

The Strategy recommends that with redevelopment, the existing approximately one-acre Wilkes Street public open space be improved to include play areas, seating, and open passive areas that will be designed to be accessible and accommodating to all ages and abilities. This improvement will be implemented by adjacent property owners through redevelopment with all applicable approvals. At such time, pathways for pedestrians, cyclists, and those using other ways to move will be designed. There will be opportunity during the development review process for community input into the design of the public open space. The Wilkes Street public open space will be a visual and functional green connection for people rather than cars between the neighborhood east to the Wilkes Street Tunnel and west to the open spaces created by the cemeteries. The improvements of the Wilkes Street public open space also present an opportunity to incorporate the history of the neighborhood through interpretive design elements.

Approved Guiding Documents

- The Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities instituted the [Park Facility Standards Manual](#) in 2012 with an update anticipated to be completed in 2020. The Park Facility Standards Manual establishes the minimum design, construction and performance expectations and requirements for the City's park features. The Park Facility Standards Manual is a reference instrument for selection of materials, fixtures, and systems and integrates City criteria with industry standards and applicable Federal/State/City requirements into a primary single-source document.
- The [City of Alexandria Playspace Policy](#) was approved in October 2013 to improve the health and well-being of all youth through design and provision of quality playspaces. The playspace should include opportunities with structured play (playground equipment) and unstructured play that support physical activity, intellectual development, socialization, interaction with the natural environment and free play. The playspace should accommodate the minimum number of children expected to reside in the surrounding area and meet the Park Facility Standards Manual.
- Findings of the [2019 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment](#) indicate the some of the strongest needs for Alexandria residents are:
 - Walking trails and loops
 - Outdoor public art
 - Natural areas and access to nature
- The City of Alexandria [Public Art Policy](#) outlines the requirements for public art within the city. The public art or amount of contributions for projects are determined as part of the DSUP process. Public art may be provided onsite or an equivalent contribution may be provided as determined through the development review process.
- The [Complete Streets Design Guidelines](#) shall guide the design and implementation of the bicycle trail facility and the sidewalk connections as well as intersection designs for trail and pedestrian crossings. Intersection designs shall also abide by the [Vision Zero Initiative](#), and move forward safe facilities as a priority.

Design Principles – Create a park that meets the needs of the surrounding users and incorporates the following

- Wilkes Street Park is the only park within a five-minute walking radius and there are a lot of children in the neighborhood; include a high-quality play equipment or play area as part of the park design.
- The surrounding neighborhood has a lot of seniors; ensure that the park is welcoming to people of all ages and abilities.
- An important bikeway goes through the park. This bikeway must remain and be incorporated as part of the park design and will follow the Complete Streets Design guidelines' preferred width for two-way Protected Bike Lanes. Additionally, this route is a commuter route for pedestrians and this use of the park must also remain. The two uses must co-exist in the safest design possible.
- Implement traffic calming measures and enhanced connections between the two halves of the park, including a raised intersection and crossings. This also helps improve the bikeability and walkability of the park.
- Staff imagines the park to be divided into two uses, passive and active. The uses will seamlessly merge into each other. Additionally, the park will integrate into the surrounding area, in a permeable manner, allowing park users to easily pass through the neighboring area into the park both visually and physically. Additionally, ensure the park design and adjacent site designs are integrated and that the park is not designed to be a private amenity for the adjacent buildings.
- Wilkes Street Park is currently two separate parcels that are zoned RB and RC (park use is allowed under this zoning designation). Rezone the parcels to be one parcel zoned as POS, as called out in the small area plan.
- Park design will work to connect the two parcels cohesively, both visually and geographically.
- Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Principles (CPTED) in the design of the park.
- Park furniture is to be compliant with the [Park Facility Standards Manual](#).
- Stormwater treatment requirements will be provided through green infrastructure and designed in a way that does not disrupt the usability of the site.
- Public art is to be integrated in the park design, in coordination with the Office of the Arts. In accordance with the approved plan the City of Alexandria Office of the Arts will lead the process for integrating public art within the new park design in collaboration with the design team.
- Currently, the eastern half of the park does not have a lot of shade. Include shade elements, such as trees and shade sails, into the design of the park.
- Implement green infrastructure and educational signage.
- The Bottoms was an important African American neighborhood; work with City staff and incorporate the site's history in the design of the park, Below are some resources about the site's history:
 - [The Bottoms](#)
 - [Untold History: The African American Community of Mercy](#)
 - [Digging out 'the Bottoms'](#)
- Existing trees in the park are old, hardwood trees and are in good health. The city arborist conducted a tree study and recommended preserving as many, if not all, existing non-invasive trees on site.

Wilkes Street Park

Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities Criteria

March 3, 2020

- Interest in using decorative, but bike-friendly surfacing (e.g. not pavers or cobblestones) on path to encourage slower bike traffic and add visual interest.
- Replace the existing light poles with Park Facility Standards Manual approved light poles or City staff approved trail lights.
- When possible, incorporate stormwater management into play areas to provide environmental education experiences
- The Heritage and OTW III are home to a diverse community, including a high proportion of residents from Ethiopia and Eritrea. If funding permits, incorporate this modern day diversity into the design, signage, etc.
- Consider relocation of flagpole and memorial rock
- An innovative approach to displaying the history of the park. One example is a story telling approach throughout the park to display the site's history. It would be great to tell a story that is not a sign, but through the design of the park.
 - There is potential to make it a progressing experience because it is a linear park.
- Consider relocation of flagpole and memorial rock that honors veterans.

Note: These design principles must be vetted, edited, and confirmed with the community through the design process.