Stevenson Park

History and Character

Stevenson Park is an 8.5 acre park at the extreme western edge of the City near the Fairfax County border. The site was dedicated to the City in 1969 through the development of adjacent parcels. The park design and features have remained the same for over twenty years.

Approximately five acres of the park are high-quality forest with numerous old-age (at least 120-150 yr. old) upland oaks. The stand of old-age Southern Red Oak along the south-facing slope is perhaps the finest remaining in a City park. Also, this park is the only known location in Alexandria for Downy Wild Rye (Elymus villosus var. villosus) and one of 2 locations in the City for the regionally-rare Fragrant Sumac (Rhus aromatica). Dog walkers and pedestrians have created unofficial paths through the wooded area, though there is no formal trail system.

The park's recreational features include a recently renovated park shelter, playground, basketball court and ballfield. In the past, Alexandria Little League and Alexandria Soccer Association used the site for programming, however, due to site conditions and drainage issues, the field is now infrequently used for these purposes. Neighborhood children do play pick-up soccer (without goals) on it.

Residents from adjacent communities, including Watergate, Stevenson Square, and Fairfax County, regularly use the park for passive play. The playground and shelter are particularly popular for families in the area to meet and the park serves as a gathering space for neighborhood playdates on Friday nights.

The parking lot north of the ballfield is rarely used by park-goers unless there is a Little League event. There is very little signage in the park and users travelling to the site from other areas of the City for sports programming may have a difficult time locating it. Stevenson Park is situated in one of the most dense areas of the City and is the only public park within 0.8 miles (the closest park, Armistead Boothe, requires crossing major roads and infrastructure if accessing by foot). The lack of easy access and signage to this park is a barrier to area residents seeking public open space.

Community Feedback

In Fall 2014, 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 "graffiti board" in the park. Over 270 people responded to the survey in total, ten of which were specific to Stevenson Park. Staff used the collected information to develop draft park plans.

In 10 years I would like this Park to...

(Top 3 rankings shown; based on a weighted score)

1. **Provide organized recreational opportunities**
2. **Help reduce environmental impacts from urban surroundings**
3. **Be a place to relax**

What would you like done with the open lawn?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	3	60%
Enhance it	1	20%
Transform it	1	20%

Explain

There's grass?

What would you like done with the parking lot?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	1	14%
Enhance it	5	72%
Transform it	1	14%

Explain

There is a person living in his car in the parking lot. He has been there for more than a year.

What would you like done with the picnic shelter?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	1	14%
Enhance it	4	57%
Transform it	2	29%

Explain

Only used for drug deals and vagrants.
needs new picnic tables

Existing Conditions

What would you like done with the playground?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	2	29%
Enhance it	3	43%
Transform it	2	29%

What would you like done with the ballfield?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	0	0%
Enhance it	5	56%
Transform it	4	44%

Explain

Add lights and improve the infield.
Terrible shape overall, limited seating, no dugouts
Worst field for kids in the entire city.
It's poorly maintained, Grass is rarely mowed and full of ticks and poison ivy. Needs a dugout desperately for player safety.
We desperately need more quality little league facilities in the city. This is one option-- the park could be upgraded with dugouts and a cage.
Redone, flatted, grass cut, real dug outs, attention to field. It is in AWFUL shape, Needs lights.
Not a safe area

Comments received in a letter from neighbor:

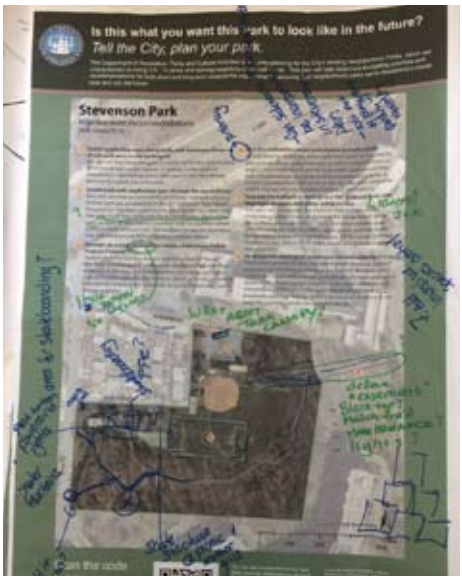
- Request to designate area between baseball field & basketball court for children to play soccer. Include goalie post.
- Request to move trash can away from picnic tables or install a trash can for dog waste only
- Request to fix drainage. A percentage of the park's runoff enters the inlet in the buildings behind Stevenson. The inlet is too small flooding the private community's dog park. According to the community member, it takes 3-4 days for the water to drain/evaporate

Graffiti Sign

A "graffiti sign" in the Park had a marker attached and asked park users to write down what they would like their park to look like in the future. The sign was on site from September to November 2014 (image from October 27).

Draft Plan Feedback

In Spring 2015, the community provided feedback on the draft park plan (below) through online surveys (see appendix for full results), park signs and public meetings. Staff also met with board members and residents at the Watergate at Landmark. Based on information from the Spring input phase, staff updated the plans to best represent current and future community needs.



