This Preliminary Interpretive Concepts document outlines initial planning and development for new interpretive products at Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site in Alexandria, Virginia. In addition to laying out foundational elements of interpretation (Goals, Story, and Visitors), we have prepared two alternatives of media elements to carry the story and create a holistic visitor-directed experience across the site. The document concludes with an early collage of design inspirations, to help us begin working towards standards.

We have developed a rough budget for Alternatives A and B, included as a separate attachment. Each provides production allowances for the various elements described here.

We also include a preliminary Content Matrix for both alternatives. Its chief aim is to lay out how the Themes in the Interpretive Framework are distributed amongst the various elements proposed here. This document will expand with additional story details and references as the project develops—for now, the document concludes with an outline of preliminary research.

To move forward, we must identify the “Preferred Alternative”—the collection of elements and core holistic theme that we will develop in Phases III and IV.

In addition to further developing these elements in the next phases, an 8.5”x11” Interpretive Plan document will expand upon the foundational elements of the Basis of Design (09/19/2017) as well as the decisions and directions formed from this phase of planning. It will further define the story elements, visitor analysis, and project, City, and stakeholder goals.

A number of existing planning documents have guided the creation of this preliminary draft. These include the Management Plan (approved January 2015). Additional details will feature in the Interpretive Plan, to be further developed in Phase III.

For now, however, we note the following guidance as particularly inspiring and relevant to our current planning efforts:

“... the importance of the ongoing efforts to preserve the Civil War fortification, as described in the FWAG chapter report on Civil War Resources, can be further amplified and emphasized by linking that piece of the story to the broader story of its aftermath. With the limitations of space and staffing identified in the FWAG Draft Chapter on “Cultural Resources—The Museum, its Collections and Programs”—the idea of extending the interpretation outdoors and using the park’s historic landscapes and remaining historic features to help tell the complete story must be a critical component of any future interpretive and educational efforts.”

–Management Plan, January 2015
GOALS (AS OUTLINED IN THE RFP)

Develop a detailed Interpretive Plan that educates and engages visitors to the Park. Strategies include:

• Interpreting relevant themes and stories that capture Fort Ward’s history over time, as recommended by the Fort Ward Interpretive Plan Committee;
• Portraying how the Park’s layered historic past is revealed in the landscape; and
• Identifying and designing appropriate educational tools and methods to interpret the Park’s history and natural resources.

Increase public awareness and appreciation of the Park’s local, regional, and national significance by connecting the history of the Defenses of Washington with the development of the post-Civil War African American. Strategies include:

• Designing a comprehensive interpretive trail that encompasses the primary sites and stories of the Park, especially related to the Civil War and post-Civil War periods;
• Establishing a phased development of the interpretive trail, incorporating potential methods such as educational signage, kiosk exhibits, printed and digital materials, cell phone tours, public programs, memorials, and landscape enhancement; and
• Expanding the Museum’s exhibits and public programs through new technologies and methods to better interpret and promote the local, regional, and national history of the Defenses of Washington, and the connection to the development of The Fort community.

INTERPRETIVE PLANNING OUTCOMES

Develop more self-guided and interactive interpretive experiences for the public that can be implemented in the historic landscape of the Park and in the Museum. Strategies include:

• Designing a self-guided tour that integrates the Civil War and post-Civil War history of the Park in printed, digital, and other formats;
• Developing Museum and outdoor exhibits, interpretive signage, contemplative or memorial spaces, and web features that illustrate the Park’s history; and
• Building Online and mobile experiences for potential audiences outside the local area.

ADDITIONAL INTERPRETIVE GOALS

• Continue to build community pride for Fort Ward.
• A newly branded, holistically coordinated storyline—culminating in a superior visitor-directed experience.
• Leverage the Museum into the holistic visitor experience.
• A more diverse and comprehensive story, humanizing all participants in Fort Ward’s history.
• Offering greater opportunities for recreational park users to connect to the Fort Ward story.
• Invite exploration of the entire park by introducing interpretation in various key locations.
• Make entrance grounds more inviting to draw more local community into Fort Ward.
• Provide orientation and story teasers in key locations to help visitors navigate and inspire them to explore.
• Define and communicate Universal Concepts that make the Fort Ward story relevant to every visitor.
• Develop storyline that increases social awareness and interest in history.
[...] Taken together, the earthworks of Fort Ward and the remnants of the Fort community tell an American story of war and peace of local, regional, and national significance. Tales of conflict and defense, slavery and emancipation, and the strength of community come together at Fort Ward to commemorate defining periods of our nation’s history.

