

## **Status of Fort Ward Archaeology, March 2014**

Prepared for the Fort Ward Advisory Group  
by Alexandria Archaeology, Office of Historic Alexandria

Fort Ward Park consists of 42.75 acres located at 4301 Braddock Road. Owned by the City of Alexandria, the park is managed by the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities. The central 36.5-acre parcel represents the historical section of the park (Figure 2). It contains a Civil War-era fortification and the Fort Ward Museum, which are administered by the Office of Historic Alexandria.

Fort Ward was recognized as a significant historical site with placement of the historical parcel on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. The nomination for National Register designation highlights the role that Fort Ward played in the Civil War, when it formed one of the strongest links in a chain of 164 forts and batteries protecting Washington, D.C., from the Confederate Army. The northwest bastion of the fort was reconstructed in the 1960s when the City acquired the property to create the park. The historical section of the park is also registered as an archaeological site, 44AX90, with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

In October 2009, Alexandria City Council allocated funds to begin an archaeological investigation in the historical section of the park to provide information for park planning and management by locating and identifying the full range of cultural resources on the property, not just those related to the Civil War. The City's archaeological and historical work, which is ongoing, includes a focus on the study and interpretation of an African American community that developed on the property after the Civil War and continued as a neighborhood until the creation of the park in the 1960s. Known as "The Fort", the community included many families' homes, a school house that later became a chapel and then a residence, and several burial grounds. To ensure preservation of burials, locating and identifying the African American cemeteries and individual graves on the property has been a critical part of the City-funded initiative.

Fieldwork for three distinct excavation projects has been completed to date. For scheduling and funding purposes, the projects have been identified as Stage 1, Stage 2A and a first phase of Stage 2B. The Stage 1 excavation, conducted by the Ottery Group, Inc. from fall 2010 into January 2011, focused on identifying unmarked grave locations, testing the efficacy of using ground penetrating radar as a tool to locate graves, and locating other potentially significant resources in limited areas of the Fort Ward property. Stage 2B fieldwork, also by the Ottery Group, was completed during summer 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. Additional funds remain in the Stage 2B budget to allow for archaeological investigation prior to a more permanent solution to drainage issues within the park. The Stage 2A work, conducted in 2012 with a field crew of temporary city employees working under the supervision of Alexandria Archaeology staff, concentrated on identifying unmarked graves and other potentially significant resources in the sections of the park that were not investigated as part of the Stage 1 project. In addition, with funding from a Save America's Treasures grant from the National Park Service,

the 2012 work included testing to ensure that a proposed ADA walkway would not disturb any significant archaeological resources and to attempt to determine boundaries of both the Jackson Cemetery and Old Grave Yard so that these sacred areas of the Fort Ward property could be fenced or delineated without disturbing burials. In addition to the fieldwork, a draft of a history report on the Fort community has been prepared by consultant Dr. Krystyn Moon.

This report presents a brief summary of the work conducted to date to date for each stage and each project. The preliminary results of this work have been presented at various meetings of the Fort Ward Advisory Group and have been shared with Lardner-Klein, the consultants preparing a management plan for Fort Ward for the City of Alexandria. This report brings these results together to clarify the implications for planning and management.

## **Investigations Conducted To Date**

**Stage 1-October 2010 – January 2011,  
Ground Penetrating Radar, Sara Lowry;  
Excavation, Ottery Group, Inc.--Shorts Lot, Schoolhouse/Church lot, Old Grave Yard,  
Jackson Cemetery, former maintenance yard**

### Investigation

- A ground penetrating radar survey (GPR) was conducted by Sara Lowry to locate anomalies that could represent burials in known and possible cemetery areas on the grounds of Fort Ward.
- Ottery Group, Inc. conducted field excavations to field check the anomalies discovered and test the efficacy of using ground penetrating radar (GPR). They also conducted excavations to test for the presence of other cultural resources on the lot that contained the home of Harriett and Burr Shorts, one of the earliest African American families to live in The Fort Community, and within the former maintenance yard, including the school/church location.
- Metal detection was conducted to attempt to identify significant areas of Civil War activity outside of the fortification.