Implementation Strategy

The recommendations in the plan (right) can be implemented independent of other projects as funding is available, whether through city or non-city funds. The cost estimates below (in 2015 dollars) do not include operating costs. Prior to the implementation of any recommendation, operating costs, if any, must be considered. The priority for each recommendation is shown as "low," "medium," or "high." RPCA determined these rankings based upon (1) park user safety, (2) community prioritization feedback and the results of the 2011 and 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment, (3) life span of the existing conditions, (4)potential for non-city funding sources, (5) level of user impact, (6) relationship to other projects.

Stevenson Park					
#	Recommendation	Priority	Estimated Cost	Associated Recommendations	Dept Lead
1	Improve and increase access to the park	High	Review after streetscape improvements		TES/RPCA
2	Create soft surface trails through the wooded area	Medium	50,000-70,000		RPCA
3	Continue to address and manage native and non-native species	Medium	5,000 - 8,000		RPCA
4	Line the outfield for soccer and provide portable goals	Medium	5,000-7,500		RPCA
5	Upgrade the ballfield to hold up to a 70ft diamond field with bleachers, dugouts, foul poles, and press box	High	500,000-600,000	Should be done at same time as parking lot re-design (recommendation #6), though not dependent upon it.	RPCA

Improvement Recommendations

1 **Improve and increase access to the park**
Stevenson Park is located in a dense area of the City with few public parks, yet it is a difficult park to access. Unless users are coming from the adjacent properties, pedestrians must walk a long distance along Stevenson Avenue or drive from elsewhere in the City. The path to get to the park is unmarked with directional signage and is not pedestrian friendly. This plan proposes access improvements by 1) developing a wayfinding strategy to direct pedestrians and users to the park from Stevenson Avenue and 2) working with Transportation and Environmental Services on thier upcoming project (summer/fall 2015) to improve pedestrian conditions along Stevenson Avenue and Stulz Road. If these two methods do not fully succeed in providing improved access, a long-term solution may be to consider an access easement to create a nature trail connection to Yoakum Parkway. This would involve an agreement with adjacent property owners.

2 **Create soft surface trails through the wooded area**
This Park provides an opportunity to increase access to nature, a desired park use, as indicated in the 2013 Citywide Parks Needs Assessment. This need is particularly great in the City's West End. The trails could also connect to the condominiums south of the park, as many of the residents currently walk through the woods in its condition without trails. The locations shown are illustrative only and need precise field verification when designed.

3 **Continue to address and manage native and non-native species**
The Division of Natural Resources has ongoing plans and projects to address the non-native invasive species at Stevenson Park, notably the large colony of Wisteria near the western corner of the park. The other two main areas with invasive exotics to be addressed are near the City champion Bush's Oak at the south corner of the park and the weedy area around the Sweet Cherry and the City champion Frosted Hawthorne. The plan will also protect the numerous old-age trees and remnant forest stands, as well as a diversity of native species.

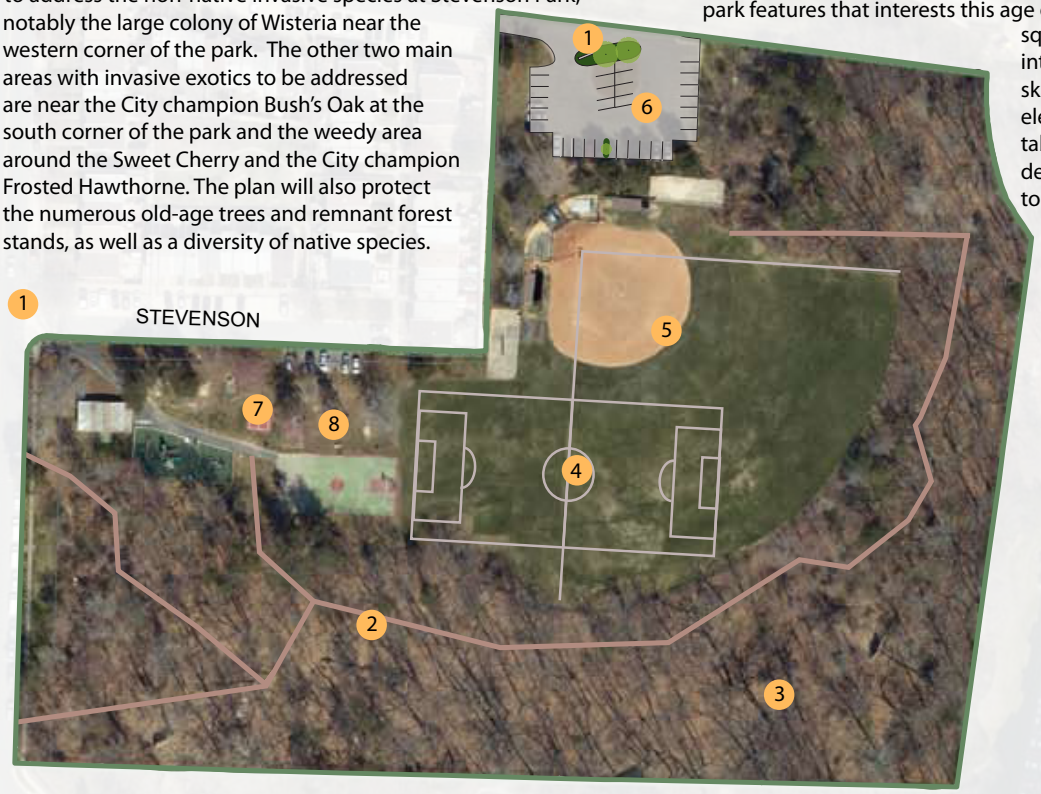
4 **Line the outfield for soccer and provide portable goals**
As indicated by neighbors, many park users come to this area to play pick up soccer, using trash cans or other makeshift items as goals. Lining the field and providing portable goals would help promote impromptu use of the Park for recreational activity. A full size regulated field will not fit on the site. The field centerline would overlap with the first base foul line of the ballfield.

