

Dana Wedeles

From: Ali Ahmad <ali.ahmad@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 21, 2015 5:12 PM
To: Dana Wedeles; Laura Durham
Cc: Bonnie Petry; ntingen@verizon.net
Subject: Re: Public Comment on City's Draft Plan for Ewald Park

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Ms. Wedeles and Ms. Durham:

First, as President of the Wakefield Tarleton Civic Association, I would like to echo the comments of my neighbors Bonnie and Nancy sent earlier. Ewald plays an important active use role for the youth of our community and our neighboring communities and plays an important environmental role.

I also participated in the recent Ewald Park events on Earth Day coordinated by the City of Alexandria, the Alexandria West Rotary Club, the Cameron Station Civic Association, our neighborhood civic association (Wakefield Tarleton), and several local businesses. Many volunteer hours went towards the very trees threatened with destruction under the draft plan. **Please note that I have two requests for information included in my comments in bold below.**

I'd like to add that while the tree removal is one of the most visibly wrong part of the the draft plan, the regrading of the hill would fundamentally change the nature of that space. I'd encourage anyone who has not to visit Ewald Park and stand on that hill behind those large red cedar trees. It is quiet, despite the constant noise of traffic on Duke St. On a recent neighborhood walk through, we met a family playing a pickup game of soccer and relaxing on blankets in the shade. Some were reading. To say the space will be regraded is to say it will be destroyed.

Furthermore, the underlying reason for the removal of many of the trees and the regrading is one of safety. It is very heartening to see this sort of proactive concern. However, I do not believe the data supports the conclusion in the draft plan.

Ewald Park is not a high-crime area. Two of the four top crimes reported for Ewald Park, or 4500 Duke Street, are driving related (Driving While Intoxicated and Accident Property Hit-And-Run) and absolutely not related to Ewald Park or to the grade of the hill facing Duke Street.

Furthermore, there is no indication that the other crimes that occurred at the park in any measurable number over the past few years, the top two being Alcohol Open Container and Marijuana Possession, occurred because of this space or would be significantly dissuaded.

I understand the privacy afforded by the hill *might* create a haven for someone to drink in public or smoke marijauna. But this behavior is common in many parks at night in this City or any city. In order to justify the destruction of this use within the park, and the destruction of the trees, the bar to show that this is a high crime area or that this particular feature is driving the crime is very high. It is as logical that proximity to an all-night convenience store (7-11) drives the the activity. The parks proximity to that 7-11, or Foxchase stores across the street, will not change.

I appreciate that you've asked Officer Lloyd to attend the meeting to discuss the APD's reasoning. **If Officer Lloyd has provided data, statistics, or a written explanation of the change I would ask that you make that available to me prior to the June 4th community meeting.** If no written report/documentation has been provided, I would like you to confirm that in writing as well.

Finally, some of the trees are threatened with removal because of a planned parking lot expansion. **I'd ask that, prior to the June 4th community meeting, you provide the data on parking lot use which justifies the expansion.** By your own standard, Ewald is a neighborhood park, with "service area of up to .5 miles." By that standard, which is extremely reasonable walking distance, there would be no need to expand the parking lot to put more cars on the road. This would not be at all in line with the City's goal of reducing SOV use.

Thank you for your service to our community, and I look forward to hearing back from you ahead of the June 4th meeting.

Sincerely,
Ali Ahmad

On Wed, May 20, 2015 at 7:45 PM, Nancy <ntingen@verizon.net> wrote:
May 20, 2015

Dear Ms. Durham & Ms. Wedeles,

Please review the attached letter and include it in the public record of the planning process relating to the Ewald Park Draft Plan.

I look forward to meeting you both at the June 4, 2015 meeting.

Sincerely,
Nancy Tingen

--

Ali Ahmad
703.895.9899

*"I'm a slow walker, but I never walk back."
Abraham Lincoln*

May 13, 2015

Memorandum

To: The Park Planning, Design, & Capital Development Division of the Department of Recreation, Parks, & Cultural Activities

From: Bonnie Petry
Vice President of the Wakefield Tarleton Civic Association
Member of TreeStewards of Arlington and Alexandria

Copy: The Co-chairs and Members of the Park and Recreation Commission

Subject: PUBLIC INPUT INTO THE CITY OF ALEXANDRIA'S DRAFT PLAN FOR EWALD PARK

As a resident of the Wakefield Tarleton neighborhood, I am deeply concerned about Park Planning's draft plan for Ewald Park (Attachment A), particularly city staff's recommendation to remove trees, re-grade the hill, and enlarge the parking lot.