### Results:

- Locations of 23 graves were identified, 4 in the Jackson Cemetery, 16 in the Old Grave Yard (Note: Two of these grave locations represent the head and the foot of a single burial.), and 2 in the Clara Adams burial area.
- GPR produced false positives and false negatives with regard to its ability to identify locations of graves.
- Buried resources on the Shorts house lot, the schoolhouse/church/residence property, and the Casey/Belk lot were discovered.

## **Stage 2B Excavation, Summer 2011, Ottery Group Interim Drainage Project**

### Investigation

- Archaeologists conducted excavations along the lines of all interim drainage trenches to ensure that no burials would be disturbed as a result of placement of the interim drainage system and to look for evidence of other cultural features.
- Metal detection was conducted to attempt to identify significant areas of Civil War activity outside of the fortification.

### Results:

- Evidence of one possible human grave that had been graded away was discovered in an area just south of the entry road.
- A pet burial was discovered to the southwest of the Old Grave Yard.
- Two post holes were discovered and excavated in the former maintenance yard.

## **Stage 2A-Excavation, Spring and Summer 2012, Alexandria Archaeology Investigation of full acreage of park outside of the fortification**

### Investigation

- City archaeologists dug trenches and hand-excavated units to look for evidences of graves on the Fort Ward property in 11 areas identified as having potential for burials to be present: Old Grave Yard, Jackson Cemetery, Adams Burial Area, Clark Burial Area, Clark Lot, School/Church and Ruffner Lots, North of Oakland Area, West of Oakland Area, Craven Lot, and Good Samaritan Lot.
- City archaeologists conducted a shovel test survey on all sections of the property (primarily outside of the fortifications) to identify locations of buried cultural resources in order to provide information about of the African American community and use during other historical periods for planning and interpretive purposes. Approximately 1400 shovel test pits were excavated.
- Hand-excavated units were placed in areas where significant numbers of artifacts related to the African American community were discovered and in areas where there was historical evidence from maps and photographs for structures to be present.
- Several hand-excavated units were placed inside the fortification to explore areas that could have contained significant Civil War features, such as a well and a base for the Fort Ward flagpole.
- A combination of more than 100 hand-excavated units and backhoe trenches were dug during Stage 2A archaeology.
- Metal detection was conducted in selected locations to attempt to discover significant areas of Civil War activity outside of the fortification.

### Results

- Additional grave locations were discovered in four areas, bringing the total number of burials to 43: 20 in the Jackson Cemetery, 17 in the Old Grave Yard, 4 associated with the Adams Burial Area, and 2 in the Clark Burial Area (Figure 1).

- Twenty areas were identified with concentrations of artifacts or evidence of structures or other features relating to the African American community (Figure 2).
- Three scatters of Civil War materials were discovered outside of the fortification, but no evidence of the well or flagpole locations was found (Figure 3).
- A scatter of Native American artifacts was found north of the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery (Figure 4).

### **Save America's Treasures Grant Excavations, Summer 2012, Alexandria Archaeology Excavations for ADA walkway and possible cemetery demarcations**

#### Investigation

- Archaeologists dug shovel tests and did metal detection inside the fortification to determine the effect of construction of a proposed walkway that would comply with the requirements of the AmericansWith Disabilities Act.
- Trenches were excavated around the identified graves in the Old Grave Yard and Jackson Cemetery areas in an attempt to locate areas where these cemeteries could be demarcated without causing disturbance to burials.

#### Results

- Archaeologists found that significant cultural levels would not be disturbed by construction of the walkway, which is extremely shallow.
- Perimeters containing no evidence of burials were identified that enclose much of the Old Grave Yard and Jackson Cemetery areas. More work is needed in these areas.

