concept Design and Interpretive Plan Presentation	November 2018
Stakeholder Meeting #4	January 2019
Client Final Direction and Approvals	February 2019
Project Completion	March 2019

Audience

Good interpretation begins with as complete an understanding of the visitor as possible—who are we reaching? Who are potential visitors not yet coming to the park, or not utilizing the interpretation? What do visitors know before coming, what can visitors learn during a visit to Fort Ward? What are the goals, interests, needs, and expectations of different types of visitors?

Visitorship

Fort Ward Park is more than a municipal park. It is a nationally significant site with a powerful story, where active archaeological and historical work that matters to its community takes place alongside valued recreation opportunities. Survey work by Fort Ward staff indicates that about 10,000 people per year visit the Museum itself, but that overall site visitation is about 40,000-50,000 (~51,000 for FY 2017). This includes both locals and tourists. Though most are local and regional, visitors regularly come from across the country and from abroad. Local visitors are often families— representative of the neighborhood— whereas tourists are more likely to be older travelers.

Though school group visitation has dropped due to practical constraints limiting field trips, K-12 educational materials are important and a popular outreach “trunk” program exists. Ninety-minute tours and shorter “meet and greet” sessions are available by reservation, but staff time and space constraints limit this from a practical standpoint. Most requests come from adult civic groups, or those interested in the military history of Fort Ward.

Anecdotally, at least half of all visitors come specifically to visit the historical site and/or for planned interpretive programs. Numbers have increased recently with events such as the Civil War sesquicentennial (2011-2015) and the release of the popular PBS series, *Mercy Street*. The site is part of Civil War Trails Association tours, and many who come also visit places like Arlington National Cemetery, the Lyceum and other Old Town sites, Civil War sites like Manassas, and African American sites like the Alexandria and Smithsonian museums.

One City staffer noted that he observes a sense of “ownership of the park that isn’t seen everywhere” among community members and staff. With the Park’s natural and recreational resources and location, many locals visit regularly—even daily or weekly. They may or may not always come for the historical experience, but every visit may enhance awareness and community involvement. A goal of the project is to “increase public awareness and establish more community partnerships,” and the City’s desire is to balance outreach to new audiences with maintaining and better serving existing ones.

Overall, there is a desire to see more diverse visitorship, more representative of the entire area. There has been increased interest in African American history and heritage, but it was noted that there is awareness of the “need to deal with issues of African American heritage and inequality” given the traditional narrative of the site. It was noted that the Park’s message about the struggle for equality and freedom has the potential to resonate with “everyone,” and that outreach can and should also extend to local communities of recent immigrants, who may identify with similar universal concepts.

Stakeholders and Community Members

Involving and serving local communities and other stakeholders is an important part of this interpretive planning process, and the unique history of the Fort Ward site and project makes this all the more crucial. Some of the stakeholder groups that have been included in this discussion are:

- Fort Ward Interpretive Planning Committee— the site’s interpretive planning stakeholder group
- Friends of Fort Ward— the Museum and historic fort’s official support group, comprised of members from the local area and throughout the country, which provides fund-raising and advocacy support, largely focused on the site’s Civil War heritage; organization founded after local residents preserved the site’s integrity from encroaching development in 1982
- The Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society
- Members of the public with an interest in the Civil War and the Defenses of Washington, and Civil War and military historians
- Alexandria Commission on Disabilities— stakeholders with an interest in making the historic and recreational resources of the Park as accessible as possible
- Virginia Naturalists

Challenges in the relationship between the City and community stakeholders, especially descendants of the original African American residents of “The Fort” neighborhood, have been significantly improved through the formation of the Interpretive Committee and other organizations and forums for dialogue. The task remains to balance the oral histories and experiences of the local community with its national identity as a Civil War military site.

Building trust and fostering collaboration that allows everyone with a stake in the interpretive plan to have a voice, remaining true to both the personal/cultural and the historical realities, is paramount.

