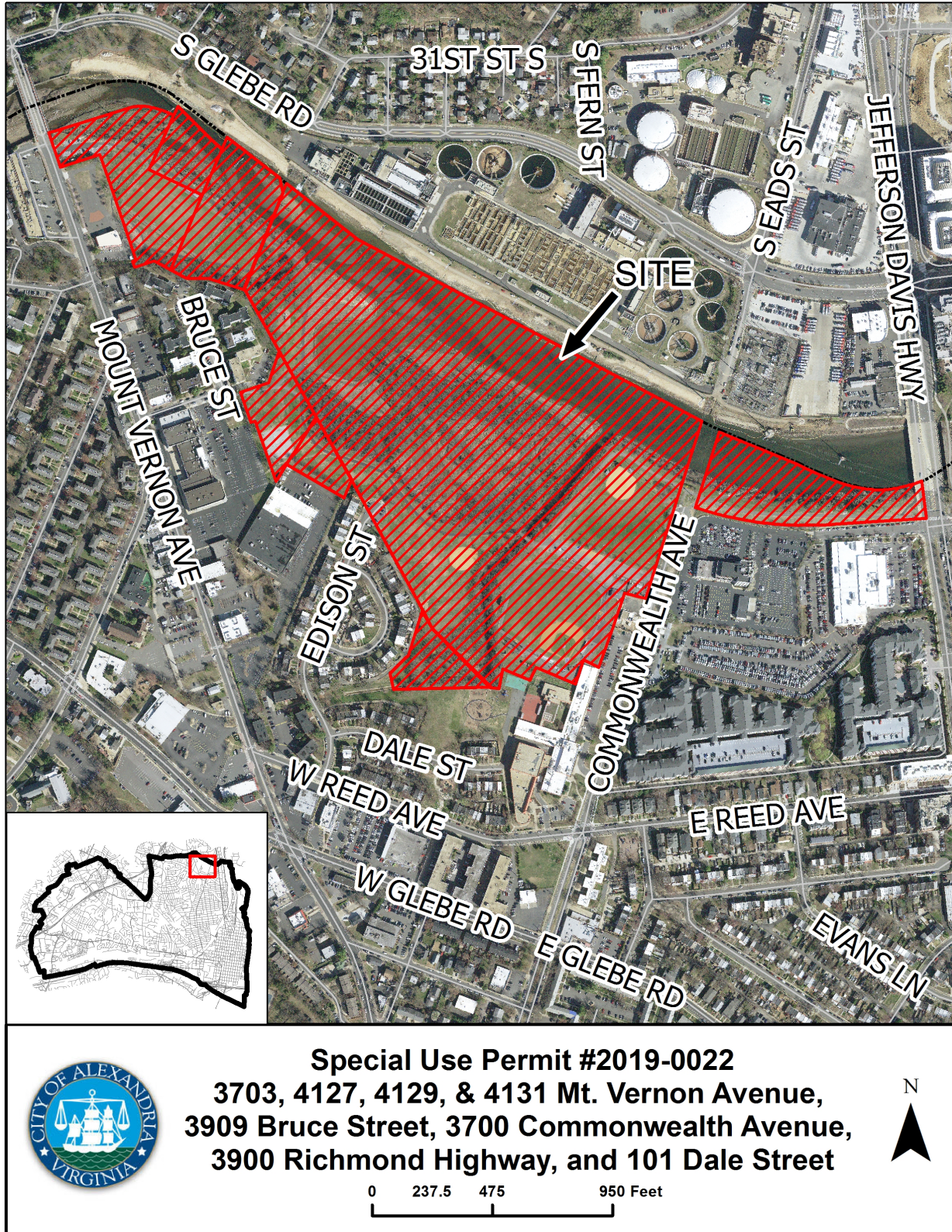
**DOCKET ITEM #4*****Special Use Permit #2019-00022******3073, 4127, 4129 & 4131 Mount Vernon Ave; 3909 Bruce Street; 3700 Commonwealth Avenue; 3900 Richmond Highway; and 101 Dale Street
Four Mile Run Park Improvements*****CONSENT AGENDA ITEM**

If no one asks to speak about this case prior to the hearing, it will be approved without discussion as part of the Consent Agenda.

Application	General Data	
Request: Public hearing and consideration of a request for a special use permit for congregate recreational facilities including a new children's play apparatus area at Four Mile Run Park.	Planning Commission Hearing:	May 7, 2019
	City Council Hearing:	May 18, 2019
Address: Address: 3703, 4127, 4129 & 4131 Mount Vernon Ave; 3909 Bruce Street; 3700 Commonwealth Ave; 3900 Richmond Highway; and 101 Dale Street	Zone:	POS/Public Open Space; CDD #7/Coordinated Development District #7
Applicant: City of Alexandria, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities	Small Area Plan:	Potomac West Small Area Plan

Staff Recommendation: APPROVAL subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the recommended permit conditions found in Section III of this report.

Staff Reviewer: Abigail Harwell, abigail.harwell@alexandriava.gov



PROJECT LOCATION MAP

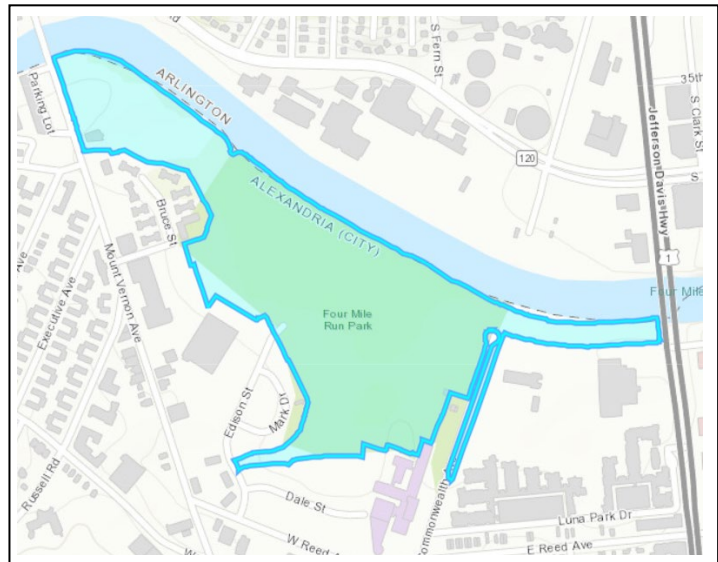
I. REPORT SUMMARY

REQUEST

The applicant, The City of Alexandria, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) requests a special use permit for congregate recreational facilities including a new children's play apparatus area (playground) at Four Mile Run Park.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site, Four Mile Run Park, is an irregularly-shaped assemblage of seven lots, located on the City's northern border with Arlington County and along the Four Mile Run stream. The park has approximately 51.56 acres in area and is designated as a "Citywide Park" by RPCA. The park has minimal road frontage for its size, with the main entrance to the park off Mount Vernon Avenue at the north west side of the property. There is also street access to the site from the townhouse neighborhoods on the south side of the park, and the dead-end street of Commonwealth Avenue. The rest of the park can be accessed via commercial development off Mount Vernon Avenue, including the proposed children's playground that is proposed to be relocated as part of this SUP request.