### **Summer Camp, Summer 2012 and 2013, Alexandria Archaeology**

#### Investigation

- In 2012 and 2013, City archaeologists held a summer camp at Fort Ward. Campers excavated in the household areas of the Ashbys and the Javins, two of the earliest families of the African American community on the property.

#### Results

- Numerous artifacts from these two households have been discovered and will be analyzed. The foundations of the Ashby house were also found and mapped.

### **Fort Ward History Report**

- Dr. Krystyn Moon has completed a draft report, *Finding the Fort: A History of an African American Neighborhood in Northern Virginia, 1860s – 1960s*
- Dr. Moon and City staff met with the descendants of Fort Ward and Seminary. They suggested revisions to the report, and she is currently working to address their comments and corrections.

## Archaeological Work Funded for FY2014-2015

Funding for archaeological work associated with the implementation of the more permanent drainage project near Oakland Baptist Cemetery is available. Plans call for testing south of the Oakland Cemetery boundary in the summer and fall of this year.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The attached chart and maps provide the locations of significant archaeological resources identified on Fort Ward as a result of the archaeological investigations conducted to date (Table 1, Figures 1-4). The chart lists 53 areas that contain buried evidence of past activities on the property. In addition to the Civil War fortifications and barracks, these include 4 verified cemetery areas, 7 possible cemetery areas, 20 areas with the potential to provide insight into life of African Americans at The Fort, 3 scatters of other Civil War materials outside of the fortification, and a scatter of materials related to Native American use of the property. The locations of resources relating to these different periods are shown on Figures 1 through 3. Options and recommendations for additional archaeological work in each of these areas are indicated on the chart along with recommendations and implications for planning and management purposes. It should be noted that additional archaeological work is recommended in some of the verified and possible cemetery areas as well as in areas where ground disturbance associated with interpretation or other changes is proposed in the Lardner/Klein management plan.

The archaeological investigations have identified protection areas at Fort Ward that provide guidance for planning and management within the park. As shown on Figure 5 (the map that was included in the Lardner/Klein draft management plan), four levels of resource protection have been proposed:

