City of Alexandria, Virginia

Pocket Park Improvement Plans

Final Draft Plan

January 16, 2020

Recreation, Parks, & Cultural Activities
Park Planning, Capital Development & Waterfront Division

Typology Park Plans

Park typology planning goal supporting Department Strategic Plan

Ensure a citywide open space system that equitably brings together our vibrant and diverse community and invests in the environment, while managing our resources responsibly.

1. Citywide Park Plans (10-50 acres) – plan completed in 2013
   to be updated 2021-2023

2. Neighborhood Park Plans (0.5 – 1- acres) – plan completed in 2016

3. Pocket Park Plans (0.5 and under) – expected completion 2020

25 Pocket Parks

Pocket Park Planning
Process

	Spring 2018	Summer 2018	Spring 2019	Summer 2019	Fall 2019	Winter 2020
Existing Conditions Research						
Obtain Community Feedback						
Create Draft Park Plans						
Obtain Community Feedback on the Plans						
Adjust Plans based on Feedback						
Conduct Cost Estimates						
Publically Release Plan and Seek PRC endorsement						

Goals for all Pocket Parks

1. Wayfinding
2. Meeting needs while being flexible with small spaces
3. Incorporating nature
4. Creating social connections

Portner Park
Draft Improvement Plan

Portner Park: 513 N Washington Street

Improvement Recommendations

1. **Add a park welcome sign**
   Add a park welcome sign to meet the City's wayfinding standards and invite park users into the park and to help create more place making in this park.
2. **Install game tables and seating**
   Community feedback indicated a desire for a community gathering spot. Installing game tables, similar to the tables at 3550 Commonwealth Avenue Park, would provide an opportunity to create social connections for both older children and adults.
3. **Add natural play features**
   Community feedback indicated a desire for play features for children in this park. Installing natural play features, such as boulders, logs, and stepping-stones, will provide play opportunities throughout the park.
4. **Seek partner agreements with neighbors on park plantings**
   The park is for public use. Many private properties have planted within the park boundary. An agreement would ensure the plants are appropriate variety and non-invasive.
5. **Explore an additional park entrance**
   Community feedback indicated that the single entrance to the park limits access and makes visiting the park challenging. Explore adding an additional park entrance using an existing easement or through acquiring an additional easement to help make the park accessible to more neighbors.

Portner Park
Final Improvement Plan

Portner Park: 1427 Powhatan Street

Improvement Recommendations

1. **Add a park sign**
   Add a park sign to meet the City's wayfinding standards, invite users into the park, help create more place making, and display the rules and regulations of the park.
2. **Review trash collection location**
   Community feedback indicated a desire to move the trash collection location from the northern end of the park. Review the area with the Department of Transportation & Environmental Services to determine if there is a better location for trash collection.
3. **Resolve drainage issues**
   Community feedback indicated that there are drainage issues in the park. Evaluate drainage improvement options through an engineering and design process.
4. **Update storm drains**
   Evaluate and update the existing storm drains in coordination with the Division of Stormwater Management and drainage improvements.
5. **Replace wooden retaining walls**
   Replace the existing wooden retaining walls along the park border which are old and failing.
6. **Explore a nadditional park entrance**
   If redevelopment of the adjacent land occurs, revisit the potential of a second entrance into the park to help make the park accessible to more neighbors.
7. **Add natural play features**
   Community feedback indicated a desire for play features for children in this park. Install natural play features to provide play opportunities throughout the park.
8. **Develop a planting and maintenance plan**
   Conduct a study and review park for non-native plants with the City arborist. Develop and implement a plan to remove non-native species throughout the park. Create a planting and maintenance plan identifying and preserving native plants and adding new, site appropriate plants that are well adapted to shady settings. Explore the possibility of a walking path throughout the park.
9. **Seek partner agreement with neighbors on park plantings**
   The park is for public use. Many private properties have planted within the park boundary. An agreement ensures the plants are appropriate and non-invasive.
10. **Add a dog waste station**
    Establish a partnership agreement with the Division of Stormwater Management and community association and install a dog waste station.
11. **Replace existing fence**
    The fence on the southern end of the park is in disrepair and non-compliant. Replace the fence with a city standard fence.
12. **Name park**
    Name the park as guided by the City's Naming Policy to give the park more of an identity.
13. **Conduct a safety study**
    Conduct a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) study to address community safety concerns. Incorporate recommendations from study.

