

Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

# SECTION II



The City of Alexandria, Virginia

October 2014

**FINAL DRAFT**

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# 1. Background

## A. Purpose of the Plan

The Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan<sup>1</sup> synthesizes work to document the significance, threats and vulnerabilities to the resources at the park, recognizing the continuum of history within the region and parkland. The findings drawn from this document, in conjunction with other specific areas of focus, are incorporated in the management recommendations that address long-term resource management and interpretation.

The management plan that follows seeks to integrate Fort Ward Park's historical significance and context with contemporary park operations and more recently updated archaeological information. The overarching intent is that Fort Ward and its resources may be sustained, maintained and interpreted.

The management recommendations for resource protection, interpretation and enhancement synthesize and apply the best practices available to address the management issues and concerns identified through the planning process.



Figure 1 - Parcel map and park boundary

## B. Site Description

Fort Ward Park is located in the Seminary Hills area, adjacent to Shirley Highway/Interstate 395, between North Van Dorn Street to the north and West Braddock Road to the south. In aggregate, it covers 43.46 acres.<sup>2</sup> The 36.52-acre core property that surrounds the earthworks dating from the Civil War and the smaller 1.94-acre parcel adjacent to Van Dorn is the focus of the management plan. For purposes of this planning effort, these two parcels will be treated as a single entity. A separate, third parcel, 5 acres in size, is also a part of Fort Ward Park, but is not included in the management plan due to its existing development with synthetic turf athletic fields and tennis courts. The third parcel was not part of the original acquisition of the Civil War fort.

Fort Ward Park has a rolling topography and is heavily wooded with meadows (recently grown via 'no mow' practices) and traditional grass turf interspersed throughout. In addition

<sup>1</sup> As defined by the City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities. (Spengler, Jim. Fort Ward Advisory Group [FWAG] Minutes. 2/15/12. 'a Management Plan is a document of policies and provides guidance to park management'.)

<sup>2</sup> Simmons, R.H. *Remnant Natural Areas in Parks, Waterways, and Undeveloped Sites in the City of Alexandria, Virginia: Seminary Hill Area*. City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities. Alexandria, VA. 2013.

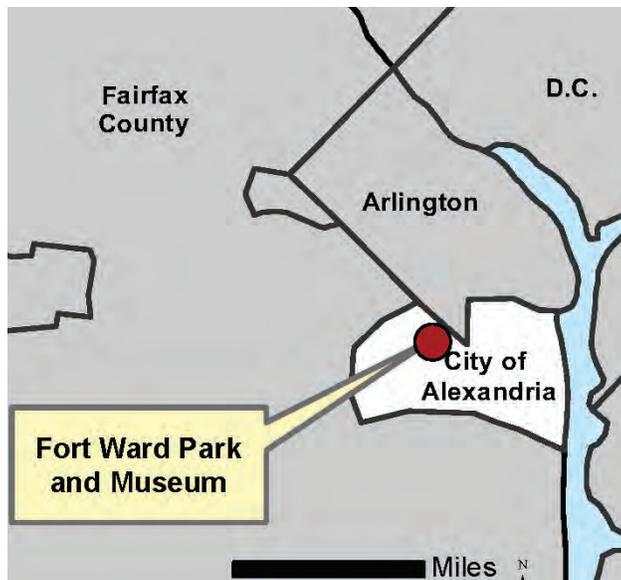


Figure 2 - Fort Ward Park location within the metropolitan region

to its significant Civil War and post Civil War African American cultural resources, the park contains important habitat and provides a ‘green lung’<sup>3</sup> for the surrounding suburban and urban area. Site features enhance groundwater infiltration and recharge. However, some features and practices such as heavy use, poor soils, grade manipulation, changing rainfall patterns and the recent hold on ground-disturbing maintenance practices to protect cultural resources have contributed to problems with excessive stormwater runoff and erosion.

The park, along with Episcopal High School and the Virginia Theological Seminary, sits on the highest of a series of ancient river terraces that step down from the park to Old Town Alexandria, along with Episcopal High School and the Virginia Theological Seminary. Seminary Terrace’s height was strategically key terrain, and a fortification at this location had commanding views of the western approaches to the City of Alexandria.

The three main land uses with tangible evidence found on the site are the Civil War fort, the African American community— “The Fort” community—and the current use as a recreational site, Fort Ward Park. Each has made changes to the physical fabric of the landscape to fit its needs. Parts of the evidence of previous uses were erased by the succeeding use. Archaeological investigations have helped and will continue to help to clarify what was done to the landscape and to document the lives of the occupants. The cultural resources associated with “The Fort” community provide a tangible link between the present and a past that has significance for the local community and descendent groups.



Figure 3 - “The Fort” community interpretive wayside sign located at Fort Ward Park

Fort Ward was a Civil War-era military stronghold established as part of the Defenses of Washington that ringed the Union capital of Washington, D.C. It is the fifth largest of the 164 earthen fortifications that comprised the system, including 68 enclosed forts and 93 fortified field artillery positions. Today it is one of the best preserved. The area remained rural into the 1950s. Acquisition of the site began in the 1950s as the construction of Interstate 395/Shirley Highway

began making this land valuable for future development. The park was created to both preserve and reconstruct a portion of the fort for the upcoming Civil War Centennial, and also to establish a public park and open space in the West End of the City of Alexandria.

<sup>3</sup> A term to describe parkland within an urban area, in the context of the health benefits it provides through green space, vegetation and recreation.

The parklands also possess a century-long legacy of community life and heritage that preceded development of the park as a public amenity. “The Fort” community, which grew up around the earthen fortification, was composed primarily of African American families that settled here to work at local institutions such as the nearby Virginia Theological Seminary and Episcopal High School. Like many rural communities, “The Fort” community was self-sustaining, sharing produce from gardens and farms.<sup>4</sup> Descendants of these families were present when the park was conceived and the land acquired—some properties through the use of eminent domain. Residents who were able were relocated into the larger “The Seminary” community. Physical evidence of the former community includes archaeological sites, burial sites, plantings and road traces.

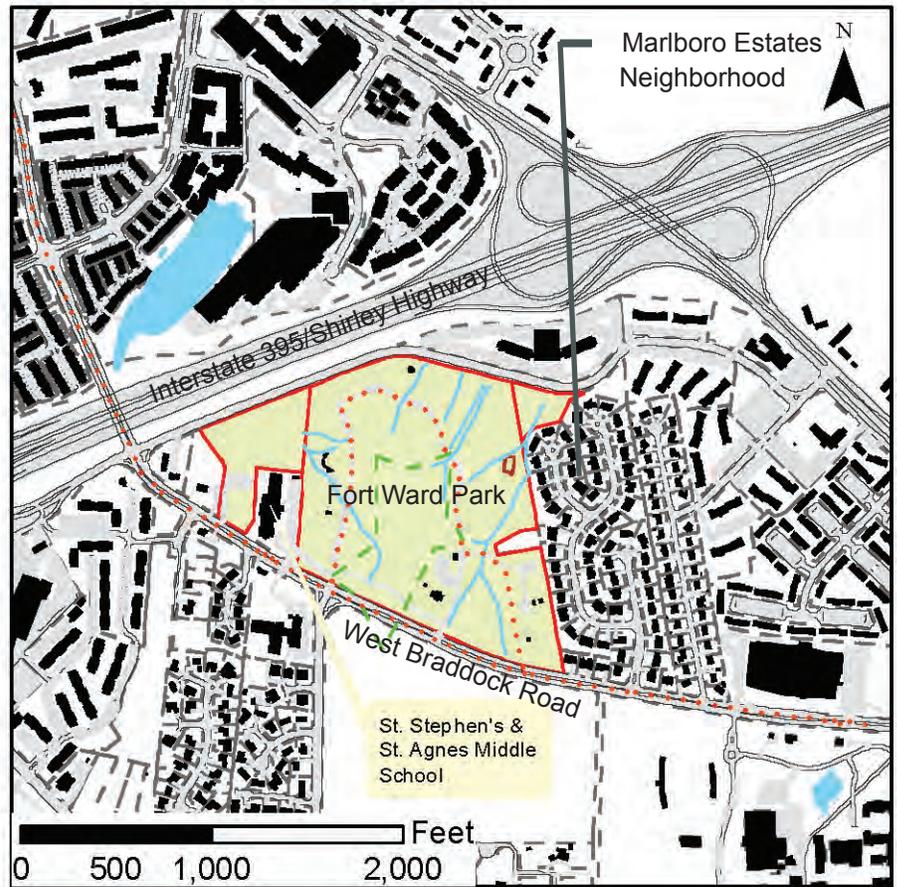


Figure 4 - Fort Ward Park shown within its surrounding land use pattern

Surrounded by residential neighborhoods (Marlboro Estates immediately to the east) and institutional uses (Episcopal High School, St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes Middle School and the Virginia Theological Seminary) the park is accessed from West Braddock Road. An informal pedestrian trail links the park to North Van Dorn Street on the park’s northern edge. Interstate 395/Shirley Highway is northwest of the park. A commercial area at the intersection of Braddock Road, King Street and Quaker Lane is located east of the residential neighborhood, separated from the park by Minnie Howard School and a single family residential neighborhood. Soccer fields and tennis courts lie to the west of the park’s core and northwest of the St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes Middle School property.

Fort Ward Park’s landscape has been managed or manipulated by humans for many years. Flakes of milky quartz found on the site indicate an early presence of Native Americans, although the evidence was too limited to date the finds.<sup>5</sup> According to historic reports, the land was farmed prior to the Civil War. During construction of the Civil War fort, trees were removed for wood products and to provide for open views from the fort. After the war, people settled on the surrounding land, built homes



Figure 5 - Azalea shrub bed at Fort Ward Park

4 Washington, Adrienne, Frances Terrell and Jim Walpole. Chapter 4. *African American Structures and Other Resources: Consideration of historical resources including location of roads and paths, African American structures, schools, landscaping, and artifacts* (with the exception of graves and burial sites). May 2013.

5 Ziegler, Charles and Frances Terrell. Chapter 2. *History and Culture: Issues and Recommendations, Recommendations for the Management of Fort Ward Historical Park*. January 2011.

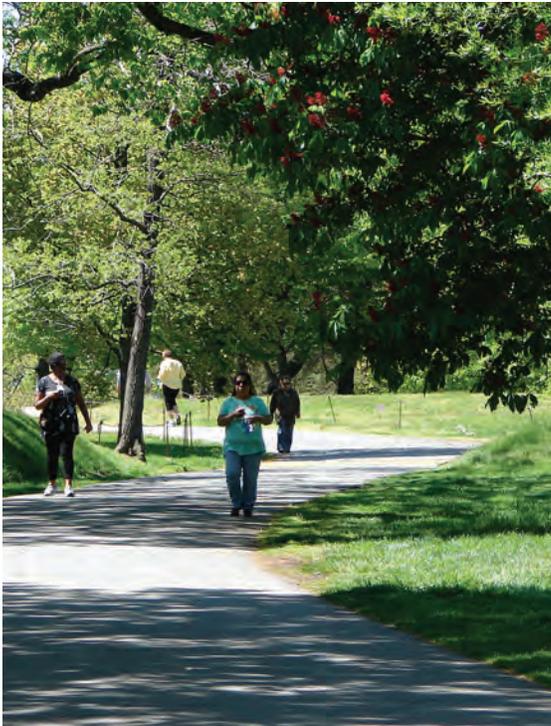


Figure 6 - Walkers at Fort Ward

and planted gardens and other vegetation. Following the creation of the park in the 1960s, additional trees were planted and others seeded themselves. Remnants of the former community’s gardens and plantings remained, as did some more natural patterns of vegetated succession.<sup>6</sup> The park was designated as the City’s Arboretum in the mid-1980s. A brochure featured lists of species and identified their locations and the locations of eighteen shrub beds. Over 60 varieties of azaleas and camellias were planted in these beds found throughout the park.<sup>7</sup> Many of the azaleas were Glenn Dale hybrids, drawn from the test gardens of the U.S. Arboretum in the 1960s. Today, the park includes wooded areas with scattered groves and champion trees, ornamental plantings, lawn areas managed as meadow or ‘no mow’ areas, plantings or turf and two intermittent streams.

Park features include late 19th century and early 20th century African American historical sites, approximately 90-95% of the earthworks remains of the Civil War fort and associated features like the outlying battery and rifle trench, a Civil War museum, an amphitheater, picnic areas, a playground, a dog exercise area, and a 0.6 mile marked walking loop.

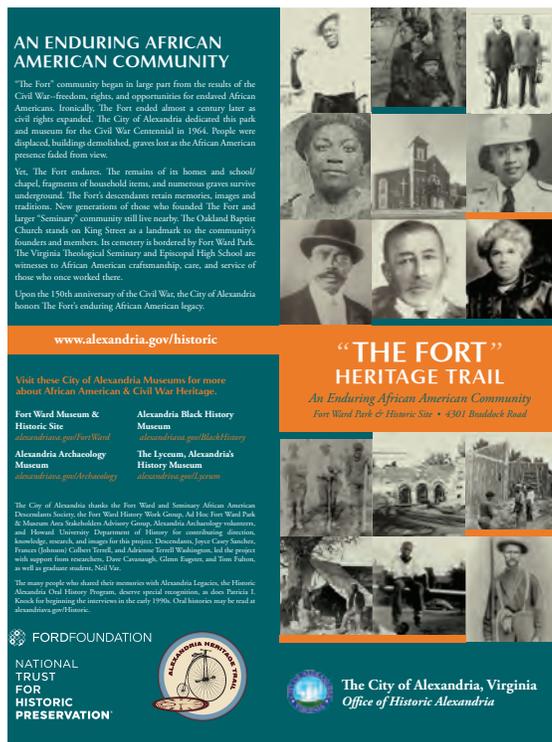


Figure 7 - Brochure and flyer for the trail within Fort Ward Park, linking to the Alexandria Heritage Trail

### C. Adjacent Land Use and Planning Context Related Resources outside of Current Park Boundaries

Fort Ward Park is included in the Alexandria Heritage Trail, a 23-mile marked urban route that explores Alexandria’s archaeology and history. Wayside signs, brochures and mobile ‘apps’ help to convey information about heritage sites located along the trail. A Civil War Alexandria iPhone ‘app’ provides mobile information about Civil War sites within the region. The City also administers an African American Historic Sites self-guided tour with a brochure that includes Fort Ward. The Alexandria Civil War Defenses of Washington Bike Trail is identified on maps and brochures available around the city and online. Fort Ward is marked as one of the stops on the Virginia Civil War Trails system. Fort Ward Park is included as a part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, administered by the National Park Service.

Other surviving forts, and the portion of the south bastion of Fort Ward that extends across West Braddock Road also relate to the park and its resources. The residential neighborhood to the east, and the seminary and schools across the street are also tied to Fort Ward Park in their relationship to the former “The Fort” community.

6 Ries, Linda and Richard Brune. Chapter 4. *Environment and Natural Resources: Issues and Recommendations*.

7 National Register Nomination Form. March 30, 1981.



## 2. Existing Conditions

The Existing Conditions report describes the natural and built environment of Fort Ward Park. It serves as the base, or starting point, for recommendations and best management practices that address the challenges and issues related to the park's physical resources in the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan. Recreation resources and facilities are addressed in a separate chapter.

### A. Natural Landscape

Fort Ward Park is primarily characterized by turf lawn punctuated by individual shade and evergreen trees and shrub borders, many ornamental in character. Woodlands are found primarily along the park margins so there is a great deal of species richness within the park. For many years, Fort Ward was managed as an arboretum. Once heavily planted with azaleas and camellias, azalea festivals were held beginning in the 1970s. Time has taken its toll on the park. Due to natural aging and storms, many trees and shrub bed plantings have disappeared or continue to decline. New trees and shrubs have not been planted since 2010, due to restrictions on ground disturbing maintenance to protect the park's cultural resources.

Fort Ward Park's natural resources provide multiple benefits.<sup>1</sup> These include:

- Forested buffer for adjacent neighborhoods
- Habitat for birds, squirrels, bats other wildlife and insects
- Chesapeake Bay watershed protection
- Pleasing landscape and refuge from urban life
- Shade for park users
- Noise reduction from I-395 and local road traffic
- Protection of historic artifacts with vegetative ground cover
- Opportunities for public education on horticulture using the landscape of Fort Ward Park (care of plants, including trees) and dendrology (trees species id and study)
- Opportunities to interpret Civil War and the African American history using the landscape as indicators of past history (cedar lane)

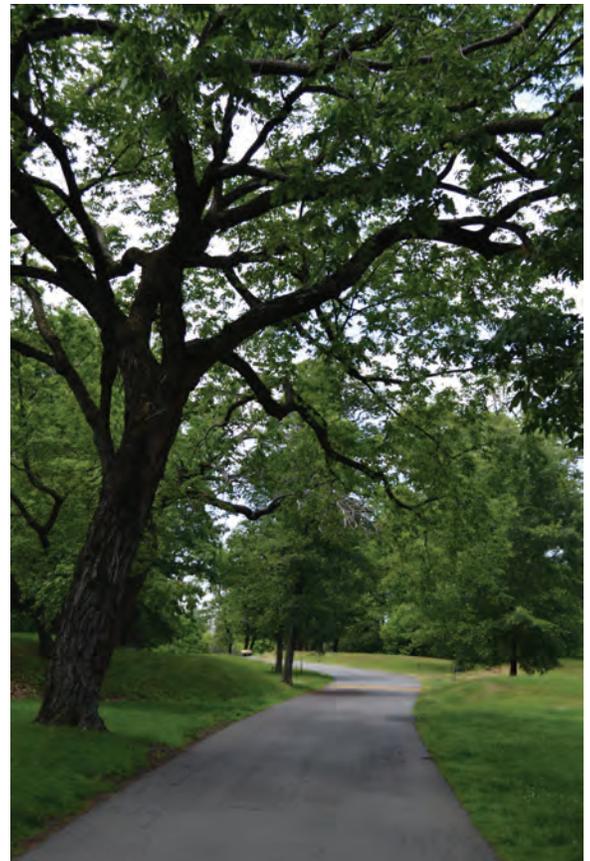


Figure 8 - Tree shaded walkway

### Geology

Fort Ward Park sits on one of the highest in a series of river terraces—Seminary Terrace—with an average elevation between 265 and 280 feet that step down across the city to the

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 7: *Environmental Resources of Fort Ward: Issues, Assessment and Recommendations for Management*. May 2013

lowest terrace, the Old Town Terrace. The park has been subdivided into five geologic map units depicting the principal type of rocks and/or sediment based on current geologic surface conditions.<sup>2</sup> The core of the park, the site within the walking loop and the area of fort construction and reconstruction, is described as being artificial fill or disturbed ground. A second unit, the Seminary Terrace unit, a broad upland plain centered on the Episcopal Seminary, wraps the disturbed area. As the summit of the Alexandria highlands, the upland plain is composed chiefly of medium-coarse gravel in strong orange-brown heavy loam, with the highest portion capped with heavy, sandy silt that locally exceeds 10 feet in thickness and is poorly drained. The Seminary terrace units are in the Tertiary–Early Pleistocene Upland Terraces time frame.

The two intermittent stream valleys are located within other geologic units. The western stream valley lies on a map unit made up of chiefly massive lacustrine clay, forming steep bluffs and hillsides with many prehistoric and modern landslide scars. Arell clay's (in the Potomac Formation–Early Cretaceous) permeability is exceedingly low, yielding sparse amounts of ground-water discharge that result in ravines that are typically dry for much of the year. The eastern stream valley falls within the Fort Ward escarpment unit (Tertiary period), dating from the same period as the Seminary terrace units, and is a clay overlaid with a few inches to a few feet of gravelly and cobbly colluvium. Steeper slopes in this unit may be subject to slope failures.

## Soils

Three soil types or complexes are identified in the National Resources Conservation Service's soil map for the portion of Fort Ward Park included within the Fort Ward Park Management Plan.<sup>3</sup> The soil survey and rankings support site observations regarding challenges in obtaining good turf growth. Soils have been compacted over time through construction activities, recreational use and vehicle traffic, exacerbating already challenging conditions. In addition to the compacted soils, the parklands have extensive stormwater run-off that intensifies the erosion problem, damaging tree roots and diminishing the vigor of all plants. Excessive sheet erosion as well as evidence of gully erosion is visible in the drainage areas with topsoil being lost throughout much of the park.



Figure 9 - Compacted soil on rifle trench

## Hydrology

A separate stormwater and drainage evaluation of the park was completed by URS Corporation in 2014.<sup>4</sup> A copy of the report is included as an Appendix of the Management Plan.

The study evaluated sixteen sites within the park, assessing existing conditions and identifying potential measures to improve drainage and sedimentation. The capacity of the existing stormwater system was also verified.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, Tony. *Geologic Atlas of the City of Alexandria, Virginia and Vicinity*. March 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Web Soil Survey <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>. Soil map prepared by Natural Resources Conservation Service, Version 5, December 14, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Fort Ward Park Drainage Master Plan, URS Corporation, February 2014

Report recommendations include both structural and nonstructural measures. Three of the improvements are defined in more detail as initial, pilot projects for the park. These include retrofitting the existing stormwater system to reduce sedimentation and to improve the water quality of the runoff; construction of two diversion berms and an underground pipe to improve nuisance flooding and erosion at the Oakland Baptist Cemetery and Old Grave Yard sites; and stream stabilization to reduce erosion and improve the overall health of the stream.

## Vegetation

### Surveys and Snapshots for Tree Cover

Individual trees such as state and city champion trees have been identified and some historic or memorial trees have been noted; however, no comprehensive, current database exists of tree plantings, champion trees on site or historic/witness trees. There is no master plan for planting in the park, nor has the arboretum label applied in the 1980s borne any additional investment or caretaking. The arboretum subject is touched upon in Appendix F of the *The City of Alexandria's Urban Forestry Master Plan, 2009*. One of the plan's pilot projects is the 'Rededication of the City of Alexandria Arboretum at Fort Ward Park.' According to the Master Plan, "This rededication should include a careful study and development of a plan that will integrate and celebrate the park's historic past as well as its future and importance as one of the city's premiere recreational sites. It should also include the reestablishment of the park's once enviable collections of azaleas and camellias and the thoughtful development of plant collections that will demonstrate a variety of plants that can be incorporated into local landscapes."<sup>5</sup>

Comparing the most recent tree survey's data completed in 2002, to the tree inventory species list contained in the brochure developed in the 1980s and earlier aerial photographs is informative. The 1927 and 1937 aerial photographs (southern portion of the park only) display similar features—clusters of wooded areas immediately adjacent and south of the Oakland Baptist Cemetery, with more woodlands along the stream valley to the north. The majority of the site is covered with open fields. The lands surrounding the park are undeveloped and appear to be farmed or pasture lands. By 1927, West Braddock Road was aligned to cut through the southern leg of the fort structure. The remains on the south side of the road can still be seen on the 1927 image. Scattered throughout the site, but concentrated on the eastern side, are individual buildings, primarily connected to West Braddock Road. Further tree growth is shown in the 1949 aerial photograph, although a hedgerow seen in the 1937 photo has disappeared (see Section II.8, Plates 6 and 7 for copies of the 1937 and 1949 aerial photographs).

Recent observations indicate that the variety of tree species within the park reinforce the continuation of the diversity of species noted in earlier inventories, if not in the quantities from the past. However, many of the trees lost in recent storms have not been replaced—22 large trees failed in 2010 storms and other trees are stressed or dying. When some of these damaged or destroyed trees were recently removed, their lower trunks (2–3 feet high) and roots were left in place. More recently, some of those stumps have been

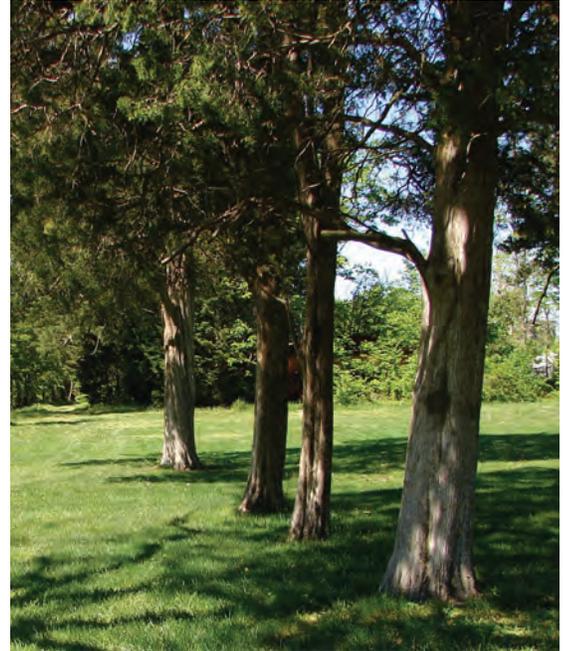


Figure 10 - Line of cedars along School House Lane

<sup>5</sup> Alexandria Urban Forestry Master Plan, page 84



Figure 11 - Broken branch on fort wall, Summer 2013

flush cut to the ground level, but again no ground disturbing activities were undertaken to avoid inadvertent damage to archaeological features. Trees along the fence line of the cemetery have been removed as well.

Today, many trees in the park show signs of extensive decay, broken branches, disease and insect damage and are leaning.<sup>6</sup> Sampling of approximately 600 of the trees in the park indicated that 100-200 of those are weakened and will potentially fail within the next five years. Healthy trees face future risks. The large Green Ash grove found in the southeastern corner of the park is vulnerable to the Emerald Ash Borer. Many experts predict the area will suffer a total loss of ash trees in the near future; however, many distinguished trees continue to thrive in the park. Several of the twenty Memorial Trees noted in the 1980s brochure remain standing. The recently published Natural Resources Technical Report 13-1<sup>7</sup> describes the City co-champion Blackjack Oak (*Quercus marilandica*), which is located at the north edge of the parking area near the state co-champion Blackjack Oak, which is located above an open grassy swale east of the museum parking lot. Nearby is the state champion Black Haw (*Viburnum prunifolium*). The City champion Downy Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*), once one of two co-champions on site, grows near the Northwest Bastion. The

City co-champion Pignut, a hickory, (*Carya glabra*) is located nearby. A Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*) City Champion is growing on the slope below the Northeast Bastion. Another City co-champion, a Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), is growing on the east of the rifle trench, near the playground. The Rudkin Oak (*Quercus x rudkinii*), a natural hybrid between Blackjack Oak and Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*), is found at Fort Ward Park on the eastern flank of the Rifle Trench, one of only two locations where the tree is found in the city.

Due to the recent archaeological discoveries and prior to completion of an archaeological survey of the park, restrictions were placed on ground disturbing activities. No new tree planting has occurred since 2010. This lack of planting is conspicuous as the park has been subject to several damaging storms—an ice storm in 2010, the June 29, 2012 derecho windstorm, and again in 2013.



Figure 12 - Grassland meadow at Fort Ward Park

### Shrubs and Grasslands

Ten of the eighteen shrub beds shown in the arboretum brochure from the 1980s remain, some in different configurations and all in different stages of growth. Many are still planted primarily with azaleas. One shrub bed is filled with pyracantha and is overgrown with vines. Some of these vines are non-native invasive species such as Oriental porcelainberry and Japanese honeysuckle. In addition, poison ivy has grown in areas of high use, such as picnic areas and along trails, and should be removed from those areas. A cedar hedge wraps an area in the southeastern corner of the park.

<sup>6</sup> Ries, Linda. FWAG

<sup>7</sup> Simmons, Rod. *Remnant Natural Areas in Parks, Waterways, and Undeveloped Sites in the City of Alexandria, Virginia: Seminary Hill Area*. Natural Resources Technical Report 13-1, June 2013, page 9.

As displayed in the historic aerial photographs, much of the parkland is still covered in grass, whether mowed as turf or designated to revert to meadow. The condition of the grassy areas vary widely throughout the park; areas within the loop road are under the control of the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), while the areas generally outside the loop road are maintained by the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA). Management of the turf affects tree health as well as soil erosion. Much of the park areas outside the loop road continue to be under stress. It is difficult to get turf reestablished when soils are highly compacted and subject to erosion. The City has begun to address these issues, with OHA and RPCA identifying areas of the park that can be aerated without damaging cultural resources and repairing surface areas. Initial aeration of those areas took place over the fall of 2013, with up to four cycles proposed for the 2014 season.

The City's *Natural Resource Technical Report* states "Dry, gravelly, open areas throughout the park provide unique habitat for crustose lichens and a variety of native, warm-season grasses, such as varieties of Rosette Grass (*Dichanthelium acuminatum*), Poverty Oatgrass (*Danthonia spicata*), Poverty Grass (*Sporobolus vaginiflorus*) and others." Perhaps the common names indicate soil conditions best—impoverished. Wildflowers are also found on site, including Pinweed (*Lechea spp.*) and St. Andrew's Cross (*Hypericum hypericoides*). Additional uncommon to rare species identified in the recent Technical Report include Hairy Thoroughwort (*Eupatorium pubescens*), Pinweed (*Hypericum gentianoides*), Hairy Bushclover (*Lespedeza hirt var. hirta*) and Frosted Hawthorne (*Crataegus pruinosa*).<sup>8</sup>

Recently, in an attempt to better manage stormwater and site conditions, areas within the park were designated as 'no mow' or natural areas to alleviate some erosion problems, better protect historic sites and to save money on turf management. Initially, three areas were designated as 'meadow' and three areas were designated as 'woodland glade.'<sup>9</sup> Both categories are mowed only once, annually in the fall. These six areas were reduced to two meadows, both located on the eastern side of the park. The attempt to generate woodland glades did not take off. A similar but slightly different proposal is included in this management plan in the continuing attempt to reduce costs and better manage stormwater on the site. The third meadow, located between the fort and West Braddock Road was eliminated and that area is managed as turf grass.

