



Fort Ward Park Management Plan and Interpretive Plan Updates

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Office of Historic Alexandria

January 24, 2022



ALL Alexandria: Committing to Race and Social Equity

WHEREAS, every Alexandrian must reckon with the City's historical past as well as our explicit and implicit involvement and contributions to the institution of American slavery and the subsequent and deeply rooted racial inequities of today;

WHEREAS, Alexandria recognizes that meaningful community involvement, input and investment is both desired and necessary to identify, explore, develop and implement policies, measures, and accountability in the pursuit of fair and equitable outcomes for ALL Alexandria;

— *Excerpt from Resolution No. 2974 Adopted by City Council January 23, 2021*

Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

“The City of Alexandria affirms that significant parts of Fort Ward Park are hallowed ground. Fort Ward Park is home to significant historic and cultural resources, including sacred burial grounds of the families that lived there. The City of Alexandria recognizes that these sacred places and any other burial sites identified in the future shall be protected from disturbance and treated with respect and dignity. The Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan provides a sensitive approach to acknowledging, protecting and interpreting the resources on this property, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places along with guidelines for managing the area's natural resources and compatible passive recreation uses.”

(Preamble, page 2, Fort Ward Park and Museum Management Plan)



Fort Ward Park Management Plan and Interpretive Plan Updates

Virtual Meeting Agenda
7:00 p.m.

- Introductions
- Presentation:
 - Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan
 - Archaeology Research and Findings: The Fort Community
 - Ground Disturbance Protocols
 - Project Updates:
 - Interpretive Plan Initiatives
 - Park Accessibility Improvements: Vehicular Parking, Picnic Shelter Accessible Route and Playground relocation
- Questions and Comments

Meeting Purpose and Goals

- ❖ Provide background on proposed projects as recommended in the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan
- ❖ Obtain feedback about the picnic shelter accessible route and playground relocation
- ❖ Continue to foster community engagement about plan implementation

Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan Timeline

- 2008: Fort Ward History Work Group
- 2009: Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group
- 2009-2017: Archaeological investigations
- January 2015: City Council Adopts the Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan
- May 2015-July 2017: Ad Hoc Fort Ward Management Plan Implementation Monitoring Group
- 2015: Drainage Improvements completed adjacent to Oakland Baptist Cemetery
- 2016-2019: Fort Ward Park Interpretive Committee and Plan

Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan



Five Plan Goals:

- ❖ *Collaborative Management and Equitable Funding*
- ❖ *Preserve, Protect, Repair and Maintain Resources*
- ❖ *Adopt Landscape Cultural Practices*
- ❖ *Educate and Engage Visitors*
- ❖ *Enhance Park Facilities*

Alexandria City Council adopted the plan in January 2015

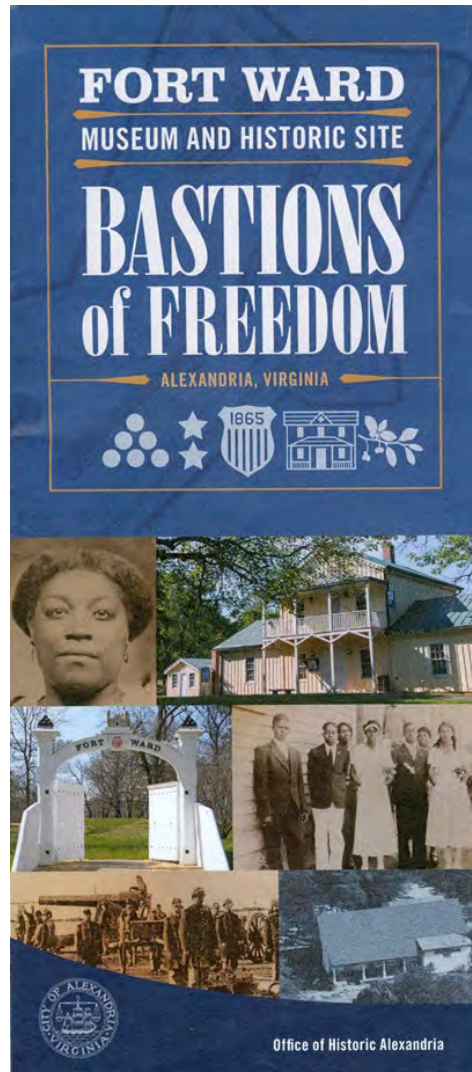
Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan Implementation

Priority Items



- ❖ Development of interpretive plan
- ❖ Mark and protect "The Fort" community and burial areas and protect burial sites from unintentional recreational use
- ❖ Make existing loop road accessible and provide additional accessible park furniture and parking
- ❖ Mark and protect unrecognized Civil War archaeology
- ❖ Redirect stormwater and sheet flow away from sensitive cultural and recreational resources
- ❖ Remove former maintenance yard access drive, fencing and gate and restore the area
- ❖ Plant new trees and provide additional care for existing trees
- ❖ Remove off-leash dog exercise area
- ❖ Protect earthworks from foot traffic
- ❖ Train all maintenance personnel to minimize damage to resources
- ❖ Relocate the playground and make it more accessible
- ❖ Identify Fort Ward on region-wide maps, brochures, websites and other city publication

Fort Ward Park Interpretive Plan



- Recommended in the Management Plan to tell the full story of Fort Ward's history, from the Civil War to the Fort community
- Interpretive Plan committee formed 2016 to accomplish this goal; Interpretive Plan consultants finalized Concept Plan for projects in 2019
- New FW brochure "Bastions of Freedom" completed in 2020
- "Bastions of Freedom" theme will frame other interpretive projects
- Start a new Fort Ward history group for community input on specific interpretive projects

Archaeology



Current Goals of Archaeological Research at Fort Ward Park

- ❖ Design New Infrastructure to Avoid Resources, when possible
- ❖ Interpret history and archaeology in new and accessible ways
- ❖ Partner with the community to preserve cultural and sacred sites

Archaeology



Archaeology through the Ages

- ❖ First City excavations in 1961 focused exclusively on the Civil War fortifications
- ❖ In 1991, archaeology expanded beyond the bastions.
- ❖ Beginning in 2009, with descendants, the research design expanded to tell the full story.

