

# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Discussion of Interpretive Framework



September 11, 2013

Interpretive Framework Discussion:  
Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan



# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Why a Management Plan?

- ‘a Management Plan is a document of policies and provides guidance to park management’ *(Jim Spengler, City of Alexandria)*

## What Will the Management Plan Accomplish?

- Identify sustainable practice strategies for the use, protection and monitoring of changes at the site over time
- Seek to balance the management of natural, cultural and recreational resources, including the earthwork fort, archaeological resources, interments, “The Fort” community and park features
- Identify potential enhancement opportunities, interpretation of site’s African American history – ‘We’re Still Here’ trail, the recognition and demarcation of graves/cemeteries, upgrades to park facilities and recreation infrastructure, public accessibility and plantings, etc.

# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Work Completed to Date

- Ad Hoc Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Stakeholder Advisory Group (FWAG), working with City staff, has developed initial ideas for how to best manage the significant historic, natural and recreational resources of Fort Ward Park
  - FWAG's Report, Recommendations for the Management of Fort Ward Historical Park, January 2011 and updated chapters
  - FWAG's Monthly Meetings and Minutes
- Consultant led informal 'Brainstorming Sessions' for two half days in the park in June 2013
- Online Survey on City's webpage in June 2013

## Ongoing Study

- Stormwater Study

# Study Milestones - Where We are Today

Meeting	Date	Topic	Discussion Points
FWAG #3	8/14/13	Resource Management and Stormwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Best practices: techniques to consider to address issues to balance management of natural, cultural and recreational resources; define actions needed to mitigate adverse affects</li> </ul>
FWAG #4	9/11/13	Interpretive Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audience</li> <li>Interpretive goals, themes, topics and stories</li> <li>How to link the story to the region and other Alexandria sites</li> <li>How to expand the museum, coordinate interpretation</li> <li>How to tell “The Fort” Community story and post-Civil War stories</li> </ul>
FWAG #5	10/9/13	Enhancement Opportunities/Interpretive Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Idea of the commemorative walk – how used thematically and to provide additional recreational resource</li> <li>How to mark gravesites and “The Fort” Community</li> <li>How to integrate with resource management</li> <li>Additional park programming and events</li> </ul>
FWAG #6	11/13/13	Facility Enhancement Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking and arrival; orientation; ring road; secondary circulation; amphitheater; picnic areas; special areas; edges</li> </ul>
FWAG #7	1/8/14	Management Plan Draft Review and Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of Draft Document</li> <li>Additional discussion on programming, management and implementation</li> </ul>
#8	TBD	Informal Public Meeting	
#9	TBD	Combined Commission Meeting	
#10	TBD	City Council Work Session	

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## Last Month Recap and Follow-up

- Comments on the existing conditions report have been received and are being collated – we will send out a table listing the comments and proposed changes to the draft for your review
- Management Practices – we are organizing the recommended practices into a matrix and will circulate as a follow-up
- Consideration of early actions for site stabilization or turf improvement - could these be done this fall in advance of the plan being done?

# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

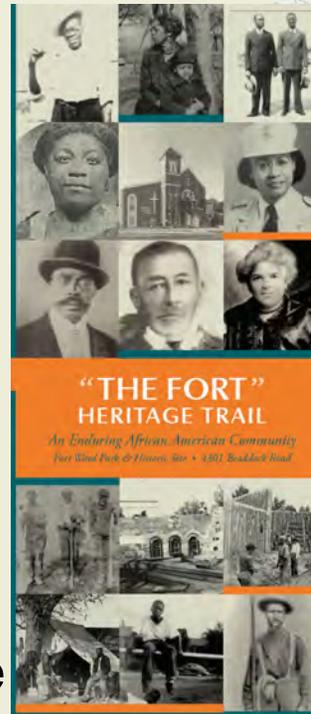
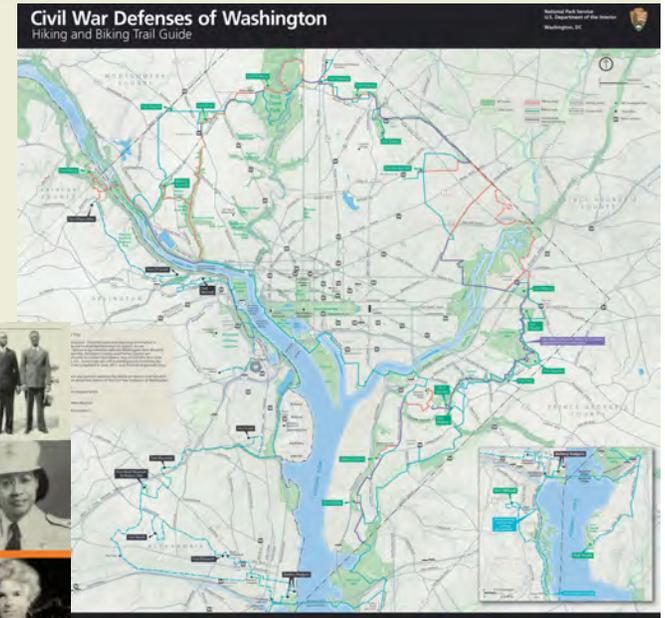
## Interpretive Framework Agenda