Located within the Arlandria neighborhood and included as part of the Potomac West Small Area Plan, the park is zoned Public Open Space (POS), with a small portion east of Commonwealth Avenue zoned Coordinated Development District (CDD) #7. The residential development adjacent to the park consists of RA (Residential Multi-Family) and RB (Townhouse) neighborhoods, which includes Cora Kelly Elementary School. To the west of the park, along Mount Vernon Avenue is property zoned CDD #6, which is developed as the Del Ray North shopping center (also known as the Arlandria Shopping Center, formerly the Mount Vernon Village Center). To the east across Commonwealth Avenue is CDD #7 which has been developed with a large auto dealership and apartment housing.

BACKGROUND

Four Mile Park has been designated as a park since the 1970's and consists of multiple land parcels acquired by the City. Uses to the park have been added gradually since that time, with the existing playground having been built in 1995. Starting in September 2012, RPCA began soliciting feedback on the existing conditions of the park and possible future improvements as part of a citywide recreational needs assessment and to address future population growth.

Conducting public workshops and online surveys, the feedback received was the basis for recommended improvements to the park, which were documented in the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan 2014. In March 2014, the Park and Recreation Commission endorsed the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan and forwarded the document to the City Council in April 2014. Since that time, RPCA has acted on many of the recommendations of the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan at Four Mile Run Park, including the wetlands restoration, renovation of the sport court, community garden, wayfinding signage, design of the wetlands bridge, and improvements to the Edison Street park entrance.

EXISTING USES

The park has a combination of active and passive recreational facilities that are highly used by the surrounding community, as indicated on Exhibit A. This includes one soccer field, two baseball/softball fields, and the Frank Mann Field which is home to minor league team the Alexandria Aces, the Bishop Ireton High School baseball team and various Alexandria little league teams. In addition to the fields, there is an existing multi-sport court, an unfenced dog exercise area, a park playground, a second playground for Cora Kelly School and Recreation Center, and a network of multi-use paths connecting the various uses within the park. The area along the Four Mile Run Stream consists of mostly of natural space that has minimal alteration and allows for passive use. The park also has restroom facilities, multi-use trail lighting, sports lighting around the fields for evening use and other accessory amenities, such as storage areas and dugouts to supplement the use of the park. Adjacent to the park is the Conservatory Center, located at 4109 Mount Vernon Avenue, which has programs and events that utilize the park, including the Four Mile Run Farmers Market and Casa Chirilagua.

PROPOSAL AND FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing playground behind the Potomac Village apartments, which would be restored with trees and landscaping. Future plans for this area include new fitness stations along the trail paths. A new playground area will be constructed south of the current location, closer to the existing sport court area and the parking lot behind the Arlandria Shopping Center. This proposal is part of the recommendations and strategies identified in the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan for Four Mile Run Park. Per the plan, the “clustering of playground, ball courts, and improved seating [at this location] will open up more contiguous open space in the center of the park” where the current playground is located “and encourage interactions between people in different age and user groups.” Additionally, the proposed site has better visibility from the Arlandria Shopping Center and parking lot, which creates a safer activity area. The proposed playground area will be larger than the existing playground with updated equipment, trails and landscaping, as seen in Exhibit B.



The current playground is secluded in the Park.

Once the proposed playground has been completed, RPCA has future plans for this portion of the park, identified as Phase II (Exhibit B), which include sunken gardens, additional trail paths, and restoration plantings to increase the number of trees in this area. Per the 2014 Parks Improvement Plan, other long-term plans for the park include renovating the parking lots and ballfields, adding bike parking, motion-sensor area lighting, improvements to park security and access, increasing landscaping and park site furnishings (such as water fountains, bridges, seating, tables), and adding a new boat launch, to name a few. With approval of a SUP for congregate recreational facilities, the park would have the permission to implement the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan recommendations in compliance with the POS zoning requirements. At this time, future improvements beyond the proposed playground relocation is subject to funding availability.

PARKING

The park is presently served by a total of 88 parking spaces. There are 20 total parking spaces located on the northwest corner of the property off Mount Vernon Avenue, and 68 spaces off Commonwealth Avenue, between the two baseball/softball fields. In addition, there are 25 parking spaces at the Conservatory Center at Four Mile Run that are available outside of the center's operation hours, and 54 parking spaces in the parking lot adjacent to Cora Kelly Elementary School and Frank Mann Field that are available outside of school hours. The parking lot adjacent to the subject playground area is a private lot for the Del Ray North shopping center. RPCA indicates that most of the playground users live within the neighborhood, and most people who visit the park either walk, drive, or bike.

ZONING/MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The park is zoned POS (Public Open Space) and is part of the Potomac West Small Area Plan, which designates this site for park use. The Zoning Ordinance Section 2-129.1 defines congregate recreational facilities as *a use devoted to recreational activities typically or often pursued as a group or a team, such as athletic fields, children's play apparatus areas, archery ranges, court game facilities, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, amphitheaters, band shells, and outdoor theaters, not including drive-in theatres*. Within the POS zoning district, congregate recreational facilities are allowed by special use permit, pursuant to Section 6-105. As the proposed playground (children's play apparatus areas) and future plans for the park would constitute as congregate recreational facilities, the requested Special Use Permit would allow compliance of the use with the POS zoning district.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS

Staff supports the request of the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities to allow congregate recreational facilities at Four Mile Run Park. By allowing the requested use, the proposed improvements, including the relocation of the playground to a more visible and safe location, benefit the community and better serve the needs of residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. During RPCA's research and outreach on improvements to the park, as documented in the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan, it was pointed out by parents and

neighbors that many people consider the playground unsafe in its current location because trees hide it from view and it is isolated from other park activities. Moreover, the existing playground equipment is outdated and under used. Staff found that proposed park improvements will have no negative impact on surrounding neighborhoods and residents. The playground will have the same hours as currently required for the park, which is sunrise to sunset, except by permitted use.

Subject to the conditions contained in Section III of this report, staff recommends approval of the Special Use Permit request.

III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. The Special Use Permit shall be granted to the applicant only or to any corporation in which the applicant has a controlling interest. (P&Z)
2. The hours of the playground shall be the same as the hours for the park.
3. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit after it has been operational for one year, and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions which were not corrected immediately, constitute repeat violations or which create a direct and immediate adverse zoning impact on the surrounding community; (b) the Director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review as the result of a complaint that rises to the level of a violation of the permit conditions, or (c) the Director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed. (P&Z)

STAFF: Robert M. Kerns, AICP, Division Chief, Department of Planning and Zoning
Dirk H. Geratz, AICP, Principal Planner
Abigail Harwell, Urban Planner

Staff Note: In accordance with section 11-506(c) of the zoning ordinance, construction or operation shall be commenced and diligently and substantially pursued within 18 months of the date of granting of a special use permit by City Council or the special use permit shall become void.

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

Transportation & Environmental Services:

R-1. The applicant shall provide information about alternative forms of transportation to access the site, including but not limited to printed and electronic business promotional material, posting on the park's website, and other similar methods. Contact Go Alex at goalex@alexandriava.gov for more information about available resources. (T&ES)

C-1. The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99). In order to comply with this code requirement, the applicant shall provide a completed Recycling Implementation Plan (RIP) Form within 60 days of SUP approval. Contact the City's Recycling Program Coordinator at (703) 746-4410, or via e-mail at commercialrecycling@alexandriava.gov, for information about completing this form. (T&ES)

C-2. The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line. (T&ES)

Code Enforcement:

A building permit, plan review and inspections are required prior to the start

Fire:

No comments.

Health:

No comments. No aquatic or food facilities are in the improvement plans.

