

Park and Recreation Commission endorsed on November 19, 2015

# Ewald Park

## History and Character

Ewald Park is a 3.88 acres park acquired in 1965. There are no known or documented historical sites within the park though there is a good possibility Native Americans used the area for seasonal settlements and/or hunting camps given its proximity to Holmes Run.



Today the park features a playground, basketball court, swimming pool (closed), and open field. It previously held tennis courts, though they were removed in the early 2000's. The former tennis area, pool and playground sit high on a hill and are not well seen from the Duke Street. The topography and hidden areas of the park have contributed to on-going safety concerns in the park, as frequently noted by the Alexandria Police Department.

has an organized summer league and often attracts NBA and college talent. But street ball takes place on courts in neighborhoods across the United States. The Ewald Park court, where the city installed new lights last year, can hold its own against most places, players say. 'We get guys from colleges coming here, players come from Maryland all the time,' said Tavon Singletary, 21, who along with Walton graduated from T.C. Williams in 2011. "Barry Farms is big, but we get some recognition out here." (McElhatton, "Playing Outside the Lines" Alexandria Times, January 24, 2014).



Ewald Pool (image left) opened in 1969 and closed in 2012 due to low cost recovery and financial constraints. Prior to its closure the pool was lightly used and lacked good accessibility and visibility, despite it being the only pool on the west side of the City.



The playground (image left) is hidden behind the pool house and has very infrequent use by children. The equipment is outdated and is inaccessible to people with disabilities.



The field is heavily used for pick-up soccer. The City and its affiliates do not program the field, rather it is a site that players know to go to for unscheduled recreation. The field (image left) is in poor condition due to its heavy use and lack of proper irrigation

and drainage.

As reported in the Alexandria Times on January 24, 2014, Ewald's basketball court is one of the best known in the Washington D.C. area for street ball. Throughout the year, players both young and old show up to play, watch and learn. As the article states:

*"The best-known place for street ball in the D.C. area is the Barry Farms neighborhood in southeast Washington, which*



The Alexandria West Rotary (AWR) recently adopted the Park and in Spring 2015 they held a volunteer day to shovel mulch, paint fences, and plant shrubs (shown below). In the past year, the Wakefield-Tarleton Neighborhood Association has also held clean-up days, in collaboration with the Alexandria Police Department. Over the years many other individuals and community groups have donated time and resources to spruce up the park, particularly around the park entrance.

## Existing Conditions





# Community Feedback

In Fall 2014, staff collected community feedback to understand how the Park is used and how it could be improved in the future. The following information summarizes what we heard through an online survey, community workshop, and “graffiti board” in the park. Over 270 people responded to the survey in total, seventeen of which were specific to Ewald Park. Staff used the collected information to develop draft park plans.

## In 10 years I would like this Park to...

(Top 3 rankings shown; based on a weighted score)

1. Be a safe place for children to explore

2. Be a place to create social connections with neighbors

3. Have lots of activity

## What would you like done with the basketball court?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	8	53%
Enhance it	5	33%
Transform it	2	13%

### Explain

Add multi-sport component to the basketball court for futsal, hockey, and other sports

Appreciate the energy efficient night lighting

FUTSAL COURT!! Would be used 24/7 by the community.

I see the courts being used quite often.

This comment applies to all park elements: The big issue is safety and lack of "nice" things. There's lots of people hanging (read: "cat calls", up to no good, etc...) around as a result of the local apartment complex The Fields and the 7-11. I do believe keeping the basketball court is a good thing because it will keep the kids from the area engaged and lower potential crime. Also, kids routinely walk across Duke without using the cross walk, making it unsafe and it disrupts traffic. The 7-11 is also a problem. The Alexandria PD always has a police car there, which tells you that crime in that area is a problem. The Park and surrounding area needs a revamp.

## What would you like done with the former tennis court

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	0	0%
Enhance it	4	29%
Transform it	10	71%

### Explain

A public pool would be great for the neighborhood.

Bring back the tennis courts! Maintain them

FUTSAL Court!