I walk, jog, and drive by and through Ewald Park on a regular basis. One of the biggest things I have enjoyed about Ewald Park since I have lived in the neighborhood are seeing the well-spaced, limbed up trees and grassy area at the front of the park near Duke Street and the giant, 60-70 year old Eastern Red Cedar trees at the top of the hill. **As shown in the picture below, Ewald Park as it exists now, with its healthy, established trees, provides valuable beauty to our neighborhood and the Duke Street Corridor.**



To start, I would urge Park Planning to consider the impacts that trees have upon real-estate values, crime, and the livability of a neighborhood. Trees impact all these areas positively. What does the tree canopy look like in Chirilagua, and along Route One South of the City of Alexandria versus Beverly Hills, Rosemont, and Park Fairfax? What are the correlated real estate values and crime rates in these areas? Regarding Park Fairfax, that community's property values are certainly not connected to those units' modernity, square footage, or ability to converted to trendy open floor plans – that community's value is directly linked to the beautiful green space and mature trees. It is important to remember that higher property values help keep the city solvent and the factors that help a neighborhood's property values should be respected and protected.

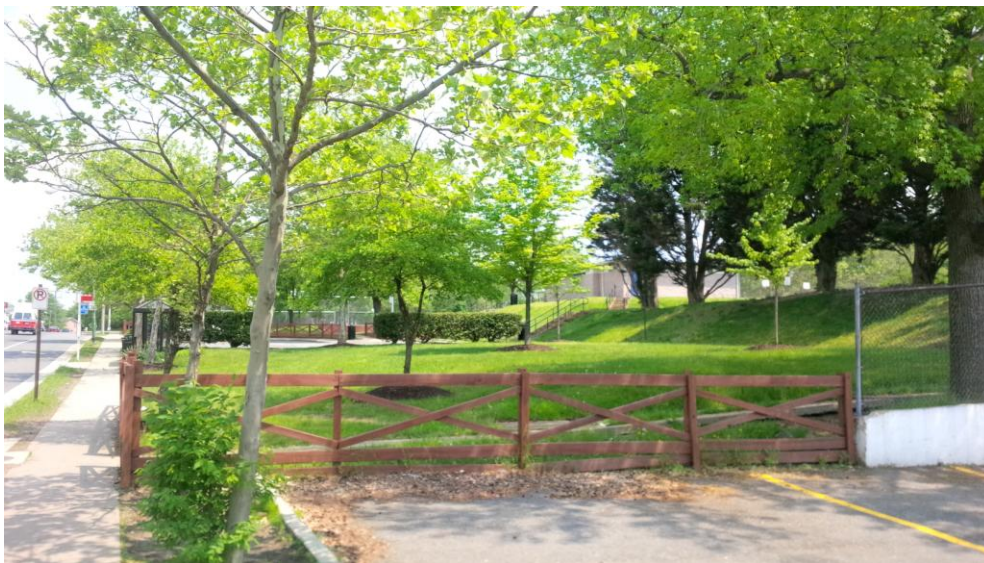
Right now, the section of Duke Street between Jordan Street and Quaker Lane has an appealing green and tree-lined appearance. Unfortunately the city has approved a transportation plan that will strip this section of Duke Street of the grassy, tree-filled islands that separate the main part of the street from frontage roads and get rid of any remaining grassy strips between the sidewalk and the street. That is bad enough, but now city staff is pushing deprive our neighborhood of established, beautiful trees on park land. Is the intent to try to make our neighborhood look considerably less green and more friendly to cars than to people and animals? If that is in fact not the intent, that would certainly be the impact of this plan.

It is also ironic that Transportation and Environmental Services' rationale for the Duke Street Corridor Plan is to ostensibly make the corridor more amenable for non-car transit. In addition, the city's Planning and Zoning Department routinely relaxes the requirement for parking spaces below the official requirement for its new developments. **Yet Park Planning is proposing to cut down trees to enlarge a parking lot, thus further encouraging people to drive, and pave over more of our green space.**

The mature, healthy, established London Plane Tree depicted in the picture below will be lost if the parking lot is expanded.



Aren't our parks supposed to preserve our green space as we see every other square inch of our city paved?