The turf area within the park is managed by two separate entities—one portion by the park's maintenance operation and the other by a private contractor under the supervision of the Office of Historic Alexandria. Beginning in 2013, the area outside of the fort area (maintained by City crews) is mowed on a two-week rotation due to recent budget shortfalls. The turf within the fort area, independently contracted, is managed

### Tree Inventories and Surveys

A tree identification map and key were printed in the mid-1980s in a brochure that references the Arbor Day, 1983 establishment of the Arboretum in Fort Ward Park. A separate survey was undertaken in 2002. The earlier arboretum survey did not include a tree count so quantity cannot be compared, but species survival can be deduced. As could be expected, ornamental species declined, as they are often short-lived and less likely than natives to easily acclimate to site conditions. Some change could also be attributed to the authors of each survey identifying a different variety for the same plant material.

Missing species from the 2002 list, but included in the earlier version are Hop Hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) Groenveltd Elm (*Ulmus 'Groenveltd'*), River Birch (*Betula nigra*), European Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*), Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*), European Larch (*Larix decidua*), Lacebark Pine (*Pinus bungeana*), Carolina Silverbell (*Halesia carolina*), Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*), Hedge Maple (*Acer campestre*), Paperbark Maple (*Acer griseum*), White Redbud (*Cercis canadensis 'Alba'*) and Stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamellia*).

Plants listed in 2002 that were not indicated on the brochure (this does not necessarily mean that the plant was not there at that time) include Red Sunset Maple (*Acer rubrum 'Sunset'*), Grey Birch (*Betula populifolia*), Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), Paulownia (*Paulownia tomentosum*), Black Maple (*Acer nigrum*), Chamaecyparis (*Chamaecyparis sp.*), Washington Hawthorne (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*), Camellia (*Camellia sp.*), Amorpha (*Amorpha fruticosa*), Pennsylvania Cherry (*Prunus pennsylvanica*), Sweet Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Burford Holly (*Ilex cornuta*), Colorado Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*) and Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*).

<sup>8</sup> Simmons, Rod. page 10.

<sup>9</sup> City of Alexandria Memorandum of Understanding on Maintenance Practices for Fort Ward Park.



Figure 13 - English ivy, as a groundcover in this picture, is considered to be a non-native invasive plant species

differently. Implemented in 2005, management of certain areas within the fort is subject to an annual cyclical turf maintenance treatment involving seeding, fertilizing, liming, aerating and weed control by landscape specialists in the fall and spring.<sup>10</sup>

The 'no mow' practice appears to have been beneficial in some areas, slowing the flow of stormwater and saving mowing costs; however, park users have expressed concerns regarding the perceived increase in ticks, the establishment of non-native invasive species and limitations on walking access. The intentional act to not mow is not clear to park users, with limited or no signage. Further confusing the user, in June 2013 a picnic table was located within the long grass near the parking lot.

### Non-native Invasive Plant Species

As with any urban landscape in Northern Virginia, non-native invasive plant species are found within in the park. Some like English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) were intentionally planted before there was concern as to the aggressive growth habits of a particular species. Others have been brought to the park by birds and animals. No comprehensive inventory or specific plan for eradication of non-native invasive species has been developed for the park.

There is one sign in the northwest section of the park indicating a native plants and wildlife habitat area. The City of Alexandria has published a document, *Invasive Exotic Plants That Threaten Parks and Natural Areas in Alexandria*, that lists exotic (non-

native) plants that are especially invasive, damaging and persistent. Plants found in the park that are on the list include English Ivy (*Hedera hibernica*)<sup>11</sup>, Flowering Crabapple (*Malus spp.*) and Callery or Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*). Other non-native invasives found in the park include Waxleaf Privet (*Ligustrum sinensis*), Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*), Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) Oriental porceleinberry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*), Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and wisteria (*Wisteria*).

### Riparian Areas

Fort Ward Park has two intermittent streams, one draining to the park's northeastern corner and one to the park's west. The drainageway alignments can be discerned from the topographic maps, soil maps and field observation. There is no mapping available of the riparian area.

### Wildlife

A review using the interactive website for the US Fish and Wildlife Services Ipac program does not identify any listed threatened or endangered species within Fort Ward Park. There is no record of any wildlife counts or studies being performed on site in the park, although

<sup>10</sup> Ziegler, Charles. Chapter 1. Civil War Resources – Fort Ward Park. May 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Genus and species name per *Invasive Exotic Plants That Threaten Parks and Natural Areas in Alexandria*

from the plant materials found within the park, it can be surmised that the park presents a rich habitat for squirrels, birds and various butterflies and insect species.<sup>12</sup>

Fort Ward Park is not identified as a Northern Virginia Bird Survey site according to a representative of the Northern Virginia Audubon Society<sup>13</sup>, nor is anyone in the birding community aware of counts being performed in the park. Birders are seen in the park as informal observers. A Cooper's Hawk has been sighted. The park has a richness in bird species in part because of the mix of pines and hardwoods, as well as a variety of sunny and shaded areas. A separate search through the bald eagle web site indicated that there are no known nest sites in or near the park.<sup>14</sup>

## B. Built Landscape

### Archaeological Studies and Investigations

Several archaeological studies have been undertaken in the park. More work is needed. Some efforts will be funded through the stormwater and drainage work. Other needed investigations have not been funded by the City in recent budget years. The City of Alexandria conducted archaeological investigations to support the reconstruction of the Northwest Bastion. The reconstructed parapet is located above the original. In 1991, Alexandria Archaeology discovered post holes and a brick platform, probably a base for a stove from one of the barracks situated near the present-day Officer's Hut during the Civil War. More recently, recognition of the African American community has occurred, with a recent study of the site completed in 2010-2011 and another in 2013. More archaeology work will be done in conjunction with stormwater and drainage work.

*"On forested hills surrounding the nation's capital are the remnants of a complex system of Civil War fortifications. Built by Union forces, these strategic earthwork forts transformed the young capital into one of the world's most fortified cities. Today, the remaining circle of forts and parkland are part of the local legacy of park planning. The Civil War Defenses of Washington hiking and biking trails are a wonderful way to explore D.C.'s Civil war history. Whether traveling by foot or by bicycle, visitors can experience many of the historic fort sites along with some of the District's neighborhoods, popular green spaces, and tremendous views of the city."*

*National Park Service brochure, "Civil War Defenses of Washington."*

The land use history of a particular place, especially in high population areas, is likely to be complex, as it is at Fort Ward Park. The use of residential lots and Civil War barracks areas followed different rules of behavior and therefore their archaeological signatures will reflect these differences. The archaeological evidence of these behaviors is likely to be spread over the landscape in different places and in different densities. Recognition of these differences will be required when addressing management strategies and techniques; for example, how much sensitivity is required for ground disturbing activities? Parameters are established for each of the identified archaeological resources and may be reviewed in the table in Appendix II.

The archaeological remains tell us much about the unrecorded day-to-day behavior of the people who used the site in the past. The documentary evidence and historical information gathered by descendants of the African American residents



Figure 14 - Fort Ward gate

<sup>12</sup> Ries, Linda. FWAG

<sup>13</sup> Williams, Carolyn. Email correspondence. July 10, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Eagle Nest Locator - The Center for Conservation Biology, July 7, 2013.

and the archaeological evidence provide tangible connections between the past and the present within the changing land use of this property. Some of this information has greater importance to some groups than to others, including different groups within Alexandria and beyond. But in sum, this integrated understanding strengthens our knowledge of the history and the changing land use of this property.

### **1960s Restoration**

Before restoring the Northwest bastion, the City of Alexandria sponsored an archaeological investigation on that portion of the fort. The investigation focused on the parapet/ditch/glacis profile, gun embrasures, ammunition filling room, and powder magazine. Field methods consisted of excavating three trenches (Larrabee 1961: 80). The 1961 work investigated fort features to be modified or destroyed by restoring the Northwest bastion. Excavations found few artifacts (Larrabee 1961:47). The profiles from the investigation provide invaluable documentation on how the fort was constructed and document post-War salvage.

### **1991 Alexandria Archaeology**

In the summer of 1991, Alexandria Archaeology conducted their archaeological field school at Fort Ward (Bromberg 1991). The focus of the investigations was the former ancillary buildings housing and supporting the troops garrisoned at the fort. These buildings were located east of the fort's main gate. About one foot below the modern ground surface, the field school found artifacts associated with the military occupation as well as postholes and a possible brick stove platform associated with one of the barracks buildings.

The excavations also identified evidence for post-War African American homes, including artifacts and landscaping. Portions of the fort's ditch were filled by these occupants to create more usable yard space.

### **The Ottery Group 2010-2011**

Between the fall of 2010 and continuing into the summer of 2011, the Ottery Group conducted investigations at Fort Ward. The fieldwork was undertaken in two distinct periods that were labeled by Alexandria Archaeology for their scheduling and funding purposes as Stage 1 and Stage 2B. (Stage 2A was undertaken as a separate effort by Alexandria Archaeology) Stage 1 focused on finding unmarked graves, testing the efficacy of ground penetrating radar to find graves at Fort Ward, and finding other potentially significant resources at selected areas within the park.

Stage 2B fieldwork, also by the Ottery group, was completed during the summer of 2011; it involved archaeological investigation and monitoring, primarily to ensure that installation of a temporary drainage system in the southeastern section of the park did not have an impact on any graves, but also to look for other resources that were present in areas to be disturbed by the drainage project.

### **Alexandria Archaeology**

The City's archaeology office, Alexandria Archaeology conducted the Stage 2A investigation to find additional grave locations and other potentially significant resources throughout the section of the park tested by the Ottery Group during the Stage 1 investigation. The City has prepared a series of overlays showing the archaeology and areas where nothing was found; archaeology separated into type—Prehistoric, Civil War, "The Fort" community and significant and non-significant archaeological sites.

## Archaeological Resources - Known and Predicted

Locally significant archaeological resources (architectural remains, activity areas, features and artifacts) and graves associated with “The Fort” community were found in archaeological investigations and are noted in this section. Specific methods and results are found in the archaeological reports posted online. The archaeologists targeted locations within yards for investigation lots where oral history and documentary research indicated that graves could be present. The methods used are standard archaeological procedures for testing graves. These methods were successful and their findings accurate when the archaeologists stripped and examined the ground surface. In yard areas that were not investigated and in areas where historical research and oral traditions hold that there are internments, but graves were not found, the possibility does exist that there are burials present in these locations.

### Prehistoric

Located on an upland terrace near the headwaters of an unnamed stream, Native American groups would have included this general area in their food gathering territory as a non-intensive and short-term use. Expectations for prehistoric archaeological resources are for small low-density sites and isolated finds reflecting short-term use of the area. (see Plate 8, Section II.8)

### Civil War

Archaeological resources associated with the Civil War are varied and include earthworks, features associated with former building locations, and artifact scatters. The main earthworks that make up Fort Ward are protected and are located within the park access loop road. The fort’s earthworks and interior retain archaeological integrity and have the potential to add significant information to our knowledge of the Civil War occupation of the park. However, the 1960s reconstruction of the Northwest Bastion disturbed and destroyed deposits associated with the construction and use of the fort at this location. Because the main portions of the earthworks are protected, there are no plans for expanded use. Issues that will affect the archaeological resources in this area involve long-term landscape maintenance.

Alexandria Archaeology has conducted subsurface testing and a metal detector survey along the proposed right-of-way of a planned ADA walkway that will lead from the fort’s gate to the restored bastion. The investigations have shown that evidence of Civil War and a post-Civil War domestic occupation are present.

There are three earthworks on the exterior of the main fortification: outer battery, covered way and rifle trench. Recreational use of the park has resulted in these features deteriorating because they lack the ground cover vegetation that covers the fort. The outer battery and covered way are in active picnic areas; meanwhile, the rifle trench is actively used as a walkway. As a result, at many locations the ground surface is exposed and active erosion is destroying the Civil War features.

Three barracks, stables, a mess hall and a privy were located north of the fort road. This location currently contains the park’s museum buildings and a parking lot. These archaeological resources have the potential for providing significant information on the soldiers who occupied the fort and can be used to address research questions about military housing, adherence to regulations, material culture, and supplying fortifications

*“Through sheer strength of will, determination, fortitude, guts and against all odds, our ancestors fashioned a life here at Fort Ward, an abandoned Union fort. Then, out of necessity, they developed an entire viable, self-sustaining community that is still very much in existence today. It’s undergone many changes, but we’re still here.*

*In the 1950s and 1960s, the City moved the residents out of Fort Ward to establish the Park and Museum, which disrupted their tranquility. In 1962, the City displaced our community once again to build T.C. Williams High School. But we’re still here.”*

*Frances (Johnson) Colbert Terrell, great-great-granddaughter of Seminary community founders, Wallace and Virginia Roy Wanzer*

*"In planning future use of the Park, it is necessary to identify the significant prior activities and uses, such as dwellings, schools, churches, barns, public roads or streets, privies and wells, landscaping, etc. Over the past 20 years, a substantial amount of information has been developed from public records such as wills, tax records, property records, City directories, and census records. Also, US geological survey maps and aerial photos as early as 1927 have provided helpful data. Archaeologists have uncovered a wealth of information about the community, and substantially more archaeological work is ongoing. For over 20 years oral histories of some of the former residents and their relatives have been obtained, as well as photographs and entries in family Bibles. Taken together this information helps provide an understanding of the lives of the families who occupied the Fort possibly as enslaved people, contraband, members of the US Colored Troops, and as free people (some of the first African Americans to vote) during the Reconstruction period, and for the next 100 years."*

*Washington, Adrienne and Frances Terrell and Jim Walpole.  
Chapter 4. African American Structures and Other Resources:  
Consideration of historical resources including location of roads  
and paths, African American structures, schools, landscaping,  
and artifacts (with the exception of graves and burial sites).  
January 2013.*

within the Defenses of Washington. Civil War artifact scatters were identified outside the earthworks on the east side of the fortifications. It is unlikely that Civil War resources would be present west of the fort in the field-of-fire.

### Roadways

Historical maps and aerial photographs have indicated the presence of old roads, some of which are still visible in the park landscape.

School House Lane, the late nineteenth- through early twentieth-century road that ran from Braddock Road to the school house, has survived. This landscape feature is readily observable and a portion of it is lined with cedar trees.

Another neighborhood road is visible as a dip in the landscape between the School House Lane and the current paved loop road.

Eagle Crest development included two roads. The two perpendicular roadbeds are visible on the west and north sides of the glacis of the fort. They were constructed as infrastructure for a community that was platted in 1938 but never developed.

Maps show a Civil War road east of the fort. Portions of this road may be under the current east loop road. It is not visible today.

Another community road, predating the Eagle Crest roads, was present along the west side of the fort. The current park paved loop path is situated in this location and there is no evidence of this earlier roadbed.

### Known Cemeteries

**Oakland Baptist Cemetery** - This private cemetery is found within the park. The known interments are within a fenced area.

**Old Grave Yard** - The Old Grave Yard is next to the Oakland Baptist Cemetery. It predates the Oakland Baptist Cemetery and the orientation of the graves differs from that of the other cemeteries. There are five existing gravestones. Only two of these stones are in situ. The disposition of the stones not marking graves, one of which is broken, needs to be determined. Conservation needs should be addressed. Investigations resulted in identifying 17 grave locations and defined the boundaries. The cemetery is not fenced and it is located on a side slope that is actively eroding. Like all locations within the park, there is a threat of damage due to soil erosion if a long-term landscape maintenance plan is not implemented.

**Adams Burial Area** - One monument is present at this location, marking the grave of Clara W. Adams. Investigations confirmed the grave location of Ms. Adams and found three more grave shafts. Originally, it was thought that Clara's husband, Robert, was buried in the adjacent grave to the north, but a more recent discovery of a grave to the south makes this uncertain. The identities of the two individuals buried in the other two graves are not known. The archaeological investigations did not establish boundaries for this burial plot. Added investigations extending in all directions from the graves are needed to discover

boundaries. Like all locations within the park, there is a threat of damage due to soil erosion if a long-term landscape maintenance plan is not implemented.

*Clark Burial Area* - Amanda Clark requested that on her death she be buried on her property in a little grove near what is referred to in the historic documentation as the Clara Adams "line." Investigations identified two adjacent unmarked grave shafts at the location Ms. Clark had asked to be buried. It is believed that one of the graves could be Amanda's. It is unknown which grave is hers and who is buried in the other. The archaeological investigations did not establish boundaries for this burial plot. Added investigations extending in all directions from the graves are needed to discover boundaries. Like all locations within the park, there is a threat of damage due to soil erosion if a long-term landscape maintenance plan is not implemented.

*Jackson Cemetery* - There are no surface indications for graves and no markers at the Jackson cemetery. Investigations resulted in the identification of at least 20 grave locations and defined the boundaries on all but one side. The east side has not been formally identified but should be near the fort's earthworks. Because this early twentieth-century cemetery was established on the fort's glacia, it is in an area that is protected from most park development. The cemetery is not marked. Like all locations within the park, there is a threat of damage due to soil erosion if a long-term landscape maintenance plan is not implemented.



Figure 15 - View of cemetery on park's eastern edge

### Possible Cemeteries and Sites

*Craven Lot* - James Walter Craven bought Lot 16 in 1921. There is weak documentary evidence for burials on this lot; it is likely the document mentioning a cemetery is referring to the Jackson Cemetery. There is also anecdotal evidence that states that Cravens said that burials occurred on their property. Although there are slight indications for cemeteries on this property, due diligence is required if any ground disturbance occurs on this lot. Like all locations within the park, there is a threat of damage due to soil erosion if a long-term landscape maintenance plan is not implemented.

*North of Oakland Baptist Cemetery* - Oral histories suggest the area north of Oakland Baptist Cemetery (Research Lots 5 and 6) may contain undocumented graves. Field investigations will need to occur in this location before any ground disturbance.

*West of Oakland Baptist Cemetery* - Lot 9a was owned by the Oakland Baptist Church prior to 1969 and is directly west of the existing boundary of the Oakland Baptist Cemetery (Lot 9b). When the City of Alexandria acquired the property, it was stated there were no burials on this portion of Lot 9. This location crosses a drainage ravine and up to 8 feet of fill covers the original ground surface. Because undocumented burials may be associated with the Oakland Baptist Church and because many graves within the park are unmarked, the City cannot assume there are no undocumented graves in Lot 9b. Added investigation specifically designed to find undocumented graves is warranted before any other ground disturbance activity occurs in this area.

*Clark Lot* - Historic research and oral histories suggest the entire Amanda Clark property (Lot 11) may contain undocumented graves. Field investigations will need to occur in this location before any ground disturbance.

*School/Church/Residence Lot* - In 1898, Clara Adams sold a ¼ acre plot to the Falls Church District of Fairfax County for use as an African American School. Later this plot was bought by Diocesan Missionary Society of Virginia. The oral history of former resident of this property, Sargent Young, recounts how there were three gravestones in the front yard of his house. However, additional research and field investigations are needed to corroborate Mr. Young's information. Before any ground disturbance in this area occurs, added investigations are needed.

*Adams/Ruffner Lot* - The proximity of this property to the Clark burial ground is the only indicator that the northern half of the Adams/Ruffner Lot has the potential for containing undocumented burials. Added investigations are needed in this area before any ground disturbance.

*Good Samaritan Lot* - The Good Samaritan Lot is a small parcel of land fronting on Braddock Road. No one understands why, in 1887, the landowners (Miller) sold a small portion of their lot to the St. Mathews Lodge No. 220, Independent Order of Good Samaritans and Daughters of Samaria. This organization was an African American beneficial and temperance organization. Since the Good Samaritans are known for their care and maintenance of cemeteries, there is a possibility the plot was a cemetery. Added investigations are needed in this area before any ground disturbance.

*African American Household Sites* - Archaeologists have delineated the loci of 29 areas associated with "The Fort" community. These include scatters of artifacts, foundation footings and piers, wells and a privy. Historical research has led to the association of many of these significant areas with the families who lived at "The Fort" community.

### Synthesis of Existing Conditions

The park's landscape is composed of the site's natural features as modified by periods of development both in the landscape—rows of trees such as the line of cedars along School House Lane—and built conditions—the fort, "The Fort" community and the more recent recreation features. This section synthesizes the continuum of history within the region and the parkland. These findings will contribute to and inform the recommendations for long-term management and interpretation of the natural and built landscape at Fort Ward Park. The section summarizes the character and composition of Fort Ward Park, while assessing the origin and importance of its features to historical significance, environmental quality and visitors.

Feature descriptions are organized into a series of landscape characteristics—patterns of spatial organization; land uses; natural features and systems; responses to natural resources; circulation; vegetation; buildings and structures; views and viewsheds; small-scale features; and archaeological resources. These characteristics, in combination with condition issues and concerns observed, will contribute to the structure of the Management Plan and its recommendations.

The museum and several additional educational, recreational and cultural programs were created at Fort Ward in the 1960s as part of park development by the City of Alexandria. Today, the park is a popular draw for local residents as well as tourists. Park visitors enjoy the park for its history, outdoor recreational opportunities such as walking, picnicking and family gatherings, cultural events and performances, children’s playground facilities and a dedicated space for dogs.

The popularity of the park, however, has led to some concerns about resource protection and repair. Today, the mix of uses, heavy visitation, and maturing infrastructure contribute to the deteriorating condition of park resources and concerns regarding ongoing appropriateness of programming. Families with ties to the historic “The Fort” community have worked with the City to integrate and honor the legacy of their forebearers, suggesting that any proposed changes to park operations be considered within a larger framework than has been the case in the past.

### Significance as a Historic Landscape

Fort Ward—both the Civil War fortification and “The Fort” community—is considered an historic landscape recognized for its patterns of spatial organization, its relationships between the built and natural landscape as a fortification in the defense of Washington and its cultural, social and political ramifications as a settlement for African Americans who located near the fort (as well as other parts of the fort system).

The original 35 acre park is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### Patterns of Spatial Organization

A critical element in defining appropriate treatment and management recommendations for historic landscapes such as at Fort Ward Park is to document the spatial organization and patterns that establish the structure of the landscape. In the case of Fort Ward, the spatial organization has three identifiable layers that form overlapping patterns: the Civil War fortification; “The Fort” community that grew up around the fortification after the war; and the commemorative period resulting in the establishment of Fort Ward Park including its recreational uses. The significance of an historic landscape often lies in the relationships among elements (for example the



Figure 16 - Park user, near fort plantings



Figure 17 - Fort earthworks with barberry hedge and wooden steps

### **Inventory of Patterns of Spatial Organization**

- *Civil War earthen fort (enclosed structure with several bastions) forming the core of the park, with extensions to the northwest, north central, and southwest*
- *Cluster of exhibit period buildings designed to reflect Civil War era fort support buildings*
- *Evidence of “The Fort” community road networks*
- *Evidence of “The Fort” community associated tree plantings*
- *Woodland areas associated with “The Fort” community*
- *Grave sites and cemeteries associated with “The Fort” community that ring the remnant Civil War fortification*
- *Park loop road that encircles the earthworks and forms a spine for recreational park activities (hub and spoke configuration)*
- *Pods of activity centers clustered along the road margins – picnic areas, amphitheater, dog park, playground*
- *Fencing along the perimeter to define the park margin*
- *Mixed plantings with views into the park from West Braddock Road*
- *Sections of densely screened edges along the park boundaries*

### **Inventory of Land Uses and Activities**

- *Museum/interpretive/educational*
- *Recreational (passive)*
- *Maintenance*
- *Utility*
- *Natural areas—woodlands and meadows*
- *“The Fort” community burial sites, building sites and plantings*
- *Adjacent private cemetery*

### **Inventory of Built Landscape Responses to Natural Landscape**

- *Siting of Fort Ward atop a high point, with bastion extensions pointing toward primary road corridors of the mid nineteenth century*
- *Stair and bridge structures providing access to the fort interior*
- *Well sites associated with the Civil War fort and “The Fort” community*
- *Amanda Clark burial site in wooded grove*
- *Historic use of the gentle terrain surrounding the fortification for farming and gardens and for road development*
- *Drop inlets, catchment structures and culverts used to channel and convey storm water beneath roads and trails*
- *Storm water management responses (riprap, silt fencing, straw bales, meadow establishment)*

fortification was built to take advantage of the landform position in the defense of Washington).

### **Earthworks**

The large earthworks that comprise the fort are composed of a continuous outer wall and protected interior space designed to accommodate artillery, soldiers, arms storage and shelter. From the reconstructed Northwest Bastion, views are afforded from the artillery emplacements into the landscape. These views extend to the vegetation that edges the park boundary. They historically extended across a broad expanse of open terrain that had been cleared to support artillery fire toward potential avenues of approach such as the Leesburg and Alexandria Turnpike. The park’s main building, the Fort Ward Museum, faces West Braddock Road as an inviting gesture to visitors.

### **“The Fort” Community**

“The Fort” community is less visible, with recent investigations confirming locations of burial sites and several of the buildings, schools, churches and road systems. The Oakland Baptist Cemetery, a private cemetery, extends into the park and provides visible confirmation of the community. Recent interpretive panels produced by the Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society have been installed in the park, telling the story of “The Fort” community—’We’re Still Here.’

### **Recreational Use**

The park’s use today as a recreational site for Alexandria residents is visible in the spatial organization of today’s park.

### **Land Uses**

There are several land uses and activities associated with Fort Ward Park that address visitor interests as well as park administration and operations. These include museum/interpretive/educational, recreational, maintenance, utility and conservation uses. There are several marked and numerous unmarked graves located within the park. Wayside exhibits are placed in the landscape to support self-guided tours and to tell some of the park’s history.

### **Built Landscapes Responses to Natural Landscapes**

Several features located within the park reflect cultural responses to natural features. The most dominant example is the siting and military design of the Fort Ward

earthworks conducted during the 1860s. Sited atop a ridge and high ground that afforded an expansive prospect of the surrounding terrain, both due to agricultural activities and to clearing by Union soldiers, the fortification allowed for a clear field of fire and protection of potential avenues of approach into the city. The high earthen walls of the parapet, and deep frontal ditch, coupled with the naturally descending terrain to the north and west enhanced the commanding position of the earthworks.

Other aspects of the fort that reflected cultural responses to natural resources included the establishment of a brick-lined well within the protected central portion of the fort to create a defensible water source for those stationed in the earthworks and the drainage system that conveyed stormwater from the center to the ditch and elsewhere beyond the perimeter walls. Today, the site of the Civil War-era well is not currently known, but the feature is interpreted within the fort.



Figure 18 - View of the fort's interior, within the context of the location's sight lines

"The Fort" community is known to have conveyed associations with the natural landscape that are in evidence today.

The land surrounding the fortification was used for farming and gardens. Wells were used to supply fresh water to many of the dwellings, and roads were developed on the gentle terrain around the perimeter of the Civil War fortifications. Oral history accounts indicate that there was also a spring on the east tributary.

### Views

Views associated with Fort Ward Park are generally inwardly focused. There are few opportunities to view the landscape beyond park boundaries due to the extent of dense vegetation along the margins. In most cases, the vegetation helps to screen views of contemporary development, consequently maintaining the distinctive character of the park.

Travelers along West Braddock Road have the best views of the park. The break in the fencing and the plantings at the entrance allow for views of the Fort Ward Museum and verdant green space within. Along the road corridor, additional views are afforded where there are breaks in the plantings; these views are enhanced during the winter when the deciduous species lose their leaves.

Within the park, views are afforded across the meadow and other areas maintained in mown grass. The picnic areas, amphitheater, playground, and picnic pavilion are all generally visible from the loop road. It is also possible to view the Oakland Baptist Cemetery from the loop road. Views toward the former maintenance area are limited by screen fencing.

### Inventory of Views

- View from restored bastion
- View directed through the reconstructed Fort Ward gate
- View to Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery from the loop road
- View into the amphitheater from road, walks and seating
- Glimpses into the park along Braddock Road through tree plantings and at entrance
- Views across open meadows and lawn
- View through the center of the redoubt
- Views blocked at park boundaries by dense vegetation
- Directed views from wayside exhibits associated with "The Fort" community



Figure 19 - Entrance to Fort Ward Park

Other views of interest include the fort exterior from several locations that help to convey a sense of the size and scale of the structure, the fort interior from the reconstructed gate and the break in the parapet associated with the loop road, and the top of the earthen structure from the bridge structures that lead in and out of the fort. Views associated with the reconstructed Northwest Bastion are dramatic. Interpretive waysides are oriented to provide a connection between the information conveyed and a view toward a particular historic resource.