Police Department:

No comments.

Exhibit A – Existing Conditions at Four Mile Run Park



Four Mile Run Park: Existing Uses

Exhibit B – Proposed Improvements to Four Mile Run Park



FOUR MILE RUN PLAYGROUND
PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS - SCHEMATIC DESIGN

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA
SCALE: 1" = 40' DATE: 01/17/2018





APPLICATION

SPECIAL USE PERMIT

SPECIAL USE PERMIT # _____

PROPERTY LOCATION: 3703,4127, 4129, 4131 Mt. Vernon Ave, 3909 Bruce Street, 3700 Commonwealth Avenue, 101 Dale Street, 3900 Richmond Highway

TAX MAP REFERENCE: 007.03-09-03, 007.04-09-04, 007.03-09-12, 007.01-02-02, 007.01-02-01, 007.01-02-03, 015.02-02-18, 008.03-01-04 **ZONE:** POS

APPLICANT:

Name: City of Alexandria, Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

Address: 1108 Jefferson Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

PROPOSED USE: Request for existing uses at Four Mile Run Park including athletic fields, playgrounds, lighting, ballcourts, restrooms, and outdoor storage, and request to renovate and relocate the existing playground.

☒ **THE UNDERSIGNED**, hereby applies for a Special Use Permit in accordance with the provisions of Article XI, Section 4-11-500 of the 1992 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

☒ **THE UNDERSIGNED**, having obtained permission from the property owner, hereby grants permission to the City of Alexandria staff and Commission Members to visit, inspect, and photograph the building premises, land etc., connected with the application.

☒ **THE UNDERSIGNED**, having obtained permission from the property owner, hereby grants permission to the City of Alexandria to post placard notice on the property for which this application is requested, pursuant to Article IV, Section 4-1404(D)(7) of the 1992 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

☒ **THE UNDERSIGNED**, hereby attests that all of the information herein provided and specifically including all surveys, drawings, etc., required to be furnished by the applicant are true, correct and accurate to the best of their knowledge and belief. The applicant is hereby notified that any written materials, drawings or illustrations submitted in support of this application and any specific oral representations made to the Director of Planning and Zoning on this application will be binding on the applicant unless those materials or representations are clearly stated to be non-binding or illustrative of general plans and intentions, subject to substantial revision, pursuant to Article XI, Section 11-207(A)(10), of the 1992 Zoning Ordinance of the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

James B. Spengler

Print Name of Applicant or Agent

1108 Jefferson Street

Mailing/Street Address

Alexandria, VA

City and State

22314

Zip Code

 2/28/19

Signature

Date

703-746-5502

Telephone #

Fax #

james.spengler@alexandriava.gov

Email address

ACTION-PLANNING COMMISSION: _____ **DATE:** _____

ACTION-CITY COUNCIL: _____ **DATE:** _____

SUP # _____

PROPERTY OWNER'S AUTHORIZATION

As the property owner of N/A--the City of Alexandria is owner and applicant, I hereby
(Property Address)

grant the applicant authorization to apply for the _____ use as
(use)
described in this application.

Name: _____

Please Print

Phone _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

- 1.** Floor Plan and Plot Plan. As a part of this application, the applicant is required to submit a floor plan and plot or site plan with the parking layout of the proposed use. The SUP application checklist lists the requirements of the floor and site plans. The Planning Director may waive requirements for plan submission upon receipt of a written request which adequately justifies a waiver.

☒ **Required floor plan and plot/site plan attached.**

☐ **Requesting a waiver. See attached written request.**

- 2.** The applicant is the (check one):

☒ Owner

☐ Contract Purchaser

☐ Lessee or

☐ Other: _____ of the subject property.

State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the applicant or owner, unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than three percent.

100% City of Alexandria, Virginia

OWNERSHIP AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Use additional sheets if necessary

1. Applicant. State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the applicant, unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than three percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
^{1.} City of Alexandria		100%
^{2.} City of Alexandria		
^{3.} City of Alexandria		

2. Property. State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the property located at refer to first page of application (address), unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than three percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
^{1.} City of Alexandria		100%
^{2.} City of Alexandria		
^{3.} City of Alexandria		

3. Business or Financial Relationships. Each person or entity indicated above in sections 1 and 2, with an ownership interest in the applicant or in the subject property are required to disclose **any** business or financial relationship, as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance, existing at the time of this application, or within the 12-month period prior to the submission of this application with any member of the Alexandria City Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals or either Boards of Architectural Review. **All fields must be filled out completely. Do not leave blank. (If there are no relationships please indicate each person or entity and "None" in the corresponding fields).**

For a list of current council, commission and board members, as well as the definition of business and financial relationship, [click here](#).

Name of person or entity	Relationship as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance	Member of the Approving Body (i.e. City Council, Planning Commission, etc.)
^{1.} City of Alexandria	None	None
^{2.} City of Alexandria		
^{3.} City of Alexandria		

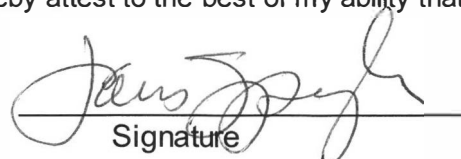
NOTE: Business or financial relationships of the type described in Sec. 11-350 that arise after the filing of this application and before each public hearing must be disclosed prior to the public hearings.

As the applicant or the applicant's authorized agent, I hereby attest to the best of my ability that the information provided above is true and correct.

2/28/19
Date

James B. Spengler

Printed Name


Signature

SUP # _____

If property owner or applicant is being represented by an authorized agent such as an attorney, realtor, or other person for which there is some form of compensation, does this agent or the business in which the agent is employed have a business license to operate in the City of Alexandria, Virginia?

☐ **Yes.** Provide proof of current City business license

☐ **No.** The agent shall obtain a business license prior to filing application, if required by the City Code.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

3. The applicant shall describe below the nature of the request in detail so that the Planning Commission and City Council can understand the nature of the operation and the use. The description should fully discuss the nature of the activity. (Attach additional sheets if necessary.)

[illegible]

USE CHARACTERISTICS**4.** The proposed special use permit request is for (*check one*):

- ☐ a new use requiring a special use permit,
☐ an expansion or change to an existing use without a special use permit,
☐ an expansion or change to an existing use with a special use permit,
☒ other. Please describe: park improvements to existing non-conforming uses in POS zone

5. Please describe the capacity of the proposed use:**A.** How many patrons, clients, pupils and other such users do you expect?

Specify time period (i.e., day, hour, or shift).

Varies, and is seasonal**B.** How many employees, staff and other personnel do you expect?

Specify time period (i.e., day, hour, or shift).

N/A**6.** Please describe the proposed hours and days of operation of the proposed use:**Day:**Daily**Hours:**Sunrise to sunsetLighted ballfields with permit5:00am - 10:00pm**7.** Please describe any potential noise emanating from the proposed use.**A.** Describe the noise levels anticipated from all mechanical equipment and patrons.The existing uses are not anticipated to increase noise above typical outdoorrecreational levels**B.** How will the noise be controlled?N/A

8. Describe any potential odors emanating from the proposed use and plans to control them:

N/A

9. Please provide information regarding trash and litter generated by the use.

- A. What type of trash and garbage will be generated by the use? (i.e. office paper, food wrappers)
Visitors are expected to produce trash--paper, food wrappers. Amount will vary depending on use.
-
- B. How much trash and garbage will be generated by the use? (i.e. # of bags or pounds per day or per week)
N/A
-
- C. How often will trash be collected?
Trash is collected bi-weekly. Receptacles are regularly checked for overflowing bins.
-
- D. How will you prevent littering on the property, streets and nearby properties?
Trash receptacles are placed throughout the park.
-

10. Will any hazardous materials, as defined by the state or federal government, be handled, stored, or generated on the property?

