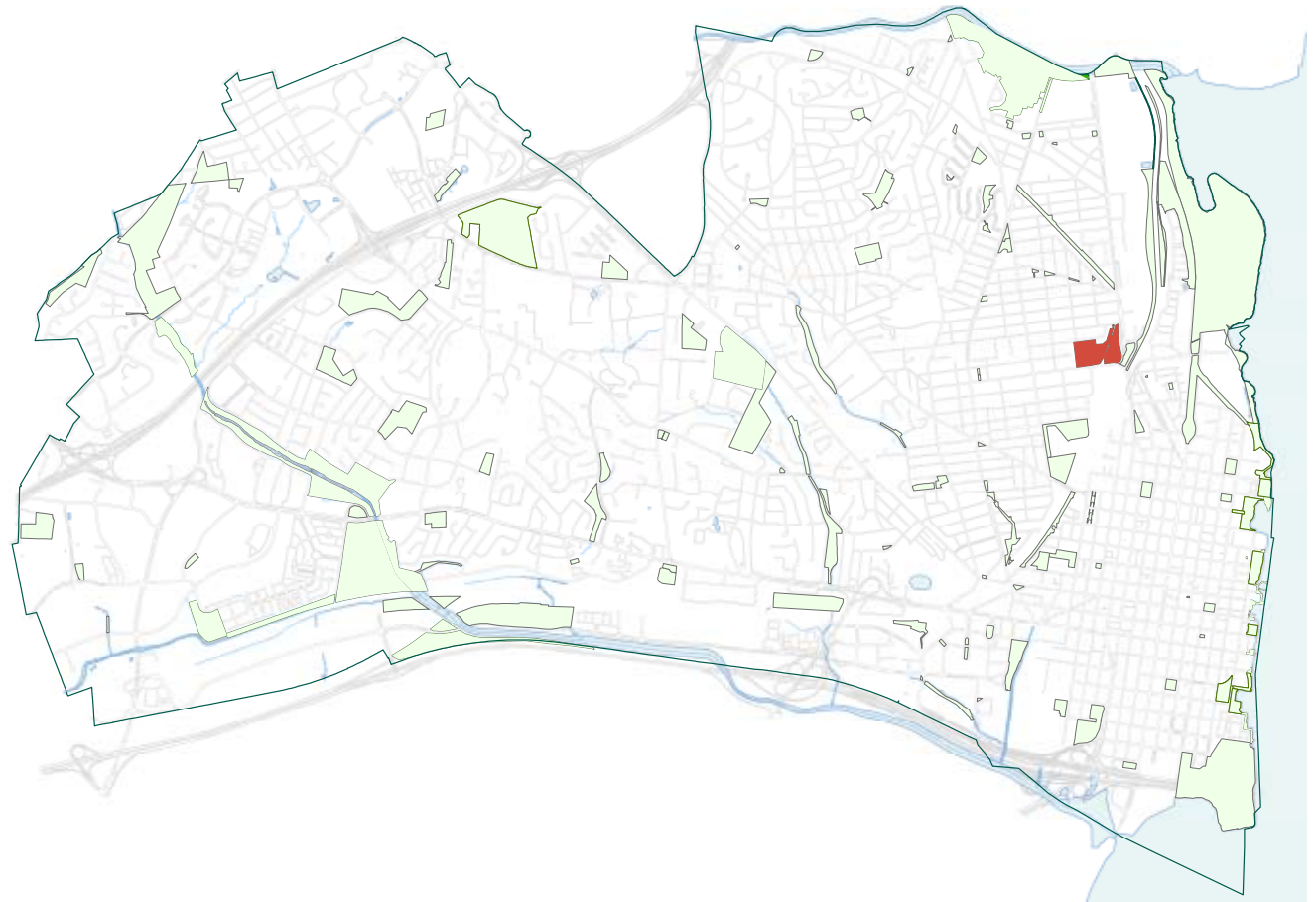


SIMPSON STADIUM PARK





Background

Eugene Simpson Stadium Park (Simpson Park) is an integral 15-acre open space that connects various points of the Del Ray neighborhood. Del Ray residents regularly gather in Simpson Park facilities, including the dog park and playground, and walk or bike through the Park to connect between the north and south sections of the neighborhood. Sports players and spectators, including the T.C. Williams Baseball team and the Congressional Softball League, travel from elsewhere in the City and region, mainly by vehicle, to use the popular sports fields. This is the type of community focused recreational use the City envisioned when the Park was developed in the 1950's.

