48 South Early Street Park

History and Character

48 South Early Street Park is in the Society Hill neighborhood between Duke Street and Wheeler Avenue. The City acquired the park through the open space program in 2009. Prior to being a park, the parcel was a lot with an abandoned home in disrepair on it. The land and home were purchased by the City and the home was demolished creating the park.

The Society Hill Homeowners' Association has adopted the park.

The park is 0.42 acres and is located entirely within the resource protection area (RPA) along Strawberry Run. The park features a walking path, large shade trees, an open lawn, a bridge over Strawberry Run to a wooded area, and benches.

Existing Conditions Map

Note: Any new park or facility is referred to by the site's address until a name has been reviewed and approved through the City naming process.

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Which of the following existing park elements would you like to preserve, enhance, or transform?

Element	Open Lawn	
Number of responses	14	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
Preserve it	8	57
Enhance it	4	29
Transform it	2	14

Element	Landscaping	
Number of responses	14	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
Preserve it	4	29
Enhance it	9	64
Transform it	1	7

Element	Park Sign	
Number of responses	14	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
Preserve it	13	93
Enhance it	1	7
Transform it	0	0

Element	Bridge	
Number of responses	13	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
Preserve it	10	77
Enhance it	2	15
Transform it	1	8

Element	Trashcan	
Number of responses	13	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
Preserve it	8	62
Enhance it	4	31
Transform it	1	8

Element	Open Space	
Number of responses	13	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
Preserve it	6	46
Enhance it	6	46
Transform it	1	8

Element	Bench	
Number of responses	13	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
Preserve it	8	62
Enhance it	4	31
Transform it	1	8

What is currently NOT in the park that you would like to see there?

1. Nothing, really.
2. Table grill human & dog fountain
3. There are many children in this area of Alexandria – but no playground equipment! I would love to offer our children some swings, a slide, etc. We have a very diverse neighborhood and giving children something to do together would enhance the community relations.
4. Play area or gazebo for celebrations/gatherings
5. Playground equipment for kids
6. Playground
7. Playground equipment (tasteful not gaudy!)
8. Playground
9. I think this park is perfect as it, a rare bit of green space with grass and rocks and trees in an otherwise heavily industrial and residential area. And the lack of playground seems to be of little concern to many children who play there, including my own, who busily and creatively invent games. Constructing playground equipment defines this wonderful space, and it current is something special to everyone because it is simply open and accessible to all.
10. Playground equipment
11. Some more seating
12. I'm always a little nervous about little kids overrunning the edge into the "stream". Some additional bushes along the edge would be a relatively inexpensive and attractive mitigation. I would be able to donate time and resources.

Community Feedback

In Fall 2018, RPCA staff collected community feedback to understand how the park is used and how it could be improved in the future. The following information summarizes what was heard through an online survey and community workshop. Over 400 people responded to the survey in total, 17 of which were specific 48 South Early Street Park. RPCA staff used the collected information to develop the draft park plans.

In 10 years, I would like this Park to…

(Top three rankings shown, based on a weighted score)

1. *Be a place to create social connections with neighbors*
2. *Be a safe place for children to explore*
3. *Be a place to relax*

The image above is an example of natural play features.

Natural play features consist of elements from the earth such as logs, tree stumps, and boulders. These play features allow children to play, explore, and use their imaginations when playing.

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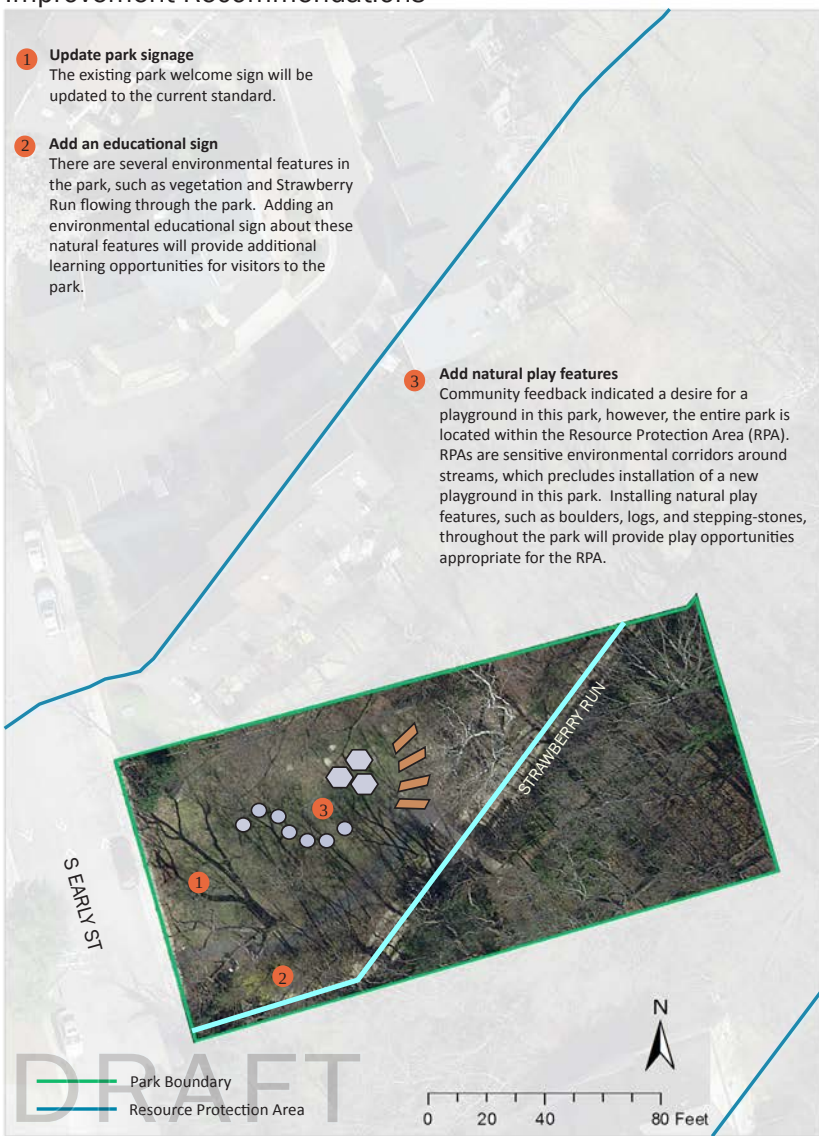
Which of the following existing proposed park elements do you love, like, or not like?