[] Yes. [✓] No.

If yes, provide the name, monthly quantity, and specific disposal method below:

- 11.** Will any organic compounds, for example paint, ink, lacquer thinner, or cleaning or degreasing solvent, be handled, stored, or generated on the property?

☐ Yes. ☒ No.

If yes, provide the name, monthly quantity, and specific disposal method below:

- 12.** What methods are proposed to ensure the safety of nearby residents, employees and patrons?

N/A

ALCOHOL SALES

13.

- A. Will the proposed use include the sale of beer, wine, or mixed drinks?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, describe existing (if applicable) and proposed alcohol sales below, including if the ABC license will include on-premises and/or off-premises sales.

PARKING AND ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

14. A. How many parking spaces of each type are provided for the proposed use:

_____ Standard spaces
 _____ Compact spaces
 _____ Handicapped accessible spaces.
See below Other.

Planning and Zoning Staff Only

Required number of spaces for use per Zoning Ordinance Section 8-200A _____

Does the application meet the requirement?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- B. Where is required parking located? (*check one*)

☒ on-site

☐ off-site

If the required parking will be located off-site, where will it be located?

Two existing parking lots at 4131 Mt. Vernon and 3700 Commonwealth

PLEASE NOTE: Pursuant to Section 8-200 (C) of the Zoning Ordinance, commercial and industrial uses may provide off-site parking within 500 feet of the proposed use, provided that the off-site parking is located on land zoned for commercial or industrial uses. All other uses must provide parking on-site, except that off-street parking may be provided within 300 feet of the use with a special use permit.

- C. If a reduction in the required parking is requested, pursuant to Section 8-100 (A) (4) or (5) of the Zoning Ordinance, complete the PARKING REDUCTION SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION.

☐ **Parking reduction requested; see attached supplemental form**

15. Please provide information regarding loading and unloading facilities for the use:

- A. How many loading spaces are available for the use? _____

Planning and Zoning Staff Only

Required number of loading spaces for use per Zoning Ordinance Section 8-200 _____

Does the application meet the requirement?

☐ Yes ☐ No

- B. Where are off-street loading facilities located? _____

- C. During what hours of the day do you expect loading/unloading operations to occur?

- D. How frequently are loading/unloading operations expected to occur, per day or per week, as appropriate?

16. Is street access to the subject property adequate or are any street improvements, such as a new turning lane, necessary to minimize impacts on traffic flow?

N/A

SITE CHARACTERISTICS

17. Will the proposed uses be located in an existing building? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- Do you propose to construct an addition to the building? ☐ Yes ☒ No
- How large will the addition be? _____ square feet.

18. What will the total area occupied by the proposed use be?

425,061 sq. ft. (existing) + 6,000 sq. ft. (addition if any) = 431,061 sq. ft. (total)

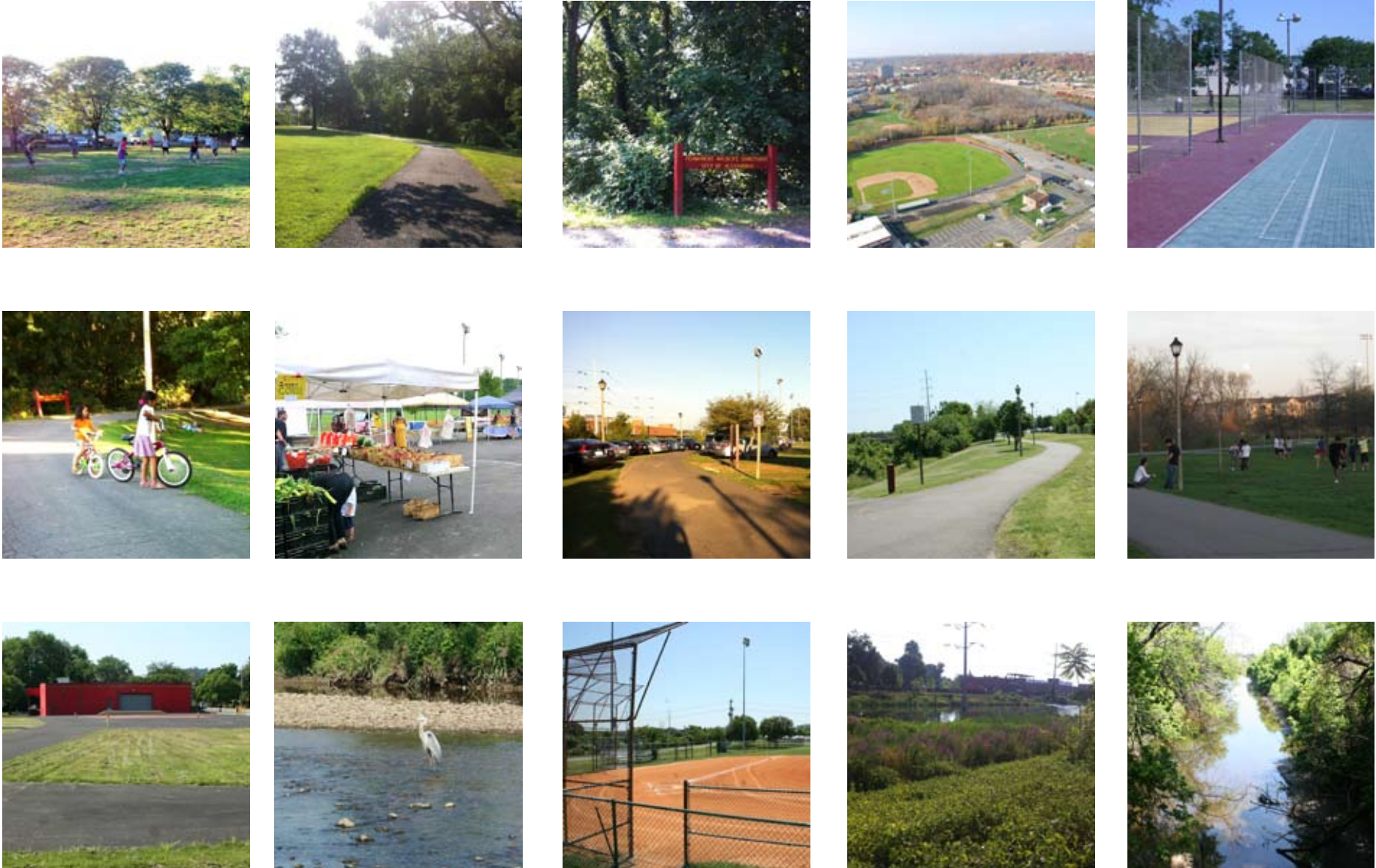
19. The proposed use is located in: (check one)

- ☐ a stand alone building
- ☐ a house located in a residential zone
- ☐ a warehouse
- ☐ a shopping center. Please provide name of the center: _____
- ☐ an office building. Please provide name of the building: _____
- ☒ other. Please describe: Public park

End of Application

FOUR MILE RUN PARK





Background

Four Mile Run Park (51.56 acres) has all the major components of an urban oasis: ballfields, soccer fields, multi-purpose courts, public plaza, and, its swamp forest and self-sustaining freshwater tidal marsh. The Park is located in a very diverse and active community in Alexandria's Arlandria neighborhood. Local residents play lively soccer matches on the multi-purpose courts while bird watchers quietly observe the diverse habitat. The heavily used bike trail connects to regional destinations and, therefore, cyclists and other visitors travel through the Park. Yet, the Park does not have the facilities or landscape to support and sustain its desired uses and upkeep.