According to the 1894 Hopkins map of the Washington, D.C. area, St. Asaph's Junction Station operated in the North East area of Simpson Park and linked major rail lines until it was demolished in the 1950's. There were also many Civil War era houses, including an Alms/Poor House that once stood in the area of Simpson Park that is now the dog park. In the late 1940's the land was donated to the City. In 1953, Eugene Simpson contributed funds to build the two ballfields, known as "Big Simpson" and "Little Simpson", on the site, envisioning a central location for Alexandria sports teams to play. Since that time, the City developed the park programs and facilities surrounding the fields incrementally.

A walking trail loops around Big Simpson field, though the paths extending beyond this main loop to other facilities are not well incorporated and lack formal and clear entrances. The paths also do not integrate with the adjacent neighborhoods as there are insufficient curb cuts at appropriate locations. As a result, visitors enter wherever convenient creating "desire lines" in the landscape. These informal entrances, such as the slope adjacent to Monroe Avenue, have eroded over time. Many park signs are outdated and do not clearly guide Park users through the site to various facilities.

Through the park planning process, park users expressed the need for more parking, particularly for sports field users. The site was originally built to accommodate two ballfields with parking needs met in both the Simpson Park parking lot and in the YMCA's adjacent parking lot (through a shared-use agreement). As the City built additional facilities, including the soccer fields and dog park, the demand for parking increased. The majority of the time park users can locate parking spaces, however, when all of the fields are in simultaneous use, particularly on weekend mornings in the



On Opening Night in June of 1953, the Simpson baseball diamond, now affectionately known as Little Simpson, was considered one of the top youth baseball fields in the country. More than 1,000 wide-eyed spectators crowded the stands from foul pole to foul pole. Some spectators hung over the outfield fence. The game was announced by Arch McDonald, the voice of Major League's Baseball's Washington Senators and covered by several Washington-area newspapers. A number of local dignitaries including Virginia Congressman Joel T. Broyhill watched the game from the press box. "It was quite an experience for an 11 or 12-year-old boy standing there with all those people watching," recalled Dennis Shaw, an outfielder for Simpson Development's team, who would later go on to teach and coach at T.C. Williams. "The park was just immaculate."

Over a half century later, Alexandria youth baseball continues to flourish thanks to dedicated volunteer participation and the continuous support of sponsors and donors. Some of the current sponsors have generously supported the City's youth baseball since Alexandria's Little Major League first opened at Simpson Stadium more than a half a century ago.

Source:
"Alexandria Youth Baseball at Simpson: 50 years and counting,"
Alexandria Little League Newsletter 1 (2003): 1, 3-5.

Playing at Simpson



TJ Lipple, a resident of Del Ray, Alexandria, loves hanging out with his son Eliot at Simpson Stadium Park's playground. He also enjoys watching the Alexandria Little League at Simpson, especially the home-run derby during the all-star weekend. TJ feels very fortunate to have a neighborhood park that hosts such exciting activities. Simpson is especially valuable to TJ, who shared that many of his friends do not have the luxury of convenient and nearby open spaces where they can take their kids.

spring and fall, availability decreases. Park neighbors have also expressed concern about visitors parking in adjacent residential neighborhoods during peak field use times. Further complicating the situation, the on-site parking lot does not have adequate dimensions for turning, forcing cars to conduct three point turns to exit.

The sports facilities at Simpson Park are in particularly high demand because they provide good playing conditions, are centrally located, and the ballfields are lit, but there is a need for general improvements. The diamond fields lack facilities for concessions and adequate storage, both for maintenance and sports equipment. Storage containers scattered throughout the site are visually unappealing and take up valuable open space. Big Simpson baseball field continually exhibits drainage challenges. Also, while the diamond fields and soccer fields are heavily used, they are only available for programmed activities and locked when not used by organized teams. This security system allows the fields to rest between play and maintain their good condition but prohibits open unorganized play.

Unlike the fields, Simpson Park's basketball court is not fenced. This highly visible court is amongst the most heavily used in the City, with players using them throughout the day and up until 10:00pm when the lights shut off. Simpson Park also attracts many visitors throughout the day to its dog park, which facilitates a strong community amongst area dog owners. The dog park, though used during dark hours, does not have lighting and the hill is quickly eroding. There is also poor drainage in the dog area. The playground, predominately used by children under five years old, is another area of the Park that brings neighborhood families together but has outdated equipment.