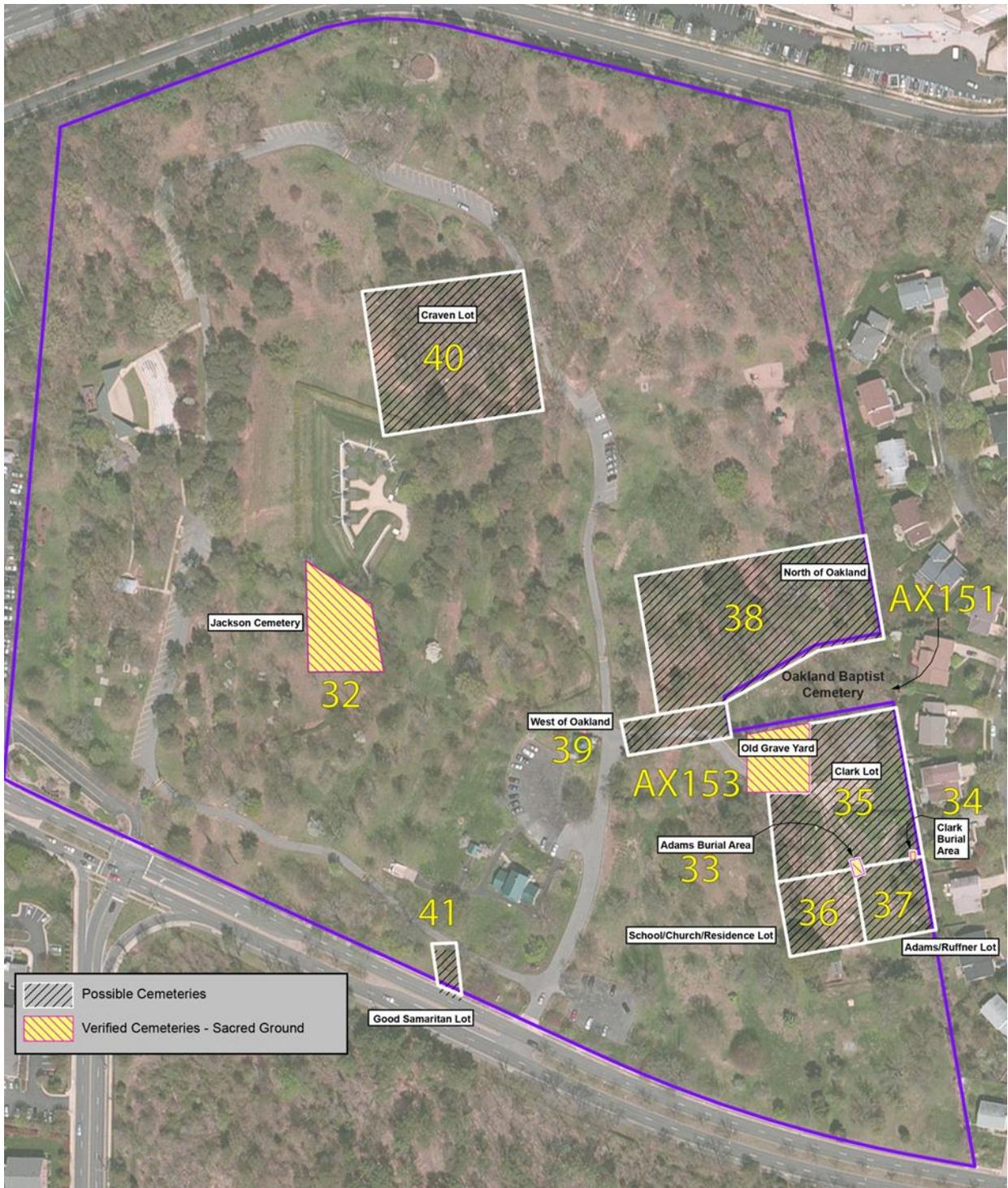
#### Levels of Resource Protection

- **Maximum Protection Areas**—verified grave areas, possible cemeteries, and Civil War earthworks. No development should be planned. No ground disturbance without archaeological review and excavation and/or monitoring. Excavation should occur in all verified or possible cemetery areas prior to any ground disturbance; if evidence of graves is discovered, plans shall be changed to ensure protection of the burials *in situ*.
- **High Protection Areas**--areas where foundations, other features, and artifact scatters relating to the African American community, life of Civil War soldiers, and evidence of Native American use have been discovered. No development should be planned. No ground disturbance (other than aeration) shall proceed without archaeological review. If deemed necessary, archaeological excavation and/or monitoring will be conducted.
- **Medium Protection Areas**--areas where archaeological testing did not indicate the presence of significant archaeological resources. Minimal ground disturbing activities (such as, stump grinding, tree planting, etc.) may occur in these areas without archaeological excavation or monitoring. If development or major changes are proposed (such as, grading, construction of an interpretive or picnic area, etc.), archaeological

review is required. If deemed necessary, archaeological excavation and/or monitoring will be conducted.

- Low Protection Areas--areas with previous disturbances where archaeological testing did not indicate the presence of significant archaeological resources. Ground disturbing activities may occur in these areas without archaeological review.

In addition, in all protection areas, the following condition shall apply when an archaeologist is not on site: Call Alexandria Archaeology (703-746-4399) if structural remains (eg. foundations, wells, privies, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during ground disturbing activities. Work must stop in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site to evaluate the resource and determine appropriate preservation measures.