5 **Upgrade the ballfield to hold up to a 70ft diamond field with bleachers, dugouts, foul poles, and press box**
This plan calls to upgrade the diamond field to have similar amenities as Luckett Field, as shown in the image below. While the outfield cannot be beyond 250 ft., a shorter outfield could still sufficiently be used for Little League games and help meet the increasing demand for ballfield space. RPCAinstalled irrigation to this field in 2015, which will provide improved site conditions.

6 **Re-design the parking lot to increase use and visibility**
The current parking lot does not have enough spaces to support programmed little league games at the ballfield. However, the circle in the center of the lot can be replaced with eight additional spaces, without expanding the existing hard surface, and a planted green island to make a more efficient and attractive use of the space. The green island will also hold a prominent park sign that recognizes the lot as an entrance to the park. Bike parking can also be added to the lot.

7 **Convert the four square area into a feature that interests teens**
The adjacent neighborhoods has a high demographic of teenagers and community members have acknowleged the need for more park features that interests this age group. The underused four square area will be converted into a feature such as a modular skateboard piece, bouldering element, or concrete ping pong table. The exact element will be determined after further outreach to teenage neighbors.

8 **Improve the grill area with additional shade and water fountain**
The area around the grill has very tall trees, but they do not provide enough shade. A combination of shade trees and shade structures and a water fountain will help make this a more desireable area for social gatherings.



2015 Neighborhood Parks Improvement Plan: Appendix

Neighborhood Parks Plan
Stevenson Park
Community Feedback, Fall 2014

The Division of Park Planning, Design, and Capital Development is currently planning for the City's existing Neighborhood Parks, which we characterize as being 0.5 - 10 acres with a service area of up to 0.5 miles. The results of this plan will help determine budgeting priorities and recommendations for both short and long-term incremental improvements, ensuring that neighborhood parks serve Alexandria's needs now and into the future.

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Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	2	29%
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Transform it	2	29%

What would you like done with the basketball court?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	2	33%
Enhance it	4	67%
Transform it	0	0%

What would you like done with the ballfield?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	0	0%
Enhance it	5	56%
Transform it	4	44%

Explain
Add lights and improve the infield.
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Worst field for kids in the entire city.
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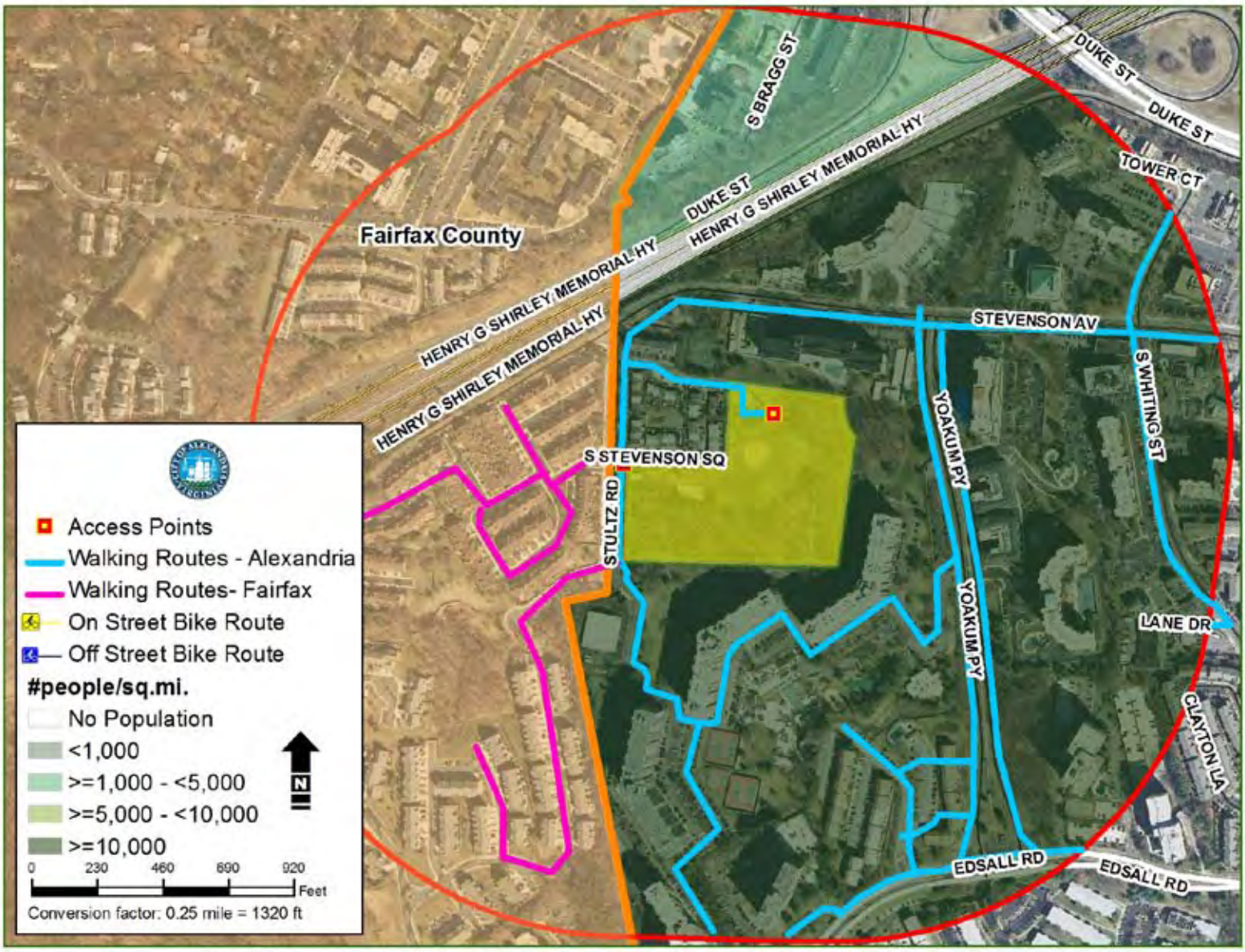