The Master Gardeners of North Virginia, a dedicated group of volunteers, have maintained a formal garden south of the playground since 1993. The garden demonstrates waterwise plants, plants that attract butterflies, and alpine plants in a rock garden. This small area of the Park also has benches that provide a quiet space to relax amongst a busy Park.



Community Feedback

From September through early December 2012, RPCA solicited input on the existing conditions and possible future uses for Simpson Park.

To gather information, RPCA held a public workshop to discuss park needs, distributed an online survey asking for feedback, and placed hard copy surveys in boxes located at entrances to the park, and in the mailboxes of adjacent neighborhood homes. Staff also visited events, local businesses, and the Del Ray Citizens Association Meeting to hold “mobile workshops.” The survey asked park users to identify their usual point of access into the Park, the mode of transportation they use to get there, their typical park activities, what they like about the Park, and what areas of the Park need improvement. Survey participants also prioritized their improvement needs. See the appendix for detailed community feedback reports.

RPCA received 244 completed surveys. Of those surveyed, 149 participants lived in the 22301 zip code, 35 lived in the 22302, 26 lived in 22305, and 23 lived in 22314. Fewer than 15 participants lived in each of the other Alexandria zip codes or outside City limits. The majority of those who visit do so weekly (49%), though 32% visit daily.

This is what we heard:

Fifty percent walk to Simpson Park, 46% drive and only 4% bike. Of those that drive, most are using the sports fields. This high number of vehicles demonstrates both a need to consider parking options when the fields are in heavy use and to review opportunities for encouraging safer pedestrian and cyclist access into the Park.

When asked, “What do you do in the Park?” many participants stated that they partake in a multitude of activities, but the majority go just for one purpose. **The highest use was to visit the dog park (18%), though other activities, including walking (15%), visiting the garden (15%) and using the playground (11%) were not far behind. Sports use had a combination of over 18%, which can be broken out by 12% playing soccer and 6.6% playing softball or baseball.**

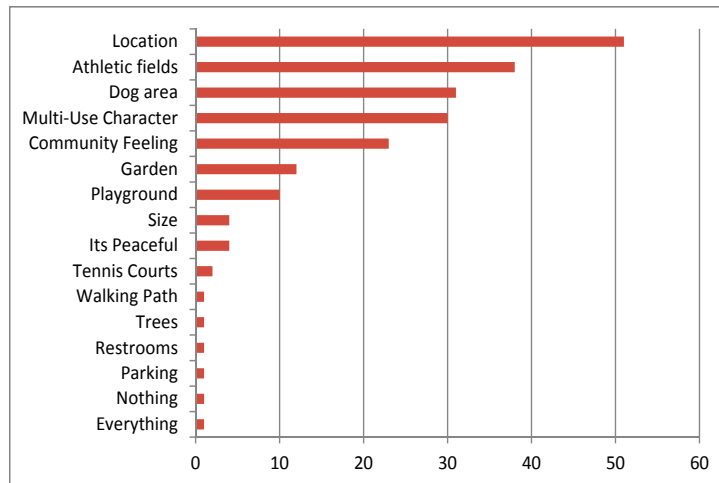
In answering, “**What do you like about the Park,**” participants overwhelmingly identified **the Park’s location.** The athletic fields and dog area followed and many people who mentioned these two features also stated that they enjoy these activities because of the interaction they have with people and neighbors in the Park. **Close to 25 people simply stated that they like the park because of the community.** It is clear

What needs improvement in Simpson Park?



The highest priority is shown as the largest circle; the lowest priority is the smallest circle. Priorities are based on the number of responses to needed improvements and then weighted by how participants prioritized their answers

What do you like about the Park?



from these responses that Simpson has the feel of a neighborhood park while offering citywide amenities. People go to this park to see and be with other people, whether it is by interactions between parents and kids in the playground or watching a baseball game. The one exception is the garden, which park users enjoy visiting for its serene setting. These type of park uses exemplify a vibrant urban park that weaves together, recreation, community, and nature in a compact open space.

There are some consistent themes throughout the three methods of community feedback. These include:

Parking

The survey and both workshops indicated that a parking management strategy is needed to determine how to control parking during heavy use of the soccer fields. From the users

perspective, there needs to be easier access to the fields from parking spaces, yet from the neighborhood point of view, park users should be limited from parking on residential streets.