- Best practices for interpretation: what are other similar museums and interpretive sites doing
- Existing Interpretive Resources
- Discussion: Interpretive Issues and Opportunities
  - Audience
  - Geography
  - Timeframe
  - Themes and Storylines
  - Goals for Interpretation

# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Background – Regional Context

- Defenses of Washington
  - Preserved sites / related interpretation
  - Regional trail guide
- African American Heritage
  - Wayside exhibits and brochure
  - Ongoing research
- City of Alexandria
  - History, periods, themes
  - Museum system and interpretive



# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Background – Existing Interpretation

### •Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site

- Museum exhibits
- Historic landscape features
- Programs and events
- Educational kits

### •‘The Fort’ Interpretive Initiatives

- Historic landscape features
- Cemeteries
- Wayside exhibits and brochure
- Ongoing research



# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Background – Assessment

### •Strengths

- Fascinating layered history
- City interpretive programs/initiatives
- High quality museum
- Impressive physical resources
- High park visitation and use

### •Weaknesses

- Limited financial resources
- Weak regional Civil War interpretation
- Complex story - limited physical area



# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Background – Assessment

### •Threats

- Divergent visions and perspectives
- Continued reductions in funding
- Lack of public appreciation

### •Opportunities

- Potential for outdoor interpretation
- Creative use of the landscape
- Coordination with other sites
- Potential to expand audiences



# Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

## Potential Models

- Menokin (Warsaw, VA)

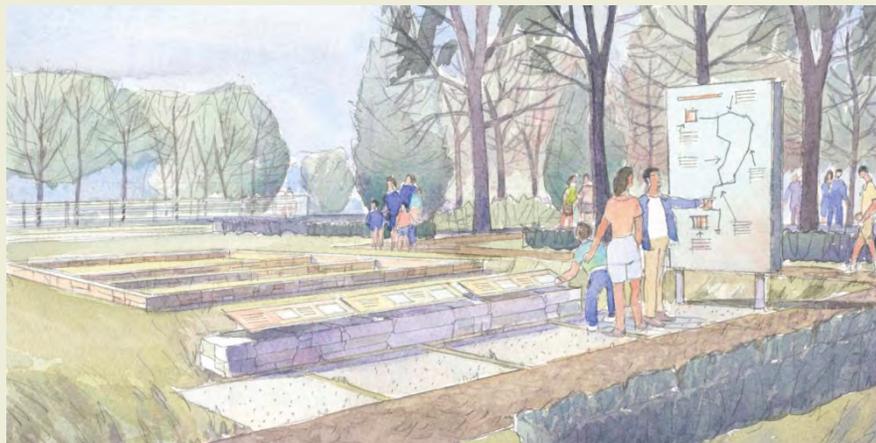
- Conserved ruins
- Lost landscape

- Erie Canal Harbor

- Reconstructed features
- Historic ruins
- Interpretive exhibits



# Making Sites Visible: “The Fort” Community



## Best Practices Examples

- Identify the locations of “The Fort” community buildings and landscape features
- Establish protection strategies for maintaining above- and below-ground evidence of “The Fort” community
- Consider trail and interpretive options (subject of upcoming meetings)