Give us back our tennis courts!

Please do SOMETHING with this. There is so much wasted/unused space in this park!

## What would you like done with the parking lot?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	8	61%
Enhance it	4	31%
Transform it	1	8%

### Explain

Add bike parking

Needs white stripes to mark parking spaces.

## How do you get to this Park?

Value	Count	Percent
Walk	14	82%
Bike (personal)	0	0%
Bike (Capital Bikeshare)	0	0%
Drive	3	18%
Public Transit	0	0%
Carpool	0	0%

## How far do you typically travel to visit this park?

Value	Count	Percent
Less than ½ mile	15	88%
Between ½ mile to 1 mile	0	0%
Between 1-2 miles	1	6%
Over 2 miles	1	6%

## What would you like done with the open lawn?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	1	8%
Enhance it	5	38%
Transform it	7	54%

### Explain

Maybe expand the playground or build a gazebo or something of interest

No one's played baseball here for years. Anything will improve!

Turf this. May be the most used open space in small park in the city.

All dirt and rocks totally unusable and unsafe

Put it to good use

Add small turf soccer fields/futsal courts. Many people play soccer in the open area, so enhancing this area would be attractive

## What would you like done with the playground?

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	0	0%
Enhance it	9	69%
Transform it	4	31%

### Explain

Need to make this area more family friendly

The playground is basic, old and needs enhancement or transformation.

We could use a playground suitable for younger children.

## What would you like done with the pool and bath house? (Currently closed)

Value	Count	Percent
Preserve it as is	0	0%
Enhance it	4	31%
Transform it	9	69%

### Explain

A public pool would be great for the neighborhood.

Either fix it up and use it or replace it with something else.

If it's not to be used as a pool, then transform to be useful!

Open it for use.

Spray grounds would be awesome

Keep closed fill it in and turn it into open space! Maybe a picnic shelter!

It would be great to actually have the pool and bathhouse open again, but I understand that it was closed due to funding and the perceived abundance of private pools in the immediate West End area. In the absence of re-opening that facility, transforming it into something useable would certainly be a welcomed change.

Market the facility, no one knew it was there. Lack of hours hurt pool use. Needed weekend hours so parents could take their kids.

## How often do you visit this park?

Value	Count	Percent
Daily	0	0%
Weekly	5	36%
Monthly	3	21%
Yearly	6	43%

## What is currently NOT in the Park that you would like to see there?

### Response

First Topic: In the distant past I had observed seniors gathering for breakfast at the McD's on South Van Dorn Street. Then the building was refurbished and the chairs and tables were anchored so that the furniture could no longer be gathered together for people to sit in groups. Next the seniors from the West End gathered at the McD's on North Paxton Street and Duke Street. This building was also refurbished and the chairs and tables anchored so that they could no longer be moved together for a gathering of customers. The seniors stopped gathering there. A "senior room" at Ewald Park should have moveable furniture so that seniors could carry in breakfast and converse. The City has been stalling for a number of years on having a Senior Center out here in the West End. An extensive survey was conducted as to the needs, and the results were included in the Chinquapin Recreation Center. Just a reminder: In the "planned" communities of either Columbia, Maryland or Reston, Virginia the seniors gathered in a Laundromat because there were chairs there! Perhaps a request should be submitted for a Laundromat in Ewald Park so the seniors would have a place to gather. Another topic: The Central Library has a large number of students using the Internet Terminal from about 3:00 PM to about 5:00 PM during the school year. Perhaps some Internet Terminals should be installed in Ewald Park for the children to use in the afternoon when school has let out. During the morning and during the evening the terminals would be available for adults. Parking: The space available for vehicle parking is about 16 or 18 spaces. White lines on the asphalt would be helpful. Would one handicap parking space be the correct amount?

A larger playground or area for my child to play

Good tennis courts that are in a safe park

Improved soccer fields, futsal courts

Quality playing surface

Restrooms!