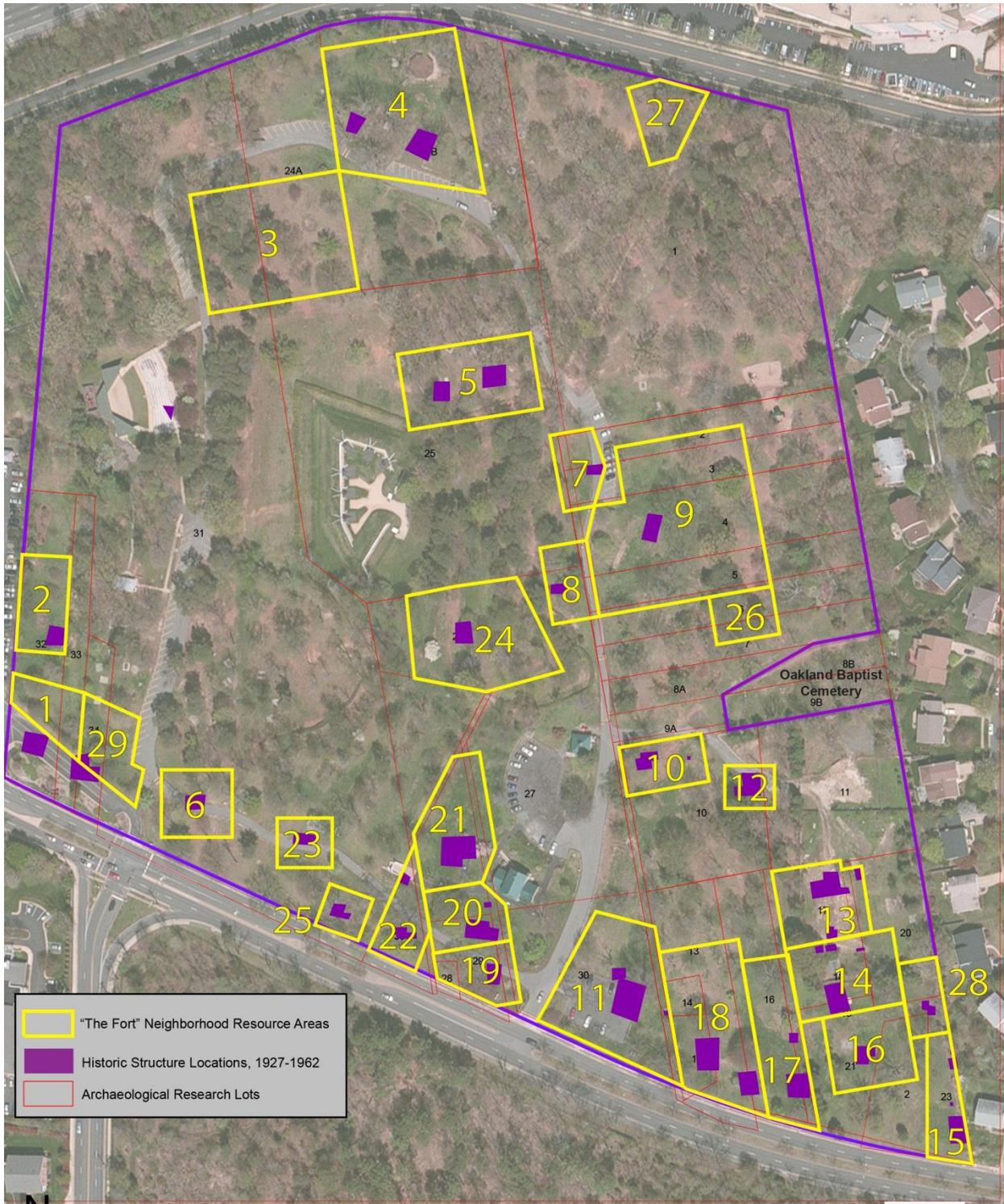


## Fort Ward Cultural Resources Identified and Potential Cemeteries