Theme 1
Fort Ward and the American Civil War
- Civil War Defenses of Washington—Engineering and Defensive Strategies
- Daily Life in Wartime Alexandria and Vicinity

Theme 2
Strength from Community: The Post-Civil War “Fort”
- Social experience of members of the Fort community over time, including emancipation, self-sufficiency, and self-determination, voting rights, property ownership, daily life, work, strength of family, building community, education, faith and burial
- The struggle against oppression; experiences under Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights movement
- Successes and contributions of the Fort Ward descendant community

Theme 3
Commemoration and Memory
- The Civil War Centennial
- The African American Experience: Displaced, Erased, but Enduring

Supporting Concept
Changing Landscape
- Native American use of the Fort Ward environment prior to European settlement
- How geology and topography contributed to the development of the Defenses of Washington in general and Fort Ward specifically
- How the geology and topography of Fort Ward was transformed by the development of the African American Fort community
- Physical transformations caused by the creation of the Park
- The natural environment today

Sitewide Interpretive Theme
The interpretive approach remains rooted in one overarching storyline. We believe it is important to view the history of the site through the lens of its period of primary significance, which includes both the Civil War and the community that came thereafter. It is very important to create a visitor experience that encompasses this one story narrative.

As we have worked on the “big idea” with the team and gathered stakeholder feedback it is clear that there is significant opportunity to develop a cohesive storyline. Members of the community continue to stress that there is not a “military story” and an “African American story,” and we agree. The two approaches to interpreting Fort Ward we present in this package are both rooted in one overarching idea.

Storyline A
Changing Landscape: Fort Ward From Civil War to Civil Rights
The first approach uses changes to the land—specifically built structures and modifications to the landscape—as a lens to compare past and current uses of Fort Ward. Individual accounts describe how the different groups of people at Fort Ward created a unique history. The story is specific to this place, and the term “Fort Ward” is ambiguous, describing both the Civil War structure and the later community.

Storyline B
Fort Ward: Defending the Nation and Building a Community
The second approach places individuals at the higher level of the interpretive layering. Whether cutout figures or prominent placement of individual perspectives on waysides, this scheme uses personal accounts (which can include newspaper stories, letters, oral history, etc.) to connect visitors with the story. As with the first approach, features of Fort Ward’s landscape and historical development emerge through this lens.

We provide a roadmap for updating existing signage, either by replacement or redesigning the existing content. Whether as part of this effort or a subsequent project, we strongly advise that this happens so that visitors have a more unified experience.
Good interpretation begins with a solid understanding of the visitor. As a unique historical site, Fort Ward attracts very specific visitor archetypes—historians and tourists of the Civil War and African American history. As a municipal park, however, Fort Ward must also appeal to its broader local community, both in recreational and interpretive opportunities.

In addition to these varied audiences, interpretive planning should also integrate its best practices:

**Relevance**
Interpretation aims to create relevancy. We will not just tell the history of Fort Ward, we will connect it to the universal experiences of our visitors. All visitors should have the opportunity to identify why the story matters and resonates, personally, with them.

**Multiple Perspectives**
Fort Ward visitors will be young and old, local and international, Civil War historians and novices to American history. They will bring different viewpoints and values. They will arrive with different expectations and leave having drawn different conclusions. In order to make the story of Fort Ward relevant to everyone, the media we choose to tell Fort Ward’s story must be truthful and direct, while respectful of every visitor’s sovereignty.

**Multiple Experiences**
Many visitors come to Fort Ward to experience history. Nearly 15,000 people visit the Museum every year. Even more visit Fort Ward but not the Museum—total visitation in 2016 was surveyed at 44,000 in 2016. We may assume that many of these visitors come to use the recreational facilities—picnic, trail (for exercise, dog walking, etc.), and playground facilities draw local users who may only lightly interact with the historic site.

