

Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan



Resource Management Issues
and Best Practices Discussion

August 14, 2013

Resource Management Discussion:
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Thank you

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.

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Big Picture – ultimate outcome – take what you all have compiled and add materials to create an integrated management plan for the park

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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

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Brief History of work to date

Study Milestones - Where We are Today

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Tonight focus on one piece of the puzzle or thread for our ultimate weaving of a management plan. Upcoming meetings will focus on other threads and are open to the public. Followed by discussion in January 2014 on compiled Draft – with weft and warp all woven together, then take to public in an informal meeting and to appropriate City Commissions and to City Council work session. Many opportunities over the fall for you to weigh in and provide comments and concerns.

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Tonight's Discussion Topics

- Existing Conditions Report, focused on Natural, Cultural and Recreational Resources
 - Status of synthesizing sources, findings yet to come
 - Please read and provide us edits, comments, etc.
- Issues Matrix - Is our listing complete?
 - Conflict and/or coordination required between issues
 - Issues requiring additional funding
- Potential Best Practices as applied to Fort Ward
 - Landscape Maintenance Practices, Turf and Meadow, Soil Erosion, Ground Disturbance, Vegetation – damage, invasive, tool for visibility

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Tonight – focus on Natural, Cultural and Recreation Resources. Won't go through the Existing Conditions report, but please provide us comments and concerns – set date of upcoming meeting – Sept 11.

Report contains a compilation and aggregation of issues drawn from our work and your report. Important to let us know if we have missed issues or misunderstood ones listed. Again, not intending to walk through each one this evening. Instead, we want to spend the short time together this evening to show you how we have recognized that some issues can be addressed, some conflict with each other, some require additional funds and some require additional coordination and share with you some examples of best practices that we think are a good fit with selected park issues that we have identified. Intend to go through them rapidly, and then open up the meeting for a robust discussion – are we on the right track? Remember, many layers to come in the next three meetings, and then we come back to you with an integrated management plan. So tonight is the launch, not the completion.

Natural Resources - Best Practices Discussion

Examples of Natural Resource Management Issues

- Natural Resources
 - Preserve and Enhance Park's Natural Character
 - Define Landscape Maintenance/Cultural Practices*
 - Declining Tree Plantings
 - Declining or Absent Ornamental Plantings
 - Declining Turf and Meadow Management*
 - Invasive Species
 - Soil Erosion*
- Stormwater
 - To come per URS Report

* Best practice examples proposed for these subheadings in this presentation

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Drawn from our issues matrix in the back of the Existing Conditions Report – three areas under the category of Natural resources to discuss this evening.

Landscape Maintenance and Cultural Practices

Issues

- Overgrown shrubs and vines
- Leaf litter
- Tree stumps and limb decline



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Concern regarding cultural practices –
invasive growth, tree stump removal,
tree care, disposal and disposition of leaf litter


Landscape Maintenance and Cultural Practices

Best Practices
Example

- Define areas for leaf litter placement, away from turf areas and sheltered from wind blow



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Example of placing leaf litter under trees,
in area bounded by walk and fallen tree –
clear boundaries for application and looks intentional

Declining Turf and Meadow Management

Issues

- Turf managed by two entities
- Meadow intention unclear



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Survey results from June session had mixed results –
some responders thought the park was gorgeous and
well maintained, others worried and didn't understand
the meadow program

Declining Turf and Meadow Management

Best Practices Examples

- Establish consistent mow cycle in conjunction with two entities
- Clearly mark intentional meadow edge