Archaeology



Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
Shovel Test Pit Survey

0 200 400 800 Feet



Archaeology



Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
Shovel Test Pit Survey Artifact Density

0 200 400 800 Feet



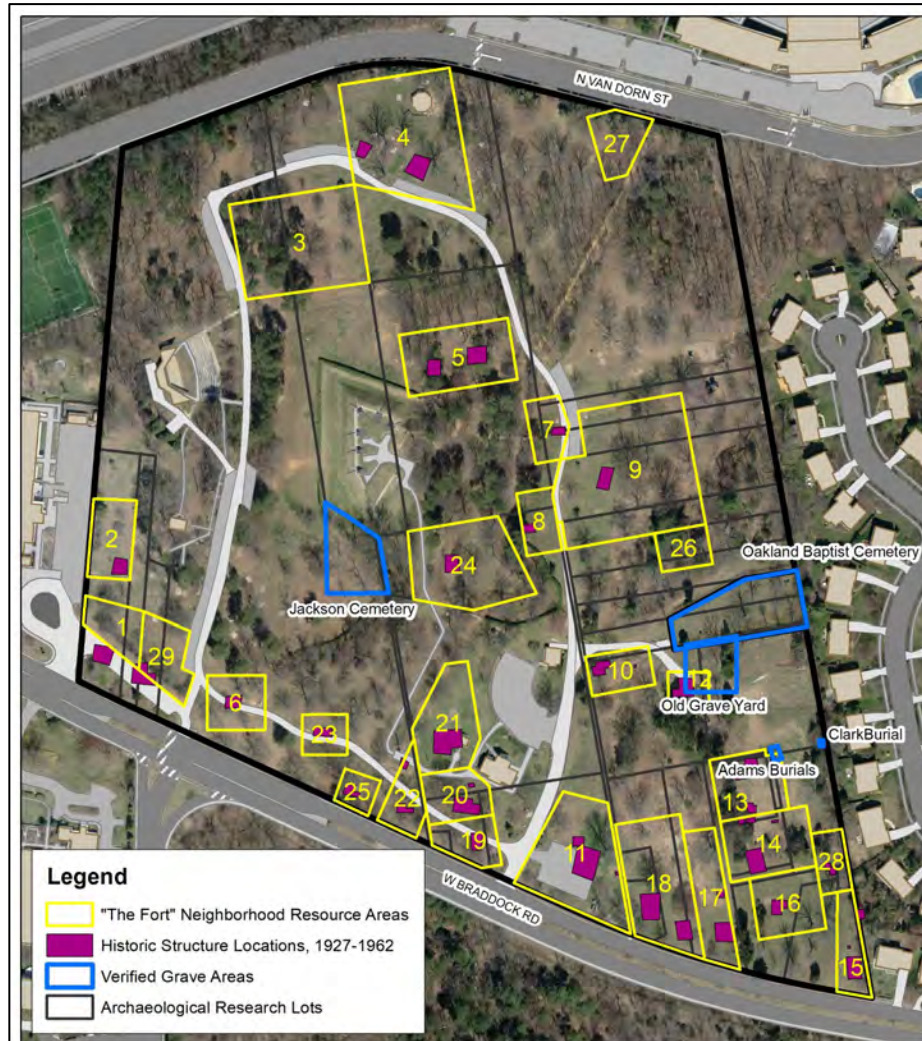
Results of STP Survey

- ❖ Red areas show highest artifact concentration.
- ❖ Yellow shows moderate frequency of artifacts.
- ❖ Blue is low artifact frequency.

Archaeology

The Fort Community Cultural Resources

- ❖ Archaeologists identified the remains of over 30 structures (purple) related to the African American families who lived at Fort Ward.
- ❖ The yellow lines shows the houselots of African American families, derived from archaeology, documentary sources, and oral history.
- ❖ The blue lines show verified cemeteries and burial grounds.



Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
"The Fort" Community

0 200 400 800 Feet



Protecting the Past

Fort Ward Cultural Resource Protection Levels

Fort Ward Ground Disturbance Protocols

- ❖ RED: No Ground Disturbing Activities Allowed except for placement of formal interpretive elements with archaeological review and investigation
- ❖ SOLID RED: No aeration permitted
- ❖ YELLOW: No Ground Disturbing Activities Allowed without further review by OHA
- ❖ GREEN: Minimal Ground Disturbing Activities (such as aeration, stump grinding, tree planting, and soft path construction)



Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
Cultural Resource Management Areas