Lynhaven Park
Draft Improvement Plan

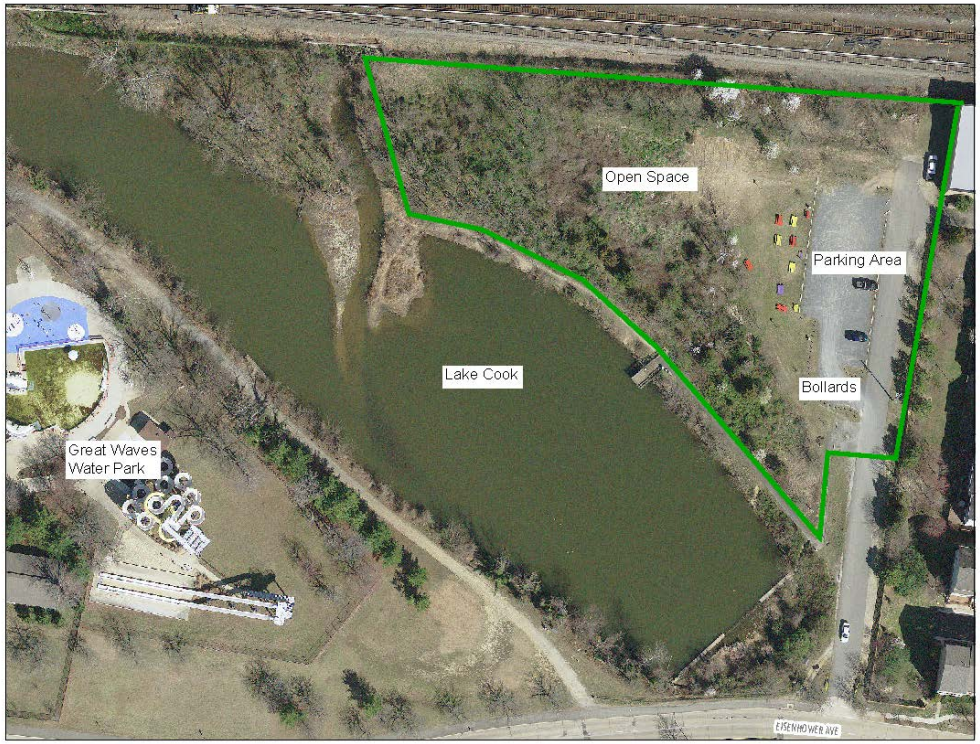
Lynhaven Park
Final Improvement Plan

Lynhaven Park: 5 East Reed Avenue

Improvement Recommendations

1. Plant trees around the park
   Plant trees in the grass area outside of the fence along Reed Avenue and the alley to provide shade inside the playground without taking space from the playground area.
2. Add a park welcome sign
   Add a park welcome sign to meet the City's wayfinding standards and invite park users into the park.
3. Install a stroller parking area
   Convert the flat hardscape area near the entrance to the park along Wilson Avenue and designate as stroller parking area.
4. Update existing playground and provide equipment for multiple age groups
   The current playground is outdated standard playground equipment, mainly focused on ages 5-12. Community feedback indicated that there is a need for additional structures that interest multiple ages and promote more imaginative play. Include regrading, additional landscaping, and a shade structure over the playground during the playground renovation.
5. Install bike parking
   Install bike parking to encourage bikers to access the site by bike.
6. Create shaded social seating areas
   Community feedback indicated a need for gathering space for parents to relax and socialize while their children play. This can include shade structures and tables.
7. Convert an area of mulch away from the play features to blacktop
   Community feedback indicated a need for variation in ground surface in the park that could be used for various activities, especially for older children. A blacktop surface could provide multiple uses. One potential use of this blacktop surface is a traffic garden, a painted miniature roadway with markings that demonstrate various roadway scenarios.
8. Create a plaza-like seating area
   Community feedback indicated a need for seating outside the fenced playground. The plaza-like space creates a welcoming point for users to the park.
9. Reconfigure fence
   Redesign park fence to allow for plaza-like seating area and include a second maintenance entrance and curb apron into the park along Reed Avenue.
10. Safe Routes to School
    Add Wilson Avenue and East Read Avenue crosswalks to Safe Routes to Schools to improve area connectivity. Realign curb ramps on E Reed Avenue and Wilson Avenue to direct pedestrians and bikers into the crosswalk.