# Making Sites Visible: "The Fort" Community

## Best Practice Example

- Design marking strategies to accompany interpretive program



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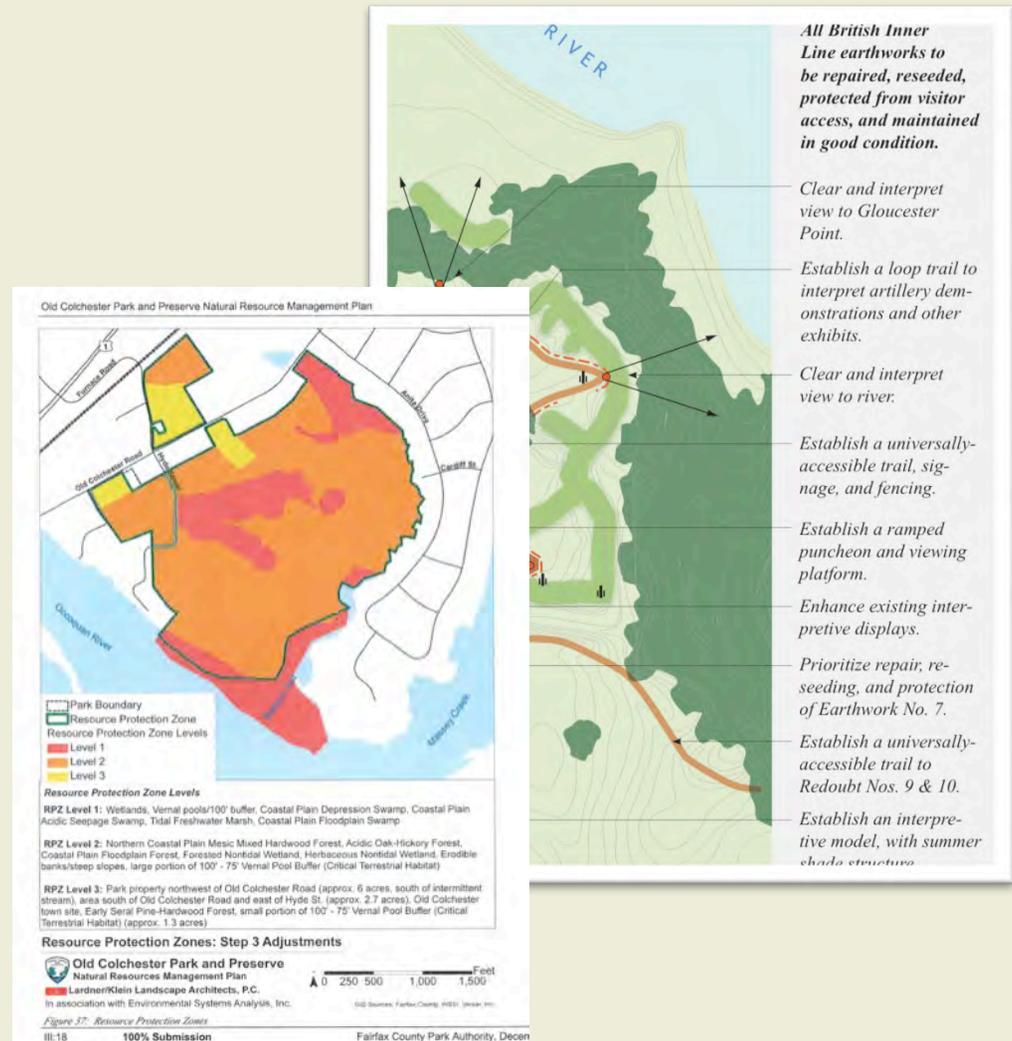
## Tonight's Discussion Topics

- Audience: **Who** are the current and potential future visitors?
- Geography: **To what extent** is interpretation limited to within the boundaries of the park itself?
- Timeframe: **When** does the Fort Ward story begin and end? Upon what timeframes should we focus?
- Themes: **What** subjects can and should be covered in interpretation?
- Implementation: **How** will we manage and coordinate storytelling so the presentation and experience is seamless? How do we coordinate with related stories other sites?

# Compilation of Best Management Practices

## The Management Plan will

- Integrate this information with other components from upcoming discussions (see slide 3)
- Identify priorities and site sensitivities
- Balance needs and resources of the park
- Combine text, mapping and graphics



# Next Steps

- Meeting on Interpretive Framework – 9/11/13
- Meeting on Interpretive Enhancement Opportunities – 10/9/13
- Meeting on Facility Enhancement Opportunities – 11/13/13
- Draft Review of Management Plan – 1/8/14



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HERITAGE *strategies*

JMA  
JOHN MILNER ASSOCIATES, INC.

# Comments and Questions?

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