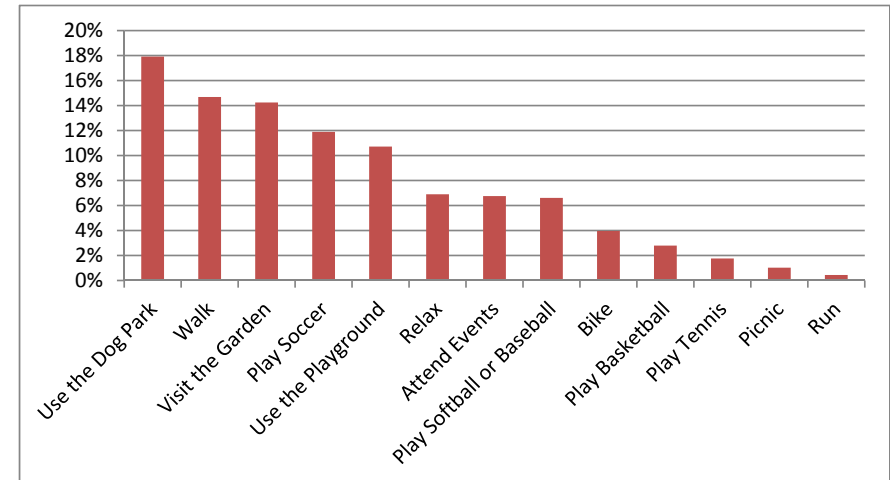
Access and Circulation

The community feedback clearly shows the need for improved pathways and entrances to the Park. Currently, park users enter where convenient, such as from Monroe Avenue, rather than where there are formalized paths. These informal entrances have become dangerous and caused erosion. Pathways that better connect park facilities and user patterns would create a more cohesive site.

Dog Park

The dog park is highly active, year-round and facilitates a strong community among dog owners. Many dog park users feel that the facility lacks amenities such as shade, lighting, new surfacing, and seating.

What do you do in the Park?



Playground

As shown in the survey results, the playground is a priority for Park improvements. As suggested, a playground renovation should include rubberized surface, areas for ages over five, and more shade. The design could also be better connected to passive use areas, making it family friendly for multiple age groups.

Passive Community Space

Simpson Park has many facilities to support organized activity for specific user groups. It lacks, however, a welcoming space to throw a frisbee, gather for a picnic, or let kids just “run around.” While the Park is compact, better circulation could help carve out open areas for unorganized passive use. Additionally, the fields may be opened on occasion for monitored use without a permit.

The Plan

KEYED LEGEND

1. WIDEN PATH 6-8 FEET TO ENABLE NORTH-SOUTH STANDARD PATHWAY
2. ADJUST PLAYGROUND BORDERS, IMPROVE ENTRANCES, AND ADD NATURAL PLAY
3. ADD STROLLER PARKING AND PLAZA AT PLAYGROUND ENTRANCE
4. CREATE OPEN-USE AREA AND IMPROVE PLANTINGS IN PASSIVE USE AREAS
5. CONNECT PATHWAY TO E. DUNCAN AVE
6. USE BOLLARDS TO LIMIT PATHWAY DRIVING ACCESS TO MAINTENANCE VEHICLES
7. PLANT PERIMETER TREES TO CREATE "GREEN ALLEY"
8. PROVIDE NEW HARD TRAILS IN EAST HALF OF PARK
9. PROVIDE NEW FIELD ENTRANCE AND RAMP
10. IMPROVE MAINTENANCE ROUTE TO SOCCER FIELDS
11. PROVIDE NEW BLEACHERS WITH EQUIPMENT STORAGE UNDERNEATH
12. PROVIDE NEW BLEACHERS WITH CONCESSIONS BOOTHS UNDERNEATH
13. CREATE PICNIC AREA NEAR CONCESSIONS
14. EXPAND PARKING LOT
15. ENCOURAGE USE OF FORTY FIVE TOTAL ON-STREET PARKING SPACES ALONG E MONROE AVE AND MAIN LINE BLVD FOR SOCCER FIELD USE
16. IMPROVE DOG PARK TO INCLUDE LIGHTING, TERRACED HILL, TREES, AND PLAY FEATURES
17. ADD MAINTENANCE STORAGE SHELTER AND YARD BETWEEN FIELDS
18. ADD VEGETATED BIOSWALE ALONG DOG PARK EDGE AND AT MAINTENANCE YARD



Note: CIP Funds have already been allocated to install stairs at Monroe Avenue/basketball court and to replace the Little Simpson Press Box in 2014.