These recommendations also violate the city’s stated goals of protecting and increasing its tree canopy and trying to make progress towards meeting its storm water mandates – **to be clear, increasing the impervious (paved) surfaces in our parks and cutting down established, and in several cases particularly large trees (the ~30 inch Eastern Red Cedars), takes us away from our storm water goals, not nearer them.**

The front most trees are healthy, well-established trees and new saplings planted and abandoned in the back of the park with dubious chances of survival will not make up for the loss of a 12.3” caliper London Plane Tree, years-old 3.7” and 6.5” caliper maple trees, 5.2” and 4.5” caliper Hawthorne trees, and **four 60-70 year old “grandfather” Eastern Red Cedar trees that range from 29.7” to 33.2” in diameter.** I would urge Park Planning to consider the storm water interception benefits of these trees, to include the most beneficial of them, these huge Eastern Red Cedars.



I would like to point out something else about the area – the established 3.7” caliper Red Maple has a living landscape plaque at its base – it was a donated tree dedicated to the memory of one of our departed neighbors, Ms. Geraldine O’Driscoll:



Commemorative
Plaque



In your draft plan, you cite your reason for cutting down the trees and re-grading the land as a desire to get rid of “a visual barrier from Duke Street” that makes the park “seem unsafe.” So to make the park “seem” safer you propose to cut down the well-spaced trees in the front of the park and restore the playground area in the back-most area of the park to forest? It is utterly ridiculous to propose to plant a “forest” in the farthest reaches of the park if you are concerned about “safety.” Furthermore, I would question this supposed concern about “safety” regardless – Ewald Park is in my neighborhood, and I have never felt unsafe in that park. What a sad loss it would be to see beautiful older native trees that are almost three feet in diameter lost due to someone’s perception of safety that is not founded on data.

Finally, I would direct Park Planning’s attention back to the surveys the city did as a part of its Eisenhower West Small Area Plan. I am including the city’s slides as “Attachment B” to this memo. In those surveys, resident placed a high priority on natural areas and wildlife habitat. While greatly increasing the density of trees and other vegetation in a partially active-use space like Ewald Park is not practical, maintaining the existing established tree canopy would be true to what residents have been telling you in these surveys. There is a real hunger, as reflected on the city’s own slides, to save the few small areas of green space and trees left, as this is all we have left.

In conclusion, please do not increase the remaining impervious surfaces in our green space. If you want to re-purpose the existing area where the swimming pool currently is, than build the community building there, but please do not increase the parking lot and destroy 9 or 10 healthy established trees and lush grass. We depend on you, the guardians of our parks to preserve our green space, not pave the planet. We have so little green space left!

Attachment A: RPCA Park Planning’s Draft Plan for Ewald Park

Ewald Park

Improvement Recommendations (Spring 2015)


- 1 **Expand parking lot and create turnaround**
The current parking lot is small, unstriped and does not allow for turnaround space. This plan proposes expanding the lot and including a landscaped median to provide a turnaround. It would also include parking spaces for disabled park users.
- 2 **Create pedestrian entrance plaza near Duke St./Jordan intersection**
A new formalized entrance to the park would create a small space for a park sign, benches, and bike racks. It would also provide park access close to the Duke Street and S. Jordan intersection, encouraging safer pedestrian access.
- 3 **Install a second basketball court and maintenance path (alternatively, court may be area for fitness equipment)**
The existing basketball court is one of the most popular in the City. A second court would help meet the demand at this park.
- 4 **Renovate the turf and install a walking path**
The park holds one of the largest and most popular unfenced turf areas in the City. This plan proposes adding irrigation and re-turfing the field to better sustain the active use. Steps from the futsal courts to the open turf area may also serve as spectator seating. A path around the field will create a location for running and walking. Walking the path seven times would equal a mile.
- 5 **Replace the pool and poolhouse with two futsal courts**
The pool has been closed since 2011. When it was open there was low use as the site is not conducive to a high capacity aquatics facility. The current poolhouse blocks visibility from Duke Street creating an unsafe setting behind it. This plan recommends replacing the pool and poolhouse with futsal (soccer) courts to meet the increasing demand in the city.
- 6 **Restore the existing playground to forest area**
This area is hidden from the street and difficult to access. Planting new trees in this site will help increase the tree canopy in the city, per the Urban Forestry Master Plan.
- 7 **Remove the trees and re-grade to improve visibility from Duke Street**
The existing row of trees, in combination with the topography, cause a visual barrier from Duke St and make it seem unsafe. Removing the trees will increase visibility into the playground.
- 8 **Move the playground to the former tennis court area**
Moving the playground to the former tennis court area will increase its visibility from Duke St and encourage greater use. It will also include new and modern equipment and may integrate water features.
- 9 **Install shade structure and picnic area**
A shaded area with seating will provide a community gathering space.
- 10 **Reserve space for community building**
A community building can provide space for civic meetings, restrooms, and recreation offices. The location of the building allows for sightlines throughout the park to increase surveillance. It is also located next to the picnic area to allow for joint uses.