### Buildings and Structures

There are several buildings and structures located within Fort Ward Park. Three of the buildings are clustered to the east of the fort. These are reproductions of Defenses of

Washington military buildings constructed in the 1960s to support park development. They include a headquarters building, used as a museum, an officer's hut, used for exhibit purposes, and a replica of the headquarters of a hospital near Alexandria that serves as a restroom. In addition to the fort itself, there is a reconstructed ceremonial gate located along the fort perimeter and park-related features that include a second restroom building, a picnic pavilion, an amphitheater, maintenance operations buildings, fencing and gates, walls, bridges, culverts and utility boxes.

The Civil War fort was designed to occupy high ground, which afforded military advantages such as the ability to command long views of potential avenues of approach by enemy forces. Specifically, the fort was designed to defend the Leesburg and Alexandria Turnpike (Route 7) and Bailey's and Balls Cross Roads. It was part of a continuous line of earthen walls or parapets, punctuated at key locations such as road corridors by more elaborate structures that housed artillery batteries such as Fort Ward. The line of parapets, and the fortifications placed on high points and other key terrain features, ringed the perimeter of the city.

The importance of the Fort Ward fortification was recognized by the City of Alexandria during the 1950s, when plans were prepared to establish a park in time to mark the 100th anniversary of the Civil War. Between the late 1950s and 1964, the City slowly acquired land for the proposed park, in some cases through condemnation and eminent domain from less than willing sellers. The City engaged archeologists to investigate the Northwest Bastion before it was reconstructed. To complete the interpretation of the

#### ***Inventory of Buildings and Structures***

- *Fort Ward Museum (Civil War-era exhibit or period building)*
- *Fort Ward Ceremonial Gate (reconstruction)*
- *Replica Officer's Hut (Civil War-era exhibit or period building)*
- *Archaeological evidence of "The Fort" community dwellings, outbuildings and institutional structures such as the school house*
- *Restroom building (Civil War-era exhibit or period building)*
- *Restroom near amphitheater and picnic area*
- *Amphitheater*
- *Maintenance facilities*
- *Fort Ward (composed of remains of original perimeter parapet wall and ditch system—southwest bastion, east bastion, north bastion, south bastion, bombproofs and reconstructed Northwest Bastion)*
- *Rifle trench*
- *Outer battery*
- *Covered way*
- *Utility cabinets near park entrance*
- *Bridges*
- *Culverts*
- *Fencing (post and rail, chain link, stockade fencing behind museum and restroom building, around dumpster, edging amphitheater)*
- *Gates (wooden post and arm at entrance)*
- *Picnic pavilion*
- *Wood retaining wall around picnic pavilion*

military landscape, the City also reconstructed a ceremonial entrance gate illustrated in period documents and built three replica military support structures. These buildings formed the core of the park near the southeastern edge of the fortification, on or near the actual site of barracks and a mess hall during the Civil War for which no documentation of style of construction had been found. These facilities house a museum, an officer's hut exhibit, and restrooms.

Fort Ward is marked by tall earthen walls, exterior ditches and sculpted landform referred to as the glacis, and a central open space marked by two dismantled bombproofs and a replica well cover. Paths, stairs, and bridges provide access to the central open space.

### Circulation

The park is served by a one-way loop road, open for vehicular traffic during specific hours. The loop road is used by pedestrians throughout the day, with and without vehicular traffic. Much of the loop road alignment was developed from roads that served "The Fort" community at the time the park was developed, although the segment that leads west from the entrance was built specifically for park use. The park's loop road circumnavigates the perimeter of Fort Ward.

A trace road, or physical evidence of a former road, of School House Lane is present between the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery and West Braddock Road. It is edged by a row of eastern red cedar trees. Residences and a schoolhouse, elements within "The Fort" community, were associated with the road.

Paved asphalt and concrete paths connect the park's entrance road, museum, reconstructed gate, officer's hut and paved parking area. The asphalt path is six feet wide and universally accessible. Concrete walks connect the amphitheater and adjacent restroom. Short segments of exposed aggregate concrete walks are found in the interior of the parapet. Other walks within the interior of the fort complex are formed of loose pea gravel and turf. The City currently plans to install an accessible path within the fort interior, made of recycled tire material - Flexi-Pave. The installation requires 4-6 inches of soil to be removed. Archaeological testing was conducted, and the site was shovel tested and metal detected in preliminary archaeological work.

### Small-scale Features

There are many small-scaled features that contribute to the character and composition of the park. They relate to site furnishings such as benches (two styles) and trash receptacles (one style), grills and picnic tables. Several formal picnic areas have been removed from the park, but the pads remain.

Signs relating to interpretive stories, rules and information are present throughout the park. There is also a small garden with a stone marker and bronze plaque that honors a former City arborist. The marker is set within the center of a circular walk of cobbles, edged by plantings and asphalt paths located between the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery and the playground in the eastern half of the park. The site is currently overgrown.

#### ***Inventory of Circulation***

- *Entrance at Braddock Road*
- *Parking near entrance*
- *Parking behind museum*
- *Loop road, partially follows "The Fort" community road system (with speed bumps)*
- *Traces of "The Fort" community road network, including School House Lane, portions of the loop road alignment*
- *Parking pods along circular drive*
- *Amphitheater parking*
- *Former maintenance access and parking*
- *Walk to and through Fort Ward Gate*
- *Paths and trails (from parking area to museum entrances, to restored officer's hut)*
- *Amphitheater walks with handrails*
- *Social trails*
- *Boy Scout constructed steps from North Van Dorn Street*
- *Pea gravel staging area inside restored Northwest Bastion*

### ***Inventory of Small-scale Features***

- *Park identity sign*
- *Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery headstones*
- *Five gravestones associated with the Old Grave Yard adjacent to the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery*
- *Clara Adams gravestone*
- *Museum identity sign*
- *Kiosk near museum*
- *Picnic area information kiosks*
- *Playground equipment*
- *Virginia Civil War Trails sign*
- *Wayfinding signs (Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery, amphitheater)*
- *Traffic signs (along roadway and at exit and entrance)*
- *Wayside exhibits (two styles)*
- *Informational signs (park hours and rules at entrance)*
- *Regulatory signs for park users*
- *Benches*
- *Picnic tables*
- *Grills*
- *Trash receptacles*
- *Flagpole*
- *Bike racks*
- *Interpreted well site within Fort Ward*
- *Replica cannon*
- *Posts to demarcate dog park*
- *Dog park signage*
- *Dog waste bag dispenser*
- *Dumpster*
- *Wood posts marking the locations of speed bumps*
- *Lighting at amphitheater*
- *Light platforms at amphitheater*
- *Post and rope edging*
- *Civil War Roundtable historical marker along Braddock Road*
- *Beatley Tree marker*
- *Arborist marker*

### ***Inventory of Vegetation***

- *Ornamental tree and shrub plantings (legacy of Arboretum plantings)*
- *Rows of eastern red cedar trees that line the former School House Lane*
- *Woodland areas*
- *Lawn*
- *Meadow*
- *Barberry hedges on earthworks*
- *Mixed vegetation on earthworks*

## **C. Existing Conditions Management Issues**

Fort Ward Park's significant cultural and natural resources have been adversely affected by ad-hoc internal decision making, lack of coordination between entities, overuse and a shortage of funds. The park's rich collection of cultural and natural resources, its importance as a recreational resource for the residents of Alexandria and its importance as a green lung for the west end present issues that must be addressed in the development of the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan.

All areas within Fort Ward Park are not equally sensitive or fragile or in need of protection. The mapping developed as part of the planning effort outlines areas for park managers and planners to logically and defensibly identify and prioritize the site's cultural resources and the appropriate level, if any, of development and site disturbing activities that may take place within those priority areas.

An outline of issues facing the park related to park operations, management and funding and natural and cultural resources is listed below. Some potential ways to address these issues are included in the discussion. Issues related to recreation uses are included in Section II.3 and Interpretation in Section II.4. Each are addressed separately from Existing Conditions.

Issues from all the chapters are organized into a management framework that brings together all of the previously isolated discussions into a comprehensive and collaborative approach for preserving, enhancing and managing the park over time.

### **Operations, Management and Funding Issues**

Fort Ward Park is maintained by several different entities. Building maintenance is performed by the City's General Services. Landscape management and day-to-day building maintenance responsibilities are shared by a private contractor and the City, per the current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Currently, ground level maintenance such as turf management, leaf removal and pruning is performed by a private contractor under the direction of OHA and by the City's park operations. Both are fully funded by the City of Alexandria. The MOU establishes the geographic areas of responsibility and identifies tasks to be performed.

The City of Alexandria is moving towards benchmarking park maintenance practices using a national metric, measuring 1 (highest cost and level of maintenance) and 5 (lowest cost - example would be natural woodlands). Given the restrictions on

budgets, significant changes in the current maintenance practices will require additional support from City funds or from private funds and volunteers.

**Issue: Park Management and Funding Considerations**

- Who funds? (Parks vs. OHA oversight).
- Four City departments share responsibility for the care of the park (T&ES - stormwater; GS - buildings; Parks - grounds; OHA - programming)
- OHA oversees preservation/programming in the park
- MOU delineates a two-zone system with different entities performing landscape maintenance tasks in each zone - updates to the MOU in 2014 have expanded geographic areas for OHA oversight to include most if not all of the identified cultural resource sites
- Need to demarcate sacred areas that have been established - how could site be marked at ground level vs. vertically?
- Lack of funding - budget constraints with the City - members of FWAG believe that funding activities in the park is not a City priority

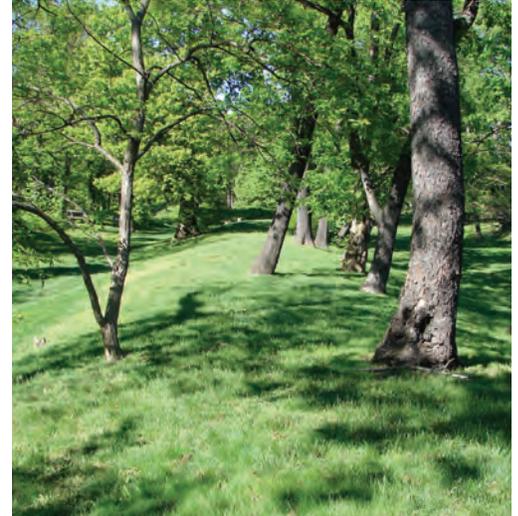


Figure 20 - Mixed vegetation on the earthworks

**Natural Resources**

**Issue: Preserve and Enhance the Park’s Natural Character**

- Retention of shaded, smooth walking surfaces
- Preservation of quiet character of the fort area
- Determination of park’s role within City’s overall arboretum (not singular, but opportunity for a featured piece of the arboretum)
- Maintenance of the urban oasis for people and wildlife (e.g. owl and black squirrel)
- Enhancement of the park’s appearance: park is worn, maintenance practices and investment have not been on par with Waterfront and other Old Town parks (park maintenance since 2010 has been impacted by archaeological research and concern that resources not be inadvertently disturbed during maintenance activities)
- Retention of the wooded area between dog exercise area and playground

**Features Adjacent to Fort Ward**

- Portion of the original Fort Ward located across Braddock Road from the park
- Roads serving as potential avenues of approach guarded by Fort Ward
- Other forts associated with Defenses of Washington
- Fort neighborhood dwellings
- Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery
- 10 acres of the park that includes an athletic field, parking area, and tennis courts
- Alexandria Heritage Trail
- Civil War Trails

**Issue: Define Landscape Maintenance/Cultural Practices**

- Clearly define turf practices for: aeration, fertilization, over-seeding and mowing height
- Clearly define standards for stump removal - when stumps can be ground or must be flush-cut; eliminate tree cutting with two foot stump remaining
- Determine need and frequency to top dress turf and shrub beds
- Clearly define standards for debris removal (downed limbs, leaves, etc.) and debris retention (leaf litter used as mulch) and for tree removal (remove at a minimum flush to ground)
- Restrict equipment in specific areas: weed whacker (tree trunk damage), mower, ‘heavy’ equipment

**Issue: Declining Trees**

- Establish cycle for tree pruning (many trees have considerable dieback of limbs; cherries near amphitheater need pruning)
- Restart tree planting (20-30 trees lost per year with no new trees planted since 2010; Need to identify places where trees should be planted; consider reusing locations of trees that were removed over the years and identify priorities for future planting)
- Evaluate the current mix of tree species found at Fort Ward—many short-lived species (black cherry, black locust); Many trees planted as part of Arboretum effort unsuited to site characteristics and have difficulty in thriving
- Absence of master plan for new tree planting and documentation for existing memorial and historic trees
- Canopy cover goal is 40% for city as a whole—what is park’s role in achieving?
- Tree inventory is over 10 years old; value is on tracking/update to determine tree failure/patterns/trends/change

**Issue: Declining or Absent Shrub Plantings**

- Establish cycle for shrub pruning/thinning
- Diminishment of shrub plantings (When featured in a brochure as the City Arboretum in the 1980s, the park contained massive quantities of azaleas and camellias. Many of these have died or been poorly maintained over the years.)
- When new plantings installed, ensure they receive water, etc.
- Site location - (high terrace) is exposed to cold winter winds, may be inhospitable to camellia plantings according to City staff member Rod Simmons

**Issue: Declining Turf and Misunderstood Meadows**

- Better incorporate ‘No mow’ areas into park’s overall aesthetic; evaluate for stormwater management effectiveness, habitat and cost savings; make clear intentional ‘no mow’ areas by maintaining edges in different way - use path system to separate turf grass mowed areas and annually mowed areas and to better define boundaries (confusion with picnic table located in no mow area)
- Non-native invasive plant and weed growth in no mow areas; management practices need to address pest management or fire hazard
- Frequent (non-meadow) mowed areas are maintained by two entities that have varying levels of maintenance presenting an appearance of poor and uneven turf maintenance

**Issue: Non-native Invasive Species**

- Concern with non-native invasive species in existing shrub beds and no mow areas: vine growth on trees

**Issue: Soil Erosion**

- Vehicular traffic (mowing, trash removal, park monitoring) compacts soil
- Heavy recreation use in picnic and playground areas exacerbates loss of topsoil, soil erosion and compaction
- Parking is occurring in picnic areas and other sites off of the pavement, killing what little vegetation is in these areas, compacting soils and damaging tree roots

**Issue: Stormwater**

- Excessive surface water runoff - particularly on the eastern side of the park

- Stormwater sheet runoff over graves
- Area surrounding stormwater pond in northeastern corner of park requires maintenance without incurring further erosion and site damage
- Need to define what mean by 'cleaning' - tree removal, surface plant removal, etc.
- Address the lack of pervious surfaces under picnic tables, walkways, etc.
- Address the lack of maintenance for stormwater facilities; make better use of bio infiltration systems



Figure 21 - Loop road path with speed bump and eroded edge

## Built Resources

### Issue: Exposure or Potential Exposure of Archaeological Resources: Ground Disturbance/Depth to Resource/Soil Erosion

The bullet list below provides a sampling of resources found at Fort Ward Park and the issues related to their care, the level of protection required for the archaeological resource and treatment recommendations. A full inventory, with the level of protection required and recommended treatments, is contained in a series of Fort Ward Cultural Resources maps and an associated table prepared by OHA. They are compiled in a series of maps that are summarized in Plate 12 in Section II.8. The full table is found in Appendix II.

- Need to stabilize (noninvasive vegetation) earthworks walls of main fortification (outer battery, covered way and rifle trench) due to erosion and exposed ground surface; lack ground cover
- Need to better manage access to earthworks outside of main fortification from casual recreation use/pathways; outer battery and covered way are located in active picnic areas and rifle trench used as a walkway
- Continual sinking of past shovel pits and other archaeological units
- Determine depth to resource (example of ADA installation of walkway - no disturbance greater than 3"); will not impact significant archaeological resources within the fort
- Lack of protection or enclosure of Old Grave Yard - located on a side slope that is actively eroding
- Jackson Cemetery - lack of protection or enclosure; ivy and non-native invasive vegetation is encroaching on the stairway leading into the fort near the cemetery
- Clark Burial Area - lack of protection or enclosure; threat of damage due to soil erosion
- Clark Lot - possible cemetery area - if minimal ground disturbance is necessary, coordinate with City archaeologists to determine preservation measures
- Craven Lot - if minimal ground disturbance is necessary, coordinate with City archaeologists to determine preservation measures to ensure protection of burials
- Adams/Ruffner Lot - possible cemetery area - if minimal ground disturbance is necessary, coordinate with City archaeologists to determine



Figure 22 - Interpretive sign

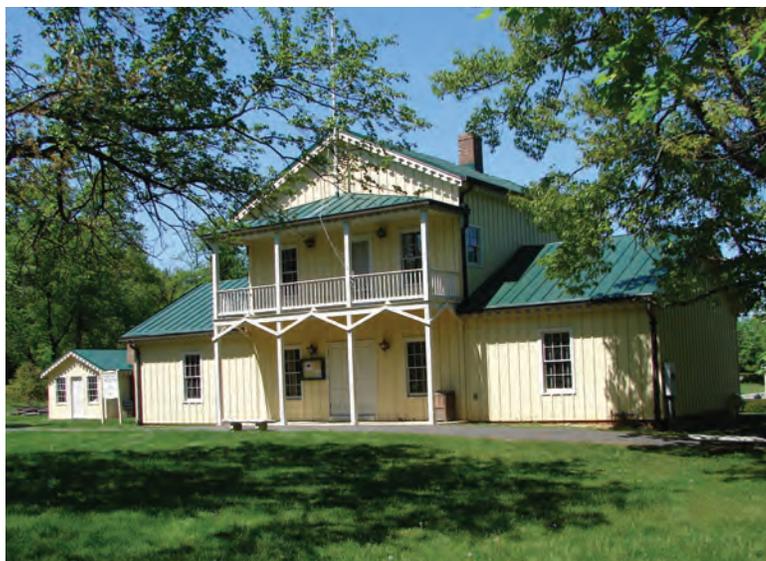


Figure 23 - View toward the Fort Ward Museum

preservation measures, excavations will be conducted as needed, and changes to plans will be instituted if graves are threatened

- School/Church/Residence Lot - possible cemetery area - conduct archaeological investigation prior to construction of interpretive elements
- Monitoring of the bastion wall for slippage (earlier cause was due to insufficient integration of the two soil systems when the original earthworks served as the base for the reconstructed upper wall in the early 1960s not because of the irrigation system -irrigation system is important for retention of groundcovers on the earthworks)
- Monitoring of the bastion wall drainage system, replaced in 2003 as part of the effort to correct the fissure and re-direct water away from the walls
- Monitoring of the Northwest bastion wall to ensure no further slumping occurs (Earlier slump repaired in 2007 to correct a slope slump that occurred due to an unusually high volume of rainfall in the spring/early summer of 2006, which over-saturated that section of the earthworks).
- Invasive animal tunneling in fort walls
- Clarity of the amount of fill found in the former maintenance yard and adjacent stream bed is needed and how best to address findings

#### Issue: Data Still to be Determined

- Boundary determination for Adams Burial Ground, Clark Burial Ground

#### Issue: Vegetation/Damage to Historic Resources

- Need to establish non-invasive ground cover on earthworks, mixed success with using groundcover (vinca) to control erosion on outer wall
- Review adherence to NPS preservation standards for care of historic earthworks sites
- Mature trees, saplings and non-native invasive vegetative growth on earthworks walls may come down in storms and pull up historic soil, etc.
- Profusion of mature trees, saplings and non-native invasive plant growth on bastion walls: front wall of fort leading to southwest bastion
- Mature trees growing out of wall on rear wall between East and North bastions
- Improper mowing has adversely impacted rear wall between fort's gate and East bastion
- Conflict with tree growth and vegetation in trench
- Poor turf growth on earthworks
- Deterioration of the wooden revetment structures in the staging area at the center of the bastion

#### Issue: Lack of Recognition for "The Fort" Community and Burial Sites

- Need for protection and recognition of grave sites
- Identification of School House Lane/other walking paths or road traces (potential to link together to create 'We're Still Here Trail' with interpretive signs, recognition of

former site features, etc.)

**Issue: Other Considerations**

- Stormwater not retained in park for irrigation
- Use of park by birds and wildlife not documented - no survey exists
- No organized community service group or volunteers to assist with park maintenance - cleaning flower beds, planting trees, light pruning by arborists or trained Tree Stewards, litter pick up, assistance with interpretive and educational materials, update of 2002 tree inventory, etc.
- Unused/unclear role for Alexandria/Arlington Tree Stewards
- Lack of decision as to priority - spend money on another park inventory of vegetation or on planting new shrubs and trees
- Lack of established ratio for tree replacement (such as plant 3 replacement trees to every 1 lost; knowing some trees won't make it)
- Recognize that it is less expensive to care for existing trees than to remove trees and replace them with new ones
- Consider tracking vegetative patterns and the identification of vegetative communities in park
- Evaluate the opportunity to recycle wood from cut trees to portable sawmills
- Many of the site furnishings are worn, consideration should be given to durable options for signs, park tables and benches
- Make better use of printed, online and cellphone interpretation tools for education - schools, youth groups
- Evaluate need and costs to conduct annual tree risk exam for trees adjacent to picnic areas, roads and locations where people gather
- Need to identify areas with the greatest need for tree canopy increase
- Need to clarify maintenance and operations responsibilities and priorities in zone format
- There is no formal plant list for acceptable plant material selection for the park - consider identifying plants that are durable, long-lived and need minimal care with a scheduled maintenance checklist for watering, mulching and pruning; include plants attractive to native birds and wildlife
- There is no on-going program of preventative tree pruning and maintenance
- Tree and branch fall remain on the ground for long periods of time, need more prompt response to remove fallen trees and limbs
- Lack of clarity for vehicle parking areas, including how best to accommodate bus traffic and drop-offs



Figure 24 - Shaded loop road approaching picnic area #2 and picnic shelter in background



Figure 25 - Recreational users on the loop road





### 3. Recreation Resources

Fort Ward Park, in addition to its historic and cultural significance, is valued for its passive recreational uses—walking, jogging, using the playground, dog exercising, picnicking, family gathering, relaxing, sunbathing, birding, observing wildlife and learning about history and nature. The events and gatherings associated with the historical aspects of the park—the Civil War fortification and “The Fort” community—are also highly valued and are considered as part of the “recreational” experience of the park. Recreational users of the park are sometimes unaware of its historic and cultural significance.

The City of Alexandria’s Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities staff have identified and documented some of the issues and conditions of facilities within the park.<sup>1</sup> Separately, an assessment of six City parks for their compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act was prepared in 2012. Entitled “*Park & Open Space Facilities Prioritization Analysis*”, it was prepared by Kimley Horn and Associates. The Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan builds upon these assessments and work prepared by the Fort Ward Advisory Group (FWAG), particularly in their chapter on *Recreational Use; Issues and Recommendations*.<sup>2</sup>

The FWAG draft chapter on recreational use<sup>3</sup> recognizes the inherent challenge in successfully balancing the cultural and natural needs of the park for educational and recreational activities. An excerpt from the chapter states that “*the growing appreciation for the historic and cultural nature of this Park needs to be reflected in how Park resources and Park administration support the needs of citizens who value the Park as a site for passive recreation, relaxation and unstructured physical activity. Historic, cultural and recreational activities can mutually co-exist but reforms may be needed.*”<sup>4</sup>

A concept diagram of existing recreational resources has been prepared and is included on the following page. Recreation areas are referenced on the map by the letters noted below. Park features included in this discussion are:

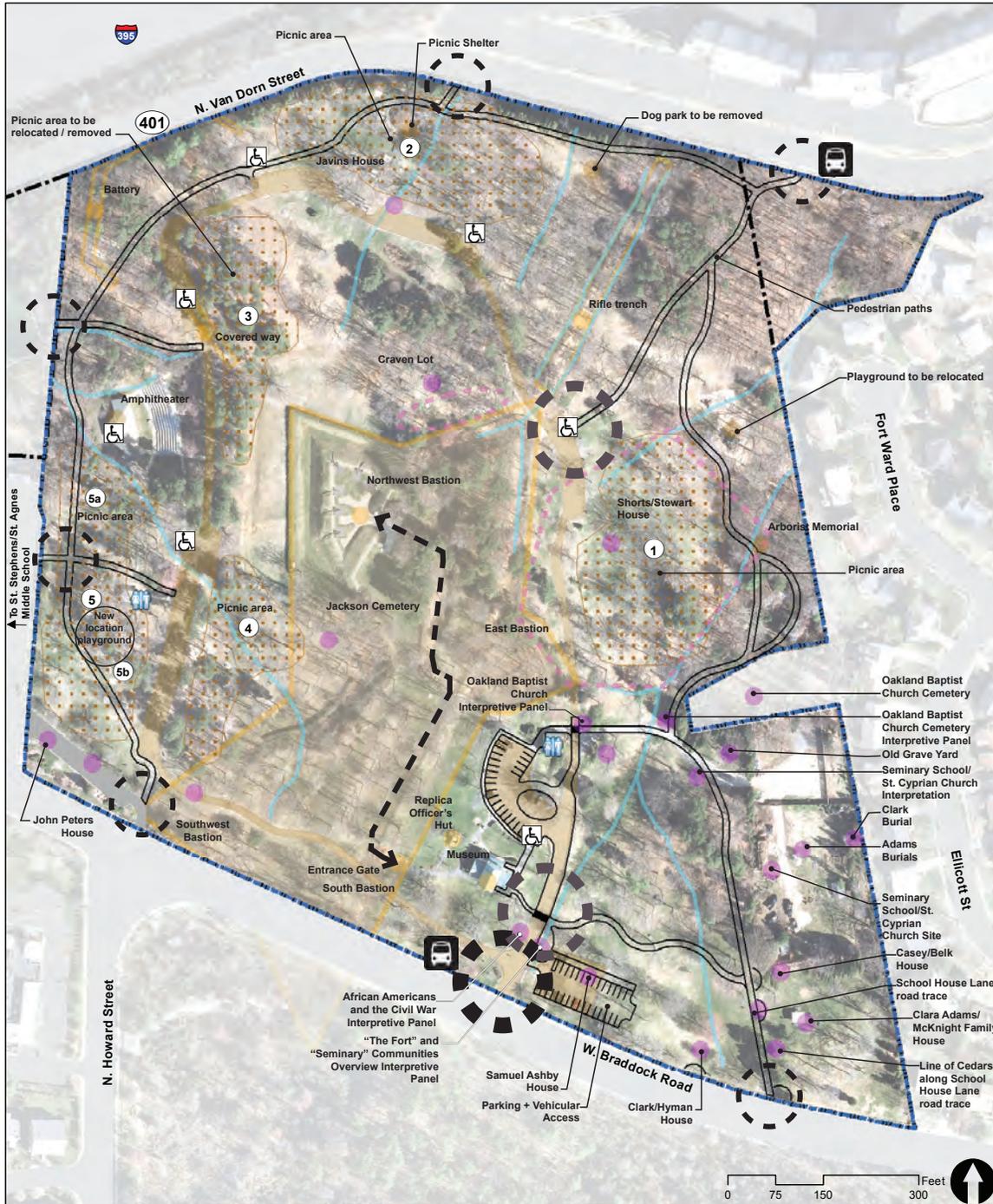
- A. Amphitheater and Adjacent Restrooms
- B. Dog Exercise Area
- C. Picnic Shelter
- D. Picnic Areas
- E. Playground
- F. Pedestrian Paths
- G. Parking and Vehicular Access
- H. Park Character and Landscape Design

<sup>1</sup> RPCA conducted a number of informal studies of park facilities prior to the formation of the Fort Ward Advisory Group.

<sup>2</sup> Forbes, Ripley and Robert Moir, Chapter 3, *Recreational Use; Issues and Recommendations*, Fort Ward Advisory Group, 2011 and 2012

<sup>3</sup> The FWAG Chapter, updated in 2012-2013, is relatively unchanged from the original developed in 2011.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*



### Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

City of Alexandria, Virginia

- Management Plan Boundary
- Park Parcel
- Park Road or Parking
- Drainage flowlines
- Native American Resource
- The Fort Community Features
- Civil War Features
- Fort earthworks and interior features
- Exterior Fort earthworks
- Recreational Feature
- Picnic Area
- Restroom

### Potential Soft Path System and Enhancement Opportunities

- Potential Soft Path System
- Potential park access point
- Entrance / orientation
- Planned ADA path
- Potential ADA parking

Figure 26 - Recreation Resource Map DRAFT

The adjoining and fenced-off portion of the park to the west and behind the St. Stephens and St. Agnes School includes a multi-purpose rectangular playing field and tennis courts. These active recreational uses are not included in the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan as these uses and their management are already agreed upon and fixed.