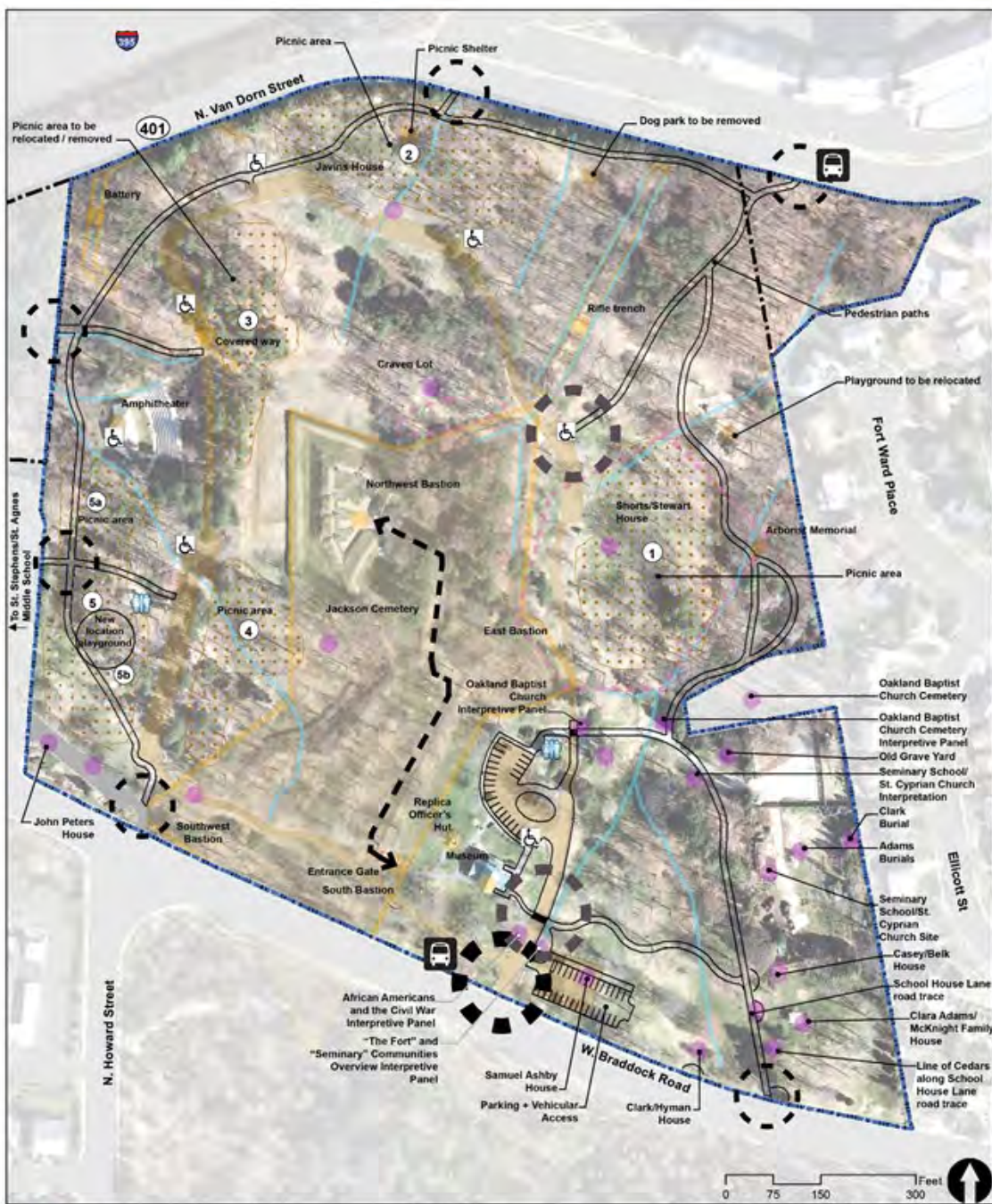
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2015 Management Plan Park Enhancements

Planning and Implementation goals

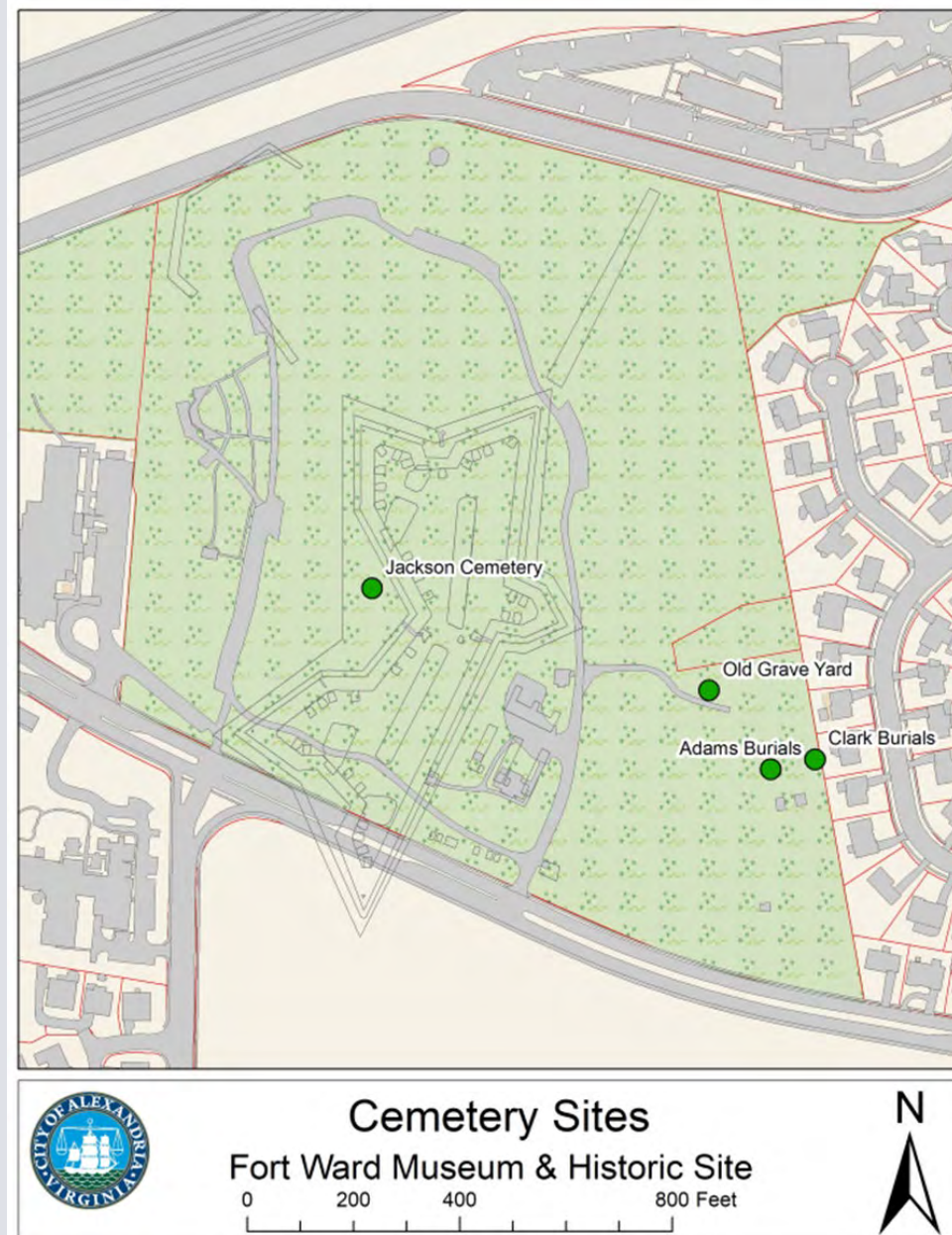
- Protect cultural resource areas
- Protect natural resources
- Limit ground disturbance
- Meet ADA requirements
- Coordinate and collaborate with archaeology during all project phases
- Community engagement