Fairfax County
S BRAGG ST
DUKE ST
DUKE ST
TOWER CT
DUKE ST
HENRY G SHIRLEY MEMORIAL HY
HENRY G SHIRLEY MEMORIAL HY
HENRY G SHIRLEY MEMORIAL HY
STEVENSON AV
S WHITING ST
YOAKUM PY
S STEVENSON SQ
STULTZ RD
YOAKUM PY
LANE DR
CLAYTON LA
EDSALL RD
EDSALL RD
Access Points
Walking Routes - Alexandria
Walking Routes- Fairfax
On Street Bike Route
Off Street Bike Route
#people/sq.mi.
No Population
<1,000
>=1,000 - <5,000
>=5,000 - <10,000
>=10,000
N
0 230 460 690 920
Feet
Conversion factor: 0.25 mile = 1320 ft

Stevenson Park

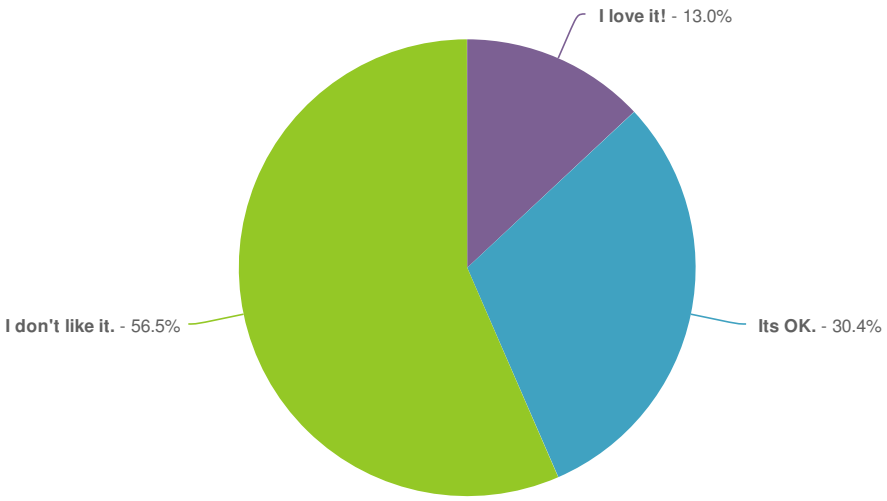
Improvement Recommendations

Draft (Spring 2015)