A singular interpretive message for the entire site, reinforced by every element, ensures that all visitors have the opportunity to connect to our story.

Additional research into Alexandria’s shifting demographics will be undertaken as part of the Interpretive Plan document, currently under development. Guidance from the Management Plan will also be integrated.

**Students and Virginia Standards of Learning**
As part of our visitor research, we are consulting with the Virginia Department of Education’s standards to ensure that interpretive projects meet the demands of students, educators, and parents. Relevant courses include “US History to 1865,” “US History 1865 to Present,” and “Virginia & US History.”

From the latter, relevant competencies include:

- VUS.1.D: Develop perspectives of time and place, including the construction of maps and various timelines of events, periods, and personalities in American history;
- VUS.7.E: Examining the social impact of the war on African Americans, the common soldier, and the home front, with emphasis on Virginia;
OVERVIEW

ALTERNATIVE A

Changing Landscapes: Fort Ward from Civil War to Civil Rights
Interpretation through the lens of historical layers, which tell the story of changing military and social development at Fort Ward.

1. Museum Enhancements

2. Orientation Station
   Two-surface (front and back), site orientation, programs and events, light interpretive introduction.

3. Orientation / Hands-On Station
   Secondary Orientation, with hands-on opportunities for kids. Adjacent to playground / rec areas.

4. Recreated Home Frame
   Metal “ghost” frame of original home to give a glimpse at the community that once existed here.

5.x. Changing Landscapes Stations
   Five large key interpretive panels strategically placed for creating viewpoints into history.

6.x. Updated Waysides (see page 11)
   Existing interpretive panels on site (Fort and African American Community) updated for consistency.

7.x. Site Markers (see page 12)
   Low-profile markers indicate key historic features that are no longer visible without impeding the historic atmosphere of the site. May work well in tandem with Brochure.

AV
Digital Element: Mobile App
Estimate 10-15 stops, site map, and intro pages.
Updates within the Museum building ensure that this visitor experience reflects the holistic story and experience of Changing Landscapes at Fort Ward.

**Park Film**
An updated park film ties site-wide themes and stories into one cohesive storyline. This serves as an overall introduction to the story and the site, launching visitors into a fuller understanding and appreciation of the meaning and relevance of the grounds.

**Thread Panels**
Small, individual panels augment the existing exhibitry by tying back to the Big Idea.

The Museum’s permanent exhibits are enhanced with this wider context:

- **The Common Soldier**—thread panels explore the varying and complex motivations behind the common soldiers—including U.S. Colored Troops—who occupied Fort Ward and other area encampments. Why did they put their lives on the line in defense of Washington, D.C.?

- **The Art of the Artilleryman**—the mesh of artillery fire ensured that the Civil War Defenses of Washington would successfully defend the U.S. capital. Why was this considerable defense so important? Thread panels lay out this critical context.

- **Medical Care for the Civil War Soldier**—civilians played a critical role in providing medical care at places like Fort Ward, and thread panels use this prompt to explore the dimensions of military-civilian relationships at this site during the Civil War.

A template of the Thread panel allows Fort Ward to continue to draw connections to the Big Idea with consistent design language through its temporary exhibitions.
This Orientation Station, though smaller in scope and scale than envisioned for Alternative B, nonetheless provides a valuable initial contact for visitors. Located at the parking lot behind the Museum, it aims to capture visitors here for the history in the location they most commonly park. Visitors who park in the first lot from the entrance will likely have their orientation to the site and story inside the Museum, or find their way to this station.

**Site and Story Orientation**
A map provides visitors with an understanding of the site and its interpretive and recreational features. Site tour brochures may be made available in a weatherproof box here. The station also introduces the holistic interpretive message. It encourages visitors to go to the Museum to begin their exploration of the Fort Ward story.

**Programs and Events**
The kiosk will also feature a schedule of programs and events at the site, much as current signage does throughout the site today.
A secondary Orientation Station gives more visitors the opportunity to interact with the history of Fort Ward—including those who did not come to the site expecting to engage with the story.