Both natural and man made interventions have led to the Park's current conditions. Native Americans once inhabited the Park and later, during the Civil War, the Southwest portion of the park was used as campground for the 1st and 2nd Ohio militias and the 1st and 3rd New Jersey Militias. Tax records indicate the possible presence of a cemetery in the northwest section of the Park. By the early 20th century urban development began to surround the park, spurred by the transportation opportunities along the stream and the nearby railway. By the mid-20th century, there were several instances where Four Mile Run Stream flooded the Park and its surrounding neighborhoods. As a result, the Army Corps of Engineers channelized the stream, addressing the flooding issues, but creating hard, inaccessible boundaries between the water and land and reducing the ecological resources in the stream and along the banks.

Since then, the tidal marsh has been impassible, especially at high tide, and the outgrowths of invasive plants threaten the Park's natural resources and deny visitors opportunities for environmental education. This valuable natural resource has been neglected, leading to difficulty in managing both illegal activity and prolific invasive flora and fauna. In 2006, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria adopted the Four Mile Run Restoration Master Plan with the support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Plan provides the framework for the restoration of 2.3 miles of highly degraded stream within the hardened flood control channel, including the section of the Stream that borders the Park from Mt. Vernon Avenue to U.S. Route One. The Four Mile Run Tidal Restoration Demonstration Project is currently (2013) in the design phase. The project aims to restore the banks of the Four Mile Run shoreline and wetlands along Four Mile Run from Mt. Vernon Avenue to Route One. The scope of work includes naturalization of the corridor, such as removal and management of invasive species and re-introduction of herbaceous plantings, a sediment transition/capture area to minimize the amount of sediment that flows into the tidal section of Four Mile Run, and re-establishment of wetlands in Four Mile Run Park. The City of Alexandria and Arlington County anticipate the construction to begin September 2014 and conclude September 2015.

Ernesto's Four Mile



Ernesto Martinez has been a resident of the Arlandria neighborhood in Alexandria, for eight years. He loves walking the trails and playing soccer at Four Mile Run Park, where he walks to and from his home at the Arlandria Chirilagua Housing Cooperative south of the Park. Ernesto hopes that with future improvements, Four Mile Run Park will become an even better place for playing recreational soccer, spending time with friends, or simply enjoying the area's natural beauty.

Along the edge of the forested area is one of the Park's dominant features, its pedestrian and cyclist trail. This trail is a local and regional route. However, due to its lack of clear signage and bike racks, the trail functions as a connection through the park and not a path welcoming people to stay and enjoy the many features within it. Moreover, the trail system through the park is not connected with other activity centers, such as the Cora Kelly Recreation Center. The path through the Park's natural area is not marked and does not connect through the wetlands, making the Park's natural resources difficult to explore.

Within the Park, Four Mile has facilities for visitors to engage in a number of sporting activities including basketball courts (mainly used for futsal) and baseball, softball, and soccer fields. Sporting teams, including the collegiate baseball team, the Alexandria Aces, place a high demand on most of these facilities, especially the soccer field and Frank Mann Baseball Field, each of which are in need of re-grading and drainage improvements. While, the majority of park users bike or walk to the Park, it is a destination for sports field users who drive and carry athletic equipment to use the fields. The current parking lots are insufficient in capacity, despite efforts to encourage multi-modal methods of transportation, such as buses and carpooling.

While the sports facilities are heavily used, the passive areas and landscape are largely neglected. The off-leash and unfenced dog area is only occasionally used for dogs, and is more often a space to play soccer. Four Mile also lacks park furniture to accommodate spectators watching the sports games or for park users. For example, there is only one picnic table in the Park. Moreover, the playground is outdated and under used. As parents and neighbors partaking in this planning process pointed out, many people consider the playground unsafe in its current location because trees hide it from view and it is isolated from other park activities.

The Cora Kelly School and Recreation Center are located along the southeast corner of the Park. The Center is a hub of community activity, including after school programs, fitness classes and events. Its situation within a residential neighborhood and the edge of a park full of sports fields and nature education opportunities seems ideal. Yet, the entrance to the building is on Commonwealth

Avenue, away from the Park and there is no pathway or connection from the building to the Park. Recreation leaders bring classes along Commonwealth Avenue and through a parking lot, despite there being wetlands and open space to see just behind the Center.

On the west/northwest end of the Park, the Conservatory building at 4109 Mount Vernon Avenue is drawing more activity to the area. The City acquired the open space properties at 4109-4125 Mount Vernon Avenue, including the former Duron Paint store building, in January 2007 through the City's Open Space Program. In June 2010, the City Council approved a Special Use Permit to convert the old paint store into a community building for public use, as guided by the Four Mile Run Restoration Plan. City Council dedicated the building at a grand opening ceremony held on May 15, 2012. As of now (Fall 2013), the building does not have a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system and is predominantly used for seasonal activities such as the increasingly popular Four Mile Run Farmers' and Artisans' Market and community festivals. Playgroups and other community groups also regularly rent the building. The plaza area includes rain gardens with trees and shrubs, reducing the pollutants discharging into Four Mile Run. This area of the Park has proven to be a successful hub of renewed community involvement and activity, exemplifying the potential for other park improvements.



Flooding from Four Mile Run prior to channelization of the stream.



Four Mile Run Streambank today.



Community Feedback

From September through early December 2012, RPCA solicited input on the existing conditions and possible future uses for Four Mile Run 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, Cora Kelly Recreation Center and in the mailboxes of adjacent neighborhood homes. Staff also visited events, local businesses, and a playgroup in the Conservatory 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 91 completed surveys. Of those surveyed, 32 participants lived in the 22301 zip code and 28 lived in the adjacent zip code, 22305. Fewer than 10 participants lived in the lived in each of the other Alexandria zip codes and none lived in 22206. Seven participants lived in Arlington. The majority of those who visit do so weekly (42.9%).

This is what we heard:

There is not a dominant mode of transportation to Four Mile Run Park. Park Users almost equally walk (30.8%) as much as drive (29.7%), while 39.6% bike.

When looking at this information in combination with the question “What do you do in the Park,” it is apparent that survey participants are using the Park’s trails (30% use the park for biking and 14% for walking), implying that the trail through the Park is one of the major Park resources. Other activities of significance include the visits to the Farmer’s Market and general relaxation.

When asked, “What do you like about the Park,” participants overwhelmingly identified the trail, reinforcing the Park’s importance as a route for walkers and cyclists. Other replies, including “nature,” “location,” “openness and green space,” recognize the Park’s natural setting along the Four Mile Run Stream, a scarce resource in an urban setting.