Furthering the “Bastions of Freedom” theme through the inclusion of the African American community story in the museum and interpretive elements throughout the park has been key in establishing this much needed balance and finding the lens through which to provide visitors with multiple narratives and their intersection at Fort Ward Historic Park.

Visitor Experience

As a part of the interpretive exhibit plan, it is necessary to consider the Fort Ward Historic Park experience from the perspective of the visitor. A primary goal of this Interpretive Plan is to create a cohesive Fort Ward Historic Park experience for site visitors through the implementation of orientation and wayfinding materials and programming that will help the visitor experience the most engagement with the site during their visit.

Orientation and Wayfinding

General Orientation and Wayfinding signage is an essential element in creating a smooth and accessible visitor experience. At Fort Ward Museum and Park, visitors will engage with orientation signage and waysides, both of which will include tactile site maps.

The Orientation Station and Stationette, described in more detail later in this document, will provide visitors with an introduction to the history of the site, as well as allow them to engage with a tactile map of the site. Visitors can gather an idea of what to see and where to go before beginning to explore the historic site.

While exploring, visitors will encounter the waysides, which will also include a tactile map of historic Fort Ward or the Community space, allowing visitors to orient themselves within the area of the park they are engaging with at that time, and help them to envision historic structures that are no longer standing.

Self-Guided Visitor Materials and Printed Brochure

Visitors will also have the option to pick up a printed brochure, to guide them through the site and provide additional information regarding what to see and do at Fort Ward Museum and Park. The brochure will provide an introductory overview to Fort Ward Historic Park, including interpretation of the Bastions of Freedom theme. The brochure will also contain an illustrated site map, for visitors to orient themselves throughout the site. The map will highlight various waysides, interpretive elements, and walking paths.

The printed brochure is the one physical deliverable that is part of the current scope. Since the new interpretive elements within the Park will not yet be complete, the first print-run will include a base map with locations that can be updated in the future, but will still be compelling and useful in the scope of this project.

Educational Programming and Events

Fort Ward Museum and Park have a slate of public programming, events, and 4th-12th grade outreach materials available through a “trunk” checkout program. Part of the scope of the

interpretive plan is to develop new ideas to expand upon these, in tandem with the new exhibit elements.

One possible way to do this is the proposed facilitated dialogue stations that can be transported to schools as needed, or kept standing within the museum. These stations will allow visitors to engage independently with the material, and would not require staff supervision. Visitors will be able to approach the facilitated dialogue station, read from a set script and engage directly with people who served at the fort during the Civil War, or people who later lived in “The Fort” community. The stations would also be designed for easy transport, to be used in classrooms or additional settings.

This facilitated dialogue interactive is described in more detail in the Interpretive Elements section of this document.

Bastions of Freedom

The theme of an ongoing struggle for freedom and equality has consistently emerged throughout the interpretive planning process as a core theme across the complete history of Fort Ward. **As part of the Civil War Defenses of Washington, Fort Ward served as a “Bastion of Freedom” for the Union army, as it protected the nation’s capital. Since its initial use as a military fort, Fort Ward has continued to function as a symbol of freedom and individual agency for the African American community that made their home on this land.**

By approaching Fort Ward as a symbol of freedom, we can allow space for multiple perspectives, including the visitor’s, to emerge within the interpretation of this historic site. Although appearing separate at the surface level, the two eras and two communities, war and post-war, who made Fort Ward their home can be told as one continuous story within the context of their unifying fight for freedom.

The Story

Resources are tangible and intangible elements of a site, a collection, or a community that provide the material for interpretation. Tangible resources are the physical aspects of a site and the people, both past and present that played a role in influencing the site’s overall story. Intangible resources are the ideas, themes, concepts, and overall emotions inspired by the historic site. In the case of Fort Ward, this includes stories and themes as well as documents, artifacts, and features in the landscape or built environment.