Citywide Regional Parks Survey

Parks, Trails and Facilities Households Would Use at Regional Parks:

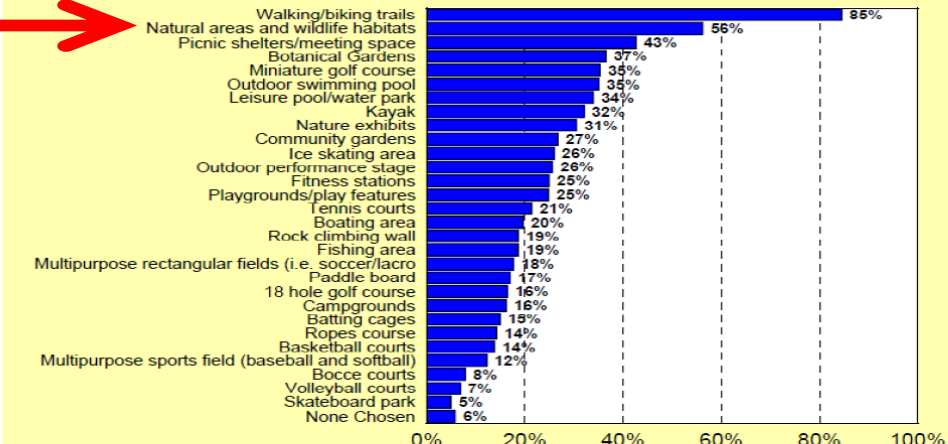
- Walking and Biking Trails (85%)
- Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats ((56%) ←
- Picnic Shelters and Meeting Space (43%)
- Botanical Gardens (37%)
- Miniature Golf (35%)
- Outdoor Swimming Pool (35%)
- Leisure Pool/Water Parks (15%)


Park and Recreation Commission
January 15, 2015
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Citywide Regional Parks Survey


Q9. Parks, Trails and Facilities Respondent Households Would Use at the Regional Parks

by percentage of respondents (multiple selections possible)



Facility	Percentage
Walking/biking trails	85%
Natural areas and wildlife habitats	56%
Picnic shelters/meeting space	43%
Botanical Gardens	37%
Miniature golf course	35%
Outdoor swimming pool	35%
Leisure pool/water park	34%
Kayak	32%
Nature exhibits	31%
Community gardens	27%
Ice skating area	26%
Outdoor performance stage	26%
Fitness stations	25%
Playgrounds/play features	25%
Tennis courts	21%
Boating area	20%
Rock climbing wall	19%
Fishing area	19%
Multipurpose rectangular fields (i.e. soccer/lacrosse)	18%
Fiddle board	17%
18 hole golf course	16%
Campgrounds	16%
Batting cages	15%
Ropes course	14%
Basketball courts	14%
Multipurpose sports field (baseball and softball)	12%
Bocce courts	8%
Volleyball courts	7%
Skateboard park	5%
None Chosen	5%

Source: ETC Institute for the City of Alexandria Regional Parks Survey (October 2014)


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Citywide Regional Parks Survey

Top Four Parks, Trails, and Facilities Households Would Use Most Often:

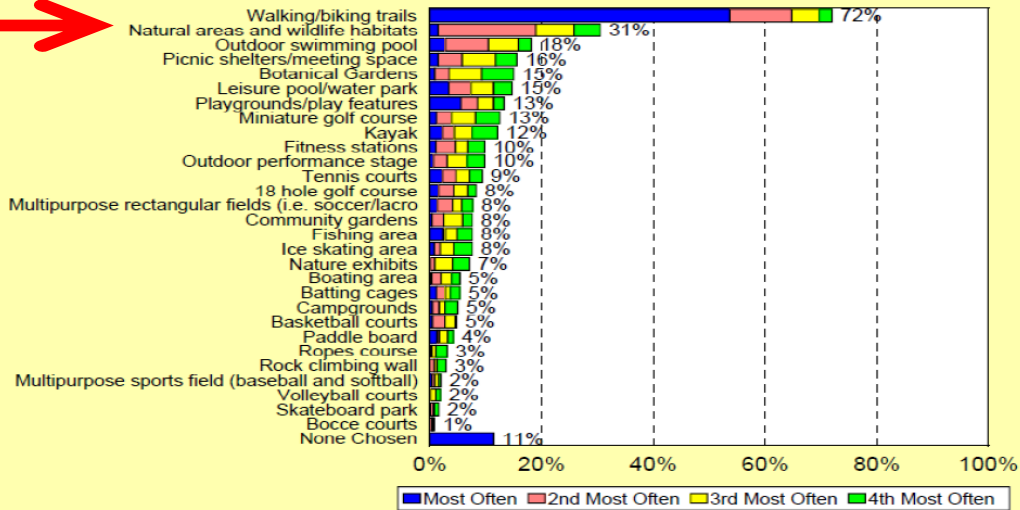
- Walking and Biking Trails (72%)
- Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitats (31%)
- Outdoor Swimming Pools (18%)
- Picnic Shelters and Meeting Space (16%)



