

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## Summary of Major Accomplishments

### AD HOC FORT WARD MANAGEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING GROUP

July 25, 2017

Since its first meeting on September 9, 2015, the Ad Hoc Fort Ward Management Plan Implementation Monitoring Group has contributed significantly in the following areas:

#### 1. Drainage

The Monitoring Group has worked with staff to plan and design the improvements to the storm water infrastructure serving the park, including the necessary archaeology associated with this effort. The initial project goal was to divert storm water away from the Oakland Baptist Church Cemetery to minimize erosion inside the cemetery. Project design included a berm and a new alignment of the storm water structures. Staff completed construction of this project in close coordination with the Monitoring Group and Oakland Baptist Church.

#### 2. Fort Ward Oral History Project

The Monitoring Group has received updates as OHA has continued to coordinate with the Fort Ward and Seminary Descendants Society and other members of the descendant community to develop a program to conduct oral history interviews of descendants of the Fort community as well as other individuals who may have knowledge about past activities and locations of graves within Fort Ward Park. Several descendants have attended OHA oral history training to enable them to conduct the oral history interviews. Staff and the Descendants Society have executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate the work of obtaining additional oral histories.

#### 3. Archaeological Research

The Monitoring Group has coordinated with staff as archaeological work has continued to pursue identification of grave and cemetery locations within Fort Ward Park. Archaeology staff conducted excavations in all areas of proposed ground disturbance associated with the placement of the storm water improvements on the east side of the park to identify if graves were present. No grave sites were discovered, and the locations were cleared for the placement of the drainage system. In addition, staff continued to hold the City's archaeological summer camp in the park and excavated areas associated with the households of the African American families who lived at Fort Ward. Descendants came to the site and spoke to the campers about their family histories and experiences.

Staff also completed the archeological work in the former Maintenance Yard area and reviewed the results with the public. No additional burials were located. Known burial

areas will be marked, area restored with regrading and reseeding, and existing fencing will be removed in preparation for the development of the Interpretive Plan.

#### **4. Fort Ward Interpretive Plan Development**

A consultant team (DesignMinds) has been hired to lead the development of a Master Interpretive Plan for Fort Ward. The Fort Ward Interpretive Committee, consisting of members of the community working with OHA staff, worked much of the past year on identifying key themes and goals that the consultants will address in developing the Plan. They are beginning the planning process this summer and will be meeting Fort Ward stakeholders and presenting a project briefing at a meeting of the Fort Ward Interpretive Committee on September 14. The anticipated time-line for the development of the Interpretive Plan is approximately 18 months, with a draft Interpretive Plan expected in early 2018, and the finalized Plan and other project deliverables to be completed in October 2018.

Members of the Monitoring Group are represented on the Fort Ward Interpretive Plan Committee, and have engaged in discussions regarding future interpretation.

#### **5. Tree Management**

The Monitoring Group has discussed and advised staff on implementation of the tree management effort. Starting last fall, staff began planting replacement trees in suitable locations throughout the Park. 22 trees were planted by the City. In addition, volunteers from Trees Alexandria donated and planted thirteen native trees at Fort Ward Park. Planting sites were reviewed and approved by the Office of Historic Alexandria. These sites were selected to provide tree canopy cover in areas of the park where trees have been removed, and in public areas where park users will appreciate the shade that the trees will provide as they mature.

#### **6. Park Improvement Projects**

Several park improvement projects, consistent with the Council-approved Management Plan for Fort Ward have been completed:

- Removal of the off-leash dog exercise area and restoration of the grounds
- Installation of additional ADA compliant park furniture (picnic tables, trash cans)
- Installation of ADA compliant parking and pathway
- Repaving and restriping of the park loop road and all parking
- Development of the ADA path between and picnic shelter with pervious material (in design phase)

A total of \$1,120,000 in capital funds have been approved in the FY 2018 – FY 2027 CIP for the continued implementation of the Council-approved Fort Ward Management Plan. In addition, \$475,000 in Capital Funds [werewas](#) approved through FY2017 for the implementation of the Plan.