Tangible Resources

Site Features

- Civil War Fort Earthworks, Trench Line, and Outlying Battery
- Reconstructed Northwest Bastion
- Historically accurate Civil War reconstructions such as the Ceremonial Gate, Officers’ Hut, and Maintenance/Restroom building
- Fort community parcels/homesteads with family names, documentation; archaeological features

- Cemeteries/burials—marked and unmarked
- 4,000+ Civil War object collection
- Archaeological resources relating to Native American, Civil War, and Fort Community periods.
- Archaeological collection representing approximately 40,000 artifacts housed in approximately 50 boxes.
- City Arborist memorial
- Infrastructure
 - Park paths
 - Braddock Road cuts through original site
- Existing signage and exhibitry
- Natural resources:
 - Trees
 - Native and non-native plants (e.g. azalea festival example)
- Nearby: Freedmen’s Cemetery, Rosenwald School site and Macedonia/Seminary, Episcopal and Baptist churches/schools
- Regional: Other Defenses of Washington sites, Old Town sites and museums, D.C.

New Site Features

- Updated signage and exhibitry
- Commemoration Space
- Community Gateway
- Recreated Home Frame Structure
- Historic Site Markers

People

- Military - soldiers, officers, surgeons, etc.
- Civilians – supporting, living, and working in Alexandria and the area near the fort (includes relief workers, doctors/nurses, merchants, photographers, workers employed at various Union facilities, contrabands)
- Contraband/freedmen
 - Some freedmen’s colonies nearby, but not at the fort itself
 - Recently discovered first evidence that African American laborers (“contraband”) employed at fort
- Fort Community
- Native Americans

Intangible Resources

Freedom and Equality

- As fought for in the Civil War
- As fought for by the postwar community

Community

- Civil War Fort “community” amongst soldiers
- Contraband community—in the region

- Later Fort Community—family, identity, neighbor / neighborhood, home, etc.
 - Inspired by the recreated home frame, community waysides, historic site markers, and commemoration space

Ownership

- Significance of Fort families owning property
- Conflict over land ownership at end of Fort era
- Ownership of story, experience, and place by contemporary communities

Additional Key Universal Concepts

- Changing landscape and function
- Complex, layered record
- Defense - of Washington, of home and community, of rights, etc.
- Building - of community, of homes, towards equality, the fort and a defensive system, etc.
- Memory/commemoration

Interpretive Elements

Overview

This section of the document compliments the Draft Concept Design Package (7/20/18) and readers may wish to follow along with that material. Note that the elements are numbered to correspond with the drawings package.

Universal/Accessible Design

Universal and accessible design elements are a major consideration in each phase of our team's exhibit development process. The interpretive plan for Fort Ward Museum and Park is marked with tactile and interactive methods of educating and communicating with visitors. Visitors with a wide range of backgrounds, ages, levels of interest, and abilities will be able to engage with the material. The discussion of the interpretive elements that follows includes references to universal design elements. Specific elements include raised line drawings on several of the waysides and tactile site maps. The new film in the Museum will include open captions. The Mobile Web component could feature audio description in the future. Importantly, these universal design features improve the visitor experience for all, regardless of ability. Sighted visitors, for example, also benefit from being able to experience tactile components, which provide additional learning points.

1. Museum Enhancements

Interpretive Techniques

- Interpretive Graphics
- Exhibit Casework
- Overview Film

Overview and Primary Messages

By restructuring some of the exhibit space within the museum to discuss “The Fort” community, as well as updating the introductory film, the museum will provide visitors with a more comprehensive history of Fort Ward Historic Park.

The area’s primary interpretive messages will include:

- Fort Ward History – the film will provide a quick, comprehensive overview of Fort Ward’s history, both as a Civil War defense and a community.
- “The Fort’s” Community History – a new exhibit explores how the community intertwines with the history of Fort Ward as a military entity.