A number of initiatives to better manage recreational use in relationship to the preservation needs of the park's resources and its neighbors have been put into effect over the past four years. These include:<sup>5</sup>

- Decreasing the number of reserved picnic areas
- Limiting the size and length of picnics
- Limiting the number of vehicles on the roadway during peak pedestrian use
- Relocating the City maintenance facility outside of the park
- Prohibiting amplified music other than Special Events
- Eliminating inflatable recreational attractions
- Limiting alcohol use
- Increasing informational signage (parking, avoiding sensitive areas, establishing no mow areas)

## A. Amphitheater and Adjacent Restrooms

Programming for the amphitheater has been reduced significantly in the past decade. Occasional concerts with historical themes comprise the current schedule. Park users, responding to the 'Listening Session' outreach effort held in the park in June, 2013, suggested that the amphitheater be more actively programmed for community events. Anecdotally, community members have stated that they miss the extensive programming that used to occur in the amphitheater. Other community members suggested that larger events unrelated to historic significance of the park were inappropriate. No one has suggested removing the amphitheater. One park user suggested that community arts organizations be encouraged to perform on site as a "thank you" to Alexandria when receiving City money and support. Another park user suggested hosting "Movie Nights" at the amphitheater. Many respondents mentioned positive memories of concerts and events they attended in years past.

Of concern is whether the amphitheater facility meets the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards for accessible design. The facility



Figure 27 - Amphitheater

### Park Regulations

The following uses are prohibited or controlled in the park as noted on the City of Alexandria web site and as posted on kiosks within the park:

- "Camping - No person shall set up tents, shacks, trailers or any other temporary shelter for the purpose of overnight camping. Exceptions: Overnight camping may be allowed for large groups under certain conditions."
- "Alcohol Beverage Policy: Fort Ward is specified and designed as a park where the use of alcoholic beverages by a group of 50 or more, based within the City of Alexandria, is permitted under strict regulation and control. Only draft beer and wine will be permitted in the park areas 2,3, and 4. Beer must be in a keg and served in paper cups." [Additional permitting requirements follow, but are not included, see City web site for more information]
- "Dogs: Unleashing dogs or allowing dogs to urinate or defecate in the park (except in the dog exercise area near the front gate is prohibited. Dog owners are required to clean up)." [This information is now out of date, the current location of the dog exercise area is in northern portion of park.]
- "Fires and Grills: Fires are permitted in park grills or personal grills only. Barbecue pits for cooking on the ground are prohibited. Propane gas grills are prohibited. All fires must be extinguished and ashes placed in designated containers or left in the park grill before the area is vacated."

<sup>5</sup> The actions noted were updated from the 2011 FWAG Chapter based upon information provided by RPCA staff.

was included in the 2012 ADA citywide assessment. At that time, the amphitheater met guidelines with the exception that the site does not have appropriate accessible parking spaces. Contrary to many who voiced concern that the facility itself was inadequate, the study states that the facility has the required number of accessible viewing areas and that there is appropriate access to restrooms, a drinking fountain and the stage itself.

If the amphitheater is to remain in the park and if the City is to continue to invest in it, more frequent programming should result. Previous City staff assessments have recommended tying the enhancement of the amphitheater facility with an upgrade and enhancement to the adjacent year-round restrooms. Expanding the restrooms capacity and making them accessible is desirable. Immediate repairs to the existing restrooms should be made to keep them usable until alternative approaches to upgrading and expanding the restrooms can be studied in conjunction with a feasibility study of the amphitheater upgrade. In addition to topics related to restrooms, other potential topics to address include:

- Evaluation of options to improve the adjacent restrooms:
  - Adaptive re-use of existing facility
  - Demolition and reconstruction of new permanent facility
- Evaluation of the physical condition and life cycle maintenance costs for the current 360-seat amphitheater, including confirming that the amphitheater is fully compliant with the Americans with Disability Act (to confirm the citywide concept level study performed by Kimley Horn in 2012)
- Evaluation of the costs and benefits of current and potential uses and programs including but not limited to:
  - Historical interpretation including living history and performing arts
  - Performances by City of Alexandria performing arts groups and schools
  - Summer movie night series
  - Restoration of the summer concert series
- Ongoing use of the amphitheater is encouraged; following receipt of the results from the feasibility study, updated standards and operating conditions should be established.



Figure 28 - Fort Ward Park - dog watering

## B. Dog Exercise Area

While there are no national standards for dog parks or dog exercise areas<sup>6</sup>, there are many examples of such facilities in the City of Alexandria and greater Washington, D.C. metro area. Originally, the Fort Ward dog exercise area was located off of West Braddock Road. It is now located adjacent to North Van Dorn Street, a four-lane roadway not separated from the park by fencing. The current site is between a high family use area (Group Picnic Area #2 and picnic shelter) and a fragile cultural resource (rifle trench).

The existing off-leash dog exercise area appears to be little used.<sup>7</sup> Many dogs are walked in the park on-leash, but in visits to the park, no dogs have been observed running loose in the designated exercise area. Anecdotal reports from a walker with a dog on leash said that the current exercise area is unfenced and too close to a busy road—North Van Dorn Street. Another dog owner said that the park is one of the few places

<sup>6</sup> Email and telephone correspondence with Bill Becker, Senior Research Manager, NRPA and Randy Burkhardt, NRPA member, March 2014

<sup>7</sup> Based on observation and interviews with park users, June 1 and June 5, 2013

where dogs can legally run off-leash, within the designated area. There are reports that dogs are off-leash in areas outside of the designated area.

Relocating the dog exercise area to another area within the park would be very difficult. At one time, the exercise area was located to the east of the entry drive off of West Braddock Road. Having been moved once already, other alternative, suitable locations within the park do not exist that will not infringe upon historically significant areas, adjacent uses or have the same exposure to traffic. Consideration was given to modifying the existing location by adding better signage and adjusting the footprint of the exercise area away from the rifle trench. After discussion with FWAG members, the impact of the off-leash exercise area on existing cultural resources; its proximity to a four-lane and no opportunity to add fencing made keeping an off-leash dog exercise area in the park infeasible. Removal will likely require a public hearing and an assessment of the locations of nearby dog exercise areas.

### C. Picnic Shelter

At one time the park had multiple picnic shelters. Today, following removal of a second shelter several years ago, there is one large shelter available for rent near the dog exercise area and adjacent to the North Van Dorn Street edge of the park. The shelter structure was assessed in 2008 and was noted to be in relatively good shape at that time.



Figure 29 - Family baby shower at the Fort Ward Park picnic shelter

Regular inspections of the shelter should continue. Modifications and improvements should include:

- Accessible parking spaces and an accessible route to the shelter from the parking space, as noted in the 2012 Accessibility Study. The accessible route should be incorporated into the proposed soft path trail network.
- The ground surface immediately adjacent to the shelter needs to be maintained so that roof runoff and compaction associated with normal use of the shelter do not create walking and trip hazards. A surface using the Flexi-pave or a well-graded stone dust material (with subgrade improvements) could be used to address accessibility and soil compaction issues around the perimeter of the shelter.



Figure 30 - Picnic table in park

## D. Picnic Areas

One enthusiastic respondent to the June 2013 ‘Listening Session’ was a park user in search of a grill. He had been to many City parks before finding Fort Ward and its numerous grills. In addition to the availability of the grills, their location near vehicle parking areas is an attractant. Other sites within the city that provide grills for public use require a long walk while toting picnic supplies and grilling gear.

The picnic areas at Fort Ward Park are also valued for their shade and for their ability to accommodate groups through the use of a reservation system. At one time, the park had 11 picnic areas, two with shelters. The park was oversubscribed, particularly on weekends and with large events. More recently, the number of designated picnic areas has been reduced to five,

one with a shelter. Limitations and prohibitions on amplified music have reduced the noise volume and parking demand and bus use has diminished. However, the more intense focus and use of the five remaining sites presents challenges related to soil compaction and erosion, damage to tree roots and tree health, and the difficulty in establishing a vegetative cover. Many of the existing picnic tables are placed on individual concrete pads, minimizing issues related to soil compaction at the table; however, significant compaction is occurring between pads.

In order to achieve turf management goals outlined in the resource management section, the following should be considered:

- One additional picnic area could be created from a large existing picnic area (most likely splitting Group 5 Area into two areas) to provide an opportunity to have five fully operational group picnic areas and a sixth rotational site serving as a substitute for one of the five as they are each rested and rehabilitated. A new, sixth, area is not being added for ongoing use. Where possible, the rotational site will not be used and the portions of an existing group area will be closed for rehabilitation as needed—closing one area for a growing season or sufficient enough time to reestablish the turf.
- Shade is one of the most important assets of the picnic areas. The natural resources and best practices sections of the management plan address this issue as well as the issue of best tree planting practices within archaeological resource areas. Maintenance of the tree canopy in and around the picnic shelters should be a high priority for both the safety and comfort of park users.
- Updating the picnic area map—the historic areas marked on the picnic area map need to be updated to include the areas associated with the burial sites. This will help to increase awareness of African American heritage as well as the Civil War fortification. In addition, the picnic area map could be used to provide interpretive information about the significance of the historic areas.

## E. Playground

The existing playground is used by nearby residents, families that visit the park specifically for the playground and families that are picnicking in the park. The playground is located on the eastern side of the park, adjacent to the Marlboro Estates neighborhood. It is approximately 250 feet from the asphalt loop road and parking area, down a steep slope that falls about 35 feet from the parking site. Subject to erosion and stormwater runoff

across the hillside, the drainage piping installed at the site of the playground is undersized.<sup>8</sup>

The equipment itself is relatively new. Although subject to weekly safety inspections by City staff, there is no recent ADA-accessibility evaluation on the equipment or playground surfacing. No accessible path connects the playground to the rest of the park features. According to the 2012 ADA Accessibility Study, there are not accessible parking spaces or a route between the parking area and the equipment that meets current ADA accessibility criteria.



Figure 31 - Shaded playground and benches in current location

8 URS Draft Presentation on Stormwater to FWAG , August 2013

**Playground Site Comparison**

Criteria	Existing Site	South of Dog Exercise Area	South of Amphitheater
<b>Potential Impact to Archaeological Resources</b>	Accessible route and expansion of ADA accessible parking space will require excavation into the subsoil	Construction of footings (below frost line) and play surface (12-24 inches) will require excavation and replacement with suitable materials; Accessible route and expansion of ADA accessible parking space will require excavation into the subsoil (but for a shorter distance than the existing site)	Construction of footings (below frost line) and play surface (12-24 inches) will require excavation and replacement with suitable materials; Accessible route and expansion of ADA accessible parking space will require excavation into the subsoil (but for a shorter distance than the existing site)
<b>Proximity to Neighbors</b>	Close to path that links from North Van Dorn Street and proximate to adjoining houses on east side	Close to path that links from North Van Dorn Street and proximate to adjoining houses on east side	Farther distance from adjoining residential areas
<b>Proximity to Parking</b>	Longer accessible route (approximately 175-200 feet)	Shorter accessible route (Approximately 100-125 feet depending upon location chosen)	Shorter accessible route (Approximately 100-125 feet depending upon location chosen)
<b>Relationship to other users (both positive and negative)</b>	Adjacent to existing picnic area	Adjacent to picnic area and dog park (dog park would need to be relocated); This site may also raise concerns about being too close to the Civil War fortifications	Adjacent to amphitheater, public restrooms and picnic area
<b>Cost of Required Physical Improvements</b>	ADA parking space (850), ADA accessible path to play ground (6000)  Premium cost for equipment related to stormwater management (cost unknown)	ADA parking space (850), ADA accessible path to play ground (3000)  Premium cost related to making adjustments to dog exercise area (or removing)	ADA parking space (850), ADA accessible path to play ground (3000)

No mention was made in the FWAG report regarding removal of the playground equipment from the park. FWAG members recommended that if a new site is selected to serve as the playground area, equipment should be installed prior to the removal of the current equipment.

Three options exist for the play area:

- Retain the equipment in its current location and upgrade, if needed, to meet the most current ADA accessibility standards. This site requires the addition of an ADA compliant parking space and accessible route. This option would also require installation of new stormwater runoff management practices to address the flow of surface water through and around the playground.
- Relocate or replace the playground to the site south of the existing Dog Exercise Area, just north of the loop road. This site requires the addition of an ADA compliant parking space and accessible route (although the structure could be placed closer to the parking area thereby shortening the route) between the parking area and equipment. This is near the single picnic shelter in the park.
- Relocate or replace the playground to the area south of amphitheater. This site requires the addition of an ADA compliant parking space and accessible route (although the structure could be placed closer to the parking area and thereby shortening the route) between the parking area and the equipment. This locates the equipment near an existing restroom.

Criteria for determining the most suitable location for the playground include:

- Quality of recreational experience (shady areas, grassy areas nearby, level and well drained surface).
- Potential impact to archaeological resources associated with the installation of footings to support the play structure, installation of a sub-base below the surface of the playground to support the playground surface, and modifications to the soil surface and subsurface to create an accessible route and parking space for the playground.
- Proximity to adjoining neighborhoods and future uses.
- Proximity to existing parking and length of ADA accessible route that would have to be constructed.
- Relationship to other uses—nearby picnic areas and restrooms are beneficial, but the dog park is not, unless it is removed from the park or the area.
- Avoid potential intensification of uses in only one or two area of the park.
- Avoid unintentional segregation of the east and west ends of the park when locating park activities.

## F. Pedestrian Path Network

The loop road that circumnavigates the primary portion of Fort Ward partially follows a portion of a Fort community road system that pre-dates the park. As noted, it is accessed from the entrance road to the south of the museum. The loop road passes through Fort Ward as a one-way, narrow, asphalt-paved corridor, later widening as it encircles the fort to the west, north, and east, returning to the primary parking area, and later the park entrance. The road is used by both cars and pedestrians, and offers access to all of the park's recreational and historical features and activity areas. Since the road is popular for recreational walking, the park closes the road to vehicles at certain times of the day. Activity areas available to visitors include several picnic areas, a restroom facility, the amphitheater, a picnic pavilion, dog park and children's playground. A series of small parking areas or

Pods edge the loop road to allow visitors to conveniently access the activity areas. Most of these park-related features were established during the initial development phase in the 1960s.

### Loop Road Management and Enhancement

One of the primary ways that park visitors experience the park is traveling along the six-tenths of a mile loop road on foot or by vehicle. The loop road circles the Civil War fortification and connects many of the park's features. Always open during park hours for use as a walking path, it is closed to vehicular traffic early in the morning. The road opens later in the day for one-way vehicular access and provides access to park features and parking areas.

A sign is located at the entry where the width narrows to one-lane and priority is given to vehicles over pedestrians. Over 400 walkers were counted on a weekend day in early September 2010 walking the route<sup>9</sup>. The walk is valued for its shade and generally smooth walking surface, and is heavily used as a measured loop for exercisers.



Figure 32 - Loop road

Most of the road width varies from 12 to 14 feet, slightly wider than a normal traffic lane. This segment is not wide enough to provide separate lanes for vehicles and pedestrians. The entrance to the park is wider, accommodating two-way traffic. Between the park's entrance on West Braddock Road and the museum parking lot, the road width is approximately 22-24 feet. Shared use between pedestrians of all shapes, abilities and ages, and motor vehicles using the park road is an ongoing challenge. Speed humps have been installed along the loop road, but while these slow the speed of vehicles, they do not meet current standards for accessible routes and are challenging to navigate for some users.

Sharing the pavement between pedestrians and vehicles and limiting the number of cars that can enter the park at any one time (based upon parking availability) continues to be the best way to manage the shared use. However, changing the sign to encourage vehicles to look out for pedestrians rather than the current version that encourage pedestrians to look out for vehicles would help to clarify that the pedestrian use is the primary use of the loop road, and that vehicular use is secondary. Vehicles will still be permitted on the loop road during appropriate hours. Vehicular access is useful for group gatherings at the picnic areas for and improved accessibility of the park and its resources. Parking near the picnic

<sup>9</sup> FWAG, 2011, Chapter 3

areas and amphitheater on the loop road will remain, but needs to be improved to increase its adherence with accessibility standards.

The following enhancements to the shared loop road are recommended:

In the short term, consideration should be given to convert the speed humps to “speed cushions” providing the minimum gap width to meet accessibility guidelines.

- Introducing a sharp curve right at the point where the park road changes from two-way to one way would also keep drivers from accelerating along that stretch of roadway (see Plate 25, Section II.8).
- At the time of resurfacing the park road, consider modifications to the shoulder using a reinforced turf shoulder (subsoil being composed of 50% topsoil and 50% gravel mix) that will also support greater pedestrian use along the edge of the road and the occasional vehicle that runs off the road.
- Roadside drainage should be addressed by improving the infiltration rates of areas that receive roadside runoff. In addition, where runoff rates exceed the soil moisture holding capacity of a turf area, runoff should be directed to specially designed infiltration areas. As this requires trenching and replacement of soil, it can only be done in areas that have been surveyed for archaeological potential and where such potential has been ruled out.

### Pedestrian Paths - Soft Path Trail Network

An additional soft path trail network was proposed by the Fort Ward Ad Hoc Committee report.<sup>10</sup> The soft path would serve to supplement the paved loop road by formalizing and linking existing informal trail segments together with new segments, developed with interpretive sites in mind.

The proposed pedestrian path “soft path trail network” needs to support multiple functions including historical interpretation, natural resource interpretation, exercise, connectivity and safety. The trail network, as proposed, would circulate around the perimeter of the park with connection points to major destination and orientation points. Formalizing a park entrance,

<sup>10</sup> Forbes, Ripley and Robert Moir. Recreational Use; Issues and Recommendations, page 3. Received May 2013.

### Trail Surfacing Types Comparisons

Trail Type	Surface Type	Cleared Width	Cleared Height	Tread Width
<i>Wooded Section</i>	Natural soil, leaf mold or wood chips from park maintenance	10'	8'	6'
<i>Open Grass or Meadow</i>	Mowed turf	10'	NA	NA
<i>Interpretive Trail Portions</i>	Well-graded surface of stone dust or permeable pavement material such as flexi-pave	12'	8'	8-10'

or entrances, from North Van Dorn Street, the linkage will benefit the preservation of the rifle trench by providing an alternate entry route other than the top of the parapet. The surface of the trail will vary depending upon location: a natural soil or mulch surface in the less traveled portions of the wooded areas; mowed grass for connecting trail routes where interpretation is desirable or where cut through traffic is likely; stone dust as the primary surface material and flexi-pave or other similar permeable paving solution in the most heavily trafficked areas and associated with interpretive installations.

The table 'Trail Surfacing Types Comparison' chart summarizes the design criteria that should be utilized for building the trail network over time.

The Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) is a system for trail management. It is a recommended process to encourage more comprehensive monitoring of trail conditions. The UTAP is used by many federal agencies to monitor and prioritize maintenance activities and report on conditions of the trails for park users. While typically applied to larger areas, the UTAP process can be adapted to an urban park and conducted by volunteers.

The UTAP process records the accessibility data for the trail including:

- Trail length
- Maximum and average cross slopes
- Maximum and average running slopes
- Surface type and firmness
- Minimum clear width
- Average tread width

The primary maintenance information recorded about a trail includes:

- Tread condition
- Obstacle locations and magnitude
- Vegetation within the trail corridor
- Condition of drainage structures
- Presence of downed trees
- Washed out sections of the trail
- Condition of signage and related trail amenities

By recording conditions on a regular maintenance and operations cycle within the City of Alexandria's park maintenance staff, a prioritized list of maintenance needs can be established and monitored on a seasonal basis.

## G. Parking and Vehicular Access

A total of 152 on-site parking spaces are provided at the park. There are two gravel surfaced parking lots near the entrance to the park, and a series of asphalt paved, angled pull-off parking areas along the loop road. For the most part, these spaces are adequate



Figure 33 - Parking area near park entrance

for the current and anticipated use in the park. The main lot, approximately 24 spaces,<sup>11</sup> adjacent to Braddock Road requires that visitors cross the park entrance road to visit the museum and fort or restrooms. The current configuration of the split rail fencing around the lot pushes the pedestrian to cross close to West Braddock Road, where vehicle driver distraction is most likely. The lot to the north of the museum accommodates approximately 33 parking spaces. Additional parking is available outside of school hours at the St. Stephen's and St. Agnes Middle School campus next door and the parking lot adjacent to the athletic fields in the lower section of the park.

Programming has an effect on parking. The City employs several different strategies to address the parking demand associated with large events—closure of one travel lane on West Braddock Road to be used for parking or a shuttle that connects off-site parking with the park. Such parking arrangements are typically associated with event programming tied to the fort or museum. Recreational use can also increase the demand for parking. The amphitheater, for example has 360 seats. To meet on-site parking demand for an amphitheater production, all parking spaces in the park could be consumed by amphitheater attendees. Similarly, on summer weekends when all picnic areas are in use, pressure is placed on the on-site parking. Fortunately, many of the everyday users of the park walk to the site and do not need parking to make use of the park and its resources.

Group events and access present another challenge. The current configuration for school and tour bus drop-off and parking is awkward. Museum staff have raised concerns and requested that alternatives be examined. Buses currently drop off riders behind the museum in the gravel lot. The lot is served by a single access point, so the bus must turn around within the lot or block the access to the lot while loading and unloading.

11 Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. *Park & Open Space Facilities Prioritization Analysis*, April 2012.

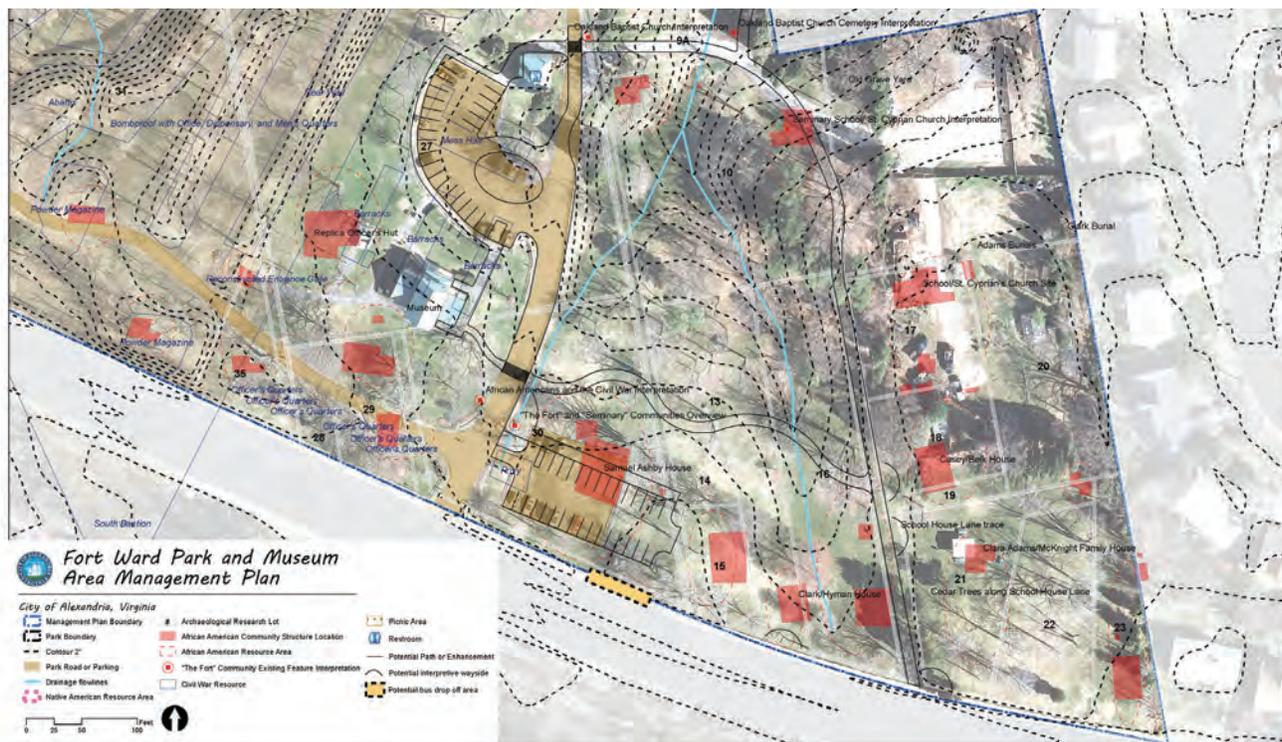


Figure 34 - Concept Diagram Enlargement

The Concept Diagram Enlargement, Figure 36, illustrates one approach that would create a loop drive so that buses (WB-40 type) can circulate through the lot, drop off passengers and return to West Braddock Road.

There are a number of issues that have been identified that need to be addressed in both the short-term and the long-term related to parking and access.

Potential ways to address these issues include:

- Narrow the main parking lot, as it is over 70' wide. The lot could be narrowed to 62' wide, with the addition of a central island or reduced in overall width. The area removed from the current parking configuration could be transformed into an accessible walkway route on the northern edge of the lot, connecting to an orientation area (as recommended in the interpretive discussion in Section II.4). An ADA accessible parking space should be located in this lot as recommended in the Kimley-Horn report. Contrary to the report's recommendation, consideration should be given to locating it on the northwest side of the lot, close to the proposed orientation area.
- Designate and mark a crosswalk on the northern side of the parking area, relocating the existing access road crossing further from the park entrance off of West Braddock Road. This would give greater pedestrian visibility to oncoming drivers and provide the driver more time to react and slow down.
- Accommodate school group/bus and other large vehicle access and parking by re-configuring the gravel parking lot behind the museum as a "U" shaped lot, allowing enough room for school busses (WB-40) and other large vehicles to turn within the lot. Approximately eight to ten spaces would be affected by the new school bus configuration. The spaces could be relocated to the main parking area as shown in Figure 34, or marked off during anticipated school bus site visits.
- An alternative to the U-shaped configuration would be to construct a bus pullout on Braddock Road as shown in Figure 34. Space is available for one bus. The City's Department of Transportation and Environmental Services briefly evaluated the feasibility of this option, estimating that cost for curb and gutter and pavement alone would be approximately \$25,000. Estimated costs for stormwater treatment, relocation of the sidewalk and other soft costs were not generated. It is unclear if the park's status as a National Register site would affect this option. Under this scenario, buses would have to find an alternative parking location once passengers have been dropped off.
- Replace Loop Road speed humps and change the existing sign to give the right-of-way to pedestrians rather than vehicles.



Figure 35 - Before sketch of potential modifications to the parking area behind the museum to better accommodate school buses



Figure 36 - After sketch of potential modifications



Figure 37 - Sketch illustrating potential marking and interpretation of Ashby House and new orientation area as a part of the re-configured West Braddock Road parking area

- Develop a pedestrian path trail network.
- Provide better access between the athletic fields and the park by installing another opening in the fence as shown on the path network diagram. Currently the only connection is located in the school parking lot, further to the south. Having a second opening in the field side would enhance personal safety by removing a potential “trap” in the northeast corner of the fenced field and provide access to the restrooms on the south side of the amphitheater.
- Provide for additional parking. The current parking configuration is suitable for events in the amphitheater. Any additional parking should be developed either as a drivable grass surface (such as turf block, or similar), or as permeable pavers. The parking area can be narrowed to recapture space on the north side of the lot used for a walkway and interpretation of the Ashby House as part of the overall orientation area for the park.
- Shared parking in nearby lots may also be considered for events. The adjacent middle school spaces are already being shared with the use of the adjacent athletic fields and during other events. Other potential lots, such as at Minnie Howard School, are approximately a 1/2 mile away. Sites greater than 1/2 mile away may require a shuttle system.
- There is no formal bicycle parking area or structures provided in the park, although the park is used by cyclists and is located on city and regional bike trails.

## H. Park Character and Landscape Design

There are several landscape architectural design strategies that should be implemented to reinforce the desired enhancements to park facilities. Several of these strategies involve protection of the Civil War fortification, and these are discussed in the resource management section (protection of the rifle trench, for example). Others address utilizing landscape elements associated with “The Fort” community to help set the context for interpreting the lives of the families that lived there or to help mark the burial sites nearby; these are discussed in the interpretive section.

- **Main entrance** - establish an identifiable landscape character (use shade trees and hedges or hedgerows to define circulation).
- **West Braddock Road** - bring the park and its interpretation out to West Braddock Road and make West Braddock Road “part of the park” by establishing a double row of street trees at the edge of the park to create an opening and orientation point for visitors at the historical location of School House Lane.
- **Secondary entrances** - create a welcoming appearance and improve safety at the North Van Dorn entrances.
- **Parking areas** - consider reshaping both primary parking lots to achieve more efficient use of gravel surfaces. For the long term, consider an alternative type of permeable paving system.
- **Loop road** - maintain a shaded route for recreational use by planting new shade trees on both sides of the road. Vary the landscape design and species selection to reflect the adjoining uses—more formal in the entrance areas, at orientation points where trails intersect with the loop road and grassy open areas, and more informal in the existing wooded areas.
- **Renovating Special Areas** - consider restoring the legacy of the azalea gardens and the City Arborist’s Memorial. Renovation of the azalea beds will require careful management to gradually reshape the azaleas, coupled with the use of various soil amendments and mulches to achieve the proper pH and soil drainage to achieve optimal growth. Similarly, the Arborist’s Memorial will require special attention and an inventory of the condition of the original landscape design. Work can begin by pruning out and removing dead materials, amending the soil to achieve proper pH and drainage, and weeding and mulching the beds on a regular basis to revitalize the desired and original plants. In both cases, where trees from the original planting have died, they should be replaced in kind, or with an appropriate substitute if the plant is either no longer available, susceptible to disease or considered to be non-native invasive.
- **Landscape** - use predominately native plant materials to enhance the park and for screening structures such as transformers or parking areas.