**Site and Story Orientation**
A map provides visitors with an understanding of the site and its interpretive and recreational features. The station also introduces the holistic interpretive message. Site Tour Brochures may be especially valuable here (in a weatherproof box), as visitors are unlikely to make it to the Museum until much later in their experience if this is their first interaction with the interpretation.

**Hands-On Opportunities**
With its proximity to the relocated Playground, this kiosk features hands-on activities to encourage educational play and excite families about exploring and learning more about the Fort and Fort Community. Examples may include a cannonball trajectory interactive (modeled with durability in mind after a Wire and Bead toy) or activities related to children’s chores during early life in the Fort Community.

**Programs and Events**
The kiosk will also feature a schedule of programs and events at the site, much as current signage does throughout the site today.
A life-size wireframe outline of a home provides a stunning and powerful impression of the Fort Community.

Note that additional research is needed to identify the actual outline of a home. The archeological reports and oral histories that we have consulted describe only rooms and layout, not the physical appearance of the homes, and we have not located any photographs showing a home in full.

**A Glimpse of the Past**
Visitors better conceive of the scale and meaning of the community that grew up in the shadow of Fort Ward in the years following the Civil War. This structure also balances the rebuilt Fort—hinting at, though not fully recreating, Fort Ward’s past.

Signage could be integrated into the wireframe, identifying and/or interpreting rooms—especially if the structure stands on an actual homesite. Note, however, that this level of interpretation is not currently accounted for in the budget.

**Programs and Events**
The monumental nature of the home lends itself well to interpretive programs and events centered in the Fort Community. Living history exploring life in the community in, for example, the late 19th century, could help visitors make direct, personal connections to the struggles and triumphs of African Americans under Reconstruction and Jim Crow. Guided tours may similarly use this structure to more vividly describe life in the community. Stakeholders and community members should be consulted during the planning and development process to make sure that any events or programs are appropriate on what many consider to be almost sacred land.
CHANGING LANDSCAPES ALTERNATIVE A

Five key locations on the site anchor the storytelling. Larger and more recognizable in the landscape than conventional waysides, these draw visitors in and help visitors imagine the site from different perspectives and at different times.

5.1 Fort Ward Military Bastion
What remains of the “Fort” at Fort Ward provides just a glimpse at this site’s fortifications—much less the Civil War Defenses of Washington. This station brings the ramparts into greater focus, and provides a viewscape that helps visitors understand the network of forts that together defended the U.S. capital in the Civil War.

5.2 Civil War Life at The Fort
Visitors use this station to imagine the active military installation of Fort Ward in wartime—envisioning both soldiers and civilians in their daily routines at the fort.

5.3 The Seminary School, Church, and Cemetery
Interpretation here reveals the deeper story of faith and community behind the Oakland Baptist Cemetery on the Fort Ward site.

5.4 Life in the Postwar Fort Community
Visitors imagine the community of homes built and maintained in the decades following the Civil War. Who moved here? Why did they choose this place? What opportunities did it offer? What challenges did residents face, both here and beyond the neighborhood? What happened to the homes and their residents?

5.5 Fort Ward Connections to Alexandria
What did this place look like before it became Fort Ward? Visitors discover a landscape that had been lived in long before Virginia’s secession from the Union. While focused on the area’s agriculture function and use as a summer retreat from downtown Alexandria, interpretation here also speaks to the evidence of indigenous occupation and uses of this place.
Interpretive waysides remain a key part of storytelling at Fort Ward. Under this plan, existing waysides are updated to meet the new graphic standards for the site.

6.1 Entrance Gate + Officer’s Quarters
Text, site plan, elevations, and photograph.

6.2 Fort Ward
Text, plan, and map of defenses.

6.3 Bombproof
Text, site plan, and detail illustrations.

6.4 Powder Magazine
Text, site plan, and sketch.

6.5 Northwest Bastion
Text, site plan, sketches, and range chart.

6.6 Profile of Fort
Text, site plan, and tactile profile.

6.7 Rifle Trench
Text and site plan.

6.8 Outlying Gun Battery
Text and site plan.

6.9 From Civil War to Civil Rights
Overview interpretation, timeline.

6.10 African Americans and the Civil War
Interpretive text and images.

6.11 The Oakland Baptist Church
Interpretive text and images.

6.12 Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery
Interpretive text and images.