Citywide Regional Parks Survey

Q10. Parks, Trails, and Facilities Respondent Households Use the MOST OFTEN at a Regional Park

by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



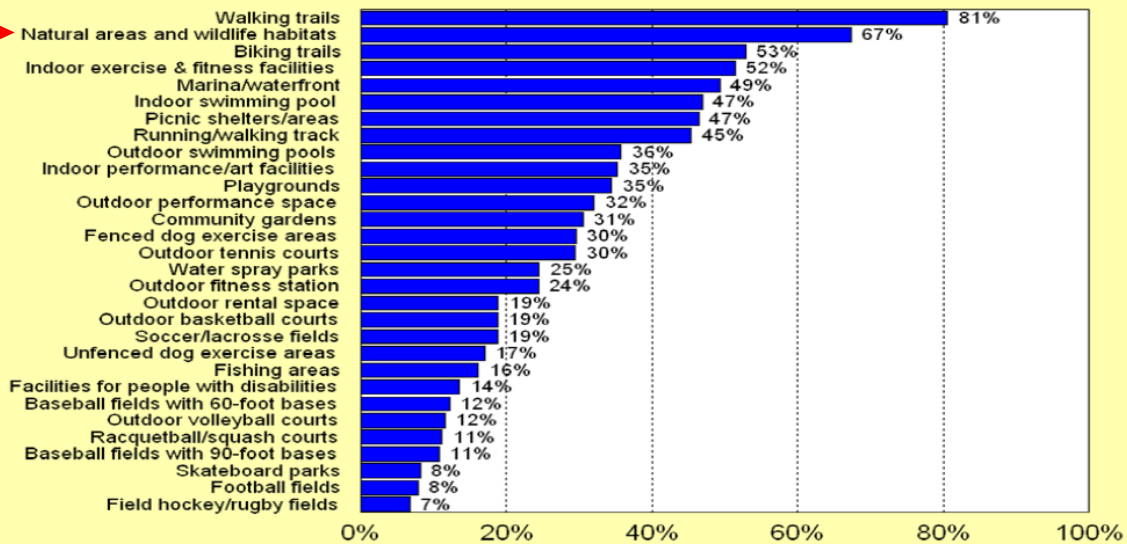
Source: ETC Institute for the City of Alexandria Regional Parks Survey (October 2014)



2013 Parks & Recreation Needs Assessment

Q5. Parks and Recreation Facilities Respondent Households Have a Need for.

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (September 2013)



Park and Recreation Commission

January 15, 2015

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Wednesday, May 20, 2015

To: The Department of Recreation, Parks, & Cultural Activities
Park Planning, Design, & Capital Development Division
Attn: Laura Durham & Dana Wedeles

From: Nancy Tingen, Wakefield Tarleton Civic Association Secretary

Subject: Public Input for the City of Alexandria's Draft Plan for Ewald Park

As a resident of the Wakefield Tarleton neighborhood, located in Alexandria's West End, I am concerned about Park Planning's draft plan for Ewald Park. I do not agree with City staff's recommendation to remove trees, re-grade the hill, and enlarge the parking lot.

One of the best attributes of Ewald Park is its well-spaced trees and grassy area at the front of the park near Duke Street. I especially enjoy looking at the 60-70 year old native Eastern Red Cedar trees at the top of the hill. As illustrated in the picture below, Ewald's established trees provides invaluable beauty to my neighborhood and also beautifies the Duke Street Corridor.



The section of Duke Street between Jordan Street and Quaker Lane has an appealing green and tree-lined appearance; however, the City has approved a transportation plan that will strip this section of Duke Street of the grassy, tree-filled islands that separate the main part of the street from frontage roads and remove any remaining grassy strips between the sidewalk and the street. Is the intent to try to make our neighborhood look considerably less green and more friendly to cars than to people and animals?