Step-by-Step: 1. Identify Appropriate Management Method

Management Method	Best Practices
Mowing	• Mow at least once a year, preferably in late summer or early fall • Mow at a height of 3-4 inches • Mow in a consistent pattern (e.g., north-south, then east-west) • Avoid mowing during peak bloom or seed set
Mechanical	• Use heavy machinery (e.g., mowers, tractors) to manage large areas • Avoid compacting soil and disturbing vegetation
Hand	• Use hand tools (e.g., shears, brush cutters) for small areas or specific plants • Avoid compacting soil and disturbing vegetation
Animal	• Use animals (e.g., sheep, goats) to graze and manage vegetation • Avoid overgrazing and soil compaction
Assist (Electricity - Mowing)	• Use electric mowers for small areas or specific plants • Avoid compacting soil and disturbing vegetation

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Potential ways to manage intentional meadow; mowed paths can also be used for dog walking as is done in New River Gorge in West Virginia

Soil Erosion and Compaction

Issues

- Heavy use by recreational users
- Equipment and vehicles on turf
- Lack of paths or trails – ‘goat herd’ or make your own

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Soil Erosion and Compaction caused by heavy use, stormwater, or lack of paths

Soil Erosion and Compaction

Best Practices Example

- Combine pads into singular, soft surface in heavily used areas


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Perhaps look to ‘soft’ surfaces for larger areas – expand on the concrete pad concept in areas of heavy use; Tonight’s look is at the intersection of the natural or cultural resource with recreational resources - will look in more detail at recreational facilities themselves in the meeting in November – dog park, playground, amphitheater, picnic facilities, etc.

Many Layers of History - Ground Disturbance

Best Practice Example

- Stabilize resource at ground level



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Many Layers of History - Ground Disturbance

Best Practice Example

- Develop a plan
 - Know where to dig - intent is to note areas where ground disturbance will not impact archaeological resources
 - Consider archaeological resources during the planning stages in areas not cleared for ground disturbance
 - Consult with Alexandria Archaeology as most archaeological resources are unseen



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Soil Erosion/Vegetation Damage to Rifle Trench

Issues

- Exposed ground surface
- Lack of groundcover vegetation
- Tree and invasive plant growth on rifle trench and parapet
- Informal use of parapet as trail system



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Soil Erosion/Vegetation Damage to Rifle Trench



Best Practice Examples

- Repair the eroded condition of the earthwork
- Establish a new trail for visitors to replace the rifle trench parapet
- Integrate the trail with other planned trail improvements (i.e. nature trail)

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Soil Erosion/Vegetation Damage to Rifle Trench



Best Practice Examples

- Establish a sustainable land cover to protect against further erosion (grass or other plant material, leaf litter)
- Encourage visitor stewardship of the irreplaceable resource through signage and interpretation

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Erosion and Vegetation Damage to Earthworks

Issues

- Need to limit foot traffic and access
- Invasive plants
- Eroded spots
- Tree growth





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Erosion and Vegetation Damage to Earthworks




Best Practices Examples

- Control or eradicate invasive species growing on the earthworks
- Address the care and needs of trees and other plants to remain

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Erosion and Vegetation Damage to Earthworks





Best Practices Examples

- Establish management practices to support the growth of healthy grass stands while promoting visual accessibility for interpretation
- Consider using a taller, native warm-season grass for the fort parapet to reduce mowing and discourage visitors from climbing on the earthwork

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Erosion and Vegetation Damage to Earthworks



Best Practices Example

- Establish a sustainable land cover to protect against erosion (such as use of leaf litter)
- Establish management practices to support woodland needs, limit the potential for damage to the earthworks from tree fall and other problems

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Making Sites Visible: "The Fort" Community

Issues

- Preserve remnant landscape features such as line of cedars along School House Road
- Need to mark 'invisible' features for visitor



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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)



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Making Sites Visible: "The Fort" Community

Best Practice Example

- Design marking strategies to accompany interpretive program



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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

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Promise – this will all come together with threads from next three meetings focus to create a management plan designed for Fort Ward park and its wonderful conflicting complexities. Will use maps, matrices, pictures and words.

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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— Again, more meetings ahead for you —
— all to weigh in and provide —
— guidance and insight —

Comments and Questions?

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Please send comments and questions _
to Laura, info here. —

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