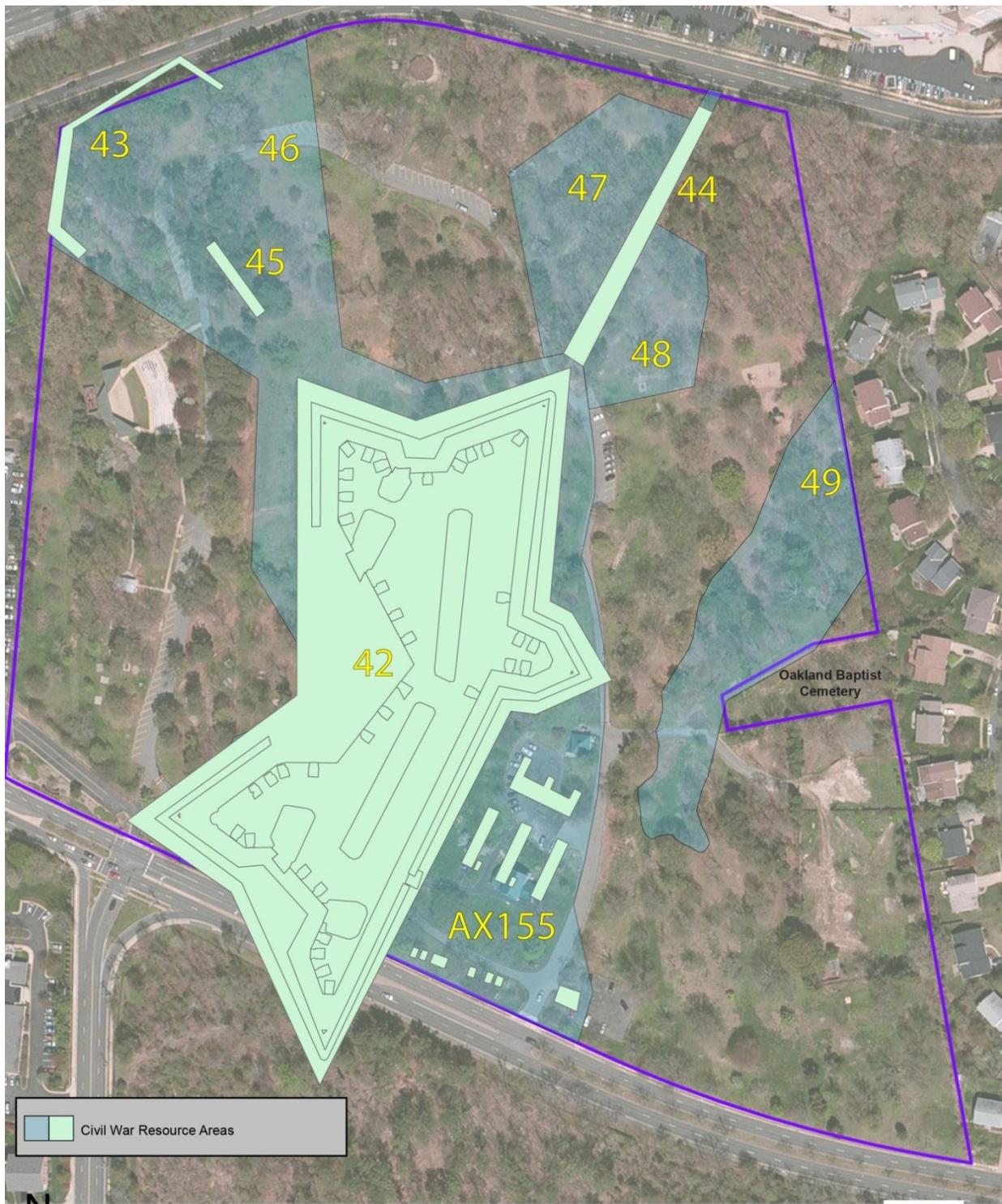
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Figure 1