## 4. Interpretive Framework

Fort Ward Park is a complex site with many layers of history—each with their own set of known facts and their own set of meanings to a wide and diverse audience. The role of interpretation is to help the diverse audience to better appreciate and experience the meanings that can be derived from information and facts. Through storytelling, interpretation at Fort Ward Park can embrace the site’s rich and layered history in a way that touches audiences and connects to the broader themes and stories of the city and region.

The purpose of this portion of the report is to compile the background information that provides the context for developing interpretive goals and an interpretive framework for telling the multi-layered stories of Fort Ward Park and its environs. Four fundamental questions set the stage for the development of an interpretive framework for the park:

- **Geography:** To what extent is interpretation limited to within boundaries of the park itself? The archaeological studies focus on what evidence can be found and pieced together by examining the site. For the museum, the setting of Fort Ward within the larger city and regional context is critical to telling the many-layered stories. To the descendants group, the geography is viewed in terms of community and family relationships as well as land ownership.
- **Timeframe:** When does story to be told at Fort Ward story begin and end? The museum focuses upon the Civil War period, 1860-1870. The descendent group focuses primarily upon the establishment of “The Fort” community to the present. Is it important to place the Fort Ward story in a broader context of both time and place?
- **Themes:** What subjects can and should be covered in interpretation? Defenses of Washington? Alexandria’s Civil War history? Building African American community after the Civil War? Urban renewal and suburbanization? Centennial? Segregation and desegregation? Slavery to freedom?
- **Implementation:** Who will tell these stories? How does one coordinate storytelling so the presentation is seamless? Which of the stories should be told at Fort Ward Park and which should be told elsewhere? If told elsewhere, how does the interpretation tie in to the other places to make sure the stories are complete and whole?

### A. Existing Interpretation

The discussion of existing conditions within the interpretive component of the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan provides general background information to set the context for discussion of interpretation at the site. It briefly outlines the regional

context, reviews existing interpretive programming at the site, and highlights issues and opportunities that have been identified through discussions with stakeholders.

Fort Ward Park was established by the City of Alexandria in the early 1960s at the time of the Civil War Centennial to preserve the remaining Civil War earthworks existing there and to interpret the fort. The park's early establishment featured reconstruction of Fort Ward's historic gate, restoration of the fort's Northwest Bastion and construction of period appropriate buildings to serve as a visitor center and visitor facilities.

Soon after the park's establishment, the role of the visitor center transformed into that of a museum, which became known as the Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site in 1982. Over the years, the museum has developed into a unique, high quality facility with an outstanding collection of Civil War artifacts, a research library and educational and interpretive programming. Fort Ward Museum has become a model small museum and it is the regional leader in interpretation of the Civil War Defenses of Washington.

In recent years, the history and significance of the post-Civil War evolution of the Fort Ward site has been brought to light, focusing upon the African American families that built homes and created a community there. Largely through the leadership of descendents of these families, the stories of the community, known as "The Fort," are being explored and beginning to be told in the context of Alexandria's overall history. Remaining historic features related to the community including grave sites have been identified and are being archaeologically investigated, researched and preserved.



Figure 38 - Brick pier from Shorts House. Photo courtesy of Office of Historic Alexandria.

Today through the work of many stakeholders, those interested in the complete history of the Fort Ward site are discussing how best to preserve and commemorate remaining resources and tell the layered stories associated with the site in a way that engages the public and presents a full picture of the site's significance. A recent study of Fort Ward Park by a Stakeholders Advisory Group provided background and developed recommendations for the future management of the park, including interpretation (Ad Hoc Stakeholders Advisory Group 2012).

The purpose of the interpretive component of the Fort Ward Park and Museum Management Plan is to further that discussion in consultation with stakeholders by outlining a comprehensive interpretive strategy for the site for the guidance of future initiatives.

### Regional Context for Interpretation

Three regional topics set the context for interpretation of history at Fort Ward Park, the overall story of the Defenses of Washington which includes the construction of the fort; the experience of African Americans in Alexandria which is exemplified by the community at "The Fort," and the historical development of the City of Alexandria with which the fort is directly associated.

The establishment and evolution of Fort Ward Park within the City of Alexandria is also part of the potential context for interpretation.

## The Defenses of Washington

At the beginning of the Civil War, the national capital of Washington was largely unprotected and extremely vulnerable to attack by hostile forces. Located at the southern edge of what remained of the Union, Washington was surrounded by rival forces, the Confederate state of Virginia to the west and the neutral but slave-owning state of Maryland on the north, east and south. Over the course of the war, an extensive network of defensive works was constructed to defend and protect the city making Washington the most heavily fortified city in the nation (National Park Service 2010; Cooling and Owen 2010: xi).

Washington's defensive works were continually developed and improved over the course of the war, advancing the science and construction of earthworks fortifications in response to the threat from ever improving and destructive armaments. By the war's end, the defensive works included 68 forts, 20 miles of rifle pits, 32 miles of military roads, and 93 detached batteries (National Park Service 2010).

After the war, most of the fortifications were dismantled and abandoned. Some properties reverted to former owners and were sold, modified, re-graded, and used for other purposes. Washington and its suburbs expanded, and once isolated fortification sites were overwhelmed by twentieth century urban and suburban development. Nonetheless, a fair number of remnants of the defensive works remain, and some have been preserved as public open space.

Today, Washington's Civil War story and the story of the Defenses of Washington in particular are an unfulfilled opportunity. The limited number of earthworks remnants throughout the region, in general, are highly compromised in terms of historical integrity, condition, and ability to tell their Civil War story.

North of and along the Potomac River, the National Park Service is steward to the largest number of remaining earthworks, including 22 historic fort sites. Originally acquired as part of a 1902 initiative to create a greenbelt and Circle Forts Drive, these sites are distributed between three separate park management units (Rock Creek Park, National Capital Parks – East, and George Washington Memorial Parkway) with many competing needs and interests and little capability to coordinate a coherent presentation.

While the significance of the Civil War sites is well recognized, and an organizational concept has been defined under a 2004 Circle Forts Parks Management Plan, meaningful interpretation has only been implemented at a few locations and the concept of a coordinated circle forts interpretive presentation remains unfulfilled. A 2010 Civil War Defenses of Washington Hiking and Biking Trail brochure is the most recent contribution in presenting the circle forts to the broader public.

South of the Potomac River, most of the remaining earthworks associated with the Defenses of Washington are in the custody of local governments or are privately owned.



Figure 39 - View from Stout's Farm, Virginia, Showing "The Seminary," Fort Ward, etc. Oct. 1861. (from Volume 1, 1861 April 12–1862 May 5 Figure 40A Guide to the Robert Knox Sneden Diary Volume 1, 1861 April 12–1862 May 5. Collection Number Mss5:1 Sn237:1 v. 1)

The City of Alexandria, Arlington County, and Fairfax County each own and manage significant historic fort sites, but with the exception of Fort Ward, little interpretation has been undertaken and in some cases, sites have been compromised or left unacknowledged. Interpretive wayside exhibits have been recently installed at Fort Ethan Allen in Arlington with the assistance of Fort Ward Museum staff and could provide a model for exterior exhibits at Fort Ward.

Regardless of the site, the extensive change to the landscape throughout the region since the Civil War through urban and suburban growth, strikingly conveyed by period photographs, makes the Defenses of Washington story hard to visualize and present. Nonetheless, the opportunity to convey this story remains if the defensive remnants can be preserved and an organizational capacity can be developed with the creativity and resources to implement the vision. A small private organization, the Alliance for the Civil War Defenses of Washington, was formed a few years ago and potentially could serve as the genesis for a new regional preservation and interpretive initiative.

### The African American Experience

Over the past fifty years, since the public prominence of the Civil Rights Movement, the African American experience in this country has received increased study and interest. Through three centuries of slavery and another century of repression under Jim Crow, African American individuals and families have persevered in forging their identity, shaping their communities, and simply surviving. Today that struggle is beginning to be recognized as an achievement of immense proportions and a new dimension of the American story and spirit that we share.



Figure 41 - City of Alexandria staff installed the six interpretive panels now part of the Alexandria Heritage Trail. Photo courtesy of Office of Historic Alexandria

Within a larger national context, the story of Alexandria's African American community is a current focus of examination, discussion, and emerging recognition. Inequities related to that story are not old and are directly related to the establishment of Fort Ward Park, the T.C. Williams High School, and other events of the recent past and present.

The City of Alexandria's interpretive program, implemented primarily through the Office of Historic Alexandria, is committed to expression of cultural diversity. The African American story is being researched and told. City initiatives include:

- The Alexandria Black History Museum, a facility of the Office of Historic Alexandria, was originally a segregated library constructed in 1940 for African Americans and is devoted to stimulating appreciation of the diversity of the African American experience. Its permanent exhibit focuses upon the local African American community and documents how area African Americans survived slavery and helped shape today's city. The museum features the first Alexandria African American history book, *African Americans in Alexandria, Virginia: Beacons of Light in the Twentieth Century*.
- The African American Heritage Park is a 7.6-acre green space that includes a one-acre, 19th century African American cemetery. The park offers a place for celebration, commemoration and quiet reflection.
- As a result of mitigation measures associated with construction of the Woodrow Wilson bridge, the City of Alexandria is constructing the Contrabands and Freedman Cemetery Memorial on the site of the historic Alexandria Freedmen's Cemetery. Between 1864 and 1869, the cemetery served as the burial place

for approximately 1,800 African Americans who fled to Alexandria to escape from bondage during the Civil War. The cemetery had been desecrated through construction of a gas station and office building in the mid-20th century. Memory of the site faded until 1987 when historians rediscovered documents indicating its location and listing names of the individuals buried there. Since then, the site has been the subject of historical and archaeological investigation. More than 600 burial locations have been identified. The dedication ceremony for the Contrabands and Freedmen Cemetery is scheduled for September 2014.

- The Alexandria Heritage Trail and Alexandria Civil War Defenses of Washington Bike Trail link African American historic sites within the overall context of the city's history. The City also administers an African American Historic Sites self-guided tour with a brochure that includes Fort Ward.
- The success of the Fort Ward History Work Group, archaeological investigations, installation of wayside exhibits at Fort Ward Park, and continuing research into "The Fort" community is an ongoing progress in the understanding and appreciation of the African American community at Fort Ward and the overall African American experience within Alexandria (Ad Hoc Stakeholders Advisory Group 2011:12-18).

## B. Existing On-site Interpretive Programming

The Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site has developed a reputation as a focused, high quality small museum telling the stories of Fort Ward, the Defenses of Washington and Alexandria during the Civil War. The museum's highly developed programming, including exhibits, tours, living history, educational outreach to schools, publications, events, lectures and research, is a model for a small community museum with limited staff and resources.

Recently, the Fort Ward Park's programming has been enhanced through the installation of wayside exhibits related to "The Fort" community.



Figure 42 - Civil War Days at Fort Ward Park, June 2013

### Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site

Located within Fort Ward Park, the Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site is a City of Alexandria agency, one of seven small museums operated under the City's Office of Historic Alexandria. The museum has been accredited by the American Alliance of Museums since 1987.

The Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site's mission is to provide visitors with a meaningful educational experience related to the American Civil War within the time frame of 1860 to 1870 by interpreting

- Fort Ward as a military site
- The Civil War Defenses of Washington
- Wartime Alexandria
- Experiences of Alexandrians during the Union occupation of the city (Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site 2008: 2)

### Museum Facilities

The Fort Ward Museum was opened in 1964 and is housed in a period reconstruction of the headquarters building at Fort Sumner, which was located north of the Potomac River in suburban Maryland. Originally intended as the park's visitor center, the building has

now served as a museum for almost fifty years. It is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 10 AM to 5 PM and on Sundays noon to 5 PM.

The museum building features exhibit space, museum shop, rest rooms and support space on the first floor; the Dorothy C.S. Starr Research Library on the second floor; and collections, office space, kitchen, and mechanical rooms in the basement. The building is older and often unmonitored in the evenings and on holidays.

A unique structure, the existing building is not adequate for its purpose, and the museum has outgrown the available space. The entrance to the museum is not inviting; it is difficult to know if the building is even open. The museum's first floor has limited floor space for exhibits and is not capable of flexible arrangements. The research library on the second floor is not accessible by elevator and cannot be easily used for public lectures and meetings. The basement, which houses the museum's valuable collections as well as office space, is not suitable for those purposes.



Figure 43 - Officers at headquarters. U.S. National Archives' Local Identifier: 111-B-247; From: Series: Mathew Brady Photographs of Civil War-Era Personalities and Scenes. (Record Group 111) Officers identified from group photo in front of quarters at Fort Ward 1863. Unidentified black adolescent sitting on steps by the men - Harwood, Hemingway, Rockwood, Gillette. Samuel Proal Hatfield Civil War Photograph Album, Special Collections & Archives, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, USA.

Adjacent to the museum building are two other period reconstructions that were designed from Civil War photographs of buildings that existed as part of the Defenses of Washington. None of the museum's three reconstructed buildings replicate structures that actually existed at Fort Ward, though historic photographs of the fort show buildings of similar character and location.

The replica Officer's Hut located adjacent to the museum is used for interpretation and living history presentations. The rest room structure located across the parking lot from the museum is a reconstruction of the headquarters building of the second Camp Convalescent in Arlington (Cooling and Owen 2010: 40).

### Historic Site

The historic features that the museum interprets include the extensive remnant earthworks of Fort Ward; the rifle trench extending through the park northward from the fort; the remains of the outlying gun battery and its associated features located northwest of the fort; and the overall location and topography of the site.

The restoration/reconstruction of the Northwest Bastion of the fort is a powerful feature of the site's interpretation and has five replica artillery pieces. In the original 1960s reconstruction, the artillery pieces had woven gabions around them as well.

The reconstructed Ceremonial Entrance Gate is an iconic feature by which Fort Ward is known and promoted and serves as the entrance to the fort's self-guided walking tour. A replica well structure is interpreted within the fort, though its precise historic location is not known.

The grounds of the historic fort have not changed substantially since the museum's opening in 1964. Existing waysides that are part of the self-guided walking tour inside the fort were introduced in the 1980s, though some of the currently existing waysides are replacements.

Wooden walkways provide access over the ramparts of the fort at several locations. A new ADA compliant walkway is being constructed from the gate to and within the Northwest

Bastion. The walkway will have a rubberized surface with a texture chosen to resemble the compacted gravel that appears in historic photographs of some Washington era forts, replacing the loose pea gravel currently in the Bastion.

### Collections

Among the Fort Ward Museum's most significant holdings is its extensive collection of Civil War artifacts that provide the core of many of its exhibits. The museum has a collection of over 4,000 objects related to the Civil War that is housed in state-of-the-art climate controlled storage cabinets located in its basement. The museum selectively acquires historic artifacts of the 1860-1870 period related to the history of the American Civil War, the Defenses of Washington and Fort Ward, and the City of Alexandria. Emphasis is placed on objects of Union provenance to better interpret the historic site.

The scope of the collection ranges from objects of general Civil War historical value that are used to interpret army life in the Defenses of Washington, to objects of local significance. Major categories of the permanent collection include arms and equipment related to the artillery, infantry, cavalry and navy; uniforms and clothing accessories; artwork, rare documents and photographs; medical instruments; mess equipment; and musical instruments (Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site 2008: 3).

### Staffing

The Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site has two full time staff members, a Director and an Assistant Director/Curator. A half-time Museum Technician provides valuable assistance, and a goal of the museum, reflected in the Office of Historic Alexandria's Five Year Plan, is to make the Museum Technician a full time position. A handful of part-time staff assist in managing the museum when it is open, especially on weekends.

The Friends of Fort Ward provides important support for the museum including consultation, advocacy, volunteers and funding for small projects. The Friends sponsor popular bus tours to other Civil War sites in the Mid-Atlantic region for members and the general public.

### Programming

Over its fifty-year life, the Fort Ward Museum has developed a wide range of educational and interpretive programming. Key audiences include specialized history and military organizations. In recent years, as available staff and funding resources have diminished, the museum has increasingly had to focus upon its core set of programming initiatives. In fulfilling its mission to the public, the Fort Ward Museum

- Preserves and interprets the historic fort through informative signs, brochures, maps, and tours
- Collects, preserves, and interprets historic artifacts relating to the Defenses of Washington and the Civil War in general
- Distributes an interactive classroom learning kit which complies with the Virginia Department of Education's Standards of Learning and presents other programs that address all age levels
- Mounts exhibitions, presents lectures and tours, and offers living history programs for the general public and specialized audiences



Figure 44 - Fort Ward Museum exhibit portraying the Defenses of Washington

- Maintains the Dorothy C.S. Starr Research Library as a center for the study of the American Civil War with emphasis on the Defenses of Washington
- Offers a web site with in-depth educational information about Fort Ward to the Internet community
- Makes available site brochures printed in French, German and Spanish
- Complies with the ADA, providing brochures printed in Braille and large print formats, as well as a closed caption video (Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site 2008: 2)

The museum's interior exhibits are a core element of its presentation. Its exhibits include an introduction to the regional story of the Defenses of Washington as well as an orientation exhibit of Fort Ward's history and restoration with a model of the fort. A 12-minute video entitled *Fort Ward and the Defenses of Washington: Silent Guardians of the Capital City* may be viewed on the main exhibit floor.

Long-term exhibits support local Civil War themes such as army life in the Defenses of Washington and Alexandria as a major hospital center for the Union army. Permanent exhibits include *The Common Soldier*, displaying objects illustrating the daily life of the common soldier; *The Art of the Artilleryman*, showing the tools and techniques used by artillery in the fort; and *Medical Care for the Civil War Soldier* with a broad selection of medical tools, equipment and images illustrating treatment practices of the time. Brochures support the exhibits' presentations (Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site 2013).

A printed walking tour, the historic earthworks, wayside exhibits, and the reconstructed Northwest Bastion provide a self-guided presentation of the site. Exterior interpretive content is, however, limited. Guided tours are offered by arrangement and during special events.

The museum conducts at least five major events each year with living history demonstrations providing a close look at the daily life of a Civil War soldier. Events include Recruiting Day in February, Civil War Fort Day in June, the week-long Civil War Kids Camp in June, Civil War Artillery Day in October and Christmas in Camp in December. Additional special events feature guided tours, talks, musical programs, and smaller interpretive programs to fill out the calendar.

The Fort Ward Museum's educational programming features award winning educational kits called *Life During the Civil War* that may be borrowed by teachers for use in class. Designed for elementary through high school grades, the kits address Virginia's Standards of Learning and contain a selection of materials and objects to be explored by students in visual, tactile and audio form.

A Teacher's Guide Notebook contains lessons and exercises to be selected by the teacher for use in the classroom on themes such as the common soldier; photography during the Civil War; civilian response to military occupation; music during the war; and the role of women and African American soldiers. The different sections of the program feature exercises, games, suggested reading lists and follow-up activities (Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site 2013).

### “The Fort” – The African American Community at Fort Ward

The African American history of Fort Ward site has recently been the subject of considerable discussion and investigation due largely to the efforts of the non-profit Fort

Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, which has been active in promoting recognition of the significance of the site. Their efforts and those of the Office of Historic Alexandria-sponsored Fort Ward History Work Group have led to important research findings on the history of the African American community that lived at “The Fort” until creation of Fort Ward Park in the early 1960s (Ad Hoc Stakeholders Advisory Group 2011: 13-14).

Archaeological investigations have been undertaken to identify the locations of historic features such as building foundations related to the community. The archaeological investigations have identified the locations of multiple graves that were known to be present. Additional grave sites may exist and additional investigations are required.

Remaining topographic and vegetative resources within Fort Ward Park associated with the physical layout of the community have been identified and are being preserved. Alexandria Archaeology initiated an oral history program in collaboration with the descendants that has recorded the stories of individuals and families. An archival history of the site has been prepared by Krystyn R. Moon, Ph.D. for the Office of Historic Alexandria and is currently under review.

Through a series of generous grants a series of six interpretive waysides have been installed at locations throughout Fort Ward Park interpreting “The Fort” and its residents. A companion brochure includes a trail map of the waysides, provides context, and builds upon the interpretive content presented on site. Living history interpreters of the African American stories are involved in Fort Ward Museum events, and the museum is exploring ways in which exhibits on “The Fort” and Alexandria’s African American Civil War experience may be incorporated into its interior and exterior presentations. Fort Ward’s African American stories are connected to other African American sites in Alexandria through the Alexandria Heritage Trail and its guidebook and brochures.

## C. The City of Alexandria’s Interpretive Resources

The City of Alexandria is a national model as a community that has had the foresight and ability to create a history and museum system staffed with archeologists, researchers, curators, educators and archivists. Alexandria’s identity is grounded in its historic character, and the city’s residents and government have invested in historic resources in a meaningful way.

### Office of Historic Alexandria

The Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) is the comprehensive public history agency for the City of Alexandria and manages the City’s museum system. Established in 1982, its administrative office is located in the historic Lloyd House in downtown Alexandria. In addition to its administrative group, the agency is comprised of eight management units, including Alexandria Archaeology, Archives and Records Management, and seven small museums

- Alexandria Archaeology Museum (part of Alexandria Archaeology)
- Alexandria Black History Museum
- Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site
- Friendship Firehouse
- Gadsby’s Tavern Museum
- The Lyceum
- Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum

The Office of Historic Alexandria was accredited as a museum system in 2012 by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition achievable by an American museum. It is only one of eight municipal organizations across the country accredited for their museum systems (Office of Historic Alexandria 2013). Its museums operate independently and provide educational and interpretive programming based upon the themes to which they relate through exhibits, school programming, public programming, and special events.

In addition to its public history programming, the Office of Historic Alexandria develops and promotes heritage tourism initiatives, assists other City departments with inter-departmental planning and review, and provides staff support to public commissions and advisory groups including the Alexandria Archaeological Commission, Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission, Public Records Advisory Commission and Fort Ward Ad Hoc Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group.

The Office of Historic Alexandria's mission, vision and educational philosophy state

- **OHA Departmental Mission Statement** - *The Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) enhances the quality of life for city residents and visitors by preserving and interpreting Alexandria's historic properties, archaeological sites, cultural resources, artifact collections, objects, archives, records, and personal stories, and by encouraging audiences to appreciate Alexandria's diverse historic heritage and its place within the broader context of American history.*
- **OHA Departmental Vision Statement** - *to be the leader in authentic, engaging, and imaginative history learning experiences for all who live in or visit the City of Alexandria, Virginia.*
- **OHA Education Philosophy Statement** - *OHA's departments of education work to integrate research, discovery, public outreach, and educational opportunities. Education and outreach include hands-on experience, tours, role playing, and school programs, using specific and appropriate primary resources. The intent is to engage citizens, students, and visitors of all ages in the adventure that is American history (Office of Historic Alexandria 2012: 10).*

OHA is facing the challenge of reduced budgets that impact its citywide operations as well as individual museums. Budget reductions are expected to continue in future years given limited revenues and competing City priorities. The agency is exploring pursuit of private funding sources as an alternative but has limited staff capability for the scope of development activities that are necessary.

Nonetheless, Historic Alexandria's Five Year Strategic Plan outlines goals and objectives that include maintaining the high quality of interpretive programming and service to the community. The plan cites objectives related to celebrating diversity, expanding partnerships, marketing, use of new technologies, research, and maintaining a high-quality professional staff.

With respect to research, the plan highlights the success of the Fort Ward History Work Group as a creative approach to research of the African American community that occupied the Fort Ward site while also engaging a broader community discussion.

With respect to interpretation, the plan notes a special focus on the American Civil War for its sesquicentennial, recognizing that the war poses issues that may be controversial and

uncomfortable from the different perspectives of residents and visitors and that need to be addressed carefully so that all viewpoints are represented. The plan states that the City's interpretation will highlight the social significance of the Civil War, rather than focusing on military heroes and strategy, to help promote a greater understanding of the causes, impacts, and ultimate resolution of the conflict (Office of Historic Alexandria 2012: 25).

The Strategic Plan also commits to

- Identifying exhibit and event objectives at each museum site so that an engaging and active public program can be achieved
- Developing programs geared to particular audiences and the needs of residents and visitors to Alexandria
- Maintaining its role in interpretive signage and other public amenities associated with history, that are erected throughout the city
- Continuing to maintain its ongoing commitment to interpretive activities at the Fort Ward site, "The Fort," associated with the African American settlement that developed in the post-Civil War period

### Alexandria Heritage Trail

The City of Alexandria has created a 23-mile Alexandria Heritage Trail through which residents and visitors can explore the city and learn about its history and historic sites. The trail is a portion of the larger Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. The Heritage Trail is divided into thirteen segments of individual trails and off-trail detours, each exploring a specific area of the city and the resources associated with it.

The Alexandria Heritage Trail is described in an 80 page illustrated guidebook written by Pamela Cressey, the former City Archaeologist. While the book is out of print, plans call for putting it on the web. The guidebook describes 110 historic sites along the trail and wayside signs, brochures and mobile 'apps' help to convey supporting interpretation of many of the sites. The installation of additional wayside exhibits at sites is an ongoing City initiative.

Fort Ward Park is identified as a location along the segment called the Preservation Trail, which follows Braddock Road. The park presentation features the historic fort and wayside exhibits associated with the African American community that lived there.

### Alexandria Civil War Defenses of Washington Bike Trail

Associated with the Alexandria Heritage Trail and the regional Civil War Defenses of Washington Trail, the Alexandria Civil War Defenses of Washington Bike Trail identifies a biking route linking Alexandria's primary Civil War interpretive sites. Opened in 2011, the trail stops include

- Fort Ward
- Fort Worth
- Fort Ellsworth
- Alexandria National Cemetery
- Alexandria Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery
- Battery Rogers



Figure 45 - Bicyclist stops at Fort Ward to look at Alexandria Heritage Trail interpretive panel as part of a ride along the Civil War Defenses of Washington Bike Trail

A Civil War Alexandria iPhone 'app' provides mobile information about Civil War sites within the region.

## D. Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

Strengths related to interpretation at Fort Ward Park include

- Fort Ward has an impressive layered history with interesting stories related to Alexandria and the region
- The City has made a significant investment over many years in the preservation, research, and interpretation of local history and historic sites
- The City has developed a structured interpretive framework through which to tell its citywide stories and to link site interpretation citywide
- A series of significant interpretive programs and vehicles (such as the museum system, Alexandria Heritage Trail, etc.) are in place to build upon
- Fort Ward Park has high visitation with the opportunity to reach out to new and expanded public audiences
- The historic fort is an important historic resource and offers an impressive physical interpretive presence
- Fort Ward Museum maintains a high quality of programming and professional standards
- Remaining physical and archaeological resources can be used to tell the story of “The Fort” community
- There is considerable interest in telling stories reflecting the theme “We’re Still Here”, as part of the African American history of the Fort Ward Park and nearby Seminary community areas
- Stakeholders have demonstrated commitment to the site and its stories

Weaknesses related to interpretation at Fort Ward Park include

- Limited financial resources from the City and other sources
- Lack of a coordinated regional initiative in presenting the Civil War Defenses of Washington
- The Fort Ward Museum staff and volunteers are working at or beyond capacity in maintaining the current level of programming
- Limited tangible and visible resources remain from the African American community era, making it a challenge to interpret
- Difficulty of representing and coordinating multiple stories physically and thematically within a limited physical area
- Segmented audiences—park users do not often interact with historic interpretation

Threats related to interpretation at Fort Ward Park include

- Preservation of gravesites
- Divergent visions, perspectives, and processes of stakeholders at the site and citywide
- Reduction in funding for Fort Ward
- Loss or deterioration of historic resources
- Lack of appreciation among the general public

Opportunities related to interpretation at Fort Ward Park include

- Outdoor interpretation has not been fully developed at the park beyond traditional interpretive panels; it could be greatly enhanced
- The landscape of Fort Ward Park, including the remnants of “The Fort” community, has the potential to engage current users in creative ways
- Linking natural and historic interpretation
- Expanding audiences

- Continuing to be a leader in museum interpretation
- Programs aimed at next generation users

## E. Interpretive Concept for Fort Ward Park

The rich and layered history of Fort Ward Park provides the opportunity to touch audiences through storytelling and interpretation. The interpretive concept for the park outlined below builds upon the recommendations of the Fort Ward Advisory Group (FWAG) draft chapters—each of which identify preservation, interpretation and education as important parts of their recommendations.

As noted in the FWAG chapter report on “African American Structures and Other Resources”, a substantial amount of information has been developed over the last 20 years that, as a whole, helps to provide an understanding of the lives of the families who occupied the fort. Much of this new information, as it is further examined, can be the basis for telling the complete story from the defenses of Washington through reconstruction to the Jim Crow era and beyond.

Similarly, 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. Extending the interpretation of Fort Ward beyond the museum walls—for example introducing the story of the Defense of Washington outdoors—helps to introduce the complete story to the widest range of audiences that are using the park for both recreational and educational purposes.

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.