Benches

I can't really say, but it's really tragic. Inner city parks in major metropolitan cities are more enjoyable. There's a huge field in the back that has potential...but I'm not sure what should go there. Maybe a jungle gym for kids?

A family friendly vibe. If the tennis courts were repaired a children's tennis program could be scheduled there.

A beautiful, relaxing spot for neighbors to gather. It's currently a spot for kids to loiter and smoke pot. It needs to be turned into a much better spot for all neighbors not just bored kids.

## Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the Park?

### Response

The state of the pool/bathhouse makes the entire park downright unappealing. The park has an appearance that is haggard, neglected, and completely unwelcoming. There is just too much wasted, unused, and/or decrepit looking space! People do not feel comfortable using the space for anything outside of basketball and soccer games. There are safety concerns at night due to the substandard lighting in the area, making it a draw to kids who want to smoke, drink, have sex and hang out. It's absolutely appalling that the city has let this park decay to this level!

More organized and supervised activities for children, teaching about litter prevention

It needs a complete overhaul and a cross walk across the street. People cross the street and don't care that cars have to stop. It's all the young kids from the surrounding area. Someone will get hit at some point. Also, the 7-11 creates huge problems. Doesn't really make anyone feel safe that there's a constant police presence there and often times at the park.

Park is not safe to use. Basketball court is only real usable area currently. Pickup semi-organized soccer fills the grass area and has left the area dirt and rocks only! Bring back nice tennis courts

People frequently cross Duke Street to get to the park, and do not use the crosswalk at the intersection with Jordan Street. Since cars coming west are coming down a hill and have limited visibility, crossers are at greater risk of being struck. This needs to be addressed somehow.

The park is well used for basketball and soccer - perhaps an actual soccer field should be put in for these pickup games. The hidden portion of the playground makes it dangerous and under utilized. Lighting should be put in and the pool expanded for actual use.

There is a major issue with this park and that is accessibility. There is a lack of a crosswalk across Duke Street from The Fields apartments to the park. This intersection is so very dangerous because the kids from this apartment complex do not walk down to the crosswalk at Jordan and Duke Streets. They cross Duke in the middle of the street either stopping traffic or getting close to being hit by a car. It's an incredibly dangerous area for adults and children.

## Have any of the following circumstances prevented you from visiting this Park? (check all that apply)

Value	Count	Percent
I am physically limited from walking	0	0%
There is no pedestrian/bike friendly access to the park from where I live	3	25%
I have concerns about crime or personal safety	10	83%
There is not enough parking	1	8%
There is nothing in the Park that interests me	6	67%

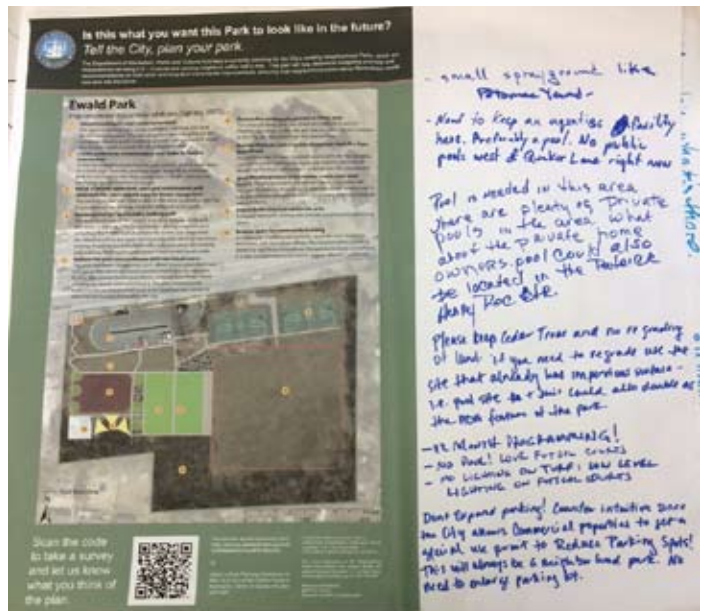
## Graffiti Sign

A "graffiti sign" in the Park had a marker attached and asked park users to write down what they would like their park to look like in the future. Park users recorded the following comments between September to November 2014



## Draft Plan Feedback

In Spring 2015, the community provided feedback on the draft park plan through online surveys (see appendix for full results), park signs and public meetings (comments on the plan shown below). Based on information from the Spring input phase, staff updated the plans to best represent current and future community needs.