GRAPHIC KEY

HARD TRAILS



BIKE ROUTE



PARK BOUNDS



OPEN USE AREAS



ENTRANCE PLAZAS



ATHLETIC FIELDS



DOG PARK

Recommendations & Implementation Strategy



The existing sidewalk between the YMCA parking lot and Duncan Avenue is very narrow, making it difficult for park users to pass each other, especially if there is a cyclist or stroller.



The playground is in need of replacement and equipment to cater to multiple age groups.

1

Widen path to be 6-8 feet in width enabling a north-south standard pathway

Many Del Ray residents use this path to walk to neighborhood destinations, yet, the existing four foot path is constricted for simultaneous pedestrian, bicycle, and stroller use at it narrowest points. Widening this pathway would create an easier pedestrian route and meet the City's standard width for sidewalks.

ESTIMATED COST: \$87,500 - \$156,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

2

Adjust playground borders, improve entrances, add natural play

The proposed playground area will be moved slightly east to accommodate the widened path (recommendation #1). It will include a rubberized surface and new play equipment to serve multiple ages. Additional tree canopy will shade the area and new benches and trash receptacles will improve the space for parents and caregivers. The entire play area will increase with the addition of a seating wall and climbing features to the east of the playground.

ESTIMATED COST: \$325,000 - \$475,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 years

3

Add stroller parking and plaza at playground entrance

The proposed northwest entrance will provide convenient access to the playground from Duncan Avenue and serve as a welcoming gateway to the entire park. Parents or guardians with strollers will be able to park them in notches along the fence line bordering the proposed entrance.

ESTIMATED COST: \$19,000 - \$27,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years



The current passive use space that is unfenced is north of Big Simpson. Its grass surface is in poor condition.



The park entrance at Duncan Avenue is simply an opening in a fence. It lacks any welcoming features and does not have a pathway to link to the rest of the Park. Often non-authorized vehicles enter the Park this way.



The northside of Simpson Park is bordered by a visible alleyway and adjacent residences.

4

Create open-use area and improve plantings in passive use areas

This plan proposes renovating open space to accommodate multiple passive uses and help to balance the type of activities in Simpson Park. With re-grading and improved landscape, the area will accommodate uses such as frisbee, picnics, and quiet relaxation. An entrance plaza including pervious brick pavers, benches, and trash receptacles will create a space for park visitors to congregate.

ESTIMATED COST: \$245,000 - \$368,000 PRIORITY: High PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

5

Connect pathway to East Duncan Avenue

If formalized, this pathway can integrate different park uses and serve as a pedestrian thoroughfare through the Park. Connecting the path to Duncan Avenue will allow easy access for pedestrians entering and leaving the Park from the neighborhood at its northern border.

6

Use bollards to limit pathway driving access to maintenance vehicles

Simpson becomes very busy during soccer and baseball games, and often cars drive along the park's pathways to drop off equipment or let out passengers. Bollards at each pathway's external access point will prevent non maintenance vehicles from moving through the site and keep the pathways safe for pedestrians and park users.

ESTIMATED COST (for both 5&6): PRIORITY: Medium PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years
\$28,000 - \$46,000

7

Plant perimeter trees to create "Green Alley"

Tree and shrub plantings along the northeast edge of the Park will create a green buffer between Simpson and the adjacent houses along East Duncan Avenue. Trees will be planted in a manner to maintain safe visibility into the Park.

ESTIMATED COST: \$65,000 - \$78,000 PRIORITY: Medium PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



The Northeast corner of the Park at Route One and East Bellefonte Avenue is in poor condition and not usable for recreation in its current state. However, if renovated, it could meet the need for unprogrammed passive use space in the park.

8

Provide new hard trails in east half of Park

These proposed trails will integrate the northern passive area (recommendation #4) with the rest of the Park and enhance pedestrian circulation at Simpson. These paths will be particularly useful once the Potomac Yard development and Route One Bus Rapid Transit are complete and there is greater activity at this Park entrance.

ESTIMATED COST: \$51,000 - \$85,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



The only field entrance from Monroe Avenue is on the southeast corner of the site.