1. **Install wayfinding signs along Stultz and Stevenson Street to direct park users to the parking lot**
   It is unclear that the parking lot is a public lot for the park because there are no signs and it appears to belong to the adjacent townhouses. Signs would direct park users to the lot and help increase the sports use of the park.
2. **Create trails with wayfinding signs through the wooded area**
   This Park provides an opportunity to increase access to nature, a desired park use, as indicated in the 2013 Citywide Parks Needs Assessment. This need is particularly great in the city's West End. The trails could also connect to the condominiums south of the park, as many of the residents currently walk through the woods in its condition without trails. The locations shown are illustrative only and need precise field verification when designed.
3. **Consider an access easement to create a trail connection to Yoakum Parkway**
   Yoakum Parkway is a very densely populated area of the city that lacks access to public open space. Stevenson Park is in close proximity to the area, but is separated to the east by a privately owned wooded area. The city hopes to obtain an access easement through this land in order to provide access to recreational space for city residents.
4. **Line the outfield for soccer and provide portable goals**
   As indicated by neighbors, many park users come to this area to play pick up soccer, using trash cans or other makeshift items as goals. Lining the field and providing portable goals would help promote impromptu use of the Park for recreational activity. A full size regulated field will not fit on the site. The field centerline would overlap with the first base foul line of the ballfield.
5. **Upgrade the ballfield to hold up to a 70ft diamond field with bleachers, dugouts, foul poles, and press box**
   This plan calls to upgrade the diamond field to have similar amenities as Luckett Field, as shown in the image below. While the outfield cannot be beyond 25000 ft., a shorter outfield could still sufficiently be used for Little League games and help meet the increasing demand for ballfield space. RPCA intends to install irrigation to this field in 2015, which would also provide improved site conditions.
6. **Re-design the parking lot to increase use and visibility**
   The current parking lot does not have enough spaces to support programmed little league games at the ballfield. However, the circle in the center of the lot can be replaced with eight additional spaces and a planted green island to make a more efficient and attractive use of the space. The green island will also hold a prominent park sign that recognizes the lot as an entrance to the park. Bike parking can also be added to the lot.

Stevenson Park Draft Improvement Plan Survey Responses, July 2015

What do you think of the following recommendations?-Consider an access easement to create a trail connection to Yoakum Parkway



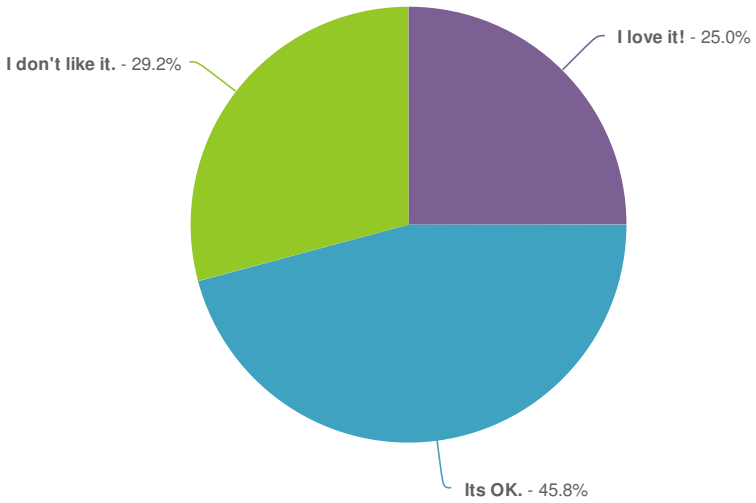
Value	Percent	Count
I love it!	13.0%	3
Its OK.	30.4%	7
I don't like it.	56.5%	13
	Total	23

Explain-Consider an access easement to create a trail connection to Yoakum Parkway

Count	Response
1	Land should not be stolen from current owners.
1	Need to consider safety
1	Please be more specific. Through which property do you wish an easement?
1	This would disturb if not destroy Watergate's security.
1	Too congested. Safety issues
1	might make it safer for children crossing from the Olympus and other Yoakum Pkwy condos/apts
1	not safe
1	too dangerous--litter, dog poop, rape

Count	Response
1	I assume the access would be a trail - requiring fencing to separate it from the two properties. This could result in a safety issue - a long narrow trail between fences with no access other then street or park.
1	absolutely not!!! All this will do is encourage crime, drug and prostitute use, etc increasing risk to local residents.
1	Pending information as t the details of any easement is essential. Exactly where is the easement proposed? Does it involve encroachment on neighboring communities? Will it inflict any cost on those communities such as adjustments of fence lines and the like? Much more information is required on this before the end of an official comment stage.

What do you think of the following recommendations?-Create trails with wayfinding signs through the wooded area



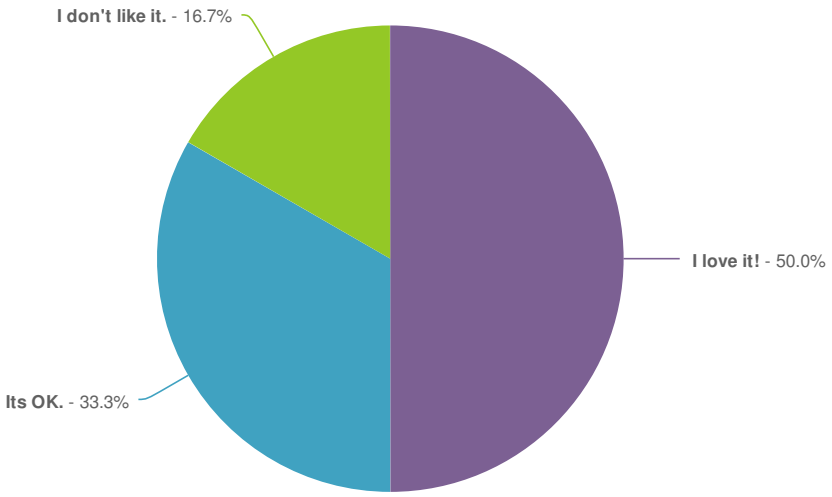
Value	Percent	Count
I love it!	25.0%	6
Its OK.	45.8%	11
I don't like it.	29.2%	7
	Total	24

