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.
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**

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.

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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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park Welcome Sign</td>
<td>I love it!</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like it</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don’t like it</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational Sign</td>
<td>I love it!</td>
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<td>53</td>
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<tr>
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<td>I like it</td>
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<td>I don’t like it</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>Natural Play Features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>I love it!</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t like it</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>33</td>
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**Improvement Recommendations**

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

2. **Add an educational sign**

   There are several environmental features in the park, such as vegetation and Strawberry Run flowing through the park. Adding an environmental educational sign about these natural features will provide additional learning opportunities for visitors to the park.

3. **Add natural play features**

   Community feedback indicated a desire for a playground in this park, however, the entire park is located within the Resource Protection Area (RPA). RPAs are sensitive environmental corridors around streams, which precludes installation of a new playground in this park. Installing natural play features, such as boulders, logs, and stepping-stones, throughout the park will provide play opportunities appropriate for the RPA.
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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Dept. Lead</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Update park signage</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Add natural play features</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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Endorsed by the Park and Recreation Commission on February 20, 2020