9

Provide new field entrance and ramp

The existing fence opening and soccer field entrance at the corner of Monroe Avenue and Main Line Blvd. is insignificant as an entrance and does not include an ADA access. This ramp will be a wheelchair accessible entrance to the Park from East Monroe Avenue.

ESTIMATED COST: \$92,000 - \$113,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years

10

Improve maintenance route to soccer fields

The proposed paved path will make it easier for park staff to access the soccer fields for maintenance work. The path will double as a surface for walking or other activities when it is not being used by park staff.

ESTIMATED COST: \$217,000 - \$275,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



The existing equipment storage space, known as the “blue building,” is insufficient and in poor condition. It also takes up a lot of space in the Park that could be used for passive park uses.



The image above from Plymouth, WI shows an example of storage and concessions built into bleachers.



The Simpson Parking Lot is often congested and difficult to maneuver

11

Provide new bleachers with equipment storage underneath

The proposed new storage for Alexandria’s Little League, T.C. Williams baseball teams, and park maintenance equipment will be built into the bleachers in order to effectively economize space. This storage will replace the existing blue building, which can then be dismantled, making way for a plaza and picnic area (recommendation #13).

ESTIMATED COST: \$715,000 - \$875,000 PRIORITY: High PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

12

Provide new bleachers with concessions booths underneath

The proposed built-in concession stand will be built into the bleachers without taking up additional Park space. Food purchased at concessions could be enjoyed at the proposed picnic plaza (recommendation #13).

ESTIMATED COST: \$780,000 - \$950,000 PRIORITY: Medium PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

13

Create picnic plaza near concessions

People frequently use the one existing picnic table near the basketball court. It is a comfortable location for sitting and watching surrounding activity at the basketball court and baseball fields, and serves as a congregation space. The proposed picnic area, including a hardscape surface and new tables will expand this use.

ESTIMATED COST: \$226,000 - \$311,000 PRIORITY: High PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

14

Expand parking lot

The new loop will mitigate vehicular congestion in the Park by allowing visitors to park or drop off passengers for sports practice and events without having to do a three point turn to exit the parking lot.

ESTIMATED COST: \$60,000 - \$77,000 PRIORITY: High PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



With the completion of Main Line Boulevard there will be additional on-street parking available for high peak sports use of Simpson Park. This will be particularly convenient for those entering the soccer fields at the gate on the Southeast corner of the Park.



The Dog Park is used year-round at all times of day, yet without lights it feels unsafe, particularly during winter months. The hill is also full of debris and is eroding. There are also drainage issues in the area after poor weather.

15

Encourage use of forty five total on-street parking spaces along E. Monroe Avenue and Main Line Boulevard for soccer field use

Recreation staff will work with team coaches to ensure that soccer players and spectators are parking along Monroe Ave. and Main Line Blvd., leaving the parking lot near the YMCA open for baseball groups. Assigning sports groups to designated parking spaces during Simpson Park's peak use times will help limit congestion and make it easier for sports groups to find available spaces. Those parking along Monroe Ave. and Main Line Blvd. can access the park using the proposed ADA accessible ramp or stairs on either side of the dog park. RPCA will also work to adjust game scheduling in order to prevent programming Simpson past its parking capacity.

ESTIMATED COST: N/A

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: N/A

16

Improve Dog Park to include lighting, terraced hill, trees, and play features

Simpson Park's dog park is one of the most popular in the City and is used day and night throughout the year, despite dark hours or weather conditions. The dog park improvements, will create a safer and more pleasant environment for owners and their dogs.

ESTIMATED COST: \$52,000 - \$75,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

17

Add maintenance storage shelter and yard between fields

The maintenance shelter and yard will help Simpson's Park staff in their work to keep the park a clean, safe, and welcoming environment. The new shelter and yard will protect field maintenance equipment from unnecessary wear and tear.

ESTIMATED COST: \$53,000 - \$73,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

18

Add vegetated bioswale along dog park edge and at maintenance yard

Stormwater management is a recurring issue at different parts of the Park. These proposed vegetated bioswales will help retained water percolate faster into the ground and enhance natural resources at Simpson.