Approach to Graphics and Casework

Within the allotted space inside the museum, visitors will encounter both an updated overview film and updated graphic elements that speak to the history of “The Fort” community. Graphics will frame the monitor used to display the film, and the remaining stretch of wall will be used to discuss The Fort’s community history.

This portion of the exhibit space will be framed with reproduction clapboards, giving the space a similar appearance to a home within “The Fort” community. The intention is to provide an updateable framework, based on buyout components. This will allow the Museum team to rotate objects, images, and stories. Community members may be encouraged to participate in developing the exhibit(s).

2 and 3. Orientation Stations

Interpretive Techniques

- Interpretive Graphics
- Tactile Element
- Wayfinding Information

Overview and Primary Messages

The primary Orientation Station near the entrance to the park and duplicate Orientation Station located near the playground will be many visitors’ first interaction with the historic story of Fort Ward Historic Site. These stations will provide a brief historical background to the site, and incorporate a tactile map allowing visitors to engage in a hands-on manner with their initial exposure to the story of “Bastions of Freedom.”

The stations’ primary interpretive messages are:

- Serving as an orientation to a visit at the site.
- Providing an overview of Fort Ward’s role in the Civil War defenses of Washington and its later role as a community.
- Showing visitors that there is more to explore than just the initial museum area or the playground.

Approach to Graphics and Tactile Elements

The Orientation Stations will use a combination of images, interpretive and wayfinding text, and maps to provide the visitor with a brief overview to the site before they explore. Specifically, the base illustrated map being developed for the brochure will also appear on this upright panel. We envision perhaps three photographs of Fort Ward with accompanying captions—the Museum, “The Fort,” and perhaps the military fort’s gate.

4. Home Frame Structure

Interpretive Techniques

- Dimensional, life-size outline of the school/church/residence building
- Visitors may touch the framework, which provides another sensory opportunity

Overview and Primary Messages

The home frame structure will serve as a physical representation of one of the homes that once stood as a part of “The Fort” community. As opposed to other areas, in which maps of previously standing structures portray the community, the frame structure will allow for visitors to more easily imagine the homes and other buildings that made up “The Fort.”

The structure’s primary interpretive messages will include:

- Reinforcing the idea that homes once stood on now-empty areas within the site.
- Helping visitors to make the connection between the historic park in its current state and the reality of the loss of homes and property for the residents of the Fort.
- People used to live here.

Approach to Frame Structure:

The home structure will be a simple metal (powder-coated steel) frame, meant to help visitors reimagine the home, as it would have stood when constructed. The shape of the home is drawn directly from historic imagery of houses in Fort Ward, and the color may be a white or off white, to suggest that of the clapboard siding on many of the homes.

5. Community Gateway

Interpretive Techniques

- Orientation Signage
- Tactile Map Element
- Title and Overview Interpretive Graphics

Overview and Primary Messages

The community gateway will function as a visual marker inviting visitors to explore the story of “The Fort” community, and its representation of Fort Ward’s heritage in the years after the Civil War. The gateway will encourage visitors to walk down the newly established Community pathway; in the same way the recreated Gate to Fort Ward entices visitors to enter the historic fort.

The gateway’s primary interpretive messages will include:

- An introduction to “The Fort” community story
- Provide a basic layout of community geography

Approach to Graphics and Design

Although the Community Gateway is intended to serve a similar function to the Gate at Fort Ward, it represents community history. The potential designs presented in this phase are loosely suggestive of the appearance of the buildings that made up the community. The first of the two pillars lining the community pathway may feature a plaque, dedicating the space to those who established “The Fort” community at the end of the Civil War. At the top of the second pillar, a basic, tactile map of “The Fort” during the early twentieth century, highlighting significant community features, will allow visitors to get a sense of the area before passing through the gateway and exploring further.