The idea of an interpreted trail—a soft path that loops around the park—is a common recommendation that is found in several of the FWAG chapters and discussed at many of the FWAG meetings. The interpreted trail can be a primary tool for achieving the interpretive goals for the park. It can provide an orientation and introduction, providing context for its establishment in the defense of Washington and its role in the establishment of an African American community that mirrors such community building elsewhere in the region and the country.



*Figure 46 - Fort Ward Museum director Susan Cumbey working with student historians. Photo courtesy of Office of Historic Alexandria*

## Goals for Interpretation

Primary goals for the interpretative presentation at Fort Ward Park include:

- Interpretive Goal 1: Increase and broaden the audience in support of the park’s preservation and enhancement by providing a high quality interpretive and educational experience.
- Interpretive Goal 2: Strengthen community identity by using the stories at Fort Ward to stimulate community conversation, dialogue, and understanding.



## Supporting Context

- Before the fort (geology, natural history, landscape history)
- Fort Ward Park Today (social history, nearby nature, refuge)

## Interpretive Elements

The interpretive presentation will be organized using existing park resources supported by additional enhancements and landscape management protocols and techniques. The presentation will feature a coordinated indoor and outdoor experience with the following components.

- Provide a single central location for outdoor orientation to inform visitors about the layout and scope of the presentation, opportunities to explore, interpretive context, and to introduce interpretive themes and storylines.
- Small, one-panel, orientation exhibits should also be installed at secondary entrances along North Van Dorn Street, and at the southwest corner of the site.
- Create a self-guided outdoor interpretive experience that encourages exploration, can be entered at any point, and can be experienced in any order.
- Use historic landscape features and carefully designed landscape enhancements to tell selected stories that illustrate desired themes. Any new landscape enhancements should be appropriate to the character of the historic site and consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- Link interpretive locations using existing and new walking trails that provide connections and options for exploring the park and its resources. Use interpretive locations to engage recreational visitors using the walking trails.
- With respect to interpretation of Fort Ward and the American Civil War 1860-1870, the remnant earthworks of Fort Ward and the overall topography of the site are the principal landscape features to be used in storytelling. Manage the features and surrounding landscape to support storytelling and suggest historic conditions. The restored northwest bastion, reconstructed entrance gate and reconstructed officers' quarters are landscape enhancements that evoke the character of the site and help tell the story.
  - On the interior of the Fort Ward earthworks, feature interpretation associated with Fort Ward as a Military Site.
  - On the exterior of the Fort Ward earthworks, including the vicinity of the battery, covered way, and rifle trench, feature interpretation connecting the military site to the larger landscape, geography and Civil War Defenses of Washington.
- With respect to interpretation of "The Fort"—The African American Experience, Reconstruction through Civil Rights, use remnant landscape features, the locations of archaeological features and appropriate new landscape enhancements to evoke conditions and convey themes through stories associated with the site.
  - Focus interpretation primarily upon the School House Lane corridor from Braddock Road to the Oakland Baptist Cemetery.
  - Use former home locations to interpret appropriate themes through stories associated with the families of those homes.
  - Use the School House site and the Clara Adams gravesite as the principal destination and interpretive focus.
  - Use the cemetery and graveyards as special places for appropriate recognition, commemoration, and contemplation.
  - Feature locations beyond the School House Lane corridor to include 'The Fort' community story throughout the park.

- Mark the foundation of the Ashby House in the parking area adjacent to West Braddock Road.
- Use the Fort Ward Museum to provide detailed, in-depth interpretation and programming of the larger themes related to the Defenses of Washington, Wartime Alexandria, and ‘The Fort’ community using the museum’s collections.
  - Expand the museum to provide a place for interior visitor orientation and information, space for educational programming, accessibility, additional visitor services, and upgraded collection facilities.
  - Continue to offer events and public programming in support of the site’s themes and storylines.
- Tie interpretation to other related sites within Alexandria and the region. Work on the Civil War and African American tours of Alexandria by enhancing interpretation at other sites featured on the tours and connecting the interpretation at all sites to citywide interpretive themes and storylines.
  - Celebrate the 150th anniversary of “The Fort” community.

### Theme Statements

Fort Ward Park was founded to preserve, rebuild and interpret the earthworks and their role in the Defenses of Washington during the Civil War. The current museum exhibits are heavily focused on the Civil War. The themes presented in this document are intended

to extend the rich story already preserved and interpreted at Fort Ward Park and Museum, not to diminish it. They, of course, can be modified and improved during the development of the actual interpretive plan.



The following theme statements should provide guidance to interpretive installations to be implemented at Fort Ward Park. Stories to be told and interpretive content to be prepared should be related to and illustrative of the themes outlined below and to additional subthemes to be developed regarding them.

#### Primary Theme

##### *Civil War to Civil Rights - A Century of Change at Fort Ward*

Fort Ward is a unique site where compelling stories of the American experience may be told. The primary theme incorporates the larger stories that are directly related to slavery, the struggle for freedom and the contributions of former slaves as soldiers during the Civil War. The primary theme incorporates the stories of the refugees that settled at Fort Ward after the war who were part of a vanguard of first generation blacks in the United States to live freely; experience the right to own property; provide education for their children; work; enjoy the fruits of ones labor; form fraternal organizations; pursue their religious faith and vote. The primary theme incorporates the ability to reach out to other similar communities—as this story is not unique to the Oakland/Seminary community—to compare and contrast similar stories that occurred in other black communities immediately after the Civil War.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 48 - Archaeological work in Fort Ward Park has uncovered Civil War era artifacts such as this belt buckle (top) and more recent artifacts from the Ashby House (bottom). Photos courtesy of Office of Historic Alexandria

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Dave Cavenaugh, personal correspondence to Glenn Eugster, November 24, 2014, Fort Ward Observer web site

## Secondary Theme 1

### *Fort Ward And the American Civil War 1860-1870*

Fort Ward is a physical manifestation of the nation's extraordinary effort to keep the nation united and expand the freedom of its people.

#### 1A. The Civil War Defenses of Washington

Fort Ward was a key strategic link in a chain of fortifications for defense of the nation's capital. Today, it is the best preserved of the 'circle forts' and is uniquely positioned to tell the story of Washington's defense.

#### 1B. Wartime Alexandria

As an occupied city, Alexandria experienced extreme social and economic disruption during the Civil War. The city's port served as a logistical center for Union forces. Contributing to the upheaval, large numbers of 'contraband'—former slaves—arrived seeking protection.

#### 1C. Fort Ward as a Military Site

Fort Ward was positioned on a hilltop to defend the strategic Leesburg and Alexandria Turnpike, a primary route into the city. Adapted to the terrain, the fort was part of an interconnected system for the defense of Alexandria and the nation's capital. Its original construction and later adaptation demonstrated advances in military planning and technology.

#### 1D. The Experiences of Alexandrians during Union Occupation

Overwhelmed by the influx of strangers, Alexandrians responded differently to occupation according to their situation—resistance, resolution, adaptation, acceptance—and some with realization of their new-found freedom. All faced struggle, uncertainty and change.

## Secondary Theme 2

### *“The Fort” - The African American Experience, Reconstruction through Civil Rights*

In Fort Ward's post Civil War era, continuing struggles to realize the fruits of freedom are evident through the stories of community, family, faith and personal endeavor.

#### 2A. Triumph over Adversity

Over generations, residents of “The Fort” established themselves as a productive and loving community in the face of great difficulties. Despite hardship, they are representative of the nation's transition from slavery to productive residents starting from scratch and building a new reality out of available opportunities over time.

#### 2B. Strength in Community

Residents of “The Fort” worked together to realize and strengthen the best aspects of community for their own betterment—education, faith, economic opportunity and mutual support—characteristic of American life.

#### 2C. Strength in Family

Family was the most important ingredient in the evolution and stability of “The Fort” community. Through successive generations, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles lived together, shared experiences and supported each other.

2D. “We’re Still Here”

Today, “The Fort” community survives and is a strong, vital presence within the city. Stories of “The Fort” inform and inspire those who hear them. Descendants of “The Fort” are active participants in community life.

F. Design of Interpretative Installations

Guidelines and recommendations for design of the outdoor interpretive exhibits and landscape enhancements to be installed at various locations within Fort Ward Park are presented below. In addition, specific topics are suggested for each installation that should be addressed in conveying the site’s interpretive themes. Interpretation of the site should convey the sense that this is one story with one primary over-arching theme, *Civil War to Civil Rights*. Secondary themes and subthemes should be consistent and follow a general set of proposed guiding principles that follow this section with respect to authenticity, accuracy, quality, context and other attributes.

Most of the proposed outdoor interpretive locations at Fort Ward Park are sites where historic features remain and use those historic features for interpretation. With respect to the historic earthworks, the features are for the most part visible and can be appreciated by visitors without additional landscape enhancement. Non-extant features such as former buildings, construction details, and vistas can be conveyed through graphics and other means.

With respect to “The Fort” community, most of the remaining historic features are below-ground archaeological features such as former home sites and unmarked graves. These sites require landscape enhancements to visually convey their presence. The interpretive design process, therefore, involves not only interpretive exhibits but landscape design elements that can be evocative and creative in nature. Public art may also be used. Suggestions for each site are provided below, but the design process should be used

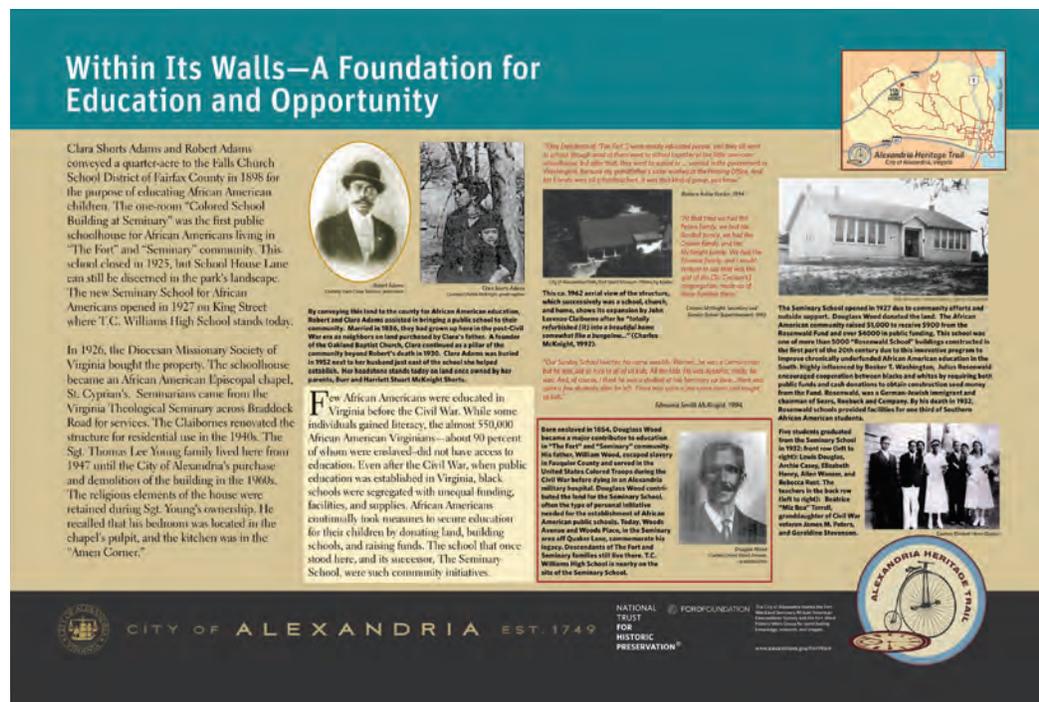


Figure 49 - Graphic style and layout of recently installed interpretive panels

to explore ideas for creative and appropriate solutions. Landscape installations used for interpretation should be consistent with these recommendations.

The interpretive design process should be led by Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA) staff, including the staff of the Fort Ward Museum, in close collaboration with the Fort Ward Advisory Group and stakeholders. The Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society and specific families should be intimately involved in the interpretation of “The Fort” community. The Oakland Baptist Church should be involved in interpretation of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery. The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities should manage the design and installation of landscape enhancements in association with OHA and stakeholders. The services of professional consultants should be used for coordinated design of interpretive landscape enhancements.

Exhibit carriers, formats, graphics, printed materials and electronic formats should be consistent with citywide standards used for interpretation by OHA in order to strengthen connections between Fort Ward Park and other city interpretive sites. This should not, however, limit consideration of creative new ideas that might be appropriate for Fort Ward or for adaptation of OHA standards.

The following guidelines and recommendations are suggested for locations within Fort Ward Park. They should be further developed and enriched during the design process and may be modified and revised as appropriate as work proceeds and additional ideas are considered.

### Orientation Exhibit

The orientation exhibit for the outdoor interpretive presentation should be sited at a central location visible from the primary entrance drive to the park and safely accessible from the primary parking areas. It should be sited in such a way as to be the first place that visitors would see as they enter the primary entrance to the park.

The orientation exhibit will include a plan of the park showing the locations of trails and interpretive sites and presenting how the park may be explored by visitors. Interpretively, the orientation exhibit should provide an overview and context for the park’s themes and stories as well as conveying the significance of the site’s resources. The exhibit should feature the primary theme, *Civil War to Civil Rights*, and relate how secondary themes are derived from it. The small orientation exhibits installed at secondary entrances to the site should briefly summarize the content of the main exhibit.

It is recommended that the orientation exhibit feature a series of three long, low exhibit carriers similar to OHA standard carriers but longer horizontally—six to seven feet each—to provide a substantial area for exhibit content and illustrations. The carriers could be curved. It is suggested that two artist renderings be used to illustrate birds-eye views of (1) Fort Ward during the Civil War and (2) “The Fort” community during the early twentieth century. The color renderings should be detailed, high quality, and as accurate as possible and should convey the character of the landscape during these two periods. Details of the illustrations may be used for interpretive exhibits elsewhere within the park as well as in supporting interpretive materials.



Figure 50 - Example of highly interactive “on-the-ground” exhibit on the Mississippi River in Memphis illustrates a technique that could be used to interpret the Defenses of Washington



Figure 51 - The School House site and current interpretive panel "Within These Walls"

The exhibit carriers should be positioned along the perimeter of a paved area where visitors can gather. People viewing the Fort Ward exhibit should face west toward the earthworks. People viewing the "The Fort" community exhibit should face east toward School House Lane. The third exhibit with the park plan and supporting context should face north into the park.

Landscape enhancements should be provided in the paved area, including benches and waste receptacle, and appropriate canopy trees and ground level vegetation should be planted to provide spatial context. The self-guided interpretive trail, discussed below and in other portions of this report, should pass through the paved area and provide access to other interpretive locations.

The orientation exhibit should address the following topics:

#### *Fort Ward During the American Civil War 1860-1870*

- Overview of the Civil War Defenses of Washington
- Overview of the Defenses of Alexandria
  - Economic and strategic significance of Alexandria
  - Geography of Alexandria – topography, roads, locations selected for defense
  - The interconnected nature of the various defensive works
  - The military role of Fort Ward
- Introduction to Fort Ward
  - The original fort and its reconstruction
  - Exterior support structures and logistics
  - Personal stories of those who served
  - Abandonment and auction at the War's end

#### *"The Fort" community The African American Experience in America, Reconstruction through Civil Rights*

- Introduction to the Civil War experience of African Americans in Alexandria (adaptation of the existing wayside exhibit African Americans and the Civil War – Fleeing, Fighting, and Working for Freedom may be used here.)
  - National context in the struggle to gain social, economic, and political freedom
  - The Civil War experience of African Americans in Alexandria
  - "The Fort" community as representative of African American communities established following the war
  - Relate to other African American communities within the city
- The role of the Virginia Theological Seminary with respect to "The Fort" community
  - Depict the physical proximity of the Seminary to Fort Ward
  - Economic, social, and religious interdependence over generations

- Introduction to “The Fort” community cultural landscape
  - Organization and layout of the landscape
  - Family domains over time
- Introduction to the themes Strength of Community and Strength of Family
  - Institutions created to support the community
  - Family relationships over generations

## Interpretive Trail Network

A self-guided interpretive trail network is proposed as the primary means through which the site will be explored and interpretive exhibits offered. The trail will connect the African American heritage sites associated with “The Fort” community with the Fort Ward earthworks and landscape, providing an enjoyable, shaded walking experience on a relatively soft path (e.g. mowed grass, wood chips, stone dust, etc.).

The trail is organized as a loop around the perimeter of the park. Along the trail are side paths connecting to interpreted resources and elements associated with the themes and subthemes noted above. The primary interpretive elements of the trail, described as you enter the park in a counter clockwise direction, include the following.

### “We’re Still Here” Trail

A portion of the trail network on the eastern side of the park in the vicinity of the highest concentration of remaining historic features associated with “The Fort” community is designated as the “We’re Still Here” Trail. The Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society and specific families should be intimately involved in the interpretation of “The Fort” community. The trail has three primary sections.

#### *“The Fort” community - School House Lane*

Interpretation along the School House Lane road trace should focus upon the themes *Strength of Community* and *Strength of Family*. The existing wayside exhibit *“The Fort” and “Seminary” Community – From Civil War to Civil Rights* may be featured in association with School House Lane.

Landscape enhancements at the location of each home site of the families living on the lane should delineate the outline of the home; provide photographs of the home, yard and residents (if available); and use the personal stories of the families and family members to illustrate topics associated with the themes. School House Lane, property lines, and other cultural features identifiable through historic photographs and research should be delineated in the landscape.

Historical research related to “The Fort” community is being completed and interpretation should be developed at each home site along with the oral histories and additional information provided by former residents and family members. The families associated with each home site should be engaged in the interpretive design process.

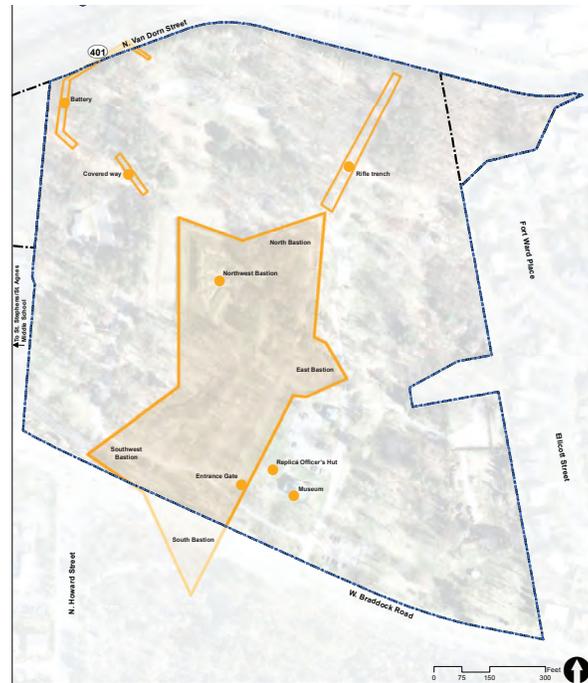


Figure 52 - Marking foundations at ground level

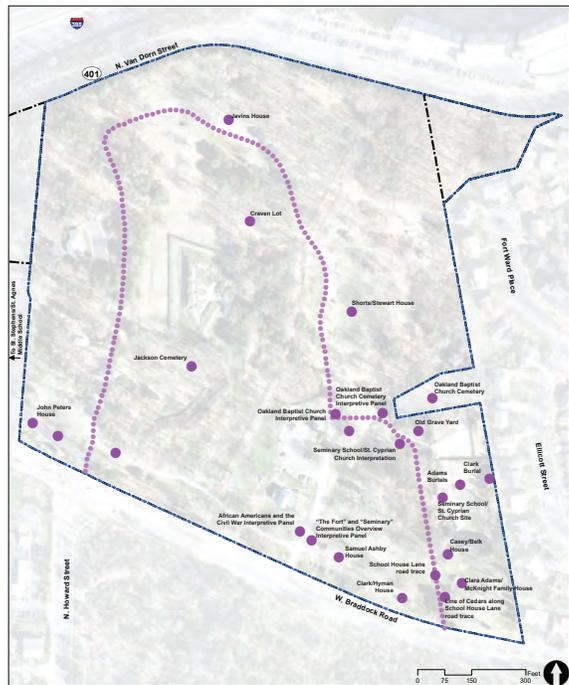
Through discussion, key points related to interpretation of the themes of *Strength of Community* and *Strength of Family* should be identified. Stories associated with the families and home sites that could be used to present those key points should then be identified.



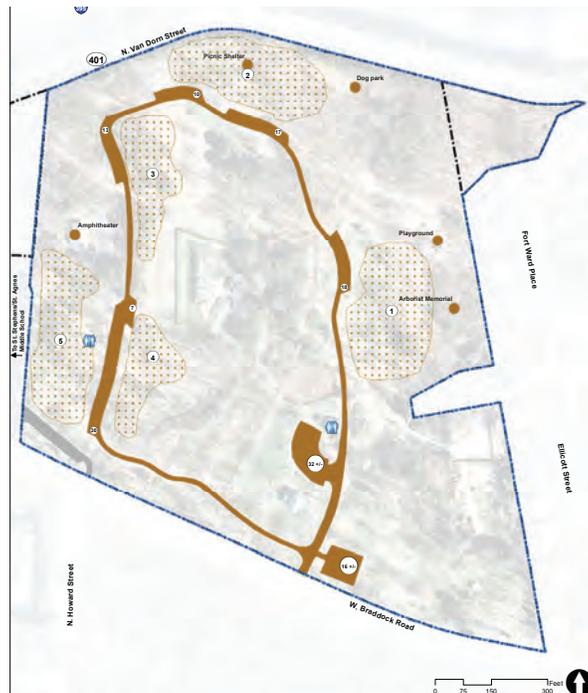
**Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan**  
 City of Alexandria, Virginia  
 Management Plan Boundary  
 Park Parcel  
 Native American Resource Area



**Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan**  
 City of Alexandria, Virginia  
 Management Plan Boundary  
 Park Parcel  
 Civil War Features  
 Fort earthworks and interior features  
 Exterior Fort earthworks

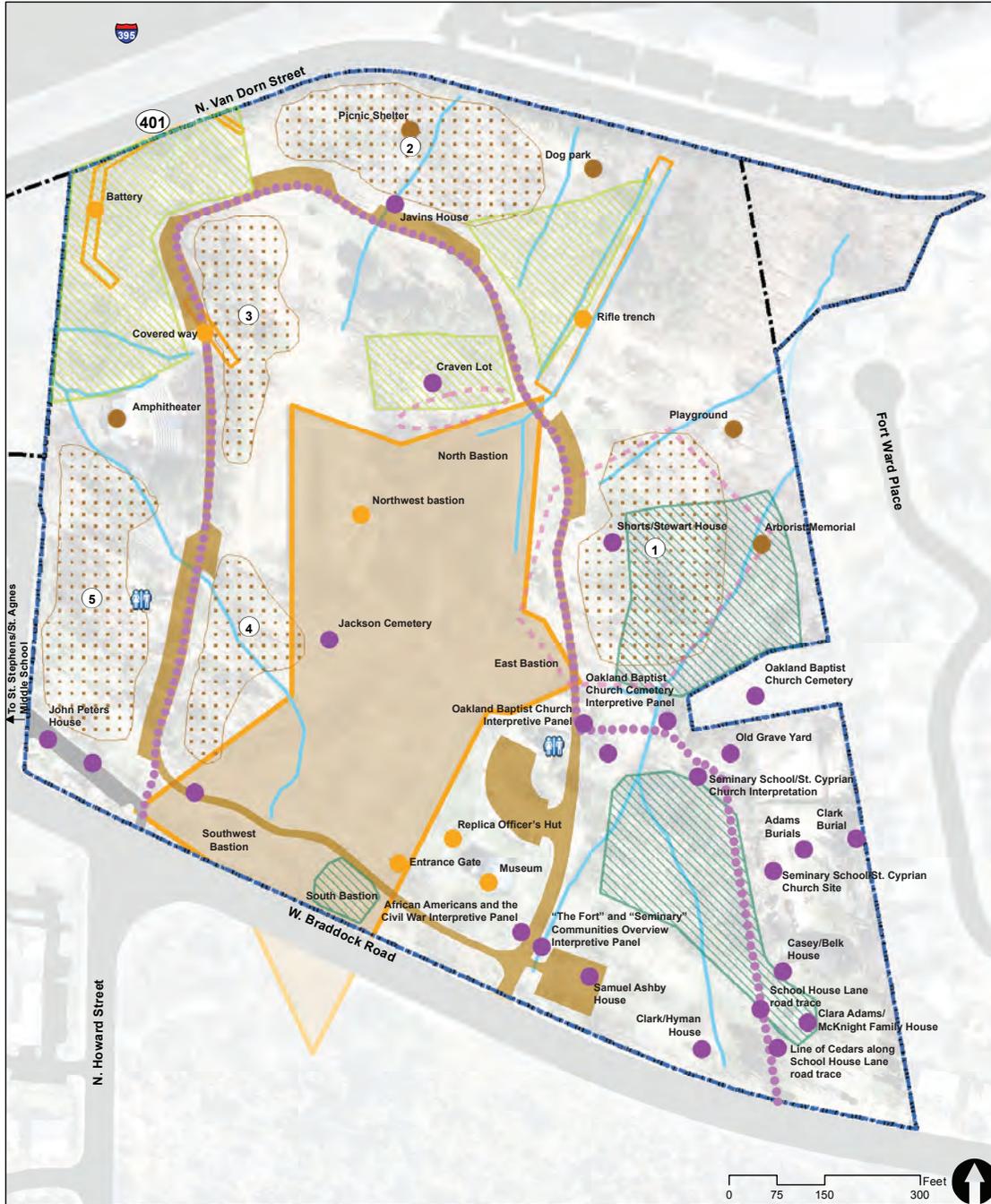


**Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan**  
 City of Alexandria, Virginia  
 Management Plan Boundary  
 Park Parcel  
 The Fort Community Features  
 The Fort Heritage Trail



**Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan**  
 City of Alexandria, Virginia  
 Management Plan Boundary  
 Park Parcel  
 Park Road or Parking  
 Number of parking spaces  
 Recreational Feature  
 Picnic Area  
 Restroom

Figure 53 - Resource Compilations



### Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

### Composite of Features

City of Alexandria, Virginia

- |                          |   |                                       |                          |
|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Management Plan Boundary | Tree Inventory                              | The Fort Community Features           | Native American Resource |
| Park Parcel              | Tree or Azalea bed (LKLA inventory 6/2013)* | "The Fort" Heritage Trail             | Recreational Feature     |
| Park Road or Parking     | Tree (Archeology-City of Alexandria)        | Civil War Features                    | Picnic Area              |
| Drainage flowlines       | Woodland Glade (mowed annually in fall)**   | Fort earthworks and interior features | Restroom                 |
|                          | Meadows (mowed annually in fall)**          | Exterior Fort earthworks              |                          |

Figure 54 - Composite Diagram

One or two stories should be selected and presented at each home site. The number of stories told at each home site should be limited in order to provide a strong, clear message so as not to overwhelm visitors.

Moving from home site to home site, visitors will have the opportunity to reflect upon and connect the stories. Together, the stories should provide a complete presentation of the key points associated with the two themes.

The purpose of the presentation is not to fully relate the history of each family (which is done in the more extensive research document and can be made available to visitors) but to convey the key points associated with the themes. The guiding principles outlined later in this Section should be used to formulate the storytelling. Through the personal stories of the families of “The Fort” community, larger themes of regional and national significance will be richly and memorably conveyed.

Home sites that may be interpreted include the following

- Clara Adams/McKnight Family Home Site
- Clark/Hyman Family Home Site
- Casey/ Belk Family Home Site
- Amanda Clark Family Home Site
- Shorts/Stewart Family Home Site
- Families along Braddock Road - Millers, Ashbys, Robert McNight

*“The Fort” community - The School House and Clara Adams Gravesite*

The sites of the School House and the Clara Adams grave, close to each other at the north end of the School House Lane road trace, should be the primary destination along the interpretive trail where interpretation of “The Fort” community is offered. One potential interpretive opportunity is to mark the footprint of the school house by an outline of pavers or plant materials or by paving it in its entirety. The site could serve as an outdoor courtyard

where gatherings can be held, self-guided interpretation provided and guided interpretation offered during events. The existing interpretive wayside *Within its Walls – A Foundation for Education and Opportunity* may be used here.



Figure 55 - Jackson Cemetery

All of “The Fort” community themes should be interpreted at this site using stories from the community’s history presented in their national context. Themes include *Triumph over Adversity*, *Strength in Community*, *Strength in Family*, and *“We’re Still Here.”*

The site should be enhanced with landscaping, public art and visitor facilities such as benches. Contemplation of the grave sites should be encouraged; a commemorative garden could be created at this location.

*“The Fort” community - Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery and Old Grave Yard*

Interpretation related to the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery and adjacent Old Grave Yard should recognize and commemorate those buried there and provide an opportunity for quiet and respectful contemplation. Interpretation and related enhancements should be undertaken in collaboration with the Oakland Baptist Church, Descendants Society and families.

The existing wayside exhibit *The Oakland Baptist Church* may be used here. Additional interpretation and enhancements should relate to the themes *Strength of Community* and *We're Still Here*. Landscaping, artwork, paved areas, and benches should be considered as part of potential enhancements.