Recommendation Number of responses	Park Welcome Sign 15	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
I love it!	8	53
I like it	7	47
I don't like it	0	7

Recommendation Number of responses	Educational Sign 15	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
I love it!	8	53
I like it	6	40
I don't like it	1	7

Recommendation Number of responses	Natural Play Features 15	
Value	**Count**	**Percent**
I love it!	10	67
I like it	0	0
I don't like it	5	33

Improvement Recommendations



In the summer of 2019, RPCA staff collected community feedback on the draft recommendations for improving this pocket park. The following information summarizes what was heard through online surveys and community feedback (see appendix for full results). The city received, 716 responses, 15 of which were specific to 48 South Early Street Park.

Based on information from the summer input phase, staff updated the plan to best represent current and future community needs. A major change to the 48 South Early Street Park Plan is installing natural play features to half of the existing open space instead of throughout the lawn, and preserving the rest as open space since that is a feature the community values.

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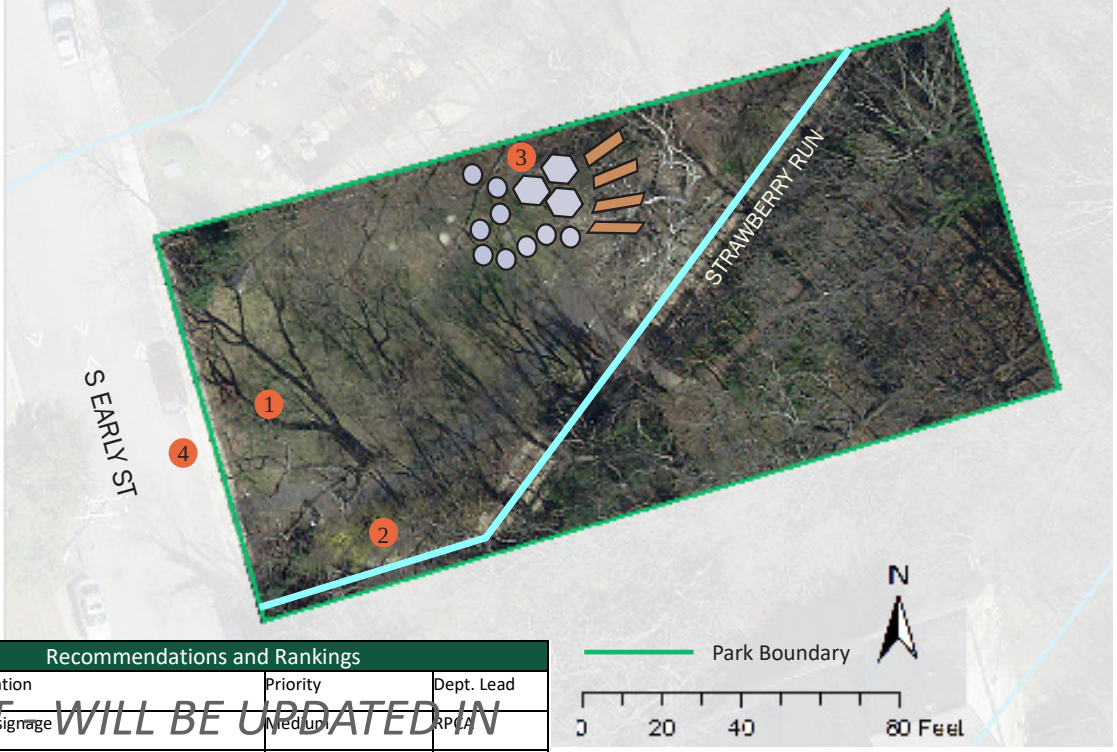
Improvement Recommendations

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

2 **Add an educational sign**
There are several environmental features in the park, including Strawberry Run flowing through the park. Add an environmental educational sign about these natural features to provide additional learning opportunities for park visitors.

3 **Add natural play features**
Community feedback indicated a desire for a playground in this park, however, the entire park is located within the RPA. RPAs are sensitive environmental corridors around streams, which precludes the installation of a new playground in this park. Install natural play features, such as boulders, logs, and stepping-stones, through half the open space within the park to provide play opportunities appropriate within the RPA while also maintaining the park's open space component.

4 **Install crosswalks and upgrade ADA ramps**
Install crosswalks and upgrade the ADA ramps at the South Early Street and Vermont Avenue to improve pedestrian access to the park.



Recommendations and Rankings			
#	Recommendation	Priority	Dept. Lead
1	Update park signage	Medium	RPCA
2	Add an educational sign	Low	RPCA
3	Add natural play features	Medium	RPCA

DRAFT - WILL BE UPDATED IN FEBRUARY 2020