6. Commemoration Space

Interpretive Techniques

- Reflection Area
- Light Interpretive Graphics

Overview and Primary Messages

A Commemoration Space has been designated to allow visitors to the site a dedicated area affording the opportunity to reflect upon the struggles, triumphs, and losses of the African Americans who built the community in the shadow of an empty Civil War fort.

The area’s primary interpretive purposes include:

- Allow visitors a place to reflect on ideas of family and community at “The Fort” while visiting Fort Ward Historic Park
- Provide the Descendants of those who lived in “The Fort” community a place to gather and remember their loved ones
- Serve as an appropriate location for commemorative events

- Reiterate that a community thrived here and that a legacy remains

Approach to Design and Architecture

At this point in the interpretive planning process, multiple design options will be presented to the Fort Ward Museum and Park staff and stakeholders in order to obtain more direct feedback regarding the vision for the Commemoration Space. The wishes of community members and descendants are especially vital to the development of this element. The archaeology team will review proposed locations and potential disturbances to the cultural landscape of the community.

7. Existing, Updated, and New Waysides

Interpretive Techniques

- Tactile Elements (selected waysides)
- Interpretive Text
- Interpretive Graphics

Overview and Primary Messages

Located throughout Fort Ward Historic Park, wayside panels will reinforce the overall theme of “Bastions of Freedom” while providing additional detail about specific elements of the site’s natural and cultural heritage. Primary emphases will be in the interpretive themes that guided the vision for this project. Waysides located throughout both Fort Ward and “The Fort” community will offer visitors the opportunity to connect specific locations with aspects of the story, delving into detail appropriate for each stop.

Note that for interpretive planning purposes there are three categories of waysides:

- Existing—the six relatively new structures interpreting African American history will remain unchanged
- Updated—the nine original waysides, mostly focused on the Defenses of Washington, will receive new panels attached to the current bases
- New—five new structures will interpret additional stories of “The Fort”

The waysides’ primary interpretive messages include:

- Fort Ward and Community History – each of the waysides will provide a more detailed history of an important aspect of the site’s history, to include natural and cultural aspects.
- A unified story – the waysides, through their design and overall approach to content, will reinforce the unified story of Fort Ward, as both a military entity and the home of a community built by members of the African American community
- “Bastions of Freedom” – the content of the waysides will contribute to this overarching theme, telling the twin, and at times intersecting, chapters of the military and community history

Approach to Graphics

The updated waysides surrounding Fort Ward and the new community waysides will have a common layout and design scheme, reinforcing the principle that the history of Fort Ward should be told as a single unified story. The new design compliments the existing community panels as well, adding to the cohesion of the overall experience. The panels will include interpretive text, first-person accounts/quotes, and historic imagery of “the Fort,” the homes in the community, and the people who lived there.

The waysides focusing on Fort Ward as a military entity will utilize the existing content, including the sketches and detailed drawings of Fort Ward during the Civil War, which can be seen on the currently existing waysides. Many of the waysides will also include a raised line element. See the examples in the accompanying drawings package.

8. Historic Site Markers

Interpretive Techniques

- Brief Interpretive Graphics
- Link to Brochure and Mobile Web Elements, Reinforcing Site Tour

Overview and Primary Message

Spread throughout Fort Ward Historic Park, up to ten historic site markers draw attention to places—either specific locations or areas of general cultural or natural significance—that most visitors would otherwise not recognize for their cultural or natural significance. These small markers—numbered to correspond with locations denoted in the brochure/mobile web/orientation panel map—will draw visitors’ attention to the area, providing them with information regarding what once stood at that spot. Along with the waysides, the markers form the signposts of the new interpretive trails.

Currently, the budget allots for ten historic site markers. This number is flexible, and cost savings from including fewer markers can be applied to the overview museum exhibit.

