Charles Hill Park

History and Character
Charles Hill Park is located at 300 East Oxford Avenue in the Del Ray neighborhood.

Charles Hill Park was named in honor of Alexandria Police Officer, Corporal Charles W. Hill, who gave his life in the line of duty. The Alexandria Police Special Operations team has adopted the park and maintains the landscaping and plantings around the park welcome sign.

Existing Conditions Map

The 0.40 acre park features shaded sitting areas, large shade trees, a walking path, and open turf for active play. Del Ray residents installed roughly 25 colorful birdhouses throughout the park.

It is difficult to grow grass along Oxford Avenue under the shade trees. There are two native plant beds in the park, one near the stop sign along Oxford Avenue and one around the storm drain in the corner of the park along DeWitt Avenue. There are two educational signs in the park, one describing the history of the St. Asaph Racetrack and one with biographical information on Corporal Charles Hill.

The lights in the park are maintained by Dominion Energy.

Charles W. Hill was born on February 22, 1949, and grew up on Long Island in Suffolk County, New York. He met his future wife there as a teenager, and shortly after they married, he became a New York City police officer. But New York City faced financial problems in the 1970s and when Chuck Hill, as he was known to his family, was laid off, he found another job out of state. On August 2, 1976, he became an Alexandria police officer.

Corporal Hill was partnered with Officer Andrew M. Chelchowski when the Special Operations Team was called to the 300 block of Hopkins Court. Jamie M. Wise, a 34-year-old escapee from a Washington, D.C. halfway house, had taken hostages inside a home to collect a drug debt.

At 6:35 p.m., Wise emerged, holding a sawed-off shotgun to the head of a teenaged hostage. A police marksman fied and hit Wise. High on drugs and mortally wounded, Wise was able to fire twice, striking Corporal Hill in the head and Officer Chelchowski in the leg. Corporal Hill was taken to Washington Hospital Center where he was pronounced dead at 8:15 p.m.

Corporal Hill, age 40, was survived by his wife Virginia, their son Charles and Robert, and his mother. In 2010, his son Robert joined the Alexandria Sheriff's Office, and in 2012 was hired by the Alexandria Police Department as a patrol officer. Corporal Charles Hill was cremated and his ashes scattered.

Endorsed by the Park and Recreation Commission on February 20, 2020
In Fall 2018, 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 we heard through an online survey, community workshop, and community meeting. Over 400 people responded to the survey in total, 20 of which were specific to Charles Hill Park. 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 safe place for children to explore**
2. **Help reduce environmental impacts from urban surroundings**
3. **Be a place to relax**

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

1. It could use some more seating, and maybe a natural area-like logs tumbled in a pile or rocks to climb/jump. Maybe a low fence or low screening bushes to better keep kids from going into the street?
2. Bocce Court
3. It is used sparingly mostly just walking through. A picnic seating area or chess tables might be nice. I like the park with the bocce court-that might promote more use of the park.
4. This park would make a great monarch way station. There should be more native plants with signage to explain what they are and why they are important.
5. Play structures for children! A couple of swings and a play set with ladders/climbing opportunities and slides would be great.
6. A well maintained lawn—with actual grass, vs all weeds; pet waste stations; adequate lighting
7. Better maintenance of lawn area.
8. Better lighting, lawn mowed, leaves picked up in fall
9. Clean up. Update the bird houses. Make sure the sign about the trooper is clean and readable. Plant more grass and flowers.
10. Educational signage about native bird species to accompany the bird houses
Charles Hill Park

### Improvement Recommendations

**Update access ramps at cross walks:** Update the ADA access ramps at the intersections of Oxford Avenue & Terrett Avenue and Oxford Avenue & DeWitt Avenue to the City standard.

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

**Install game tables and seating:** Community feedback indicated a desire for a community gathering spot with game tables, similar to the tables at 2015 Commonwealth Avenue Park. Rustic tables and seating, such as logs, would keep the naturalistic feel in this largely urban setting. Native plants that are well adapted to shady settings can be added to provide a shaded space for children to play in the park.

**Provide a native plant/pollinator garden:** A native plant/pollinator garden in the park’s existing green space for watering plants. Adding plantings to the park.

**Install a stepping stone path:** A stepping stone path, using stones or logs surrounded with mulch, provides a shaded space for children to explore or for story-time.

**Install a Little Free Library:** A Little Free Library focusing on children’s books would provide families access to age-appropriate books. The Little Free Library could be shaped like a birdhouse to bring the birdhouses in the trees.

**Install a playground:** A playground-shaped like a large birdhouse, to mirror the birdhouses in the trees, would provide a space for children to play.

**Cover utility box with patterned wrap:** Similar to the traffic control box wrap project conducted throughout the City in 2015 and 2016, cover the existing green utility box with a patterned wrap.

**Install a water fountain & hose bib:** A new water fountain, with a spout for drinking water and water for a hose to use for watering plants.

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Improvement Recommendations

1. **Update access ramps at crosswalks**
   Update the ADA access ramps at the intersections of Oxford Avenue and Terrett Avenue, and Oxford Avenue and DeWitt Avenue to the City standard. Install a crosswalk across E Mt Ida and Dewitt Avenue to increase access to the park.

2. **Update park signage**
   Update the existing park welcome sign to the current City standard.

3. **Create a seating area**
   Install moveable seating to provide a place to relax and socialize. Moveable seating allows users the flexibility to decide where they want to gather and how to use the park.

4. **Provide a native plant bioretention garden**
   Install a native plant bioretention garden in the circular mulched area to be visually pleasing. The bioretention garden provides an area for natural habitat within a largely urban setting and addresses drainage issues in the park. Select native plants that are well adapted to shady settings and can grow in this area.

5. **Install a stepping stone path**
   A stepping stone path, using stones or logs surrounded with mulch, provides a shaded space for children to explore or for story-time.

6. **Cover utility box with mylar patterned cover**
   Cover the existing green utility box with a patterned wrap, similar to the traffic control box wraps project conducted throughout the City in 2015 and 2016.

7. **Install a water fountain and hose bib**
   A new water fountain, with a spout for both humans and dogs, and hose bib for watering plants.

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**Recommendations and Rankings**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Dept. Lead</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Access ramps</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Water fountain and hose bib</td>
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