6.13 Within Its Walls
Interpretive text and images.

6.14 Jackson Cemetery
Interpretive text and images.

Sample graphics to be updated.
A series of low-profile graphics mark out key sites and locations in Fort Ward that are no longer visible or not otherwise interpreted. These locations help visitors appreciate the enormity of Fort Ward’s story and appreciate the dedicated efforts of archeologists at this site. They also provide additional touchpoints for the Brochure and/or Mobile App (see page 13). A custom illustration on each panel (whenever possible) provides an outline of the footprint of the site feature.

Ten such markers are currently budgeted.

**Potential Sites to Mark**

- Recorded Native American site.
- Military Barracks, Southeast Civil War feature.
- Homesites—Jackson, Javins, Adams, McKnight, Casey, Clark/Hyman, Ashby families. Unknown homesites may also be marked.
- Seminary School, St. Cyprian Church.
- Cemeteries.
We may augment the visitor experience with supplemental materials on a phone or tablet. As cell phone technology continues to evolve and spread, a single app for devices would be a constantly moving target and demand considerable maintenance costs over time. A web app can be built more flexibly, with scaleability and a content management system to keep the content fresh. A web app should also have better compatibility across a wider array of devices.

As currently budgeted, we envision 10-15 stops on a mobile tour, linked to new interpretive elements and/or new Site Markers (TBD).

A variety of functions, however could be implemented (and on a rolling schedule, as funding is available)—including a strategic combination of several features, such as:

**Deeper Site Exploration**
A numeric, graphic, or map marker symbol allows visitor to explore stories told elsewhere on the site in greater detail—through text, video, and imagery (for example, a rendering of a building that used to be in the park). Visitors who want to learn more can expand the narrative as they desire.

**Mobile Tour**
Visitors explore the park and stop at various locations for interpretation of the changing landscape. The web platform may also share perspectives from various points of view and from different eras—historic voices, but also (curated) contemporary ones to bring relevance to the stories.

**Streaming Audio Tour**
The web app could offer a collection of audio tours, for people who want to be told a longer narrative rather than manually exploring content.

**Children’s / Student Educational Aid**
Teachers and parents guide children in using the app as they explore the site, as well as in pre- and post-visit learning activities. Any approach would be designed to meet Virginia Standards of Learning.

**Children’s Game**
Kids and adults alike could play a game-based educational/interpretive activity on the app. A “Finder” game, for example, would encourage visitors to locate strategically placed spots around the park where they will find a person from the past who tells them a short tale of what it was like when they lived there, culminating in a special message or reward if they collect/meet/find all people from the past in the park.
**OVERVIEW**

**ALTERNATIVE B**

**Fort Ward: Defending the Nation and Building a Community**
Interpretation through the perspectives of the people who shaped the military and social landscape of Fort Ward, changing Alexandria, the Region, and the Nation.

1. **Museum Enhancements**
   Updated site-wide, story-wide film and new African-American exhibit.

2. **Orientation Station / Tactile Site Plan**
   Multi-surface including site orientation, programs and events, interpretive introduction. Large-scale tactile model of the site.

3. **Orientation Stationette**
   Secondary orientation, capturing recreational visitors and others who do not interact with the main Station.

4. **Figures (4) w/ Audio**
   Flat metal figures of various people through time, with outdoor-grade audio boxes to share voice recordings.

5. **Community Gateway**
   Structure demarcating the entrance to the African American Community Trail, bookending the military Fort gate with a community signpost.

6. **Interpretive Wayside Panels (see page 20)**
   Twelve key interpretive panels strategically placed to interpret key structures, locations, and stories. **NOTE:** Interpretive Waysides in this Alternative feature robust content and are intended to, upon completion, replace all existing interpretive signage at Fort Ward.

7. **Commemoration Space**
   Dedicated space with seating and light interpretation to encourage visitors to reflect on the site’s history.