Lake Cook Pocket Park
Draft Improvement Plan



Lake Cook Pocket Park: 3911 Eisenhower Ave

Improvement Recommendations

1. **Install nature inspired play features**
   Community feedback indicated a desire for additional opportunities for children to play in the park. Install a playground with nature inspired features for children of all ages. Locate the playground outside of the resource protection area.
2. **Install a bat house**
   Community feedback indicated a desire to enhance nature throughout the park and to control insects naturally. Bats are an important part of the ecosystem, they eat mosquitos and other insects and act as pollinators. Install a bat house to attract bats to the park. Work with the Natural Resources Division to ensure the bat house is installed in an appropriate location.
3. **Invasive species management**
   The Natural Resources Division will manage invasive species in the park as part of its operating program.
4. **Plant native trees in wooded areas**
   By planting sapling native trees in the wooded areas around the park, these will over time, replace trees that decline naturally. Also, evaluate the plantings around the lake and throughout the park and supplement as needed.
5. **Add seating and shade structures**
   Community feedback indicated a need for shaded seating and gathering spaces. Install picnic table seating and shade structures that could be used as a gathering area for caregivers, multi-generational gatherings, and community gatherings.
6. **Plant trees to serve as barrier**
   Vehicles park along the side of the access road, killing the small plants and creating muddy conditions, instead of driving into the park and parking in the provided parking lot. Trees will serve as a natural barrier along the access road and guide park visitors to the parking lot.
7. **Install Bike Share Station**
   Transportation & Environmental Services is considering installing a Bike Share station near the Cameron Run bike trail. This station would provide a needed connection point in the bike share network along the busy Cameron Run bike trail. The selected location will need to allow a vehicle to access the station to "rebalance" bikes between stations.
8. **Improve park access from Eisenhower Avenue**
   Provide safe and accessible pedestrian and bike crossings into the park. This may include additional crosswalks, updating existing crosswalks to high visibility, an improved intersection, and shortened crossing distance through installation of refuge islands or realigning the crosswalks.
   A transportation analysis will be coordinated by Transportation and Environmental Services.
9. **Mark the loop trail with a ¼ mile sign**
   The new loop trail around the lake is ¼ mile long. Mark the trail to indicate the length.
10. **Evaluate park needs based on use since renovation**
    The area around the lake was extensively renovated in 2018 as part of a stormwater retrofit project. Evaluate use and park needs since the renovation, paying particular attention to school groups, fishing patterns, and neighborhood use.
11. **Explore partnerships with NOVA Parks for bathroom access**
    Community feedback indicated a desire for bathrooms or port-a-johns to be installed in the park. Explore partnerships and signage with NOVA Parks to provide a bathroom for park users at Cameron Run Regional Park.

DRAFT

Lake Cook Pocket Park
Final Improvement Plan

Lake Cook Pocket Park: 3911 Eisenhower Ave

Improvement Recommendations

1. **Install nature inspired play features**
   Community feedback indicated a desire for additional opportunities for children to play in the park. Install a playground with nature inspired features for children of all ages. Locate the playspace outside of the Resource Protection Area.
2. **Install a bat house**
   Community feedback indicated a desire to enhance nature throughout the park and to control insects naturally. Bats are an important part of the ecosystem, they eat mosquitoes and other insects, and act as pollinators. Install a bat house to attract bats to the park and add education signage. Work with the Natural Resources Division to ensure the bat house is installed in an appropriate location.
3. **Plant native trees in wooded areas**
   Plant sapling native trees in the wooded areas around the park, which will over time, replace trees that decline naturally. Evaluate the plantings around the lake and throughout the park and supplement as needed.
4. **Add seating and shade structures**
   Community feedback indicated a need for shaded seating and gathering spaces. Install picnic table seating and shade structures that could be used as a gathering area for caregivers, multi-generational gatherings, and community gatherings.
5. **Plant trees to serve as barrier**
   Vehicles park along the side of the access road, killing the small plants and creating muddy conditions, instead of driving into the park and parking in the provided parking lot. Plant trees to serve as a natural barrier along the access road and guide park visitors to the parking lot.
6. **Evaluate park program needs based on use since renovation**
   The area around the lake was extensively renovated in 2018 as part of a stormwater retrofit project. Evaluate use and park needs since the renovation, paying attention to school groups, fishing patterns, and neighborhood use.
7. **Mark the loop trail with a ¼ mile sign**
   The new loop trail around the lake is ¼ mile long. Mark the trail to indicate the length.
8. **Install Bike Share Station and bike parking**
   Transportation & Environmental Services is installing a Bikeshare station between Lake Cook and Cameron Run Regional Park. This station provides a needed connection point in the bike share network along the Eisenhower Avenue trail. Install bike parking to encourage bike use to the park.
9. **Improve park access from Eisenhower Avenue**
   Provide safe and accessible pedestrian and bike crossings into the park. This may include additional crosswalks, updating existing crosswalks to high visibility, an improved intersection, and shortened crossing distance through installation of refuge islands or realigning the crosswalks. Transportation & Environmental Services to coordinate a transportation analysis.
10. **Add water access**
    Add water access for both a drinking (and bottle filler) and hand washing.
11. **Add a rules and regulations sign**
    Add a rules and regulations sign to inform park users of the park's rules.
12. **Invasive species management**
    The Natural Resources Division to continue to manage invasive species in the park as part of its operating program.