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

Nature

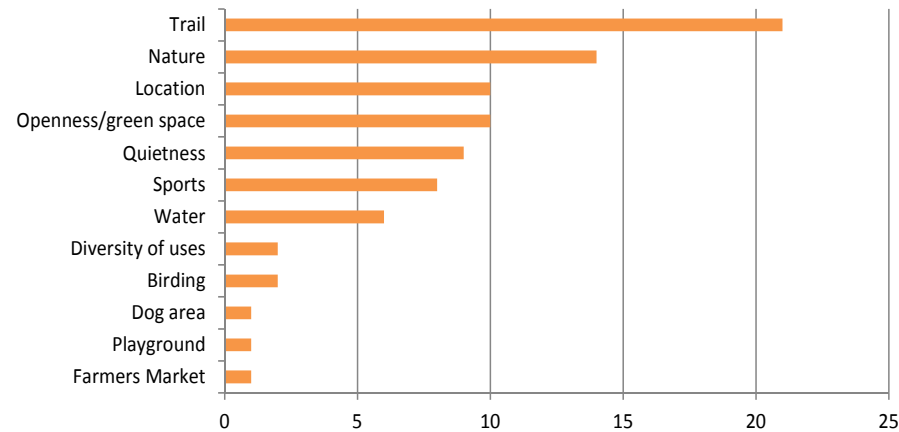
The survey and workshop clearly indicated

What needs improvement in Four Mile Run Park?

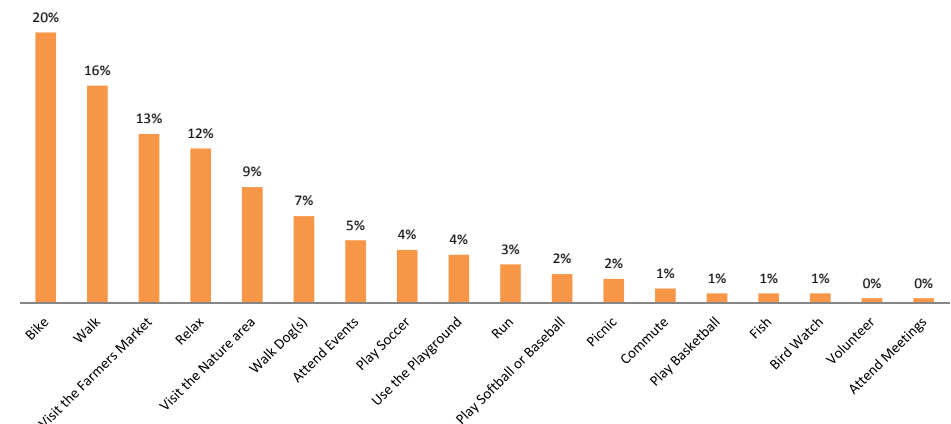


The highest priority is shown as the largest circle; the lowest priority is the smallest circle. Priorities are based on the number of responses to needed improvements and then weighted by how participants prioritized their answers

What do you like about the Park?



What do you do in the Park?



the Park's highest asset and priority for improvement are the Park's natural areas. The Park's features, such as the wetlands and stream, are rare in an urban environment and create bird habitats and unique ecological resources. Yet, the Park's current design and the growth of invasive species have masked these resources and opportunities for environmental education.

Trails and Connections

One of the dominant uses of the Park is its pedestrian and bicyclist trail. As indicated in the survey and the workshop, the trail is a local and regional destination. However, the trail mainly serves as a connection through the park, rather than attracting people to stay in the Park. Trail amenities, such as bike racks and park activities, would allow people to not only pass through, but to visit. Additionally, more

trails through the wetlands and to the Cora Kelly Recreation Center would allow greater park usage and connections to nature.

Security and Park Activities

The playgroup's major concern with using the Park is its security. This was also emphasized in the workshop and survey. Park activities, such as the playground, do not appear to be fully used because they are hidden from the street and isolated. As suggested in the workshop, one solution to enhance the Park's activities is to cluster uses near the park entrances. This would create a convergence for mixed age groups and programs, allowing more "eyes on the park" and the perception of active, safe spaces.

Parking

The majority of Park visitors bike or walk to the

Park. However, there are many users that drive, particularly to use the athletic fields. It is likely that most sports players will continue to drive as they originate from all over the City to use the fields and often carrying athletic equipment. Appropriate parking accommodations must be met for sports field use, but while doing so natural areas will need to be preserved.

Natural play spaces

The workshop participants indicated an interest in seeing more areas in the park for kids to play on informal park elements, such as boulders and climbing features. The survey also supports the need for a renovated playground with park furniture, while the playgroup hoped to see play features in more visible locations. All three of these interests may be incorporated near park entrances and other locations.

The Plan

KEYED LEGEND

1. RENOVATE PARKING LOTS & ADD BIKE PARKING
2. COMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY BUILDING AND PARK EXPANSION
3. ADD WATER FOUNTAIN
4. ADD MOTION SENSOR AREA LIGHTING PER APD
5. IMPROVE FIELD CONDITIONS
6. RELOCATE & FENCE DOG AREA
7. ADD 2-3 ADULT FITNESS STATIONS ALONG PATH
8. RELOCATE & CLUSTER PLAYGROUND, COURTS AND SEATING
9. ADD MILE MARKERS ALONG EXISTING PATH
10. ADD NEW HARD & SOFT TRAILS
11. IMPROVE PERIMETER TREES TO CREATE "GREEN ALLEYS"
12. INSTALL NEW BRIDGES
13. CONSTRUCT STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ELEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL FEATURES
14. ESTABLISH NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN
15. CREATE OPEN-USE FIELD WITH SEATING
16. AMEND TURNABOUT & REESTABLISH GREEN SPACE WITH PICNIC AREA AND GRILLS
17. RESERVE AREA FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE RECYCLING CENTER
18. RENOVATE MUSTER ROOM AND ADD RESTROOMS
19. INCREASE CONNECTIVITY TO CORA KELLY FACILITIES
20. PEDESTRIANIZE INTERSECTION & CONNECT TO 3550 COMMONWEALTH AVE PARK
21. FORMALIZE PARK ENTRANCE

PER FMR RESTORATION PLAN	A. NATURALIZE STREAMBANK
	B. REMOVE FILL & RESTORE WETLAND
	C. INSTALL NEW BRIDGE

GRAPHIC KEY:

	HARD TRAILS		PARK BOUNDS		ENTRANCE PLAZAS		ATHLETIC FIELDS		STREAM BANK RESTORATION		TIDAL WETLANDS
	SOFT TRAILS/BOARDWALK										



Recommendations & Implementation Strategy



Drivers park haphazardly in the parking lot west of the soccer fields.



In 2007 the City acquired the properties at 4109-4125 Mt. Vernon Ave. A group of local architects donated their time to develop the plan for the site, shown above. In 2011 the City completed the first phase of work, including the building shell renovation, event space, and stage.

1

Renovate parking lots & add bike parking*

The parking lots will be able to accommodate more vehicles for sports field users once they are renovated and restriped. The renovated parking lots will reduce run-off by including porous pavement which is particularly important in such a highly sensitive environment. Additionally, installing bike racks will encourage visitors to bike to Four Mile Run Park.

ESTIMATED COST: \$690,000 - \$832,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

2

Complete implementation of the Four Mile Run Park Conservatory & park expansion

The parkland along Mount Vernon Avenue will continue its transformation into a thriving community space. As previously planned, the Community Building needs a new HVAC system and roof repairs, connecting trail, natural play features, park furnishings and rain gardens added to the surrounding plaza area.