8. **Digital Element: Cell Phone Tour**
   Estimate 10-15 stops
Updates within the Museum building ensure that this visitor experience reflects the holistic story and experience of Fort Ward, revealing its role in defending the nation and building a community.

**Park Film**
An updated park film ties site-wide themes and stories into one cohesive storyline. This serves as an overall introduction to the story and the site, launching visitors into a fuller understanding and appreciation of the meaning and relevance of the grounds.

**African American Exhibits**
Planning will assess current areas in the museum and identify opportunities and challenges to adding a dedicated small exhibit on the African American community at Fort Ward.

In our current budget allocations, we envision an approximately 10’ x 10’ (100 sq. ft.) area for exhibits on the postwar Fort community.
This station provides a more robust Orientation than envisioned in Alternative A, and includes a central tactile feature to initiate the visitor experience at Fort Ward. Located in front of the Museum, it aims to capture visitors and create a central starting point for all visitors, whether or not they enter the Museum.

**Exterior Tactile Orientation Map**
This tactile map lays out the site and its many resources—seen and no longer visible—from the years 1860 to 1965. It allows visitors to orient themselves to the site in a manner unique from the Site Tour Brochure, as well as providing an accessible portal to the site and story to vision-impaired visitors.

**Interpretive Introduction**
The expanded Orientation Kiosk provides a strong interpretive introduction to the site. Large-scale custom-illustrated imagery might depict the landscape in three eras: before, during, and 50 years after the Civil War. Each illustration also features a site map to further reveal how the site has physically changed, and historic images or portraits that show changes in the people who have occupied it.

**Programs and Events**
The location of this station will need to be carefully chosen so as to not impede Living History events. That said, its Orientation Map provides a natural gathering point for guided tours, school groups, and other programs on site.
A secondary Orientation Station gives more visitors the opportunity to interact with the history of Fort Ward—including those who did not come to the site expecting to engage with the story.

We have budgeted this element to be more straightforward than its counterpart in Alternative A.

**Site and Story Orientation**
A map provides visitors with an understanding of the site and its interpretive and recreational features. The station also introduces the holistic interpretive message. Site Tour Brochures may be especially valuable here (in a weatherproof box), as visitors are unlikely to make it to the Museum until much later in their experience if this is their first interaction with the interpretation.

**Programs and Events**
The kiosk will also feature a schedule of programs and events at the site, much as current signage does throughout the site today.
Stylized silhouette / cutout figures at three strategic locations on the site add humanity to the glimpses of the past that we share at Fort Ward. Further humanizing these stories are outdoor-grade audio stations, where actors (possibly drawn from stakeholders—see “Using Authentic Voices, page 23) give voice to people who defended the nation and built a community at Fort Ward.

**Orientation: Civil War Officer and Community Member**
Visible from Braddock Road and immediately upon entering, these two figures reflect Fort Ward’s evolution from national defense to a new community. Audio shares a Union Officer’s perspective of the Civil War, the need to protect Washington, D.C., and (ideally) the importance of Fort Ward itself in these defenses. The audio also shares the voice of a Fort Community member, describing the importance of his or her home and neighborhood. Like the Orientation Station, these figures are purposefully placed to not impede park events.

**Fort Path: Soldier**
A soldier’s figure leads visitors down the path leading from the Gate to the Northwest Bastion and provides an immersive interpretive stop along the way. We may look to soldiers’ reminiscences on the drudgery of life stationed at a fort, or the fear of encroaching Confederate forces, or the ideals for which the Civil War is being fought—and if he believes in them. We may also share a USCT soldier’s perspective here, as well—reflecting on what the Civil War Defenses of Washington mean for himself and his family.

**Fort Community: Mother and Child**
Two figures provide a civilian’s point of view of Fort Ward’s history. The child, in particular, provides a point of view that is relatable to visiting children and families. He or she may describe chores, games, and/or school—including how far they have to travel to get to class.

Approximate location on site for Orientation figures.
This prominent marker demonstrates Fort Ward’s dedication to telling how the Fort Community represents the ongoing evolution of the site following the end of the Civil War. Drawing visitors down the new Community pathway (much as the recreated Gate does for the Fort itself), this feature provides an interpretive introduction to exploring Fort Ward as a developing community in the years following the Civil War.