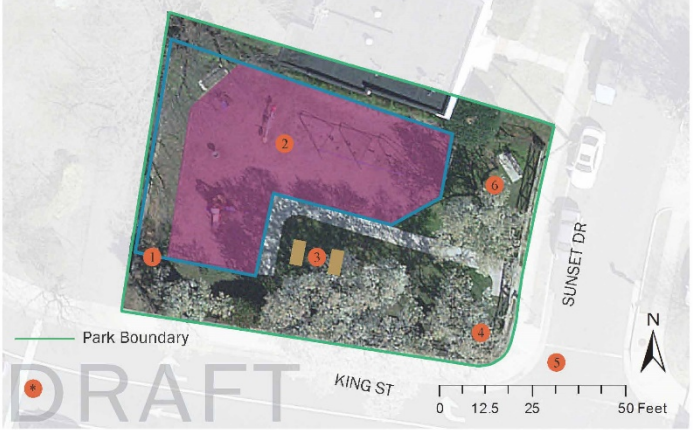
Sunset Mini
Draft Improvement Plan

Sunset Mini Park: 4 Sunset Drive

Improvement Recommendations

1. **Move fence to designate use areas**
   The fence is currently around the entire park, and community feedback indicated that many people are not aware this is a park. Moving the fence so that it is only around the playground opens up the rest of the park to passers-by and creates a more inviting space for all ages.
2. **Renovate the playground**
   The playground equipment is limited in this park and does not adequately use the available space. The current playground was renovated in 2007. When appropriate to renovate the full playground, consider a train theme given the proximity to train tracks that serve Amtrak and WMATA trains.
3. **Add social seating area**
   This park could be a gateway into the City from the WMATA/Amtrak stations and be a good place for families and visitors who use the train to picnic and play. Add picnic benches or Adirondack chairs in the grass area near the cherry trees to create a community gathering area.
4. **Add a park welcome sign**
   Add a park welcome sign to meet the City's wayfinding standards and invite park users into the park and to help create more place making in this park.
5. **Improve park access from King Street**
   Improve the pedestrian crossing to the park across Sunset Drive to provide safe and accessible access from King Street. This may include updating the existing crosswalk to high visibility and updating the ADA access ramps at the intersection of Sunset Drive and King Street.
6. **Consider public art**
   Work with the Office of the Arts to appropriately integrate public art into the design process for this park.

* *Transportation and Environmental Services is considering improvements to the design of the King Street, Callahan Drive, and Russell Road intersection.*