# Improvement Recommendations

- 1 Create a turnaround and landscaped median in the parking lot**  
The current parking lot is, unstriped and does not allow for turnaround space or landscaped medians. This plan proposes installing a landscaped median and trees to provide a turnaround. It would also include parking spaces for disabled park users. The lot would be designed to not impact healthy existing trees.
- 2 Create pedestrian entrance 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**  
The existing basketball court is one of the most popular in the City. The addition of lights will require a special use permit and may be added at a later stage of implementation due to cost.
- 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 multi-use 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. As requested by the Park and Recreation Commission on October 17, 2015, staff will investigate the use of synthetic turf and lights prior to implementation.
- 5 Replace the pool and poolhouse with two multi-use 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 aquatic facility. The current poolhouse blocks visibility from Duke Street creating an unsafe setting behind it. This plan recommends replacing the pool and poolhouse with sport courts to meet the increasing demand in the city. One of the courts will be a multi-use court and include a movable net for tennis and pickleball. The other court would be used for futsal (court soccer).
- 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 Work with Alexandria Police Department (APD) to improve park safety, particularly in areas not visible from Duke St.**  
This plan recommends on-going community group involvement and cooperation to keep "eyes on the park." This can occur through regularly scheduled events in the park, communication with APD and increased park use. Over time, these strategies and crime reports will be measured to ensure safety and determine if other Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design tactics should be pursued while not impacting healthy existing trees.
- 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. The shade structures will be integrated within the existing trees to provide year round shade.
- 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.



## Implementation Strategy

This plan uses citizen input and considers other external considerations to determine how to address park improvements incrementally over time. Most of the recommendations in the plan can be implemented independent of other projects as funding is available, whether through city or non-city funds. The cost estimates (in 2015 dollars) do not include operating costs. Prior to the implementation of any recommendation, operating costs, if any, must be considered.

The priority for each recommendation is shown as “low,” “medium,” or “high.” RPCA determined these rankings based upon (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 the existing conditions, (4) potential for non-city funding sources, (5) level of user impact, (6) relationship to other projects.

Ewald Park					
#	Recommendation	Priority	Estimated Cost	Associated Recommendations	Dept Lead
1	Create a turnaround and landscaped median in the parking lot	Low	450,000-550,000	This recommendation will be considered if there is increased need for drop-off/pick up space after the multi-use courts are installed (recommendation #5)	RPCA
2	Create pedestrian entrance near Duke St./Jordon intersection	High	50,000-75,000		RPCA
3	Install a second basketball court and maintenance path	Medium	150,000-250,000		RPCA
4	Renovate the turf and install a walking path	High	500,000-650,000		RPCA
4b	<i>Option with synthetic turf and lights, per PRC</i>		800,000 - 1,000,000		RPCA
5	Replace the pool and poolhouse with two multi-use courts	Medium	550,000-650,000	Removal of the poolhouse should ideally precede the playground construction (recommendation #8) to provide visibility to the site from Duke Street.	RPCA
6	Restore the existing playground to forest area	High	35,000-50,000	Will follow the construction of the new playground (recommendation #8)	RPCA
7	Work with Alexandria Police Department to improve park safety, particularly in areas not visible from Duke St.	High	N/A at this time		APD/RPCA
8	Move the playground to the former tennis court area	High	350,000-500,000	FY19 CIP is design \$\$ only	RPCA
9	Install shade structure and picnic area	Medium	25,000-35,000		RPCA
10	Reserve space for community building	Low	N/A at this time		RPCA



The image (left) from a San Francisco park shows an example of stairs serving as spectator seating as proposed between the sport courts and open field space.