Explain-Create trails with wayfinding signs through the wooded area

Count	Response
1	I don't know where you mean.
1	More detailed information is required on this befor informed comment can be made,
1	Need to consider safety.
1	Safety and dog extremely issues
1	The wooded area is too small for multiple signed trails.
1	unsafe

Count	Response
1	there is already a nice trail with a side loop that was made by local residents and used regularly. It doesn't require any signs as this is a small wooded area and does not require any directions. All signs will do is disrupt nature and give kids a something to destroy. We cleaned out lots of trash from this location to make it nice for use of everyone bordering the park and made enough of a presence known regularly to dissuade the druggies and prostitutes so it is nicer. When people from farther away use the woods and trail, we get more trash dumped and lots of broken glass. the city doesn't clean this up.

What do you think of the following recommendations?-Install wayfinding signs along Stultz and Stevenson Street to direct park users to the parking lot

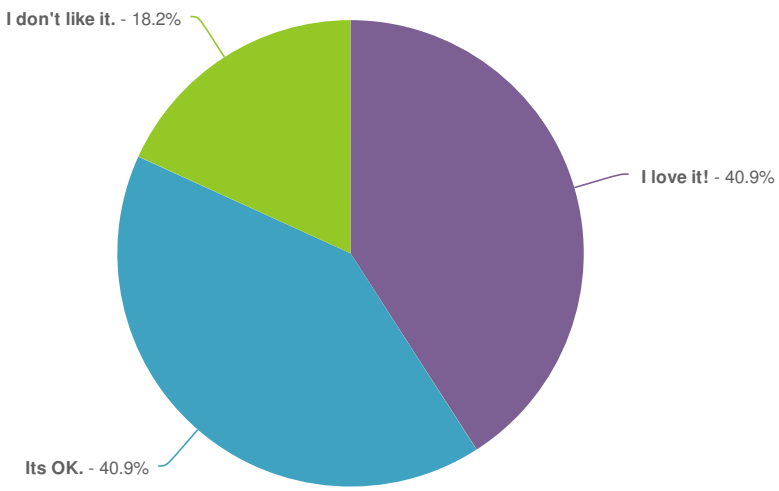


Value	Percent	Count
I love it!	50.0%	12
Its OK.	33.3%	8
I don't like it.	16.7%	4
	Total	24

Explain-Install wayfinding signs along Stultz and Stevenson Street to direct park users to the parking lot

Count	Response
1	not needed
1	the ballfield parking is hidden. People drop off at the playground.
1	Although unnecessary. all of us in the neighborhood use the lot and did not have any problem finding the entrance. Anyone who has been in the park at least once also knows how to access the lot.
1	you want more land from WAL but do you forget the only reason yo7u have Stevenson Park is because WAL gave you the land

What do you think of the following recommendations?-Line the outfield for soccer and provide portable goals

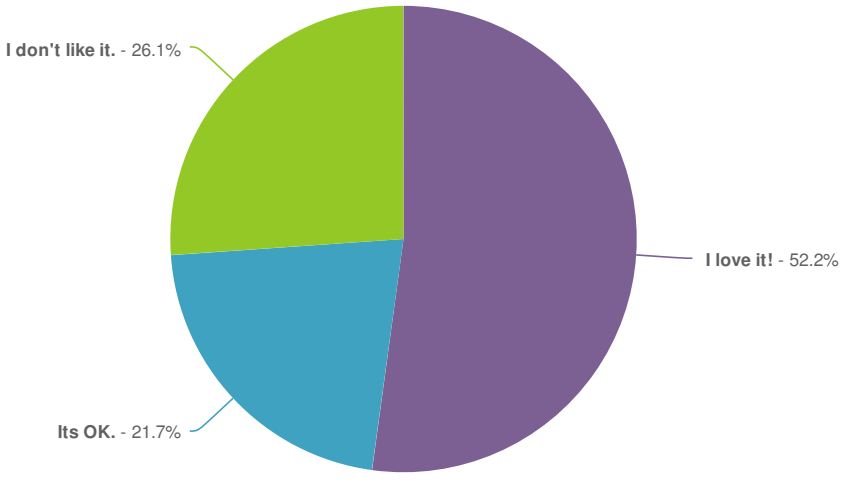


Value	Percent		Count
I love it!	40.9%		9
Its OK.	40.9%		9
I don't like it.	18.2%		4
		Total	22

Explain-Line the outfield for soccer and provide portable goals

Count	Response
1	great idea but watch out for dog poop
1	There hasn't been any soccer games at this field for the last 3 years due to declining field conditions since the city didn't maintain anything other than minimal grass cutting. A couple of people come in and kick balls around, usually from the townhouses next to the field.