**A Marker**
We recommend a high-profile, easily recognizable, and thematically inspired structure to demarcate the beginning of the Community Trail. This marker will pique the interest of on-site visitors as soon as they arrive, as well as passers-by, such as drivers on Braddock Road who today might catch a glimpse of the Gate.

**Associated Interpretation**
Simple introductory text may be featured alongside the gateway, as well as relevant historic quotes that help set the scene and context for the Fort Community story.

**Programs and Events**
This highly visible, magnetic structure provides a natural location for guided tours, school groups, or tie-ins to events like Living History that may also take advantage of other areas [see Alternative A’s Home Frame, page 9].
These “enhanced” interpretive waysides provide multilayered interpretation, consistently based in and supporting the storyline. Purposefully located and capturing a range of subjects, they are intended to ultimately supplant all current interpretive signage.

6.1 **Soldier Lives at Fort Ward**
Interprets the lives of officers stationed at Fort Ward (tied to the Officer’s Quarters building), as well as regular soldiers (tied to once-present barracks) and the USCT, some of whose descendants would later found the neighborhood at Fort Ward.

6.2 **Recreating Fort Ward**
Based at the gate. Interprets the founding of the park, creation of the gate, rebuilding of ramparts and other features, and displacement of the community.

6.3 **Ramparts and Bombproofs**
Based at the Bombproof or between the Bombproofs and the Eastern ramparts. Interprets the types of fortifications—how they were built, their purposes, etc.

6.4 **Powder and Fire**
Interprets the Powder Magazine and cannon emplacements at Fort Ward, tied to those features. Explores their placement, operations, and daily tasks and battle expectations of those manning the forts.

6.5 **Defending Washington, D.C.**
Looks holistically at the fort to interpret its role in the greater Civil War Defenses of Washington—and why this protection was so vital. Explores the symbolism of these fortifications to contraband enslaved people.

6.6 **Connections to Alexandria**
Located with Braddock Road traffic in mind, interprets the site’s connection to the City of Alexandria in Prewar, Civil War, and Postwar contexts.

6.7 **Before the War**
Encourages visitors to consider the character of this place before its distinction as a “fort.” Includes evidence of indigenous occupation (and is tied to a recorded Native American site) and descriptions of the antebellum farming on the property.

6.8 **We Are Still Here**
Interprets the new Community Gate and provides an overview of the African American descendants of the Fort Ward / Seminary community today.

6.9 **Faith and the Community**
Based at the Oakland Baptist Cemetery. Interprets the church and cemeteries at Fort Ward—why and how they were founded.

6.10 **Education at Fort Ward**
Overlooks the original location of the Seminary School and interprets the role of education in the Fort Ward African American community—something that many residents traveled at great length to achieve, in addition to the schoolhouse set up here.

6.11 **A Community at Fort Ward**
Looking out across the homesites, interprets families and neighborhood leaders like the Adams, McKnights, Caseys, Belks, and Balls, and traces how families grew and changed their community through decades of ongoing inequality.

6.12 **From Fort to Community**
Connects both the Outlying Gun Bastion and Jackson homesite as an opportunity to trace the evolution of Fort Ward from military installation to homesite to municipal park. May also be appropriate at the site of the Jackson Cemetery / Southwest Ramparts.
INTERPRETIVE WAYSIDE PANELS  ALTERNATIVE B

Potential outline of interpretive categories on each Interpretive Wayside Panel.
Planning and consultation for Fort Ward in previous years has emphasized the importance of “commemoration” to the site. Fort Ward offers a unique place in the United States to remember the sacrifice and struggle of soldiers and civilians alike during the Civil War—and at the same time to consider the struggles, triumphs, and losses of African Americans who built a community in the shadow of this United States fort.

A Place to Pause and Reflect

Visitors do and will have an enormous array of opportunities to engage directly with Fort Ward’s story across the site—signs to read, sights to see, programs and events to enjoy, books to purchase, and so on.