ESTIMATED COST: \$178,000 - \$223,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

Overall Preliminary Cost Estimates

The estimated cost range (in 2013 dollars) shown on the right includes two scenarios: 1) If the recommendations were implemented independent of other projects and include associated soft costs (contingency, engineering, survey, geotechnical, environmental, permitting) and 2) a cost scenario in which all the recommendations are implemented together.

The priority for each recommendation is shown as "low, medium, or high." RPCA determined these rankings based upon three factors: 1) park user safety, 2) community prioritization feedback and the results of the 2011 and 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment, 3) life span of existing facility.

The proposed timeline for each recommendation considers the project priority, the project cost with relation to the Department budget and contingent upon the Capital Improvement Plan, and the construction sequencing of recommendation amongst other park projects.

ESTIMATED COST RANGES									
DESCRIPTION			If recommendations are addressed all together as package		If recommendations are addressed individually (soft costs are loaded in each item)		Priority	Timeline	
WAYFINDING			\$11,178	-	\$14,285	\$13,414	-	\$17,142	high 1-3 years
01 WIDEN PATHWAY			63,038	-	112,167	\$87,623	-	\$155,913	medium 3-10 years
02 PLAYGROUND RENOVATION			171,181	-	245,718	\$237,942	-	\$341,548	high 1-3 years
02 NATURAL PLAY FEATURES			62,150	-	95,658	\$86,388	-	\$132,965	high 1-3 years
03 STROLLER PARK & PLAYGROUND PLAZA ENTRANCE			13,809	-	19,171	\$19,194	-	\$26,647	medium 1-3 years
04 - PASSIVE PLAY AREA			66,644	-	114,626	\$92,635	-	\$159,331	high 3-10 years
04 PASSIVE OPEN SPACE			180,027	-	250,860	\$250,237	-	\$348,695	high 3-10 years
05 & 06 DUNCAN AVENUE ENTRANCE			20,270	-	33,290	\$28,176	-	\$46,272	high 3-10 years
07 ALLEYWAY LANDSCAPE BUFFER			53,877	-	65,077	\$64,652	-	\$78,093	medium 3-10 years
08 TRAIL TO ROUTE 1			36,631	-	61,593	\$50,917	-	\$85,614	high 3-10 years
09 MONROE AVENUE ADA ACCESS			66,407	-	81,084	\$92,305	-	\$112,706	high 1-3 years
10 MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS			156,262	-	197,793	\$217,204	-	\$274,932	medium 3-10 years
11 BLEACHERS & STORAGE			516,735	-	631,250	\$718,262	-	\$877,438	high 3-10 years
12 BLEACHERS & CONCESSIONS			561,398	-	685,391	\$780,344	-	\$952,693	medium 3-10 years
13 REMOVE BLUE BUILDING & CONTAINER			162,624	-	223,967	\$226,048	-	\$311,314	high 3-10 years
14 PARKING LOT TURN AROUND			42,810	-	55,256	\$59,506	-	\$76,806	high 3-10 years
16 DOG PARK BERM STABILIZATION			10,506	-	13,883	\$14,603	-	\$19,297	high 3-10 years
16 DOG PARK LIGHTING			27,840	-	40,565	\$38,698	-	\$56,385	high 3-10 years
18 DOG PARK BIO-FILTERS			127,992	-	159,648	\$177,909	-	\$221,911	medium 3-10 years
17 MAINTENANCE STORAGE SHELTER			38,355	-	52,663	\$53,313	-	\$73,201	high 3-10 years
IMPERVIOUS SURFACE BMP REQUIREMENTS			100,000	-	100,000	\$100,000	-	\$100,000	medium 3-10 Years
DOCUMENTARY STUDY/EVALUATION			16,920	-	22,880	\$16,920	-	\$22,880	medium 3-10 Years
INTERPRETATION			5,000	-	7,500	\$5,000	-	\$7,500	medium 3-10 years
UTILITY UPGRADES			110,000	-	137,500	\$152,900	-	\$191,125	high 1-3 years
SUBTOTAL			\$2,727,582	-	\$3,574,916				
Soft Costs	CONTINGENCY		545,516.46	-	714,983.16				
	ENGINEERING		327,309.87	-	428,989.90				
	SURVEY		81,827.47	-	107,247.47				
	GEOTECHNICAL		54,551.65	-	71,498.32				
	ENVIRONMENTAL		54,551.65	-	71,498.32				
	PERMITTING		150,000.00	-	200,000.00				
GRAND TOTAL			\$3,941,339	-	\$5,169,133				