## Fort Ward Cultural Resources "The Fort" Community

Figure 2



## Fort Ward Cultural Resources Civil War

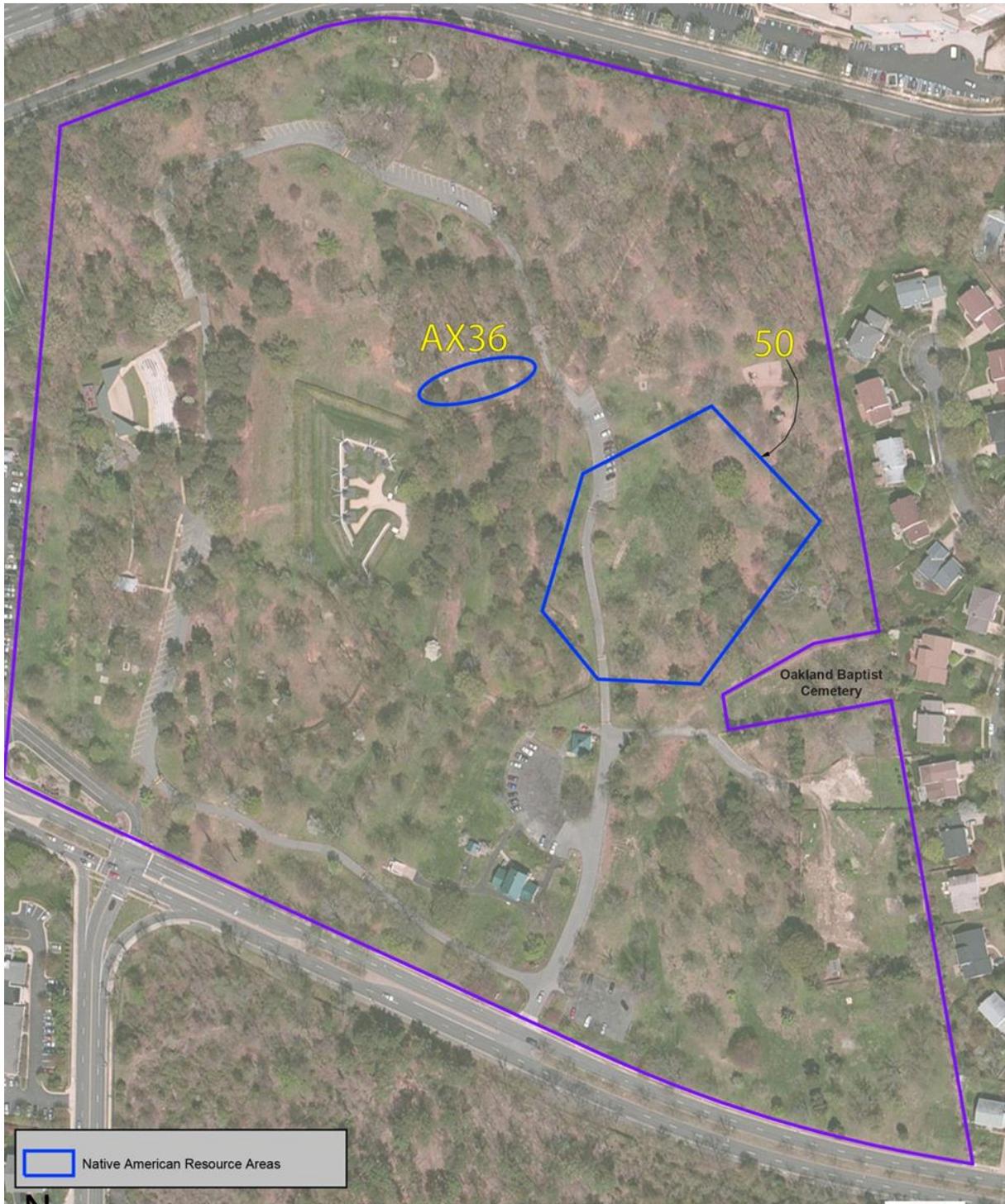


0 62.5 125 250 375 500 Feet



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Figure 3