ESTIMATED COST: \$400,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

3

Add drinking fountains

A drinking fountain in this area will serve those using the Conservatory as well as general park visitors.

ESTIMATED COST: \$5,000 - \$10,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

4

Add motion sensor area lighting, per Alexandria Police Department recommendations

Energy Efficient lighting in this area will increase feeling of safety for commuters in the evening, and work in accordance with the security and visibility needs of the Police department.

ESTIMATED COST: \$9,800 - \$14,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3 - 10 Years

*In addition to bike parking at Four Mile Run Park, a new bike share station will be installed near the Park in conjunction with the upcoming Mount Vernon Village Center. Bike share will help create linkages between Four Mile Run Park and other area parks, making it easier for people to access Four Mile from different parts of the City.



The Four Mile fields are amongst the best in the City, but need improved drainage systems. Field #2 faces the wrong orientation for meeting standards.

5

Improve field conditions

Frank Mann Field needs a new backstop, press box and foul ball fencing. Improvements to both Field #2 and #3's makeover will include a new backstop, soccer goals, benches, and irrigation. These investments will allow RPCA to maximize use of sports facilities at Four Run Mile Run while maintaining high quality standards over time. This plan recommends re-orienting the softball field (field #2) to an optimal field alignment for sun and shade.

ESTIMATED COST: \$1,252,585 - \$1,601,020 PRIORITY: Medium PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



The boundary of the existing dog area is defined by wooded bollards.

6

Relocate and fence dog area

People bring their dogs to the current dog area throughout the day even though it is unfenced and relatively small compared to others in the City. Moving the dog area and creating a boundary around it will help create an active hub in the center of the park. The new dog park will meet the City's fenced dog area standards.

ESTIMATED COST: \$65,000 - \$90,000 PRIORITY: Medium PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years



The 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment results showed a high need for fitness equipment, such as the chin up bars recently installed in Holmes Run, above.

7

Add 2-3 adult fitness stations along path

Many people walk, jog, or run through the Park as part of their exercise route. The new adult fitness stations would provide exercise opportunity for park users and give active passersbys a reason to spend more time in the Park. The 2013 Needs Assessment showed a strong desire for fitness stations.

ESTIMATED COST: \$10,000 - \$18,000 PRIORITY: High PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years



The current playground is secluded in the Park.

8

Relocate and cluster playground, courts, and seating

Clustering the playground, courts, and seating will open up more contiguous open space in the center of the park and encourage interactions between people in different age and user groups. The activities will also be more visible from the proposed Mount Vernon Village Center, creating a safer activity space.

ESTIMATED COST: \$170,000 - \$210,000* PRIORITY: High PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years

*The costs shown are only for the playground. The Mount Vernon Village Center Development will contribute funds for the sports court relocated.



Example of mile marker in Holmes Run Park.

9

Add wayfinding and mile markers along existing path

Many pedestrians, joggers, and runners use the path through the Park. Enhanced directional signage and mile markers will make the path a more enjoyable and safer route for people to take.

ESTIMATED COST: \$5,000 - \$10,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 years



Informal "desire lines" indicate where park users want pathways.

10

Add new hard and soft trails

The informal desire paths at Four Mile demonstrate the need for a cohesive system of pathways throughout the Park. The paths have evolved over time as external and internal uses have changed. The lack of convenient paths linking different park facilities has caused park users to blaze their own. New hard and soft trails on the northern half of the Park will create additional routes for pedestrians to walk and increase access to park facilities.

ESTIMATED COST: \$450,000 - \$720,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



The southside of the Park abuts the alley of a residential neighborhood.

11

Improve perimeter trees to create "Green Alleys"

"Green Alleys" will serve as a natural buffer between the Park and the adjacent neighborhood. They will create a comfortable sense of enclosure for people in the Park with sufficient openings for neighbors and park visitors to see in and out of the Park. The new trees will also contribute to the City's tree canopy. New trees would contribute to the goals of the Urban Forestry Master Plan.

ESTIMATED COST: \$61,000 - \$75,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



Currently, there is no pedestrian connection over the tidal marsh.

12

Install new bridges

With new bridges installed, park users can take continuous routes throughout the Park. The bridges would be built to allow park users to cross natural habitat with minimal disturbance.

ESTIMATED COST: \$535,000 - \$1,270,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years



Integrated stormwater management in Portland, OR.



Co-op garden at George Washington Middle School.



Open play often occurs in the dog area, as shown above.



The Commonwealth Ave. Park entrance lacks a welcoming entrance and the part of the street north of the entrance is currently unused.



The City has a standard recycling drop-off center, as shown above in Jones Point Park.

13

Construct stormwater management element with educational features

The City is studying the feasibility of a stormwater treatment forebay at the existing outfall near the trail to help reduce the amount of trash, sediment and pollutants (phosphorous and nitrogen) discharging to the existing wetland. Since the area is adjacent to a park trail, the facility may be accompanied by educational signage explaining the stormwater benefits of the facility and the existing wetland area.

ACTION: T&ES to complete engineering feasibility

14

Establish new community garden

A new community garden will help address the City's need for gardening opportunities in the Arlandria community, as demonstrated in the 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment. The garden will be a collaborative effort between the Park's neighboring residents and institutions, and will create a great space for bridging new relationships in the community. The garden will present an opportunity for children at the Cora Kelly School and Recreation Center to discover gardening and components of a healthy lifestyle.

ESTIMATED COST: \$105,000 - \$131,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

15

Create open-use field with seating

The open play field will be a designated space within the park for people to engage in non-programmed active uses like pick-up soccer, touch football, or ultimate frisbee. The field will be graded at a modified elevation and lined with built-in terraced seating where people can congregate to watch others play.

ESTIMATED COST: \$58,000 - \$80,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

16

Amend turnabout and reestablish green space with picnic furniture

In accordance with the goals of the City's Open Space Plan, this Plan proposes to move the Commonwealth Avenue turnabout to the entrance at the parking lot and convert the .25 acres of this under used stretch of Commonwealth Avenue along the edge of Field # 2 to a working open space. This space will have picnic tables to accommodate park gatherings and spectators from the games happening at Frank Mann Field and Field #2. The new turnabout would serve as a formal entrance to the park.

ESTIMATED COST: \$158,000 - \$190,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

17

Reserve area for possible future recycling center

As part of a recycling plan for the City, Transportation & Environmental Services may use this location as a drop-off center for recycling with a collection box.

ESTIMATED COST: \$45,000 - \$50,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



The existing park staff room is an insufficient size and located between two restrooms.

18

Renovate muster room and add restrooms

Park staff is in great need of additional space to store equipment and adequate restrooms in order to best perform their task of maintaining Four Mile Run Park to the highest quality possible.

ESTIMATED COST: \$200,000 - \$400,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

19

Increase connectivity to Cora Kelly facilities

The link to Cora Kelly Facilities is extremely important given that Four Mile offers an incredible space for children of all ages to play and learn. With a better connection to the Park, Cora Kelly will facilitate programs and events in Four Mile. It also will allow children more access to the abundant natural resources in the Park, including wetlands, and provide environmental education opportunities.

ESTIMATED COST: \$320,000 - \$525,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years

20

Pedestrianize intersection and connect to 3550 Commonwealth Park

The new pedestrian route connecting to 3550 Commonwealth Park is a practical means of creating an interconnected system of Parks and open spaces in Arlandria.