These recommendations also violate the City's stated goals of protecting and increasing its tree canopy and meeting its storm water mandates. Please do not increase the remaining impervious surfaces in our green space!

I look forward to attending and speaking at the June, 4, 2015 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy E. Tingen, Secretary
Wakefield Tareleton Civic Association

Dana Wedeles

From: Suzanne Dingwell <suzdingwell@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2015 2:52 PM
To: Laura Durham; Dana Wedeles
Cc: ali.ahmad@gmail.com; Bonnie Petry
Subject: Trees at Ewald Park

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Ms. Durham and Ms. Wedeles,

I applaud the efforts being made right now by the City for long term planning for Alexandria's parks and green spaces, so important for future success. Thank you for your vision and your industry on the city's behalf.

Twice this spring I've made exploratory trips to Ewald park with the current draft plan in hand, and I would like to offer the following observations to support the idea that further consideration be given to saving the existing shade trees on the site.

Of course, first of all, it will be many years before replacement trees could provide the amount of shade that the existing trees provide in three key places: the upper field where tennis courts once were, the current playground, and the proposed parking area.

The mature trees in those places provide cool respite for people, keep the playground equipment cool enough to actually touch in summer, and give a wonderful green buffer to the noise and activity of Duke street. I talked with a family sitting on a blanket under the shade of the juniper trees, (*Juniperus virginiana*), who literally pleaded with me (I must have looked official with my clipboard) not to let the trees be cut down.

It seems most logical to keep the playground away from the street instead of moving it closer. Certainly opening up the view so more people are led into the park is to be desired. Once the pool house is down, a long sloping ramp could be installed to accomplish this without the re-grading and the destruction that it would cause. If possible it would be nice to save or transplant the lovely mature wax myrtle, (*Morella cerifera*), another Virginia native, to the side of the pool house.

Thanks for this opportunity to be a part of the planning process.

Let's save the trees we have!

Best Regards,

Sue

Sue Dingwell
418 Ferdinand Day Drive
Alexandria, VA 22304

Dana Wedeles

From: Arthur Impastato <aimpastato@earthlink.net>
Sent: Tuesday, June 02, 2015 10:04 AM
To: Dana Wedeles
Cc: mindyllyle@comcast.net; ali Wakefield civic
Subject: Please do not destroy the Ewald Park trees

It has come to our attention that the RPCA has released its draft plans for changes to neighborhood parks, which are defined as small parks that serve neighbors within a half a mile. This includes John Ewald Park, located at 4500 Duke St.

While there is certainly merit to many parts of the plan, there's a big problem in that it calls for the removal and destruction of at least 9 healthy mature trees in Ewald Park. The RPCA should issue final plans that do not call for the destruction of these trees. The reasons for preserving them are as follows:

- Four of the trees are Eastern Red Cedars and are 60-70 years old. They are huge, and beautiful, and provide shade for people using the field.
- Five of the trees are closer to the street, and would be destroyed in order to expand a parking lot. These include 12.3" caliper London Plane Tree, years-old 3.7" and 6.5" caliper maple trees, 5.2" and 4.5" caliper Hawthorne trees.
- These trees are important to stormwater management in Alexandria. Removing them and replacing the topography with a regraded slope and a new parking lot would take us further away from solving our stormwater management crisis.
- One of these trees is planted in honor of one of our dear departed neighbors, Ms. Geraldine O'Driscoll, a parks activist. A commemorative plaque is located at the base of the tree. The trees are well placed and there are clear signs of loving care.
- The four eastern red cedar trees and the grade of the field area provide excellent noise barrier from a very busy Duke St. intersection. Removing the trees and regrading would end the usefulness of the field itself. Information from the police department shows that most crimes reported at the Ewald Park address are crimes associated with Duke Street, like Driving While Intoxicated.

If you have any questions, please let us know.

Arthur "Sash" Impastato

President

Cameron Station Civic Association

Dana Wedeles

From: Dana Wedeles
Sent: Thursday, July 23, 2015 2:52 PM
To: Dana Wedeles
Subject: FW: ewald park

-----Original Message-----

From: pryperone to h <hahnvirginia@aol.com>
To: Laura.Durham <Laura.Durham@alexandriava.gov>
Sent: Mon, Jun 1, 2015 8:37 pm
Subject: ewald park

PLEASE DON'T PAVE PARADISE TO PUT UP A PARKING LOT! LEAVE THE TREES ALONE!