The site markers primary interpretive messages include:

- Furthering visitor engagement with the historical significance of the cultural and natural heritage of the park
- Providing additional information about specific sites of importance
- Inviting further exploration via the mobile web interface

Locations for the ten historic site markers will be selected in consultation with stakeholders and archaeologists, along with the park team. In order to round out sitewide interpretation of the themes, reviewers will be encouraged to consider both geography and interpretive emphasis. Potential locations for historic site markers include:

- Native American Site (which may be placed “near” but not necessarily in the identified archaeological area)
- Military Barracks

- Historic and Natural Vistas
- Home sites throughout the park
- Seminary School
- Oakland Baptist Cemetery
- Fort's Well
- Clara Adams Burial Site
- Schoolhouse Lane

Approach to Graphics and Design

The historic site markers are intended to be smaller than a wayside, and subtler in structure, so they do not clutter the landscape of Fort Ward Historic Park. The smaller markers will note the historic significance of the site at which they are located, and provide a short paragraph of information regarding the importance of each particular space. The historic site markers will include numbers and directions to access the Mobile Web element, to be discussed in more detail later in this document.

Educational Programming

Interpretive Techniques

- Interactive Elements
 - Facilitated Dialogue

Overview and Primary Message

This element consists of an interpretive approach—"Audience Centered Experience (ACE)"—via a facilitated dialogue to provide visitors with a more direct connection to the daily lives of both the soldiers who served at Fort Ward and those who later lived in "The Fort" community. Two visitors will each be given a script, which depicts a conversation that may have occurred between two occupants of the Fort. For example, a Union officer giving instructions to a soldier, or two members of "The Fort" community discussing attending church or school. Each visitor will read a part, placing them directly within the shoes of those who lived at Fort Ward. The final design will be a small, tabletop exhibit that can be easily moved in a "suitcase" type carrier, for school or additional programming, or left standing in a convenient location within the museum space.

Potential discussion topics are limitless. The goal is to conduct additional interviews with members of the community, specifically to ask them what stories they would like young (or any) visitors to learn. The stories then become the source material for the dialogues. We will be developing an example based on existing oral histories.

Potential dialogue topics include:

Early white residents in the area discussing traveling to Alexandria
 Soldiers assigned to Fort Ward discussing the Defenses of Washington
 USCT soldiers discussing life at Fort Ward after the war ended
 Conversations involving Clara Adams

Decisions made around the Civil War Centennial
Descriptions of specific homes in “The Fort”
Civil War engineers overseeing construction of fortifications

The primary interpretive goals of the facilitated dialogue are:

- Establishing a personal connection between visitors and historic people who lived at “The Fort”
- Allowing visitors to better understand daily life at Fort Ward and “The Fort”
- Reminding visitors that Fort Ward has been consistently occupied by “real people,” rather than distant historical figures, emphasizing that while the specifics may change, people in all eras need to make decisions that may resonate with visitors’ personal issues

Brochure

Interpretive Techniques

- Interpretive Graphics
- Orientation Elements
- Interpretive Text

Overview and Primary Message

The brochure will serve as a quick guide for visitors to use while exploring Fort Ward Museum and Park. Moreover, the multi-fold piece will encourage exploration and help visitors plan their path through the site. The brochure will follow the holistic story of Fort Ward, guiding visitors through Fort Ward Historic Park and encouraging them to consider how the stories connect.

The key features of the brochure will include:

- A self-guided site tour (which could include multiple mini-tour tracks appealing to varied interests, such as archaeology, military history, and African American heritage)
- Specific tie-ins to interpretive elements throughout the Park
- Illustrated map, which is also used in the Mobile Web and Orientation elements
- The use of first-person stories and authentic voices, connecting the visitor with the people who inhabited the space before them

Approach to Graphics

The Fort Ward Brochure will feature interpretive graphics, matching the design style used within the waysides and site markers. The brochure will also feature an illustrated map of Fort Ward Historic Park, drawn in the same style as pictured in the additional presentation package.

Mobile Web Element

Mobile technology and hand-held devices, such as phones, tablets, and media players, have become an increasingly used part of daily life. By incorporating the use of these devices within

the historic site, visitors can engage with additional information more directly by putting it directly within their hands.