Sunset Mini
Final Improvement Plan

Sunset Mini Park: 4 Sunset Drive

Improvement Recommendations

1. Move fence to designate use areas
   The fence is currently around the entire park, and community feedback indicated that many people are not aware this is a park. Move the fence back to allow access to the benches without entering the playground. This opens up the rest of the park to passers-by and creates a more inviting space for all ages.
2. Renovate the playground
   The playground equipment is limited in this park and does not adequately use the available space. The current playground was renovated in 2007. When appropriate, renovate the full playground and consider a train theme given the proximity to train tracks that serve Amtrak and WMATA trains.
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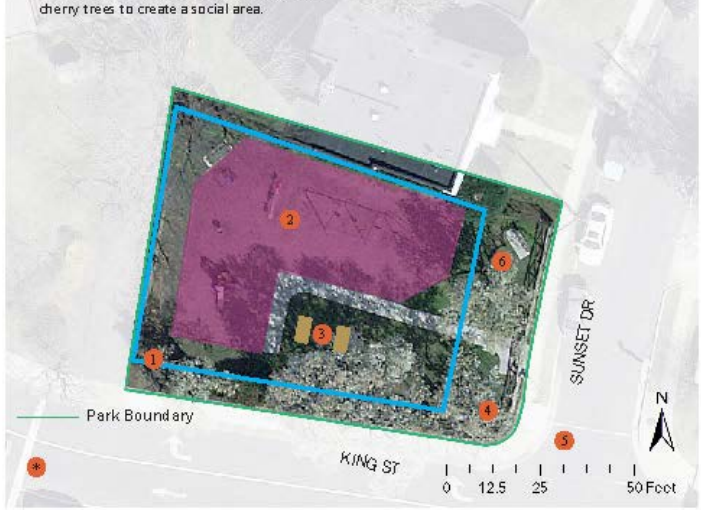

Woodbine Tot Lot
Draft Improvement Plan

Woodbine Tot Lot: 1509 Woodbine Street

Improvement Recommendations

1. **Update park signage**
   The existing park welcome sign will be updated to the current standard.

2. **Add additional seating**
   Install picnic table seating that could be used as a gathering area for caregivers and for multi-generational gatherings. Also install multi-tiered seating near the playground that can be used as a gathering area for caregivers and allows them to see children throughout the playground.

3. **Renovate and reconfigure the playground**
   The existing playground is outdated and does not meet the community needs. It can be difficult for caregivers to see children throughout the playground due to the location of the equipment. The play equipment will be updated with new structures for multiple age groups.

4. **Add a gate to the alley**
   Community feedback indicated that families along Dogwood Drive would like to access the park through the alley. Along with a gate, additional signage in the alley would need to be installed warning drivers that children are present.

5. **Add paint/thermoplastic to the alley**
   To add additional color and visibility to the alley near the playground, install a thermoplastic or painted design in the alley along the length of the playground. This acts as a safety feature to help cars slow down and adds color and vibrancy to the park.

Whitaker's Wish

In 2019, the Make-A-Wish Foundation approached the City of Alexandria with a wish from a local four year old. Whitaker has bravely battled cancer and is currently waiting for his wish. Whitaker absolutely loves going to the Woodbine Tot Lot across the street from his house and has asked to renovate the playground and add some special items to make the tot lot extra special for himself and all his neighborhood friends.

The Make-A-Wish project will renovate Woodbine Tot Lot, per the Whitaker's wishes. Make-A-Wish will hire a designer to work with the community and a contractor to renovate the playground, with RPCA oversight. The playground design will take into consideration the draft Pocket Park Plan.

Through the Community Matching Fund, the City of Alexandria, is offering a $25,000 grant and Make-A-Wish is matching these funds.

Woodbine Tot Lot
Final Improvement Plan

Woodbine Tot Lot: 1509 Woodbine Street
Improvement Recommendations

1. Update park signage
Update the existing park welcome sign to the current city standard.

2. Add additional seating
Install picnic table seating to be used as a gathering area for caregivers and for multi-generational gatherings. Install multi-tiered seating near the playground to be used as a gathering area for caregivers and allows them to see children throughout the playground.

3. Renovate and reconfigure the playground
The existing playground is outdated and does not meet the community needs. Update the play equipment with new structures for multiple age groups. Community feedback indicated a need for shade in this park. Install a shade structure, such as a shade sail, as part of the playground renovation. Reconfigure the park's entryway to a non-mulch surface to make it easier for caretakers with stollers to get in and out of the park.

4. Add a gate to the alley and reconfigure fence
Community feedback indicated that families along Dogwood Drive would like to access the park through the alley. Replace the fence with a city standard green fence and reconfigure it to allow a buffer zone between the alley and the park for caregivers, children, and strollers. Along with a gate, additional signage in the alley will need to be installed warning drivers that children are present.

5. Add paint/thermoplastic to the alley
Install a thermoplastic or painted design in the alley along the length of the playground to add additional color and visibility. This acts as a safety feature to help cars slow down and adds color and vibrancy to the park.

Next Steps

1. Receive cost estimates and prioritize recommendations
2. Receive endorsement or changes from Park and Recreation Commission based on public hearing
3. Staff will make changes to the plan as advised by the PRC
4. Integrate recommendations into CIP process and seek alternative funding sources