What do you think of the following recommendations?-Re-design the parking lot to increase use and visibility

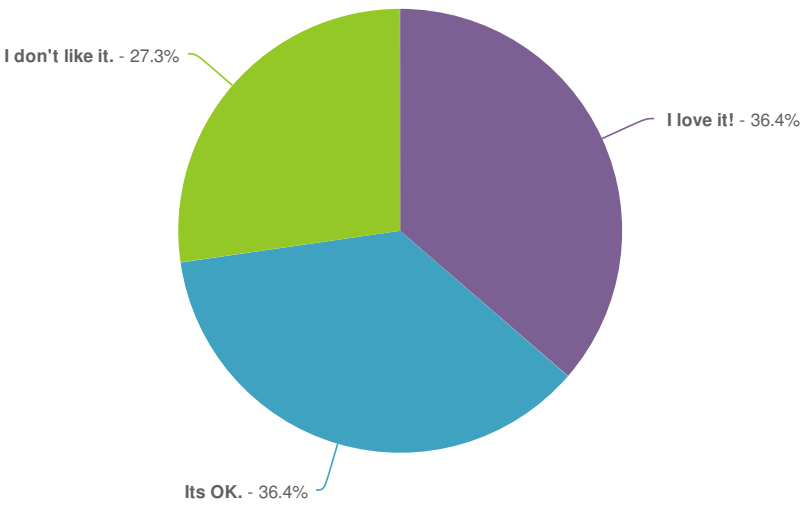


Value	Percent	Count
I love it!	52.2%	12
Its OK.	21.7%	5
I don't like it.	26.1%	6
	Total	23

Explain-Re-design the parking lot to increase use and visibility

Count	Response
1	I don't know how.
1	the parking lot gets used and when full is very tight, School buses use this lot after dropping off children and putting spaces in the middle area would make it impossible. Larger SUVs, mail trucks, etc also use this lot since it is a very narrow street. More spaces would further congest this area causing problems
1	It is likely that this small park will be used by residents who live in the adjacent dwellings. They can easily walk to Stevenson Park so additional parking is unnecessary.
1	Yes, because the existing parking lot is too small and used exclusively by the adjacent residences as their own

What do you think of the following recommendations?-Upgrade the ballfield to hold up to a 70ft diamond field with bleachers, dugouts, foul poles, and press box



Value	Percent	Count
I love it!	36.4%	8
Its OK.	36.4%	8
I don't like it.	27.3%	6
	Total	22

Explain-Upgrade the ballfield to hold up to a 70ft diamond field with bleachers, dugouts, foul poles, and press box

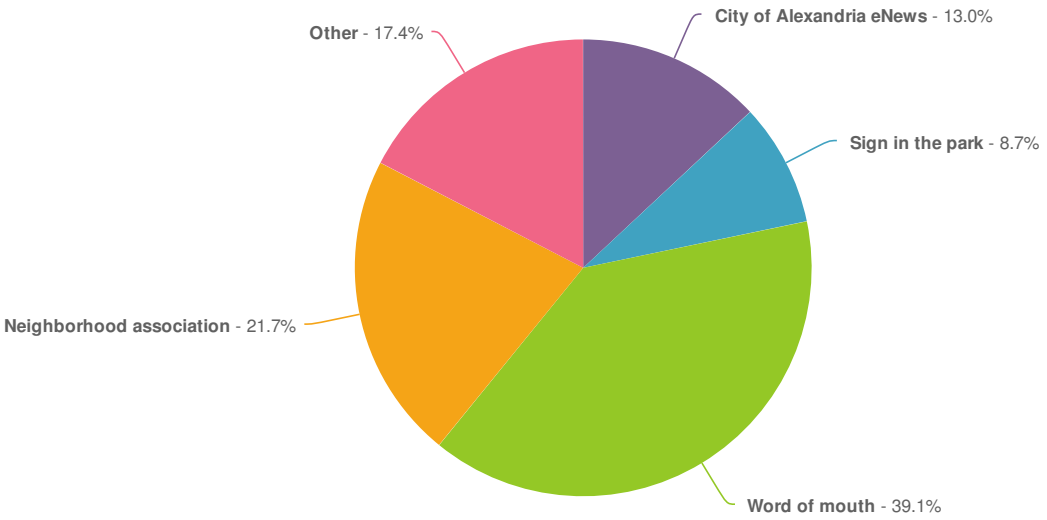
Count	Response
1	If there's room.
1	This will generate too much noise for neighbors.
1	and lighting and electronic score boarad?
1	kids practice or play here 5-6 days a week already. They and their families leave trash all over the place. water bottles, juice boxes, snack wrappers, coffee cups, baggies with candy or snack leftovers, etc. We don't need more of that which larger groups would bring. Since it is already used almost every day, the only way it would increase would be if they start earlier than 4 pm so you had back to back usage.

Do you feel all of the comments were heard and addressed in the draft Stevenson Park plan? If not, what is missing and how can we make the plan better?