For the Fort Ward Historic Park this interpretive plan proposes a web-based feature that pairs with links located on the historic site markers. Visitors will be encouraged to use their mobile device to follow the link, providing them with additional information regarding the specified historic site. Note that the web content can be accessed by any device with an internet browser. While the designers will develop the content to work effectively on smart phones and tablets, it will function on computer browsers as well.

See Appendix C for additional information regarding the implementation and functionality of this mobile accessible web feature.

Bibliography and References

The following is a partial list of references provided by the City in the course of Phase I correspondence and in the Kickoff Meeting. Please continue to alert the team of specific additional resources and materials that should be included here.

1. City of Alexandria:
 - a. Ad Hoc Fort Ward Historic Park and Museum Area Stakeholders Advisory Group for the City of Alexandria “Recommendations for the Management of Fort Ward Historical Park.” 2011.
Including:
 - Drafts of same Report from 2010 and 2012-2013
 - Public responses to the 2010 draft of the Report
 - b. Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria. *Alexandria Legacies—Fort Ward Oral History Project*. Multiple interviews. Transcribed between 1992 and 2009.
 - c. Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria. “Draft Summary—Archaeological Investigations at Fort Ward Park.” 2017.
 - d. Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria. “Fort Ward Historical Park Stage 1 and 2 Archaeological Survey and Cultural Resource Areas To Date (7-26-2012).” 2012.
 - e. Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria. “Status of Fort Ward Archaeology, March 2014.” 2014.
 - f. City of Alexandria, Virginia Website. <https://www.alexandriava.gov> Accessed July 2017.
Including:
 - Office of Historic Alexandria:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Historic>

- Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/FortWard>
 - Alexandria Archaeology Museum:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Archaeology>
 - Office of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities:
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/Recreation>
 - g. “Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan.” Adopted 2015.
 - h. Office of Historic Alexandria. “The Fort” Heritage Trail: An Enduring African American Community” brochure.
 - i. Request for Proposal 00000647: Interpretive Plan for the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area. 2016.
Including:
 - "Fort Ward Interpretive Framework.” 2016.
 - j. Historic Markers in Fort Ward Park
2. Barnard, John G. *A Report on the Defenses of Washington*. Washington, D.C.: Govt., 1871.
 3. Cooling III, Benjamin Franklin and Walton II, Owen. *Mr. Lincoln’s Forts: A Guide to the Civil War Defenses of Washington*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.
 4. Minkoff, Mary Furlong. “Making Sense of The Fort; Civically-Engaged Sensory Archaeology at Fort Ward and Defenses of Washington (PhD Dissertation).” 2015.
 5. Moon, Krystyn R. “Finding the Fort: A History of an African American Neighborhood in Northern Virginia, 1860s-1960s.” 2014.
 6. Washington, Adrienne and Furlong, Mary M. “Coming Together to Uncover the ‘Fort’ in Alexandria, Virginia,” *News - A Publication of the Society for Applied Anthropology*, Vol. 23, Number 1. Oklahoma City: Society for Applied Anthropology, 2014.

We propose to add these elements to the Final Plan:

Appendix A: Meeting Notes and Dispositions

Appendix A will provide a record of meeting notes from each phase of the project, as well as dispositions and feedback from Fort Ward Historic Park. Full documentation will be provided with the Final Interpretive Exhibit Plan.

Appendix B: Public Meeting Surveys and Stakeholder Responses

Appendix B will contain response records from each of the three post-public forum surveys distributed to project stakeholders. All three sets of responses will be included in the Final Interpretive Exhibit Plan, after the third survey has been distributed.

Appendix C: Mobile Web Functionality and Wireframes

Appendix C will contain an in-depth explanation of the functionality of the mobile feature, as well as a finalized version of the wireframe examples that were presented at the Phase III Meeting on July 20, 2018.