Protecting and memorializing Fort community cemeteries and burial sites



- **Goal: to Educate and engage visitors, Section II-5.10**
- Strategy 4.1.2 Make use of landscape features to tell the stories
- Design and install landscape elements and a memorial stone that allow for cemeteries and grave sites to be experienced as places of contemplation
- **Goal: Preserve, Protect, Repair and Maintain Resources, Section II-5.10**
- Strategy Actions 2.1.1
- Mark and protect “the Fort” community and burial sites
- Map areas where ground disturbance may occur and levels of supervision
- **Goal: Best Practices, Ground Disturbance, Section II-6.12**
- Strategy Actions: Mark and protect “The Fort” community and burial sites
- Place appropriately designed enclosure around the perimeter of the Old Grave Yard and Jackson Cemetery; mark graves at the Clark burial site
- Establish protection strategies for “Fort” community cultural resources and sacred sites



This project focuses on further protection and memorialization of the Park’s key cemeteries and sacred burial sites.

- Ground disturbance policy and mapping of sensitive areas in place
- July 2021 public meeting reviewed goals and gathered feedback
- Temporary protective stanchions to be replaced with appropriate permanent fencing that demarcates burial sites
- Additional commemoration of burial sites with memorial stones or markers and interpretive signage

Protecting and memorializing Fort community cemeteries and burial sites

Demarcating Cemetery perimeters



Old Grave Yard with temporary wood stanchions



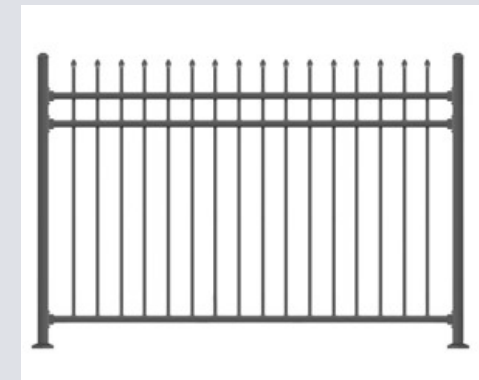
Jackson Cemetery on fort glacis, with Northwest bastion of the Civil War fort in background

Considerations:

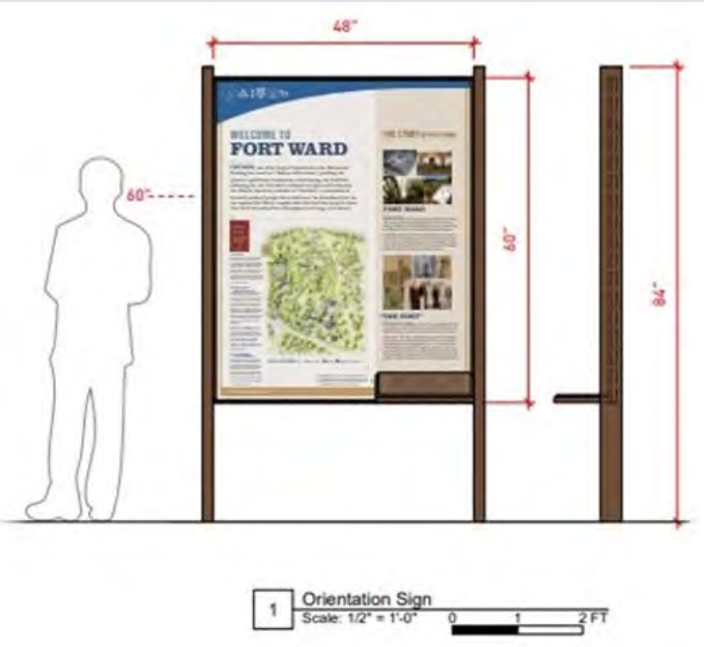
- Known perimeter for demarcation & ground disturbance concerns
- Options that are historically appropriate & compatible with Park setting
- Fencing styles that are historically compatible and consistent with existing fencing style in Alexandria cemeteries



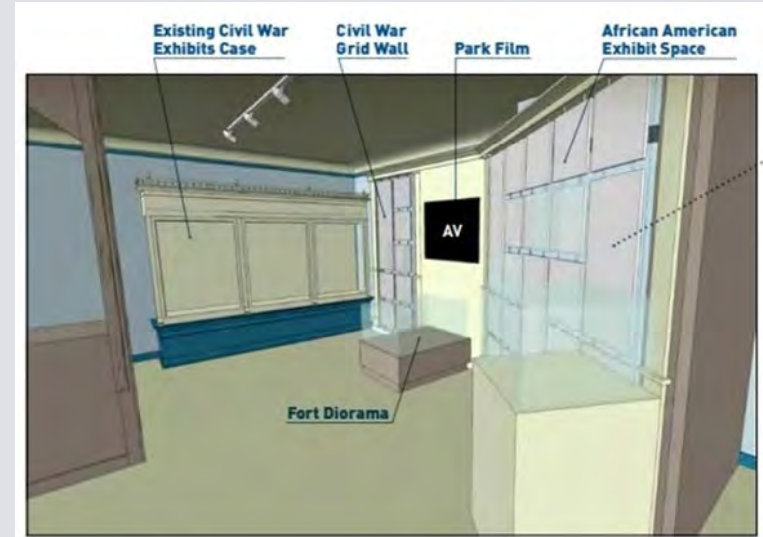
"Hairpin" style iron fencing, between Douglass and Christ Episcopal Cemeteries