### Exterior of Fort Ward

Interpretation outside of the earthworks should be located along the trail network near the entrance gate and on the north and west sections of the perimeter trail. Interpretation should continue relating the theme *Fort Ward as a Military Site* but may also address topics associated with the themes *The Civil War Defenses of Washington* and *Wartime Alexandria*. Among others, it may address the following topics. Exhibits may be developed by Fort Ward Museum staff in collaboration with other OHA staff.

- The surrounding landscape – farms, land use, residents before the war and during the war
- Braddock Road and the Leesburg and Alexandria Turnpike in wartime Alexandria
- Exterior support buildings military roads, and logistics
- The Rifle Trench–role, geography, and connections to other fortifications defending Alexandria
- The Battery and Covered Way–role, geography, field of fire, and connections to other fortifications defending Alexandria
- Personal stories of those who served



Figure 56 - Earthworks at Northwest Bastion

### “The Fort” community - Jackson Cemetery and Javins and Craven Lots

Sites located beyond the vicinity of “*The We’re Still Here Trail*” are significant to the “The Fort” story and have the potential to convey interpretation associated with *The African American Experience* and related themes. Interpretive exhibits and enhancements may be implemented at these sites but need to be designed in a manner that does not compromise historic features and viewsheds associated with Fort Ward and its Civil War landscape.

The existing interpretive wayside Jackson Cemetery is installed on the glacis of Fort Ward at the site of the cemetery. Additional enhancement of the ground plane of the site, such as the marking of identified graves, could be considered. Similar exhibits and enhancement could be considered for the Javins and Craven Lots on the north side of the fort in the vicinity of the paved road and near the Ashby, Miller and McKnight properties. Thematic relationships and storylines may be determined based upon research, oral histories, and other information.

### Interior of Fort Ward

Interpretation within the Fort Ward earthworks should focus upon the theme *Fort Ward as a Military Site*. The introduction of a limited number of self-guided wayside exhibits in OHA format similar to those recently prepared for Fort Ethan Allen by Fort Ward staff are envisioned. Exhibits may be developed by Fort Ward Museum staff in collaboration with other OHA staff. The exhibits might address the following topics.

- Layout of the fort–how it is shaped for defense of the surrounding geography
- Fields of Fire – the role of various artillery positions within the fort showing the purpose, range, and coverage of the artillery pieces they were designed to accommodate
- Parts of the fort–role, function, construction
- Firing an Artillery Piece–men, positions, roles, activities
- Personal stories of those who served

## Fort Ward Museum

Over the longer term, funding should be sought for the expansion of the Fort Ward Museum to address deficiencies in the ability of the museum facility to support its mission. Planning for the museum expansion should be undertaken to provide materials to support a fund-raising initiative. Conceptual design drawings, renderings, a description, and cost estimate should be prepared. A capital campaign should be professionally planned to prepare for fundraising.

It is recommended that the future expansion be accomplished through construction of a new addition to the existing building on the north, parking lot side of the building. The addition should become the new entrance to the museum from the parking lot, which should be reconfigured. It should relate to the park's trail network and outdoor living history areas near the fort. Alternatively, discussion and plans in the past have focused on evaluating the reconstruction of the Civil War Barracks buildings as a possible museum expansion and interpretation in the same area. Any form of museum expansion in this area will require relocation and reconfiguration of the existing parking area.

The current museum's location is highly likely to contain significant archaeological features and deposits associated with the fort's outbuildings and should be addressed. An expansion of the museum would require extensive archaeological investigations.

In general, the existing replica museum building should remain with its current exterior appearance on the east, west and south elevations. On the north, the new two story addition should be compatible with, but should not replicate, the character of the existing building. The design of the museum would be subject to Board of Architectural Review and would need to consider its potential impact on the setting of Fort Ward Park as an historic site and landscape. To the extent practical, the new addition should incorporate a significant amount of glass to enable views of the fort and the landscape from within the building, especially public spaces.

The first floor of the addition should provide an entrance and visitor reception area where visitors and small groups can gather. A visitor reception desk, museum store, seating and information kiosks should be provided. ADA compliant rest rooms and an education/meeting room (if there is enough space) should be available on the first floor. An elevator should provide access to the basement and second floor. A fire stair should serve the basement and second floor as well.

The expanded second floor should provide space for offices and meeting space. The expanded basement should be dedicated to the museum's collection and work space. The first floor of the existing building should be devoted entirely to exhibits, and the second floor should continue to serve as a library and research space.

Site orientation should be provided primarily at the outdoor orientation exhibit, discussed above, rather than within the building. Interior exhibits should continue to focus upon supporting themes related to Fort Ward's Civil War history as they do now, featuring the museum's extensive collection. Interpretation of African American themes should focus upon the Civil War experience of African Americans in Alexandria and national themes of race prior to, during, and following the war, relating to and setting a context for interpretation of "The Fort" community at sites along the interpretive trail network.

## Citywide and Regional Linkages

The Office of Historic Alexandria should work to strengthen citywide and regional linkages between Civil War sites and African American interpretive sites. The existing City interpretive presentation, developed over decades, is unique and the historical research that has been undertaken in Alexandria is extraordinary. Yet interpretation at many of the sites identified in the existing Civil War and African American self-guided trails in Alexandria is not well developed and not well connected. Some identified sites have no self-guided interpretation at all. The following steps are recommended to enrich the two trails networks and make the experience fulfilling. Strengthened citywide interpretation will help promote Fort Ward and link it to other interpretive sites within the city and the region.

- Work with partners and legislators to strongly encourage the National Park Service to interpret and promote the circle forts. Identify an achievable 'next step' for regional interpretation and work toward its funding and implementation.
- Create a relationship with the developing National Museum of African American History and Culture of the Smithsonian Institute on the Mall. Support its development and connect to its educational programming. Identify ways in which Alexandria's African American interpretive presentation of authentic sites can link to and illustrate themes and storylines being used by the museum.
- Continue to provide leadership to Civil War Defense of Washington sites south and west of the Potomac River. Support a working group that meets regularly to coordinate activities and promotion. Identify and undertake joint projects. Advocate for preservation and interpretation of remaining sites.
- Clarify themes and storylines associated with Alexandria's Civil War and African American history and interpretation. Develop an overarching set of themes and storylines for each topic into which each interpretive site within the city can fit. Identify how each individual site and its stories relate to the citywide themes.
- Using the citywide themes and storylines, create interpretive linkages between sites featured along Alexandria's Civil War and African American trails. Refresh the trail presentation by enhancing self-guided interpretation at each identified trail site, making connections clear, and enriching web-based interpretive content to create an outstanding self-guided trail experience.



Figure 57 - Excerpt from Military Map of NE Virginia Showing Forts and Roads, Engineer Bureau, War Dept. 1863

## Programs and Supporting Materials

Fort Ward Museum currently offers a variety of high quality interpretive programs and events that are well attended and promote the park. These programs should continue to be supported. It is not anticipated that additional programs can be offered without additional staff, volunteer, and funding resources.

It is suggested that a new fold-out map of Fort Ward Park be designed and produced integrating interpretation of the themes discussed above. The map should illustrate both the Civil War and early twentieth century "The Fort" community landscapes and provide interpretive content that builds upon and deepens the self-guided exhibits provided along the interpretive trail network and within the earthworks.

The City website should continue to be used as a primary vehicle for historical information and interpretive content. A comprehensive approach should be taken to the design of the Fort Ward section of the website to clearly present the history and significance of Fort Ward Park, present each of the park's interpretive themes, illustrate the themes with stories derived from the site, provide access to historical documents and research, and relate the park to citywide interpretive themes and stories.



Figure 58 - Example of public art incorporated into an interpretive presentation at Steigerwald Lake Wildlife Trail, Clark County, WA

## G. Guiding Principles

As interpretive projects and programs are implemented over time, the following guidelines for interpretation should inform decision-making in creating a successful interpretive presentation within the park.

- **Authenticity:** Wherever possible, tell each story where it happened in a tangible, real place. Use authentic physical features—earthworks, home sites, graves, landscape, and other resources—to tell stories.
- **Accuracy:** Stories should be well-researched and accurate, and interpretation should convey authentic experiences. Information and perspectives may well be at variance with contemporary sensibilities, but should be presented accurately nonetheless. Honest, complicated, and sometimes unpleasant stories are a time-tested way to touch audiences deeply and affect people's lives. Sources for stories based upon legend, lore, or oral tradition, should be identified.
- **Quality:** Each interpretive installation and enhancement should provide a high quality visitor experience in terms of location, design, orientation to resource, storytelling, physical installation, accessibility, and educational impact.
- **Context:** Present stories in ways that make them immediate and understandable and that connect them to larger themes and historical context. Present stories from multiple perspectives and points of view in their thematic and historical context to help audiences appreciate how different people from diverse groups and political persuasions see things differently. Audiences should be able to draw their own conclusions from each story presented.
- **Significance and Meaning:** Interpretation goes beyond conveying a story's facts—drawing connections, significance, and meaning to audiences. In developing interpretive content, examine each story for its significance—for a key message to be conveyed by the story or exhibit. Communicate this significance or message to audiences in ways that connect to their life experiences. Provide interpretation in ways that help audiences relate it to experiences in their own lives. Use authentic stories of real people in their words in the actual places where events occurred wherever possible. Use expression of universal concepts such as love, loss, uncertainty, and success to which everyone can relate in their lives to help forge personal connections to a story.
- **Experiential Learning:** People learn and remember things better when they are engaged physically and intellectually. Emphasize communication that is visual and

ted to real things and authentic places and features, not just reading waysides and text. Present themes and stories in ways that encourage audiences to explore other sites within the city and region by drawing interpretive connections, inserting tempting leads, and providing the information and tools needed to spark and follow through on interests. Encourage audiences to explore the landscape physically by inviting them to move around from place to place.

- **Variety of Experiences:** Provide a variety of interpretive approaches to satisfy the interests and capabilities of different age groups, temperaments, and orientations. Options should offer varying levels of activity, timeframes and levels of required concentration. Provide alternative ways to experience interpretation for individuals with physical limitations or disabilities.
- **Depth of Information:** Primary interpretive content should be succinct and well written, emphasizing key messages, context, and connections. Provide information and guidance for exploring subjects in greater detail through a layered approach or using alternative communication methods to encourage those who are interested in learning more or digging deeper.

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## 5. Recommendations

### A. Purpose and Significance of the Park

The management framework recognizes that the management actions for Fort Ward Park must support a broad array of users and uses; must protect and maintain the park's nationally significant historic and cultural resources and locally significant natural resources; must serve to educate its visitors through innovative and engaging interpretation and programming; and must continue to satisfy the growing needs for passive recreational enjoyment of a shady, natural oasis from an increasingly complex urban environment.

### B. Process

Recommendations in this document are the result of a sequence of Fort Ward Advisory Group (FWAG) meetings focused on each of the major topics that are covered as part of this management plan: preservation and management of natural, historic and archaeological resources; the interpretation of those resources; recreational opportunities; and the facilities that are needed to support the use and operation of the park.

The recommendations are also based on an active public engagement process. Two park "listening sessions" were conducted at Fort Ward Park in early June 2013 with a follow up online survey to gather additional public input. Following publication of the January 13, 2014 FWAG draft document, it was placed online at the City's website. A public meeting was held on February 24, 2014 and an open house was held on March 8, 2014. Comments were solicited through all public outreach efforts and an online comment option.

Three stages of archaeological work have been completed in the park - Stages 1, 2A and 2B. Stage 3 has been recommended by OHA staff but has not been funded in the past two City budget cycles. Other than the archaeological review associated with the current MOU agreement, Save America's Treasures grant, or upcoming drainage improvements to be implemented once a permanent drainage plan has been selected, no additional investigation has been pursued. Archaeological investigation will continue at Fort Ward over a number of future years, as funding and opportunities present themselves. In the meantime, the existing MOU serves to protect archaeologically sensitive areas until further study can be undertaken. (from OHA memo and email dated 3/21/14)

#### **FORT WARD PARK DEFINITION AND PURPOSE**

*Fort Ward Park is classified as a Destination/Historical Park by the City of Alexandria. It is similar in service area, use and size to the City's six other Citywide Parks<sup>1</sup>. Fort Ward Park's founding purpose was for use as a 35-acre historic park and Civil War museum with supporting recreational facilities, picnic areas and an amphitheater all enhanced by carefully located planting beds<sup>2</sup>.*

*Later, additional acres (not subject to this Management Plan) were acquired and are used for active recreation and athletic fields. Today, in addition to its historic, interpretive and educational mission, the park serves the surrounding community's need for passive recreation consisting of less structured and less formal activities. Examples include: a playground, picnic areas, historic/cultural sites, an amphitheater and natural resource areas. The park is also significant locally as preserved open space for the City of Alexandria—associated with an adjoining complex of centrally located and largely wooded parcels of land owned by Episcopal High School and the Episcopal Theological Seminary.*

<sup>1</sup> Citywide Parks Improvement Plan 2014, City of Alexandria, Virginia Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities, Park Planning, Design & Capital Development, Draft, January 16, 2014. Page 9

<sup>2</sup> Application for listing on the National Register of Historic Places approved by the Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Commonwealth of Virginia, February 16, 1982

### **Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.**

For Fort Ward, the overarching treatment approach for the site is rehabilitation. The Standards for Rehabilitation are:

- A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
- The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
- Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
- Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
- Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
- Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
- Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
- New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab\\_standards.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_standards.htm)

## C. Management Goals

The management actions are organized along five specific goals that were derived from discussions at the meetings, the FWAG’s work and additional research from the planning team.

- Goal 1: Management and Funding**
- Goal 2: Park Character - Preserve, Protect, Repair and Maintain Resources**
- Goal 3: Landscape Cultural Practices**
- Goal 4: Educate and Engage Visitors - Share the Stories of Fort Ward Park**
- Goal 5: Enhance Park Facilities**

Each goal includes a set of related objectives, strategies and actions. The recommendations tie together all of the previously identified actions and ideas into a single set of proposed management actions.

Fort Ward Park is filled with historic resources and is rich in natural resources. Every square foot of the park is used, for historic interpretation, for recreation and as native woodland. Management practices must recognize that the interrelated nature of the park’s resources are key to the park’s future and its good management. Section II.2 of the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan documents the known state of the site’s existing conditions and resources. Section II.3 and .4 outline a recreational and interpretive framework for balancing the need to accommodate a wide range of users and increase awareness of the special significance of Fort Ward Park. This section of the recommendations is focused on identifying the best maintenance and management practices that address the issues and site constraints found within the park. These practices are presented as related to ‘general recommendations,’ applicable throughout the park; specific to natural resources; and specific to the cultural resources—in particular the earthworks, “The Fort” community, and the burial and cemetery sites.

The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties is one of the best practices that applies to the entire park and its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. When unsure if a site practice is appropriate or not, refer to the guidance offered by the standards and the caveat of “Do no harm.”

In addition, the City of Alexandria applies a number of best practices with regard to “sustainability” policies associated with its efforts and those practices should also apply to all aspects of the park’s management. The Environmental

Action Plan 2030 (EAP 2030) was adopted by City Council in June 2009 and follows the guiding principles outlined in Alexandria's "Eco-City Charter."

Best practices consistent with the charter include minimizing energy expenditure; limiting the need for irrigation to extreme drought and plant establishment and reducing the need for fertilizers, or other soil amendments, and water by selecting plant materials that are native and naturally adapted to existing site conditions; limiting herbicide and pesticide use as much as possible and taking advantage of natural ecological processes to manage resources efficiently.



Figure 59 - Cedar trees along School House Lane

## D. Summary of Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Actions

A short overview of the full list of recommendations is incorporated here. More detailed information related to why such a recommendation is made and how it might be applied is included in the chart in Section II.7, tied to specific actions.

### *Goal 1 - Management and Funding*

*The City of Alexandria will support a broad array of users and uses by collaboratively managing the park and equitably investing in the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area as compared with other regional city parks and facilities.*

Throughout the planning process, Fort Ward Advisory Group (FWAG) members have expressed concerns that:

- Fort Ward Park is not receiving resources adequate to address its role as a regionally and nationally significant historic and cultural resource
- Fort Ward Park is not receiving a proportional share of funding when compared to the other major parks in the City (there are six other 'large' parks); in particular, there is a sensitivity among FWAG members to the balance of investment between the waterfront parks and Fort Ward Park
- Fort Ward Park is in need of "deep" maintenance; landscape cultural practices were suspended and impacted by the reasonable hold on maintenance activities while the archaeology efforts were underway

There are a number of activities that could be implemented to bring the necessary attention and funding to Fort Ward Park:

- Communicate the significance of Fort Ward Park to the broader audiences: city leaders, business leaders, preservation and conservation organizations, community groups and other civic organizations
- Sponsor educational and research symposia on the significant and unique Civil War and African American heritage found at Fort Ward Park and the region
- Link the financial needs of Fort Ward Park with those of other City parks and open space in support of alternative public park financing such as a bond issue, real estate transfer tax, or public/private partnerships, donations and endowments
- Link the preservation, enhancement and management of Fort Ward Park to broader regional and national audiences associated with the circle forts and

the Defenses of Washington and seek broader recognition and funding for preservation, interpretation and enhancements as a system of forts (the Circle Fort Trail), with an emphasis on the role of the African American communities often associated with them

- Link the preservation, enhancement and management of Fort Ward Park to broader regional and national audiences associated with African American heritage, including the pending opening of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)

City staff can accomplish some of the needed activities. However the City’s Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities and its Office of Historic Alexandria do not have a staff position dedicated to pursuing public/private partnerships, donations or endowments.

Establishing a professional development position is critical to the maintenance, management and expansion of the City’s museums and its park properties.



Figure 60 - Leaf litter in native woodlands at Fort Ward Park

The level of funding and resources available to manage the park is a critical issue facing the park. Current levels do not meet all the needs for the preservation of its nationally and regionally significant resources while at the same time meeting recreational needs. There is a strong perception that the allocation of resources is unbalanced and Fort Ward Park is not receiving a fair share of resources when compared with other parks of its size and significance. The following objectives strategies and actions are recommended to address this critical issue.

**Objective 1.1**

**Continue the collaborative management process between City agencies as established in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

The MOU between the Office of Historic Alexandria (OHA), Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA), Department of Transportation and Environmental (T&ES) Services and Department of General Services (GS) spells out the operations and maintenance responsibilities for the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area. The interdepartmental MOU should be seen as the primary tool for allocating resources and identifying needs in a manner that is consistent with the approved management plan.

Administration of the MOU will benefit from quarterly meetings with appropriate staff in attendance from RPCA, OHA, T&ES and GS to coordinate and resolve park issues, including an assessment of seasonal staffing needs in terms of daily security and operations. The MOU will annually identify the specific individuals who will participate in the quarterly meetings.

The diagram in Plate 19 and in the Best Practice section related to the MOU recommends adding several portions of the park to the area managed and maintained through OHA’s oversight: the



Figure 61 - Purple areas under OHA oversight (MOU)

area with Old Grave Yard (shown in blue on Plate 12: Cultural Resource Level) and the areas in the southeastern corner of the park. Responsibilities (and funding) should cover all maintenance activities—OHA tackling tree care, turf management, leaf raking, etc. within its area and RPCA tackling all within its area. This aggregation of landscape maintenance activities should help to clarify the responsible party. The diagram should be updated annually in conjunction with the updating of the ground disturbance diagram. Whether the Old Grave Yard is incorporated into the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery physically or not, at a minimum it should be incorporated visually and managed as a single entity.

**Strategy 1.1.1 Use the MOU process to assess and monitor progress and identify problems and solutions**

Action: Review and update MOU annually

**Objective 1.2**

**Make Fort Ward Park a priority in the City of Alexandria funding**

The annual update of the MOU and annual monitoring and progress reporting can be utilized to establish a defensible budget for management and maintenance practices as needed to preserve, protect, repair and maintain the nationally and regionally significant resources that are the responsibility of its owner, the City of Alexandria. Beyond the budgeting annual review and budgeting process, park managers and supporters should communicate progress and activities to the broader audience of stakeholders with an interest in the preservation and enhancement of Fort Ward Park.

**Strategy 1.2.1 Plan for and communicate the needs and priorities for park management funding (operational and capital) as part of the City budget consistent with the responsible stewardship of a significant historic site and regional park serving the entire City and beyond**

Action: Communicate significance and importance of Fort Ward Park to a wider audience

Action: Link financial needs of the park to other City Initiatives; broaden 'ask' for funding and support



Figure 62 - Worn trails on earthworks

**Objective 1.3**

**Support and finance enhancements to park facilities to meet the needs of the broadest array of park users and neighbors**

Broadening the user base is a critical step in gaining the financial and management support for the responsible stewardship and necessary enhancements to Fort Ward Park. Broadening the user base should include programming for education, interpretation, performing arts, public art and upgrading the accessibility of the park to all users of all ages and abilities.

**Strategy 1.3.1 Broaden the array of programming and public art in Fort Ward Park**

Action: Sponsor educational and research panels and symposia

- Action: Expand community-oriented offerings at the amphitheater
- Action: Locate public art in collaboration with the Office of the Arts' Public Art Master Plan

**Strategy 1.3.2 Enhance park's accessibility and meet ADA standards**

- Action: Relocate the current playground facility to the western side of the park, making access and equipment accessible
- Action: Provide accessible park furniture
- Action: Make the existing paved loop pedestrian path system accessible where possible and sign areas where not possible
- Action: Provide accessible parking and pathways for all park and museum features

**Goal 2 - Park Character: Preserve, Protect, Repair and Maintain Resources**

The City of Alexandria, working with its boards and commissions, volunteers and park neighbors, will work to protect and maintain the nationally significant historic and cultural resources and locally significant natural resources found within Fort Ward Park.

The management plan identifies a range of maintenance and management practices that comprehensively address the issues and site constraints found within the park and then identifies specific practices related to each action. Comprehensive "best practices" are presented in Section II.5 and are generally applicable throughout the park; specific to natural resources; or specific to the cultural resources—in particular the earthworks, "The

Fort" community and the burial and cemetery sites. Best practices for each of the recommended actions (where applicable) are listed in a detailed management practices matrix found in Section II.6 and Section II.7.



**Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan**  
**Ground Disturbing Activities**  
 City of Alexandria, Virginia  
 Management Plan Boundary  
 Park Parcel  
 Potential Soft Path  
 Minimal Ground Disturbing Activities (such as aeration, stump grinding, tree planting, and soft path construction)  
 No Ground Disturbing Activities Allowed without further review by OHA  
 No Ground Disturbing Activities Allowed except for placement of formal interpretive elements with archeological review and investigation by OHA  
 Lander/Klein Landscape Architects, PC  
 in association with  
 Heritage Strategies, Inc. John Miller Associates, Inc. and Barbara Franco  
 GIS Sources: City of Alexandria

Figure 63 - Level of permitted ground disturbance for tree planting, stump grinding, etc.; Areas are shown without removing nonplantable areas such as the amphitheater, parking lots and roads

**Objective 2.1**

**Protect vulnerable park areas from adverse ground disturbing activities**

At the most basic level, vulnerable park resources must be protected from ground disturbing resources; however, this does not mean that nothing can be disturbed. Ground disturbance must be monitored by activity, depth and frequency. Adopting the following strategies and actions will result in a clear process for maintaining and enhancing the park and allowing such activities as aeration, stormwater management, tree planting, pathway construction, facility construction and other activities that are needed to accommodate increasing numbers of park users.

**Strategy 2.1.1 Determine level of permitted ground disturbance**

- Action: Mark and protect unrecognized Civil War archaeology
- Action: Mark and protect "The Fort" community and burial sites
- Action: Map areas in conjunction with OHA and RPCA to identify where ground disturbance may occur unsupervised; where ground

*disturbance may occur with supervision; and where ground disturbance is NOT allowed*

**Objective 2.2**

**Heal areas of erosion and compacted soils within the park**

Erosion and compacted soils contribute to stormwater management problems and degrade the recreational experience in the park.

**Strategy 2.2.1 Stabilize surface areas**

- Action: Address animal tunneling in earthworks
- Action: Restore shovel pit testing sites to original grade
- Action: Redirect stormwater and sheet flow away from sensitive cultural and recreational resources through small berms, spreaders and other techniques
- Action: Reinforce eroded edges of paved surfaces
- Action: Repair surface erosion damage
- Action: Protect earthworks from undesigned foot traffic
- Action: Protect burial sites from unintentional recreational use



Figure 65 - Tree maintenance

**Strategy 2.2.2 Improve compacted soils**

- Action: Renovate picnic areas by rotation or partial closure of group area

**Strategy 2.2.3 Relocate or remove uses that conflict with resources**

- Action: Remove former maintenance yard access drive, fencing and gate
- Action: Remove former maintenance structures from eastern edge of park
- Action: Reshape or remove fill at site of former maintenance yard

**Objective 2.3**

**Enhance park’s vegetative character and open space**

The park’s open grassy areas, its mature woods and rich ornamental plantings have all declined due to over use and a general lack of investment needed to keep up with the maintenance needs. Storm damaged vegetation has not been replaced due to concerns about adversely affecting archaeological resources. The once thriving azaleas and other plants are in decline. A map designated ‘Management Zones for Landcover’ has been prepared that crisply identifies turf area (irrigated and non), woodlands and meadows. The following strategies and actions are recommended to restore Fort Ward Park’s distinctive landscape character.



Figure 64 - Management Zones for landcover

**Strategy 2.3.1 Maintain mix of open and wooded landscapes**

- Action: Establish boundaries for turf and meadow management
- Action: Establish boundaries for areas managed as native woodlands
- Action: Develop a data set on wildlife (birds, animals, etc.)

**Strategy 2.3.2 Develop and adopt planting approach for Fort Ward Park's natural and cultural landscapes**

- Action: Determine role to play in 'City Arboretum' proposal
- Action: Develop and update data set on vegetative resources
- Action: Develop a planting strategy, recommended plant list and planting zones

**Goal 3 - Landscape Cultural Practices**

*Adopt appropriate and coordinated landscape management practices.*

The existing woodlands at Fort Ward Park are in serious decline. Tree count is down by one-quarter or more, based on a survey of approximately 600 trees in the park. No new trees or shrubs have been planted since 2010 due to ground disturbance concerns related to unknown archaeological resources. Now that more information is known about the archaeological resources and a process has been established for ground disturbing activities as part of the management plan, new trees and shrubs need to be planted on an annual basis at greater than replacement levels. Additional effort must be invested in maintaining the remaining trees and shrubs, especially along the wooded pathways that will frame part of the soft path trail network proposed for the park.

**Objective 3.1*****Tie ongoing City of Alexandria maintenance practices with those specific to the park***

The City of Alexandria's park operations has a monthly task calendar and is moving the department's maintenance practices to align with the APPA Operational Guidelines for Educational Facilities, Grounds, second edition. These guidelines identify five levels of staffing with related practices for grounds maintenance.

**3.1.1 Coordinate Management Plan recommendations with other City of Alexandria park maintenance efforts**

- Action: Reference the City's working list and supplement with Landscape Cultural Practices for Fort Ward Park
- Action: Coordinate efforts and appearance between private contractor operations (OHA) and RPCA staff area of responsibilities

**Objective 3.2*****Contribute towards the City of Alexandria's Tree Canopy Goal of 40%***

The City of Alexandria's Urban Forestry Plan identifies a goal of establishing a 40% tree canopy cover for the city as a whole and planting citywide 400 new trees per year to achieve that goal. Achieving this goal is highly dependent upon maintaining existing cover, especially in public parks where the opportunity exists to exceed the target canopy coverage of 40%. Many urban sites are unlikely to achieve a canopy coverage of 5% due to parking lots, road ways, dense urban development.

**Strategy 3.2.1 Restore and expand the existing woodlands**

Action: Plant new trees

**Strategy 3.2.2 Assess tree cover and health**

Action: Prune diseased and dead tree limbs

Action: Remove fallen and hazard trees

**Strategy 3.2.3 Perform tree maintenance**

Action: Assess tree growth on earthworks

Action: Identify appropriate treatment of leaf litter

Action: Remove standing stumps in the park

**Objective 3.3****Restore shrub layer**

The shrub layer is an important element of the desired park character as noted during the park listening sessions and in the FWAG report on natural resources. Restoration of the shrub layer requires restorative pruning, soil amendments, top dressing, and weeding to remove non-native invasive species.

**Strategy 3.3.1 Restore shrub layer in high visitor use areas and at woodland edges**

Action: Plant new shrubs

**Strategy 3.3.2 Perform shrub maintenance**

Action: Maintain existing shrubs

Action: Maintain shrub beds

**Objective 3.4****Remove inappropriate vegetative growth****Strategy 3.4.1 Remove non-native invasive groundcovers and undesired shrubs and saplings from earthworks and burial grounds**

Action: Remove inappropriate vegetation from earthworks

Action: Remove inappropriate vegetation from burial grounds and cemeteries

**Strategy 3.4.2 Minimize non-native invasive plants**

Action: Remove non-native invasive plants



Figure 67 - Signage on earthworks



Figure 66 - Trees on the earthworks

**Objective 3.5*****Establish attractive and sturdy turf***

Turf areas in the park serve as a back yard for many of the neighboring apartments, as well as those wishing to picnic, relax or appreciate the park-like setting of Fort Ward Park. This appreciation has led to over use, soil compaction and lack of vigorous turf growth. Specific areas within the park have been designated as 'no mow' areas, where limited mowing to manage non-native invasives and weed infestations encourages native grasses and wildflowers to flourish.