# Fort Ward Cultural Resources Native American

0 62.5 125 250 375 500  
Feet



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Figure 4

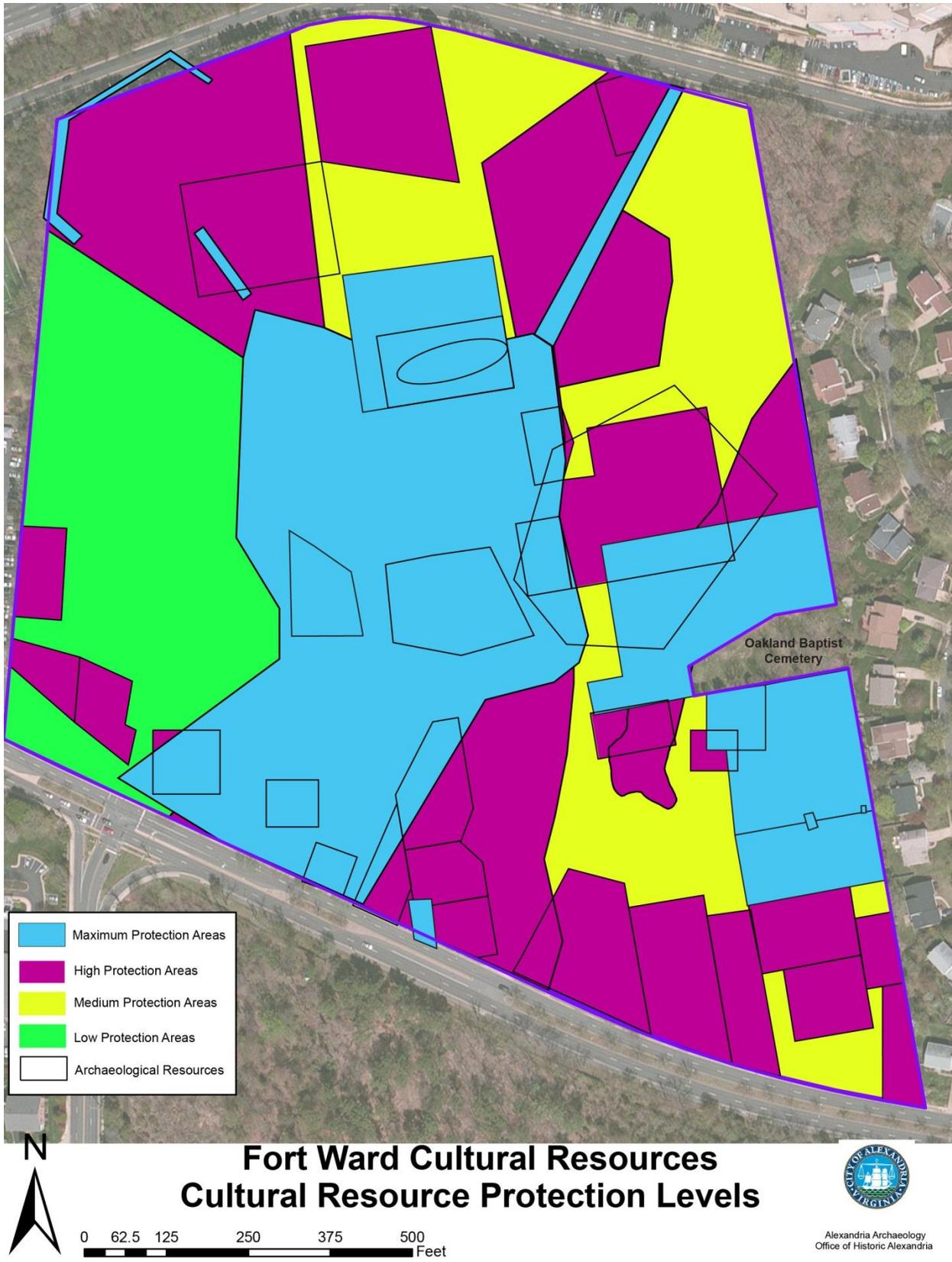


Figure 5—See report text for description of levels of protection.