Upcoming Interpretive Plan Projects



- Two Park Orientation Stations, completion 2022
- Museum Orientation Exhibit and Film, installation goal 2023
- Interpretive Signage, phased beginning 2022
- “Fort” Interpretive Trail, funding request FY2023, multi-year project requiring further public input
 - Includes additional signage, school/chapel/residence feature, and commemorative space



Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements



- Management Plan Strategy
1.3.2: Enhance's Park accessibility and meet ADA requirements
- Comply with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates and 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- Resolve complaints received by the Office of Human Rights
- Prioritize park facilities that do not meet requirements:
 - Vehicular parking areas
 - Picnic shelter
 - Playground

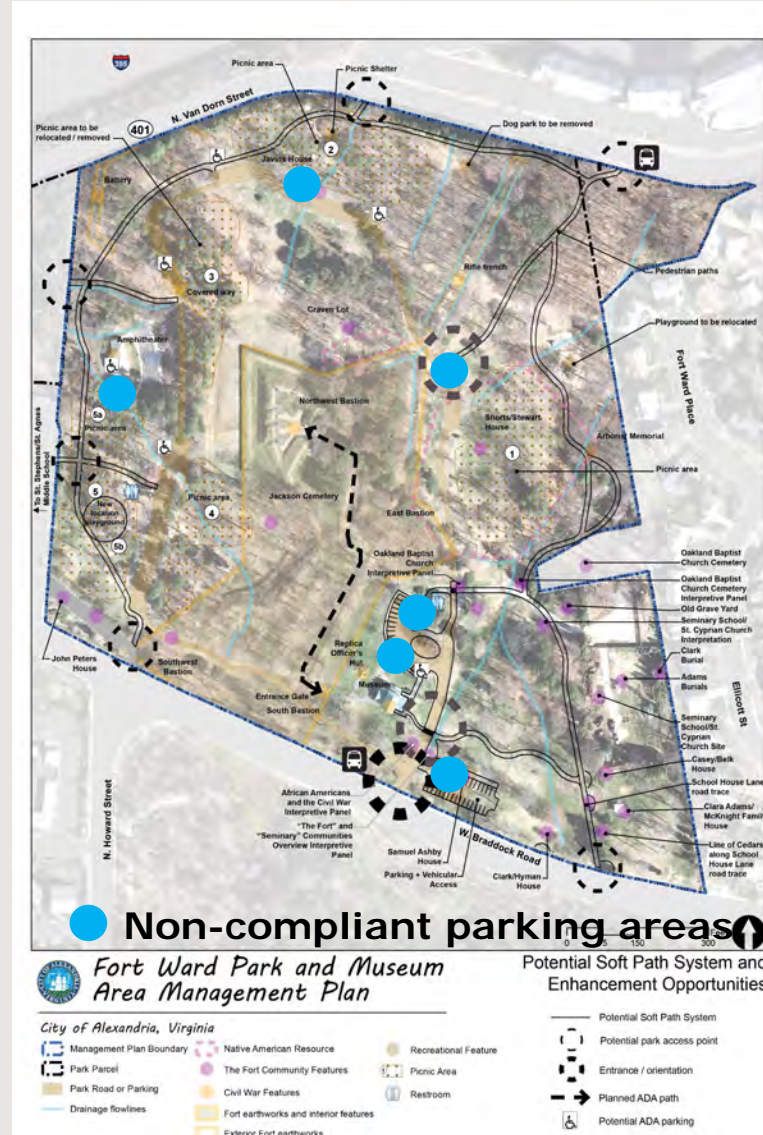
Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements

Vehicular Parking

- Management Plan Strategy 1.3.2
Action Items: Provide accessible parking and pathways for all park and museum features
- **Action Item: Provide accessible parking to amphitheatre**

Ground Disturbance

- Work will involve removing and reinstalling existing asphalt
- Parking areas currently with gravel surface will be converted to asphalt. The gravel will be removed and replaced with asphalt
- Test pits will be done to determine the depth of gravel and subbase materials
- Close coordination with Archaeology, especially gravel areas
- Currently in design. Installation 2022



Requirements for ADA parking

- Provide a minimum of one ADA parking space for each parking area
- Each ADA space shall have compliant signage
- Provide marked access aisle adjacent to parking space; minimum 60 inches wide
- Parking space dimensions:
Regular: minimum 96 inches width
Van: minimum 132 inches width
- Slope: Maximum of 2%
- Provide parking to each park facility and connect to accessible route



Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements: Vehicular Parking



Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements

Picnic Shelter Accessible Route

- Management Plan Strategy 1.3.2
Action Items: Provide accessible parking and pathways for all park and museum features
- Management Plan Strategy 5.1 Improve pedestrian circulation and safety:
Action Items: Clearly mark and develop two access points from North Van Dorn Street



- Pathway will be constructed from permeable pavers to capture runoff
- Parking will include one van accessible space and one standard accessible space
- Picnic areas will include wheel-chair accessible tables
- Pathway also will connect to Van Dorn Street
- 27 new trees will be planted in the vicinity of the area
- Mature shade trees will be preserved
- Construction anticipated spring 2022
- Archaeology monitoring during construction

Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements

Picnic Shelter Accessible Route - Site Archaeology

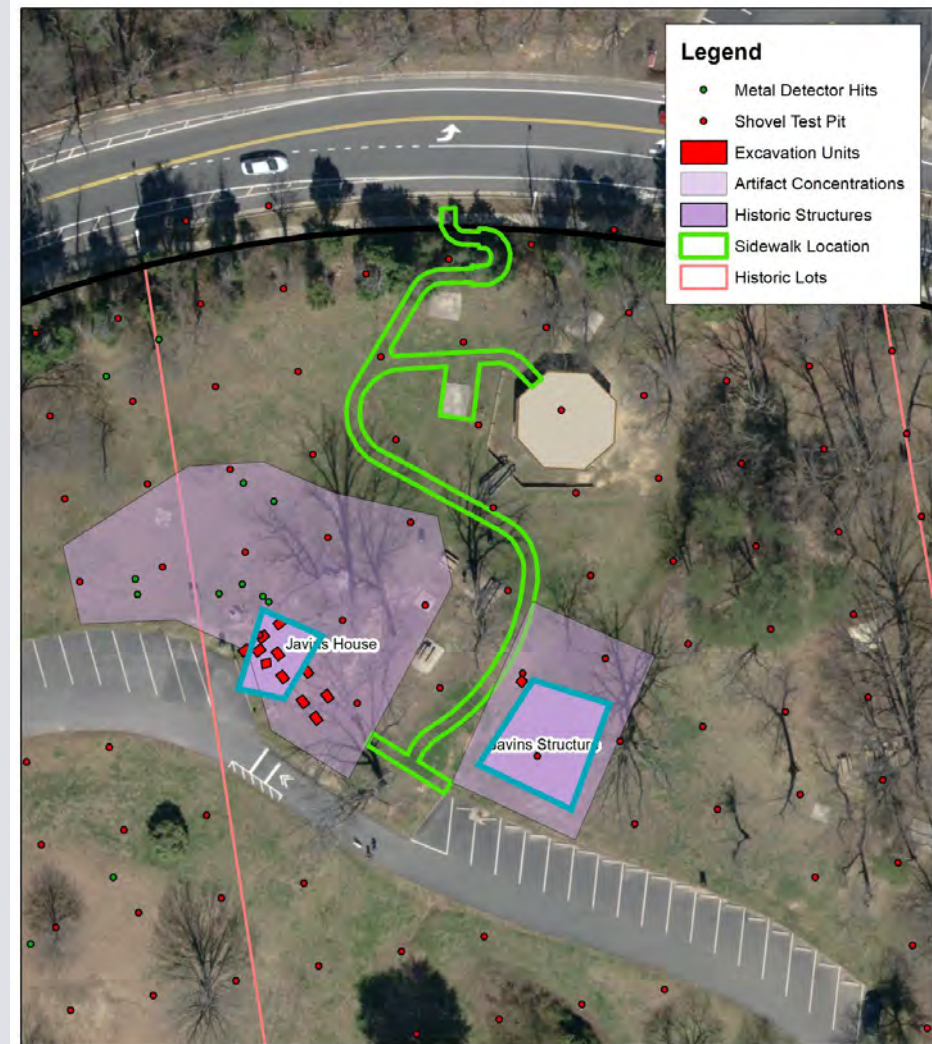
The Javins Homestead

History:

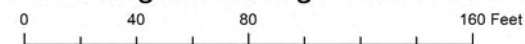
- Samuel and Florence [McKnight] Javins purchased a 2.5-acre lot in 1889, expanded it to 4.23 acres in 1921.
- Historic maps indicate that the Javins built a house and an outbuilding that stood until the 1950s.
- The Javins had nine children and maintained a close connection with extended family in Steelton, Pennsylvania, settling there between ca. 1911 and 1921.
- Florence passed in 1931 and Samuel sold the property in 1934 and moved elsewhere.

Archaeology:

- **Identify:** Shovel test holes every 30 ft. and systematic metal detection helps us to identify artifact concentrations.
- **Evaluate:** Eleven test units in and around the main house generates data, including the identification of a well.
- **Protect:** Worked with designers to route the ADA access to avoid archaeological resources.
- **Monitoring:** Archaeologists will monitor all ground disturbing activities during construction to ensure that any archaeological materials that are uncovered will be recorded and collected.



Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
Prior Archaeological Testing - Picnic Area Sidewalk



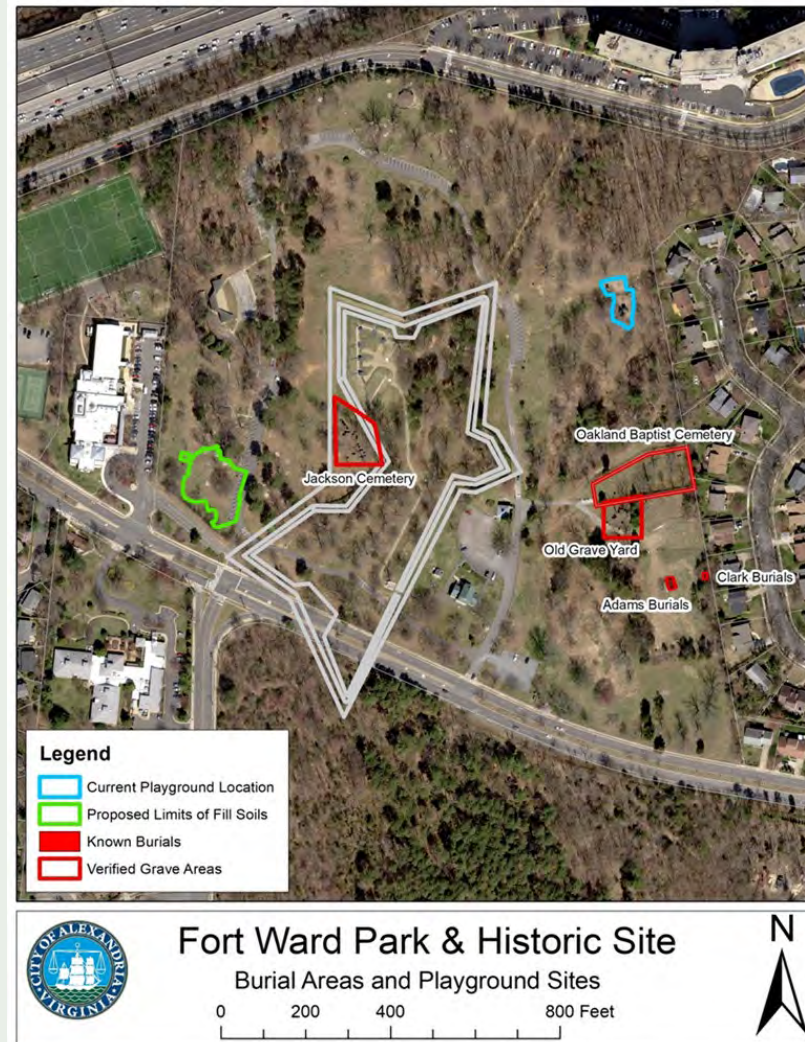
Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements Playground Relocation

Goal #1 Management and Funding

Strategy 1.3.2:

Enhance park's accessibility and meet ADA standards

Action Item: Relocate the current playground facility to the western side of the park making access and equipment accessible



- Some of the existing playground equipment will be re-installed.
- The former playground area will be restored to grade and re-planted and stabilized with trees and groundcover.

Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements Playground Relocation Site—South of Picnic/Restrooms



Location considerations:

- Existing slopes
- Construction access
- Proximity to parking, restroom and picnic area
- Water availability

Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements Playground Relocation---Concept Design



Playground
Fort Ward Accessibility Improvements
(DRAFT May 2020)

Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements Playground Relocation- Concept Design



Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements Playground Relocation---Site Archaeology

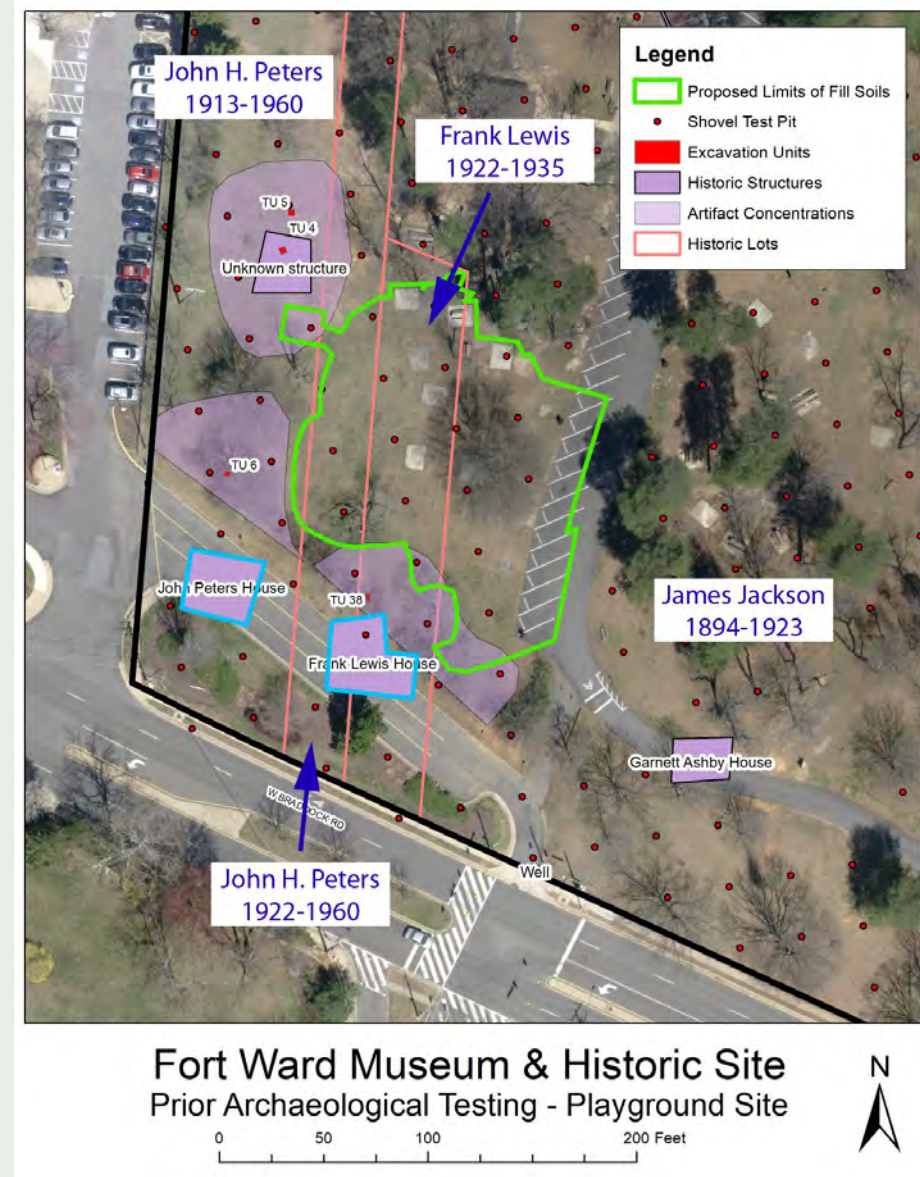
The Peters and Lewis Homesteads

History:

- In 1894 James Jackson purchased an 11.5-acre parcel of land that encompasses much of the western half of the park.
- In 1913 Jackson sold John H. Peters 0.75 acres. Peters built a house and he and his family resided on this property until 1960.
- In 1922 Jackson sold Peters another 0.25 acres and sold Frank Lewis 0.25 acres. Lewis built a house and sporadically occupied the property until 1935 when the family sold it John Peters.

Archaeology:

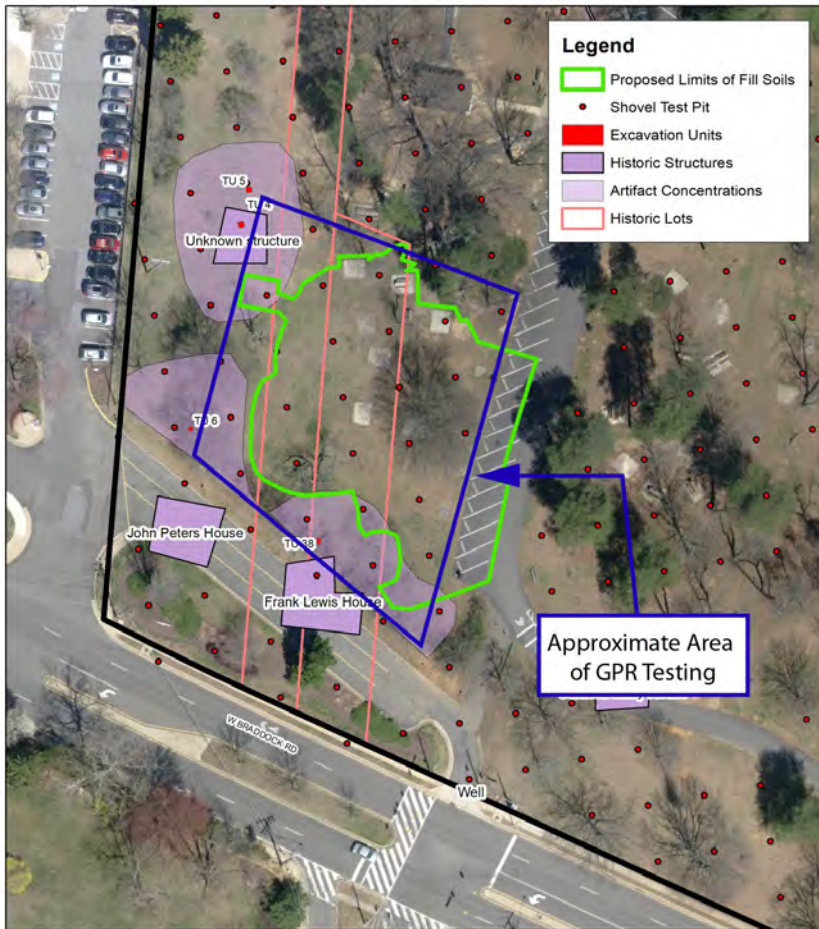
- **Identify:** Shovel test holes every 30 ft. helped us to identify artifact concentrations. Note that the footprints of the houses no longer exist.
- **Evaluate:** Four test units generated data and verified that the Peters and Lewis houses had been graded away. However, artifacts are concentrated on the north side of where the houses once stood, and around an outbuilding on the back of the Peters lot.
- **Protect:** Worked with designers to import fill soils to build up the playground location and protect archaeological resources in place.
- **Further Investigation:** Possible Ground Penetrating Radar [GPR] study
- **Further Investigation:** If the playground moves forward in this location, an Excavation Plan will be put into effect in those areas that will be impacted by playground equipment anchors or other incursions.



Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements Playground Relocation – Site Archaeology

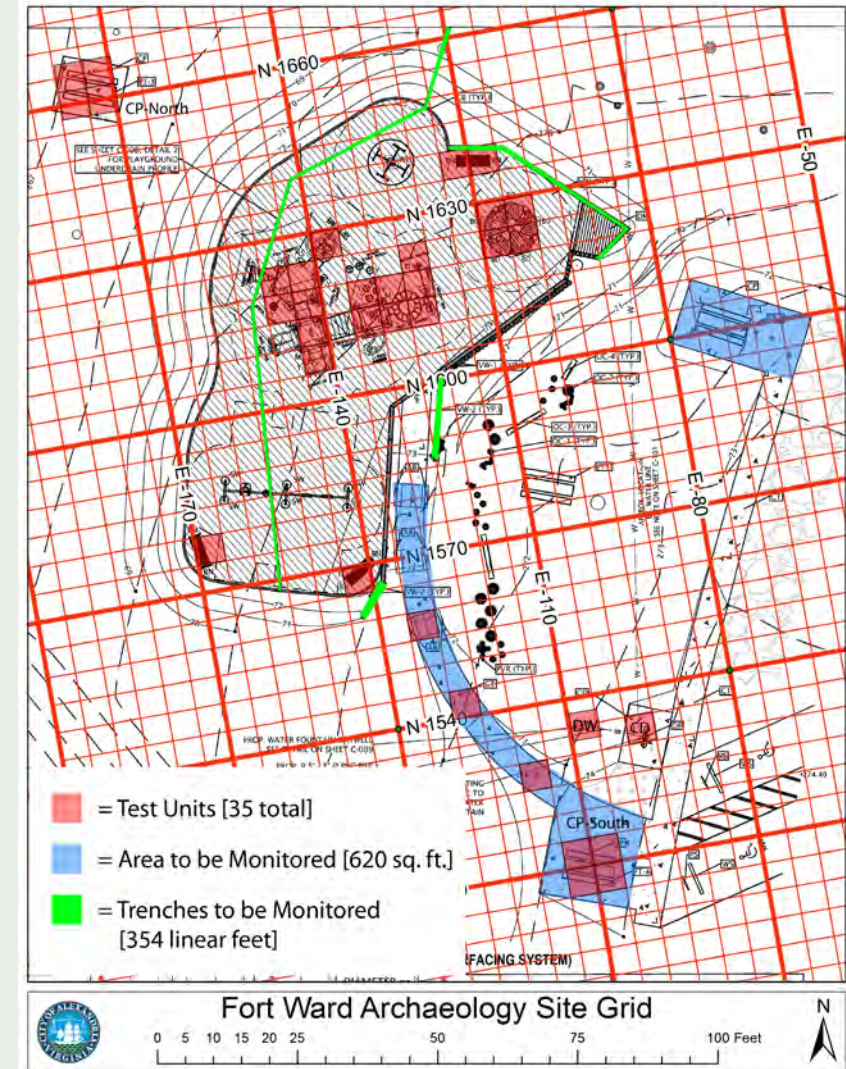
Further Investigations:

- Staff Recommendation:
Receive community feedback on whether to proceed with Ground Penetrating Radar Spring 2022.
- Staff Recommendation:
If playground goes forward in this location, implement Excavation Plan.



Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
Prior Archaeological Testing - Playground Site

0 50 100 200 Feet



Fort Ward Archaeology Site Grid

0 5 10 15 20 25 50 75 100 Feet

Public Comment

- Submit your comments/questions in the Zoom Q/A located on the menu bar
- If you are listening to the meeting by phone, Press *9 to raise your hand, and you will be unmuted

This presentation and questions and answers will be posted to the City website:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/recreation/info/default.aspx?id=29638>

If you could not submit your questions/comments in the Zoom Q&A during the meeting, please email them to judy.lo@alexandriava.gov