**Strategy 3.5.1 Actively manage turf growth**

Action: Core aerate soils to address compaction

Action: Overseed and top dress turf

Action: Define mowing height

**Strategy 3.5.2 Actively manage meadow growth**

Action: Remove invasives and woody plant materials from meadows

**Objective 3.6*****Train maintenance personnel on appropriate practices for historic and archaeological sites and natural areas***

Under the current MOU, OHA is responsible for maintenance around the Civil War fortification and museum. With extensive historic and archaeological resources throughout the park, training for maintenance personnel should be directed towards all those with maintenance responsibilities throughout the park.

**Strategy 3.6.1 Use the MOU park maintenance zone areas to identify level of training required for maintenance personnel**

Action: Train all personnel on use of equipment to minimize damage to resources

Action: Provide training and certification for maintenance personnel at the park

**Goal 4 - Educate and Engage Visitors: Share the Stories of Fort Ward Park*****Increase and broaden the audience in support of the park's preservation and enhancement by providing a high quality interpretive and educational experience.***

Currently there is both passive and active interpretation in the park. Many of the existing interpretive exhibits need to be refreshed, and recent findings from archaeological work and historical research for the fort need to be incorporated into new and updated interpretations focusing on the overall thematic time frame, from the Civil War to the Civil Rights-eras.

A more detailed interpretive plan is needed to apply themes, topics and related stories to sites and places within the park. The themes and stories can be linked to the broader relationships associated with the circle forts and the Defenses of Washington. Fort Ward Park represents a tremendous opportunity to link the themes related to Defenses of Washington with the post Civil War settlement of African American communities after the

forts were abandoned, and to better tell the stories as to how these settlements evolved into unique and established communities.

### **Objective 4.1**

#### ***Develop a detailed Interpretive Plan for Fort Ward Park that celebrates the park's multi-faceted history***

The management plan lays out a broad interpretive framework regarding the time frame, geography, audiences and potential themes for park interpretation. A more detailed interpretive planning effort is needed to apply themes to sites, select appropriate stories related to each theme and site and to identify the appropriate interpretive tools that best tell the stories. The more detailed interpretive plan is necessary to define ways the landscape can be used as an interpretive tool while not overwhelming the park and its resources. The incorporation of the landscape will allow the Civil War-era interpretation to expand from the museum and “The Fort” community interpretation to be brought into the museum—presenting the site as one connected story from the Civil War to Civil Rights.

The intent is to integrate the overall interpretive story and museum offerings to include displays and interpretation for the period from the Civil War to the Civil Rights eras both within the museum and in the park's landscape. Elements reflecting the African American experience, such as the USCT mannequin, may be appropriate displays within the museum, as determined by the more detailed interpretive planning effort to come. Similarly, elements presented in the museum today may be more fully interpreted within the larger park, removed from the museum itself, creating room within the museum for exhibits related to the African American experience during this time period.

#### **Strategy 4.1.1 Expand or reform the Fort Ward History Work Group and Fort Ward Advisory Group to provide advice on the interpretive planning, design and implementation**

- Action: *OHA to formally invite key stakeholders from the Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, Civil War historians, naturalists, educators and community representatives to participate in a new advisory committee working on the development of an interpretive plan*
- Action: *Working with the advisory committee on interpretation, select topics, stories, text, and images that best represent the recommended themes for Fort Ward Park (including both citywide or regionwide themes and site specific themes)*
- Action: *Match the recommended stories, sites and places with the best communication and educational practices including a range of web-based and mobile technology, as well as exhibit design*
- Action: *Where historical imagery is not available, utilize drawings and illustrations to evoke the imagery sought to capture the meaning of the interpretation*

#### **Strategy 4.1.2 Make use of landscape features to tell the stories**

- Action: *Match the recommended stories with the sites and places where the stories are best told; develop conceptual site plans for any related physical improvements needed to help tell the stories*
- Action: *Design and install an interpretive trail as part of the overall trail network as a means of organizing the outdoor interpretive experience*

- Action: Use the ‘We’re Still Here’ theme as part of the trail system as a means of organizing the stories associated with the “The Fort” community, and link those stories to the larger citywide themes associated with African American heritage*
- Action: Connect and reorganize the pathways through the fort so they become part of the trail network as a means of interpreting the fort’s unique earthworks and to encourage movement through and around the earthworks in a careful and respectful manner*
- Action: Install outdoor exhibits and enhance historic landscapes (use vegetation to de-mark old road alignments, gardens, house sites, etc.) to interpret “The Fort” community*
- Action: Design and install landscape elements and a Memorial Stone that allow for the cemeteries and grave sites to be experienced as places of contemplation*
- Action: Design and install interpretive exhibits or landscape elements that help to tell stories of family and community, and connect to broader themes of race and the struggle for social, economic and political survival*

### **Objective 4.2**

#### ***Increase awareness of the site’s local, regional and national significance by linking to themes related to the Defenses of Washington with the establishment and building of an African American community***

Recent archaeological work and historical research presents a tremendous opportunity to link the system of forts associated with the defenses of Washington with the African American settlements that grew into communities in and around many of these forts. The story is not being told anywhere else—allowing Fort Ward to be identified as a significant place for the interpretation of African American heritage. The stories of the families, their schools, churches and community life can be associated with broader themes of US Colored Troops involved in the Civil War, the role of the Seminary, the Jim Crow-era and the Civil Rights-era that followed.

#### **Strategy 4.2.1 Greet and orient the visitor**

- Action: Install a comprehensive exterior orientation exhibit at the primary entrance to introduce themes and stories, provide context and orient visitors to the park*
- Action: Install a small, 1-panel orientation kiosk at each minor entrance to the park*
- Action: Provide web-based and mobile technology applications and content to allow visitors to dig deeper and broader into the themes introduced at Fort Ward Park; use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr) to celebrate all aspects of the park—see National Archives and Library of Congress for examples*

#### **Strategy 4.2.2 Link interpretation at Fort Ward to broader citywide and regionwide themes**

- Action: Identify Fort Ward on region-wide maps, brochures, websites, and other city publications as a place to explore Alexandria’s history from the Civil War to the Civil Rights eras*
- Action: Feature Fort Ward Park in enhanced citywide Civil War and African American interpretive trails*
- Action: Develop interpretive and educational resources that help visitors compare and contrast “The Fort” community with other African*

*American communities in Alexandria and beyond; clarify themes and storylines and identify how each individual site and its stories relate to the citywide themes*

*Action: Promote and encourage visitors to come to Fort Ward Park to better understand how “The Fort” community is representative of African American communities of freedmen established in the wake of the Civil War and their experiences*

#### **Strategy 4.2.3 Strengthen regional linkages to interpretation at Fort Ward**

*Action: Work with partners to encourage the National Park Service to interpret and promote the circle forts to promote regional interpretation of the Defenses of Washington*

*Action: Continue to provide leadership to Civil War Defenses of Washington sites south and west of the Potomac*

*Action: Forge a relationship with the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the African American Civil War Museum*

*Action: Coordinate with NMAAHC themes and storylines to use Alexandria and Fort Ward Park as authentic locations illustrating the themes and storylines*

### **Objective 4.3**

#### ***Reorganize and/or expand the museum to engage more visitors and broaden the stories told***

The Fort Ward Museum is a tremendous resource for telling the story of the Civil War fortifications, the defenses of Washington and the African American communities that grew up around them after the war. But more than just the story, the museum has the potential to encourage visitors to establish connections with the people and places associated with the stories—involving moments of intellectual and emotional revelation, perception, insight or discovery. The museum and the park can encourage these connections by developing more self-guided experiences where the visitor discovers the connection through a more interactive experience. An expanded museum experience extending from indoors to outdoors would help to introduce visitors to that process of discovery and connect their lives to the lives of people in the past.

From a practical standpoint, extending interpretation outside provides a mechanism to tell the whole story—from Civil War to Civil Rights—and to connect the stories with broader themes in the city and region beyond. Over the long-term, the museum may need to expand to make better use of the exhibit space; provide more space for orientation and educational programs; make the museum more accessible; and freshen the museum to attract new and younger audiences.

#### **Strategy 4.3.1: Develop the tools and resources needed to expand museum interpretive opportunities with self-guided experiences**

*Action: Update the museum’s strategic plan to reflect the goals, objectives, strategies and actions of the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan—resulting in an updated program of uses for the museum*

*Action: Develop a feasibility study and a new museum master plan (and design of an addition, if feasible) that leads to a more visitor friendly museum; provides views of the park landscape; incorporates both indoor and outdoor exhibits that are secure and properly monitored; incorporates space for the management and storage*

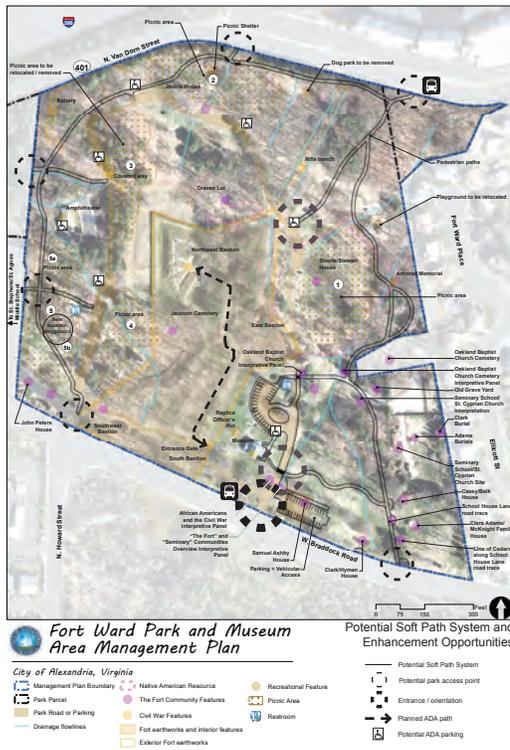


Figure 68 - Diagram of features, potential 'soft path' and off-site connections

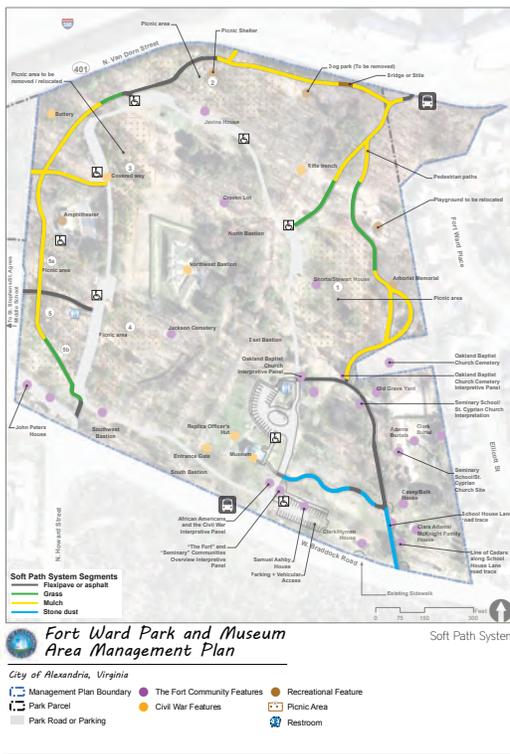


Figure 69 - Diagram of potential parking changes, bus-loop and gateways

of collections; and makes the museum and its educational facilities accessible to individuals with disabilities

Action: Undertake preliminary design of the expanded museum and prepare illustrative materials and cost estimates

**Strategy 4.3.2 Create a capital campaign to raise funds for a museum expansion**

Action: Using the results of the feasibility study and master plan, develop a fundraising program to implement the master plan (as part of the overall citywide system of museums)

Action: Retain a professional development specialist to guide the capital campaign (as part of the overall citywide system of museums)

**Strategy 4.3.3 Use the existing museum building for new exhibits**

Action: Continue to feature exhibits on topics that support interpretation of Fort Ward using the museum's extensive collection

Action: Introduce exhibits on the African American experience before, during and after the Civil War to provide context for outdoor exhibits of "The Fort" community

**Strategy 4.3.4 Create as many opportunities for personal connections as possible and visitors will enjoy the experience and find relevancy**

Action: Make use of talk back boards, interactives (leave something behind, problem solve, active learning)

Action: Use stories of the families that are associated with Fort Ward and "The Fort" community to connect people with their past through personal connections

**Strategy 4.3.5 Reach people who do not normally go to museums by taking the museum to places where this audience normally goes**

Action: Include interpretive information in picnic area map and signboards

Action: Update the historic information on the picnic area map to include areas associated with burial sites

Action: Look at New Media grants from NEH

## **Goal 5 - Enhance Park Facilities**

***Satisfy the growing need for passive recreational enjoyment of a shady, natural oasis from an increasingly complex urban environment.***

As noted in Section II.3, Fort Ward Park is valued for its passive recreational uses, as well as for the events and gatherings associated with the historical aspects of the park. Based upon the 2012 and 2013 draft of the recommendations of the Fort Ward Advisory Group and the follow up meetings and discussions with users of the park, the following objectives, strategies and actions are recommended to address the growing recreational needs in a manner that is sensitive to the historic and cultural significance of Fort Ward Park.

### **Objective 5.1**

#### ***Clarify and enhance park circulation and parking***

Park users and FWAG members identified a number of issues and problems that related to the park entrance, parking, vehicular and pedestrian use of park roadways, pedestrian circulation and the need for a secondary system of soft paths.

##### **Strategy 5.1.1 Improve pedestrian circulation and safety**

- Action: *Make pedestrian use the priority use for the paved loop path and mark mileage distances on or near pavement*
- Action: *Introduce a sharp curve at the junction of the paved loop path*
- Action: *Develop a pedestrian network of soft paths*
- Action: *Connect the existing park path to the West Braddock Road sidewalk*
- Action: *Clearly mark and develop two park access points from North Van Dorn Street*
- Action: *Re-connect athletic fields with rest of the park*

##### **Strategy 5.1.2 Improve bus access and parking (tour and school groups)**

- Action: *Redesign the existing parking area to better accommodate a bus drop-off*

##### **Strategy 5.1.3 Reconfigure existing parking**

- Action: *Expand the length and reduce the width of the gravel parking lot*

### **Objective 5.2**

#### ***Minimize conflicts between adjacent uses both within and around the park***

Park users and FWAG members identified a number of issues and problems that have led to conflicting experiences among users with different expectations during their visit to Fort Ward Park. Issues and problems have mostly revolved around visitor information and orientation; accessibility; conflicts between uses and historic preservation goals; and the deteriorating condition of certain facilities and infrastructure.

##### **Strategy 5.2.1 Communicate park regulations**

- Action: *Continue to monitor and to limit noise from park activities*
- Action: *Better communicate park regulations*
- Action: *Enforce existing park regulations*

##### **Strategy 5.2.2 Remove the off-leash dog exercise area location and facility**

- Action: *Remove the off-leash dog exercise area from the park*

**Strategy 5.2.3 Relocate and enhance park facilities (long-term) to better serve the public and to protect the park's resources**

Action: Relocate group picnic area #3, avoiding any culturally sensitive sites or resources

Action: Adopt design standards for all park furnishings and signs

**Strategy 5.2.4 Evaluate the effort required to upgrade and improve the amphitheater for more active use**

Action: Evaluate upgrade or removal of the existing amphitheater

**Strategy 5.2.5 Replace, upgrade or remove failing facilities**

Action: Repair and evaluate the upgrading of the existing restroom located on the western side of the park

## E. Best Management Practices

Successfully achieving the recommendations requires implementation of the actions in a manner that benefits the park. Best Management Practices describe the maintenance, operation or management approaches matched to a specific challenge facing the park. There are many versions to choose from. This discussion is broadly presented here, in Section II.5 and includes park-wide recommendations that articulate an approach and philosophy to park management. Following this discussion, each individual action is addressed with specificity and recommendations in Section II.6.

### Best Management Practices for Park Stewardship

Two successful partnership organizations that have been in operation for two or three decades are the Prospect Park Alliance (Brooklyn, New York) and Friends of Patterson Park (City of Baltimore, Maryland).

#### Prospect Park Model

Prospect Park's group was established in the 1980s. The 526-acre park is the heart of Brooklyn and is used by 1.7 million people every year. The park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, was rapidly deteriorating from over use and under funding. The City of New York used Community Development Block Grant funds to create a Park Administrator's office solely for Prospect Park.

Following the infusion of public funds, Prospect Park Alliance was formed in 1987. It became clear that private funds were needed to supplement public funding and to successfully implement the plans for the park's restoration and enhancement. The Alliance raised private funds and oversaw the volunteer program. The director of the City's Prospect Park administrator's office also served as the president of the board of the Alliance. The dual role allowed for close coordination and collaboration.

#### Friends of Patterson Park Model

Friends of Patterson Park is another successful non-profit membership organization that was formed in 1998. Its purpose is "to promote, protect and advocate for our treasured common ground so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come." Patterson Park is a major city park located in an inner Baltimore neighborhood. Baltimore's waterfront is well known, gets a great deal of attention and receives significant resources from city and business leaders. Patterson Park has historic significance as the oldest park in Baltimore,

nationally significant due to its ties with the War of 1812 and Civil War history, and provides an important urban oasis and recreation site for Baltimoreans.

The Friends group considers these primary activities as part of their mission

- Advocating for and educating people about the importance of preserving this historic, urban green space
- Maintaining and promoting a positive park image
- Providing a forum for and ensuring community input into the process for change in the park
- Acting as a liaison between the community and the Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks
- Increasing fiscal and human (volunteer and staff) resources available for park projects and programs
- Fostering park stewardship in the community and building the skills of the community to care for the park
- Developing events and programs that bring the community into the park to learn, recreate, and make friends

### Park Stewardship Options

The Friends of Fort Ward, the Descendents Society, or a newly formed group should be encouraged to more aggressively pursue the level of funding that is needed to responsibly steward and interpret these nationally significant resources. This effort, conducted as a partnership with the City, can positively influence a citywide effort to bring external funding to its museums, parks and open space. There is no current regionally based organization for a group from Fort Ward Park to partner that is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of the Defenses of Washington or the African American communities that were established and grew around the circle forts.

There are three distinct expansion options worth exploring to achieve more recognition, awareness and funding of Fort Ward Park and Museum.

- **Expand the mission, role and reach of the existing 'Friends of Fort Ward' Group**  
The current group is a membership organization that seeks donations to fund publications, guided tours, special programs and projects, and professional conservation and storage of the museum's collection, among other elements.



Figure 70 - Rifle trench parapet

#### *Advantage*

The existing Friends of Fort Ward group is an established non-profit organization. The group has a relationship with OHA and the Museum operations and programming. Should the group have the desire and capacity to grow and expand their mission to encompass the entire park, the existing Friends group could play a more significant role in the management plan's implementation. This may be an opportunity for the group to broaden its membership and bring in a new generation of supporters.

*Disadvantage*

The Friends of Fort Ward has a very defined mission and a dedicated group of supporters that may or may not be interested or have the volunteer capacity to expand their reach without watering down what they are already doing well.

- **Form a New Regional Partnership**

Fort Ward is one of the best preserved and interpreted examples of the circle forts that formed the Defenses of Washington and the communities that grew up around them. The recent partnership efforts by the The Fort Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, the City of Alexandria's Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities and its archaeologists has resulted in wealth of new knowledge about "The Fort" community that can be interpreted to reach broader audiences. The focus of a new organization should be more regional in scope, with a key mission being the preservation and enhancement of the circle forts and their associated African American communities.

*Advantage*

The National Park Service has a 'Fort Circle Trail' established (designated as a "National Recreation Trail" by the US Department of Interior) and permanent, part-time staff assigned to that trail. A strong case for funding is through the expansion of the story to one that is more regional in scope and encompasses a unique piece of African American heritage that just is not being told anywhere else. Tying that history to the preservation, enhancement and interpretation of the circle fort system would be critical to increase the leverage for outside funding. Such a regional group, associated with the Fort Circle Trail, may be better able to access resources of the foundations that support the National Park Service sites. The National Park Foundation and its African American Experience Fund, (AAEF) is the only national fundraising organization of the congressionally chartered, [National Park Foundation](http://nationalparkfoundation.org) that supports and preserves African American history found in national parks (see <http://aaexperience.org/about-aaef>).

*Disadvantage*

A regional partnership would be a significant challenge to start and initiate. The potential exists that the more day-to-day needs for Fort Ward Park may get lost among the competing interests of the multiple jurisdictions that would form the partnership. While more leverage could be obtained for future funding, the larger pool of potential funding would have to be shared more broadly.

Successful organizations that operate to conserve and enhance parks are typically very well endowed at their start, focus directly on the primary park in the community (such as Prospect Park in Brooklyn or Patterson Park in Baltimore), have a large number of users from which they can draw their support and have a highly deteriorated park as the focus of their attention.

Could either model work for a 47-acre park on the west end of a city that in 2010 had a population of less than 150,000? It would be a significant challenge—one that would require all of the groups with an interest in the future of Fort Ward: whether it is the African American heritage; the Civil War

heritage; recreation or urban nature that are valued—to work together with common purpose and resolve.

Moreover, it may be difficult, in these days of such a highly competitive funding environment, to achieve the necessary momentum to make such an organization work for the benefit of Fort Ward Park alone.

- **Phased Approach**

A third way, then, might be to consider both moderate expansion of the Friends of Fort Ward for the near term to work on gaining support for the needed expansion of the museum to bring African American heritage into the museum and move Civil War heritage outside into the landscape of the park. The longer-term focus would be to initiate the partnership efforts needed to create a Fort Circle Trail regional support group of which Fort Ward Park would be a critical player. This may necessitate the reforming of the existing friends group and a rewriting of the mission and goals, while expanding the board of directors to reflect the broadened vision.

## Park-wide Best Management Practices for Physical Changes

### Woodland Management

- Prioritize tree removals by first identifying those trees that pose the greatest threat of windthrow or loss during a storm.
- Remove the trees identified as posing the highest risk, along with non-native invasive species, short-lived old-field invader species, species with shallow root systems, and all debris, brush, and other material not considered healthy vegetation from the earthworks.
- Assess the resulting light levels and leaf litter coverage.
- Over time all trees, including saplings, should be removed from the earthen parapet and ditch. Healthy, existing, longer-lived hardwood saplings that do not possess shallow root systems should be removed last once the desired forest management conditions are met.
- Healthy, longer-lived hardwood trees located around the earthworks should be retained and maintained, and augmented with new plantings, to provide leaf litter to protect the soil of the earthworks from erosion. In areas where trees have been removed, allow saplings of the longer-lived hardwoods to become established around the earthworks, but continue to remove trees from the earthworks themselves.

### Ground Disturbance

- Avoid disturbing the soil during tree removal activities. Special care must therefore be taken in the removal process so as to not cause erosion. Trees should be sectioned and the cut sections lowered to the ground, taking care not to disturb existing soil and grades. Remove non-native invasive plants such as tree-of-heaven and Japanese honeysuckle identified during monitoring programs by cutting stems flush with the ground and applying a systemic herbicide. Avoid hand-pulling or other techniques that may cause soil disturbance.

### Landscape Cultural Practices

- Cut stumps flush with the surrounding grades and apply a systemic herbicide to the cut end of deciduous hardwoods to discourage resprouting. Stump grinding of trees removed from the earthworks is not recommended due to the disturbance this would cause to potential archaeological resources and the stability of the earthen structures. Stump grinding may take place in portions of the park where ground disturbance is allowed, or with supervision from OHA.
- Monitor earthworks to ensure that landcover of leaf litter or grass entirely covers the earthworks as an erosion control measure.

### Ground Surface Manipulation

- Retain and maintain existing grades, except where drainage or soil erosion problems have been identified. In particular, avoid modifying existing topography that may reflect evidence of military activities. Also avoid removing soil in the environs of the earthworks. If soil is added in the vicinity of the earthworks to improve drainage, a sand tracer could be used to identify the repair for future archaeological investigations.

### Best Management Practices for Earthworks

Although individual approaches to earthworks management vary depending on site-specific conditions and management capabilities, there are four fundamental components of any earthworks management program:

- Understanding historic landscape conditions through research, documentation, and archaeological investigation;
- Understanding contemporary landscape conditions through inventory, mapping, documentation, and assessment;
- Establishing a management strategy that sets forth goals, issues, concerns, and a desired outcome, as well as a prioritized process for achieving the vision; and
- Evaluating the success of the process through review and monitoring, and revising the management plan as needed based on the evaluation.

Although many of these efforts have already been addressed to some degree (for example, documentation of the historic origin, location, and use of the earthworks has already been completed) park mapping and documentation will need to be updated as elements of the management plan are implemented, such as where new trails are added or erosion is repaired, and to record monitoring information.

### Best Management Practices for Landcover Establishment

- Establish criteria for the desired character and composition of new landcover. For example, for landcover on the earthworks, consider the following:
  - Species must be able to be maintained at a height of between three and fifteen feet above the ground.
  - Species must be suited to local soil types, the planting zone, and rainfall conditions (soil testing should precede species selection).
  - Species should be drought tolerant.
  - Species must provide above ground cover and/or a root system that protects against soil erosion characteristics particular to the local soil.
  - If the species provides long-term soil erosion protection but no short-term protection, there must be a viable annual or interim landcover option for the establishment period.

- The long-term cover species must be perennial or self-perpetuating, although temporary cover species may be annual.
- Preference will be given to a species that is relatively easy to establish.
- Preference will be given to species with greater benefits to wildlife.
- Preference will be given to a species that has less onerous maintenance requirements than fescue, specifically as regards mowing frequency.
- Preference will be given to native species over non-native species.
- Non-native invasive species will not be used.
- Re-vegetate all disturbed soil in a manner that optimizes plant establishment for that specific site, unless ongoing disturbance at the site will prevent establishment of non-native invasive species.
- Use local seeding guidelines and appropriate mixes, but realize that many species previously recommended for this purpose are now presenting non-native invasive problems. Use native material where appropriate and available. Re-vegetation may include plug planting, seeding or hydroseeding, fertilization, and mulching.
- Monitor and evaluate the success of revegetation in relation to the project plan.
- When re-vegetating areas that were previously dominated by non-native invasive plants, try to achieve at least 90 percent control of the non-native invasive before attempting restoration.

### Best Management Practices for Non-native Invasive Species Control

- Before starting any ground-disturbing activities, inventory non-native invasive plant infestations both on site and in the adjacent area.
- Begin activities in uninfested areas before operating in infested areas.
- Use uninfested areas for staging, parking, and cleaning equipment. Avoid or minimize all types of travel through infested areas, or restrict to those periods when spread of seed or propagules are least likely.
- When possible, to suppress growth of non-native invasive plants and prevent their establishment, retain relatively closed canopies.
- Minimize soil disturbance and retain desirable vegetation in and around the area to the maximum extent possible.
- Monitor infested areas for at least three growing seasons following completion of activities. Provide for follow-up treatments based on inspection results.
- When it is necessary to conduct soil work in infested roadsides and ditches, schedule the activity when seeds and propagules are least likely to be viable and to be spread.
- Quarantine soil from infested areas to prevent off-site spread.
- Non-native invasive plants can be introduced and spread by moving infested equipment, sand, gravel, borrow, fill, and other off-site material. Inspect material sources at site of origin to ensure that they are free of non-native invasive plant material before use and transport.

### Best Management Practices for Woodlands

- Plan felling and extraction to minimize adverse effects on standing trees, ground cover, soil, and sensitive environmental features.
- Select silvicultural techniques according to slope, erosion-hazard rating, and/or risk of landslides in order to minimize soil disturbance and erosion, and disturbance of watercourse.
- Do not allow surface water runoff from any type of soil disturbance to run directly into a watercourse.

- Maintain the integrity of all streambeds and banks. When it is necessary to alter a stream's course for any reason, return the streambed and banks, as near as possible, to their original condition.
- Do not leave construction debris of any type in streambeds.
- Do not spray chemicals directly into water or allow chemicals, herbicides, fertilizers, or petroleum products to degrade surface or groundwater.
- Leave streamside management zones along watercourses both to filter sediment from overland flow and to maintain the inherent, normal temperature of water in all streams and other bodies of water.
- Provide for rapid revegetation of all denuded areas through natural processes supplemented by artificial revegetation where necessary.

### Best Management Practices for Adapting Historic Road Traces as Trails

- Use only low-tire-pressure vehicles when working along historic road traces.
- Design new trails that follow or traverse historic road traces in such a way as to avoid cutting into the ground in order to preserve archaeological resources. Utilize fill sections rather than cutting into the existing grade wherever possible to achieve positive drainage and address drainage and erosion control needs.
- Incorporate local materials, such as stone and wood, into trail-related structures including water bars, stepping stones, signage, fences, steps, treads, stream crossings, stone boxes or treadways crossing marshy areas, retaining walls, trail markers, and shelters. Design these features to be clearly a product of their own time.