



Goal 4: Educate and Engage Visitors - Share the Stories of Fort Ward Park
Park: *Share the Stories of Fort Ward Park: Increase and broaden the audience in support of the park's preservation and enhancement by providing a high quality interpretive and educational experience.*

Goal 4 Action Examples

- Develop new Advisory Group to guide the development of the park's Interpretive Plan; Group to provide guidance on selection of appropriate topics, stories and text for inclusion and match selections to best communication and educational practices

Goal 5: Enhance Park Facilities: *Satisfy the growing need for passive recreational enjoyment of a shady, natural oasis from an increasing complex urban environment.*

Goal 5 Action Examples

- Develop pedestrian network of soft paths
- Connect the park to the surrounding pedestrian system (West Braddock, North Van Dorn, athletic fields)
- Better communicate and enforce park regulations
- Remove unleashed dog exercise area from park
- Relocate playground to western side of park - long-term

Next Steps

- Public Meeting on Monday, February 24 at 7 PM
- Public Meeting on Saturday, March 8 from noon to 4 PM
- City sponsored online comment board

Both meetings will be held at the St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School Gymnasium, 4401 West Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA

Need More Information?



Laura Durham
 Open Space Coordinator
 Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
 1108 Jefferson Street
 Alexandria, VA 22314
 (P) 703.746.5493
 e-mail laura.durham@alexandriava.gov

The City of Alexandria is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request a reasonable accommodation or to request materials in an alternative format, call Laura Durham at 703.746.5493 (Virginia Relay 711) or e-mail laura.durham@alexandriava.gov.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION for updated Fort Ward Park Definition and Purpose

Fort Ward Park is a regional park serving the City of Alexandria. The park's founding purpose was for use as a 35-acre historic park and museum with recreational facilities such as picnic areas and an amphitheater enhanced by carefully located planting beds¹.

Later, additional acres (not subject to this Management Plan) were acquired and are used for active recreation and athletic fields. Today, in addition to its history and interpretive and educational mission, the park serves the surrounding community's need for passive recreation consisting of less structured and less formal activities. Examples include: tot lots, picnic areas, historic/cultural sites, amphitheaters and natural resource areas. The park is also significant locally as open space for the City of Alexandria—associated with an adjoining complex of centrally located and largely wooded parcels of land owned by Episcopal High School, the Episcopal Theological Seminary and the Second Presbyterian Church.

¹ Application for listing on the National Register of Historic Places approved by the Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, Commonwealth of Virginia, February 16, 1982



Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

Fort Ward Park Today

Fort Ward Park is an asset to the City of Alexandria and the region. Rich in historical and natural resources, it is fraying, heavily used and in need of a collective vision to move forward, steward its resources and expand its interpretive and passive recreation offerings in a responsible manner. It is time to explore additional sources of support for the park. Issues that must be addressed in the development of the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan include the stewardship of the park's rich collection of cultural and natural resources, the park's importance as a recreational opportunity for the residents of Alexandria and the park's importance as open space for the west end.

Acquisition and Early Development of the Park

The first 35 acres of the 43.46 acre property were acquired in the 1950s to both preserve and reconstruct a portion of the fort for the upcoming Civil War Centennial and to establish a public park. In addition to the Civil War resources, the land possesses a century-long legacy of community life and heritage that preceded development of the park as a public amenity. Known to local families as "The Fort" community, physical evidence of its history includes archaeological sites, burial sites, plantings and road traces. Fort Ward Park's Museum has an outstanding collection of Civil War artifacts, a research library and educational and interpretive programming. In recent years, the history and significance of the post-Civil War evolution of the Fort Ward site has been brought to light, focusing on the African American families that built homes and created a community in and around the Seminary.





The Challenge

Fort Ward Park is filled with historic resources and is rich in natural resources. Every square foot of the park is used—for historic interpretation, for recreation and as native woodland. Potential and documented cultural artifacts lie underground and their protection is in conflict with many normal park operation activities such as tree and stump removal, turf aeration, tree planting and trail development. Proposed best management practices must respect and understand the interrelated nature of the park's resources.

Why Develop a Management Plan?

A management plan addresses specific topics that affect a park and its mission and operations. The document lays out a long-range plan and management strategy that reflects a community's values and interests. Expanded from the concept of a master plan—a type of plan that prescribes improvements and their location within a set time period—a management plan is usually focused on cultural and natural resources, educational opportunities and operational issues at a site. Management plans are useful tools and provide strategic guidance for decision-making on complex issues that have many variables and potential answers.

Recommendations are incorporated in a series of physically defined management zones, reflecting the purpose of the park and the goals established for the park's specific topics or resources. Zone plans recommend uses or levels of impact in specific areas of the park as related to the vulnerability of a resource topic and are implemented through specific actions. Topics addressed at Fort Ward include natural and cultural resources, interpretation of those resources, operations, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and park and recreation facilities.

Plan Contents

The full Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan goes into great detail regarding recommended best practices and actions for better management of the park. To support these recommendations, the document includes chapters focused on the site's resources. Chapter II presents a snapshot of the site's present natural and cultural resources. Chapters III and IV outline a framework for balancing the need to accommodate a wide range of users and bring awareness to the special significance of Fort Ward Park and the Museum.

Chapter V presents the report's recommendations around a framework of goals, objectives, strategies and actions. The framework recognizes that the management actions for Fort Ward Park must support a broad array of users and uses; must protect and maintain the park's nationally significant historic and cultural resources and locally significant natural resources; must strive to educate its visitors through innovative and engaging interpretation and programming; and must continue to satisfy the growing needs for passive recreational enjoyment of a shady, natural oasis from an increasing complex urban environment.



Management Plan Goals

The goal statements are supported by objectives, strategies and actions. Many actions are illustrated in maps and by photographs in the report and are also outlined in a spreadsheet in the report's Appendix. Examples of actions related to each of the five goals are:

Goal 1: Management and Funding: *The City of Alexandria will support a broad array of users and uses by collaboratively and equitably investing in the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area as compared with other regional city parks and facilities.*

Goal 1 Action Examples

- Expand the area under the supervision of the Office for Historic Alexandria
- Expand the existing 'Friends Group'
- Link the park's financial needs to other City-wide initiatives
- Sponsor education and research panels and symposia

Goal 2: Park Character - Preserve, Protect, Repair and Maintain Resources: *The City of Alexandria, working with its Boards and Commissions, volunteers and park neighbors will work to protect and maintain the nationally significant historic and cultural resources and locally significant natural resources found within Fort Ward Park.*

Goal 2 Action Examples

- Mark and protect unrecognized Civil War archaeology, "The Fort" community and burial sites
- Remove former Maintenance Yard fence, gate, drive, fill and buildings; restore
- Establish boundaries for turf types, meadow, woodlands

Goal 3: Landscape Cultural Practices: *Adopt appropriate and coordinated landscape management practices.*

Goal 3 Action Examples

- Plant new trees and shrubs annually
- Prune trees and remove fallen and hazard trees; remove standing stumps
- Assess tree growth on earthworks



Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan
 Management Zones Land Cover Definition
 City of Alexandria, Virginia
 Management Plan Boundary
 Park Boundary
 Contour 2'
 Potential Soft Path
 Woodlands
 Meadows
 Impervious
 Turf not irrigated
 Arboretum Memorial