This space provides a break from that—a specifically quiet space, where we encourage visitors to simply reflect on the past, consider how the actions and evolutions at Fort Ward influences our present, and how we each might continue to defend our nationa and build our communities ito the future.

This space could be augmented with memorial-style information: names of people known to be stationed at Fort Ward, names of people known to be part of the Fort Community, and so on.

Programs and Events

While typically a quiet space, occasional Commemoration ceremonies—including any that may be added to or augmented in current Living History events—may be well-suited to this space.
Visitors use their own cell phones to call in at various sites and listen to an interpretive program that augments their experience at Fort Ward. Human voices help visitors to draw a more personal connection to the story of Fort Ward’s defense of the nation and later community, as the interpretive script not only provides deeper content but also shares voices and perspectives of the site’s evolution over time.

We are currently budgeting for 10-15 stops, linked to new interpretive elements and/or new site markers.

**Location-Based Site Tour**

Visitors will need instructions to call into the Cell Phone Audio Tour at various locations throughout the site. These may take the form of individual panels (on uprights or low-profile pylons) and/or be integrated into the new Waysides (see Element #6, pages 20-21) planned for this Alternative.

**Using Authentic Voices**

This narrator-driven program may also feature authentic voices from both history and today. Voice actors bring life to witnesses of Fort Ward’s history. Key stakeholders may even be recruited for this purpose—we may reach out to reenactors from the 23rd Regiment United States Colored Troops, for example, to give voice to historical perspectives of Fort Ward’s and the greater Civil War Defenses of Washington’s role in defending the nation. Contemporary historians may also speak to the importance of the site in the style of Ken Burns documentaries—providing insights behind a narrator.
NOTE: Design inspirations are developed under the understanding that Fort Ward’s interpretive elements may take a unique style, not bound to City standards.
NOTE: Design inspirations are developed under the understanding that Fort Ward's interpretive elements may take a unique style, not bound to City standards.
Development of the Fort Ward Brochure is tied closely to the interpretive elements selected for the site. Further development of this item will therefore be more fully realized in Phase III.

At the moment, however, we can be sure to integrate the following key features in any iteration of the Brochure:

**Site Tour**
Visitors will use the Brochure as part of a self-guided tour of the Fort Ward site. The Brochure follows the holistic, single story interpreting the site, directing visitors not only through the different and changing spaces of Fort Ward but also its different and changing eras. Visitors will be able to clearly identify major pathways, and the Brochure will recommend a clear route for exploring the site.

**Tie-Ins to Static Interpretive Elements**
Locations featured in the Brochure should connect to static interpretive elements—waysides, stations, site features, and so on. These highly recognizable site features will help visitors find their way around the site and around the story.

**Using Authentic Voices**
Orientation on the Brochure will be supplemented whenever possible with primary source history. Doing so reminds visitors of the people that inhabited this place, and facilitates closer connections to the story. Quotes will by necessity have to be brief and direct—longer, deeper quotes may be shared in other elements.
Opportunities for program tie-ins to the new interpretive elements have been noted throughout this package, and we may continue to develop these opportunities and more in order to meet the Interpretive Plan’s “Programming” requirement. These concepts will be driven by the overall layout and elements for the site.

Alternatively, we would like to propose putting the Program Development budget allotment towards assisting in a series of Facilitated Dialogues and Oral History sessions, especially with children and African American community members.

Doing so will help to inform and direct the interpretive products under development, and drive at stakeholder buy-in to the City’s investment in Fort Ward.

Our Facilitated Dialogue with students at Valley Forge National Historical Park (pictured at right) yielded particularly strong results. Using interactive prototypes and mid-design graphics as prompts, we tested intellectual comprehension and emotional takeaways—seeing if what we had planned and designed would be effective, directly with a key portion of our audience.

Insights helped us confirm and fine-tune our planning and design—a critical achievement for the park and, we believe, for Fort Ward. We also believe that these conversations could be leveraged into Oral History gathering—in the course of testing materials, we would also recommend asking, “does YOUR (or your family’s) story fit in here? What would you tell here?”

Our deliverables would include developing and producing the testing materials, as well as a recommended script for conducting the dialogues and interviews.