Count	Response
1	Be happy with the land WAL has already given and lets not try to take more from them.
1	Concern about the security of Watergate at Landmark residents.
1	Concerned about security in this area.!
1	Misunderstand about the need for access from Watergate.
1	Yes
1	no additional comment
1	no. safety issues with easement were not considered.
1	The park truly needs lighting, additional shade area by the grill, an additional grill, & definitely a water fountain .
1	I think the plan was developed without talking to the neighboring residents who use this park on a daily basis. It's whole focus seems to be on bringing in people from farther away to use the park. The park is surrounded by hi-density housing and is gets significant useage. It is a small park and cannot handle much more useage without further degrading the natural resources and local wildlife. Also, the sign regarding this plan was placed where most adults using the park on a regular basis would not even see it. It appears that actual input from regular neighborhood users was not desired.
1	No attempt has been made to speak to the Association/residents at the affected condo communities located on Yoakum Parkway, or if it has, has not been advertised.
1	As per earlier remarks, more complete information is necessary as to the exact location of any proposed easement, its impact on at least two communities -- Watergate & Sentinel; whether such as an easement will require these communities to adjust existing fence lines; whether the easement will result in the "taking" of existing community property or impose costs on either association, etc. As for nature trails, the concept is fine, but it would be nice to know the details of the proposed trails and how invasive they may be, how well they will be maintained, whether this will result in the loss of any tree canopy, whether they will become an after-hour gathering spot which could create a nuisance factor. Again, more deailed information could relieve potential concerns.
1	Did not participate in the comments, but on board with the proposed access point from Yoakum Pkwy.
1	Please consider not allowing parking so close to driveway into parking area. Now difficult to see oncoming traffic from left when exiting.
1	The current basketball court could benefit as being used as a futsal court as well. There are a number of folks in this neighborhood interested and love playing soccer/futsal, which is the world's most popular game. It would be to see a multi-use court.

Count	Response
1	Two things suggested were - add play equipment that is appropriate for older children (something they can climb such as in Jones Point Park or at Tucker Playgrounds. - doggie poop bag station One more -yesterday I was at the park discussing the improvements with another park user and a bathroom is needed - other Alexandria parks have public bathrooms
1	Stevenson between Yoakum and Stultz has 8 driveways - 7 are from parking lots. This block allows parking on both sides. There have been numerous accidents, some involving pedestrians with one involving the death of a child. Stultz Rd allows parking on both sides of the street and cars park to the edge of the driveway corner of the playground. There is no marked cross walk.

How did you learn about the Neighborhood Park Plan survey?



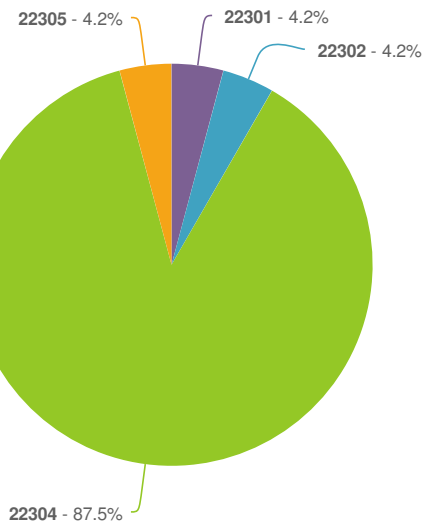
Value	Percent	Count
City of Alexandria eNews	13.0%	3
Sign in the park	8.7%	2
Word of mouth	39.1%	9
Neighborhood association	21.7%	5
Other	17.4%	4
	Total	23

Responses "Other"	Count
Left Blank	21
Watergate Landscape Cmte	1
Word of mouth and social media.	1
email	1

How many members of your household are in the following age groups?

	# in household	Responses
Under 5	**4** 100.0%	4
6-12	**4** 100.0%	4
13-18	**4** 100.0%	4
19-29	**3** 100.0%	3
30-49	**6** 100.0%	6
50-69	**12** 100.0%	12
70 or above	**12** 100.0%	12

What is your zip code?

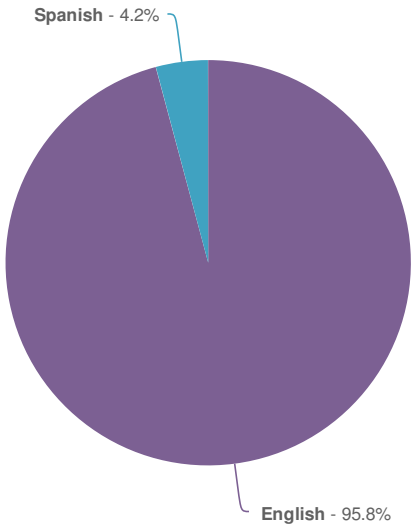


Value	Percent	Count
22301	4.2%	1
22302	4.2%	1
22304	87.5%	21
22305	4.2%	1
	Total	24

Statistics	
Sum	535,292.0
Average	22,303.8
StdDev	0.7
Max	22,305.0

Responses "I live outside of Alexandria"	Count
Left Blank	24

What is the primary language spoken in your home?



Value	Percent	Count
English	95.8%	23
Spanish	4.2%	1
	Total	24

Responses "other"	Count
Left Blank	24