ACTION: Underway through T&ES

21

Formalize park entrance

Currently, there is a lack of signage and prominent entrances publicizing the park and its many features. This new entrance plaza will welcome neighbors and Dale Street passersby to the Park.

ESTIMATED COST: \$24,000 - \$36,000

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 Years



The southwest corner of the park, the back of Cora Kelly Recreation Center, and 3550 Commonwealth Park are currently disconnected and lack formal entrances.



During the Four Mile Run flood control project of the 1970's, the Four Mile Run streambank and wetlands were inundated with construction fill and, subsequently, invasive species. The Four Mile Run Restoration Project aims to restore these sites as natural habitats for plants and wildlife within an urban setting.



In 2010, Arlington and Alexandria held a design competition for a pedestrian-cyclist bridge connecting the two jurisdictions. A design team lead by Buro Happold won the award and is now completing design sets for the bridge concept shown above.

A

Naturalize Streambank Corridor

In order to naturalize the streambank, the City and Arlington County will remove the riprap, gabions, and invasive species along both sides of the streambank. Herbaceous plantings of appropriate native species, including low growing, low maintenance hearty naturalizing species will improve the habitat, increase stability and improve water quality throughout the corridor.

IMPLEMENTATION IS ALREADY UNDERWAY.

DESIGN COMPLETION: Spring 2014
CONSTRUCTION COMPLETION: Fall 2015

B

Remove Fill and Restore Wetland

This project will remove, lower and terrace the riverside portion of Four Mile Run Park to establish and restore the historic wetlands prior to construction of the flood control project. This will create new emergent tidal wetlands with wetland plantings. The grading will remove the artificial fill and be designed flat to allow for a future boardwalk and trail.

IMPLEMENTATION IS ALREADY UNDERWAY.

DESIGN COMPLETION: Spring 2014
CONSTRUCTION COMPLETION: Fall 2015

C

Install Pedestrian Cyclist Bridge

The project consists of a new pedestrian and cyclist bridge to be built over the existing Four Mile Run flood control channel between the borders of Alexandria and Arlington Counties. The design ideas for the bridge were first explored via a competition process organized by Arlington and Alexandria in 2010 and is currently in design. The bridge will connect existing bike paths near South Eads Street and Commonwealth Avenue. It is approximately 375 feet from one side of the channel to the other in this location.

DESIGN IS ALREADY UNDERWAY, FUNDED BY VDOT AND LOCAL MATCH.

ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST:

\$7,000,000 - \$9,000,000

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.

Projects included as part of the Four Mile Run Restoration Project are already funded through local and federal State and Tribal Assistance Grant programs.

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	Proposed Timeline	
WAYFINDING	\$11,178	-	\$14,285	\$13,414	-	\$17,142	high	1-3 years	
01 MT VERNON AVE PARKING LOT	127,115	-	163,388	\$179,232	-	\$223,842	high	3-10 years	
01 COMMONWEALTH PARKING LOT	361,964	-	443,910	\$510,369	-	\$608,156	medium	3-10 years	
02 COMMUNITY BUILDING RENOVATION	400,000	-	400,000	\$400,000	-	\$400,000	high	3-10 years	
03 ADD WATER FOUNTAINS	5,000	-	10,000	\$5,000	-	\$10,000	medium	1-3 years	
04 ADD MOTION SENSOR LIGHTING	\$2,700	-	\$3,600	\$3,600	-	\$5,076	medium	1-3 years	
05 FIELD #1 - FRANK MANN	98,750	-	123,500	\$139,238	-	\$169,195	medium	3-10 years	
05 FIELD #2 - SOCCER/BASEBALL	402,540	-	527,950	\$567,582	-	\$723,291	medium	3-10 years	
05 FIELD #3 - UNFENCED	157,051	-	206,246	\$221,442	-	\$282,557	medium	3-10 years	
05 FIELD #4 - SOCCER	230,016	-	310,932	\$324,323	-	\$425,977	low	3-10 years	
06 RELOCATE DOG PARK	46,058	-	66,046	\$64,942	-	\$90,483	medium	1-3 years	
07 CORA KELLY FITNESS EQUIPMENT	9,000	-	15,000	\$10,800	-	\$18,000	high	3-10 years	
08 RELOCATE SPORT COURTS	101,137	-	141,209	\$142,604	-	\$193,456	high	1-3 years	
08 RELOCATE PLAYGROUND	119,193	-	152,485	\$168,062	-	\$208,905	high	1-3 years	
08 OPEN PLAY AREA	41,158	-	58,774	\$58,033	-	\$80,521	high	1-3 years	
09 MILE MARKERS	6,000	-	6,000	\$7,200	-	\$7,200	high	1-3 years	
10 ADD NEW HARD & SOFT TRAILS	45,000	-	720,000	\$45,000	-	\$720,000	medium	3-10 years	
11 ALLEYWAY LANDSCAPE BUFFER	51,618	-	62,391	\$61,941	-	\$74,869	high	3-10 years	
12 PREFABRICATED BRIDGE INSTALLATION	1,269,200	-	535,000	\$1,789,572	-	\$732,950	high	1-3 years	
13 CONSTRUCT STORMWATER MANAGEMENT				Coordinate with T&ES				TBD	
14 COMMUNITY GARDEN	74,080	-	95,718	\$104,453	-	\$131,134	medium	3-10 years	
15 CREATE OPEN-USE FIELD WITH SEATING	58,000	-	80,000	\$58,000	-	\$80,000	medium	3-10 years	
16 RESTORE COMMONWEALTH OPEN SPACE	111,960	-	136,713	\$157,863	-	\$187,297	medium	3-10 years	
16 COMMONWEALTH FURNISHINGS	36,409	-	47,290	\$51,336	-	\$64,788	medium	3-10 years	
17 RECYCLING CENTER	38,000	-	40,000	45,000	-	50,000	medium	1-3 years	
18 RENOVATE MUSTER ROOM	200,000	-	400,000	\$200,000	-	\$400,000	high	3-10 years	
19 CORA KELLY TRAIL	321,851	-	523,629	\$453,811	-	\$717,371	high	3-10 years	
21 PARK ENTRANCE FURNITURE	20,000	-	30,000	\$24,000	-	\$36,000	medium	3-10 years	
20 PEDESTRIANIZE COMMONWEALTH AND REED				Underway through T&ES				medium	1-3 years
DOCUMENTARY STUDY/EVALUATION	34,820	-	62,480	34,820	-	62,480	medium	3-10 years	
INTERPRETATION	15,000	-	20,000	15,000	-	20,000	medium	3-10 years	
UTILITY UPGRADES	112,500	-	140,000	\$156,625	-	\$191,800	high	1-3 years	
SUBTOTAL	\$4,507,300	-	\$5,526,546						
Soft Costs	CONTINGENCY	901,459.93	-	1,105,309.30					
	ENGINEERING	540,875.96	-	663,185.58					
	SURVEY	135,218.99	-	165,796.39					
	GEOTECHNICAL	90,145.99	-	110,530.93					
	ENVIRONMENTAL	180,291.99	-	221,061.86					
	PERMITTING	150,000.00	-	200,000.00					
GRAND TOTAL		\$6,505,293	-	\$7,992,431					



**DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION, PARKS
AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES**

1108 Jefferson Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Park and Recreation Commission

April 10, 2014

Mayor William Euille
Vice Mayor Allison Silberberg
Councilman John Taylor Chapman
Councilman Timothy B. Lovain
Councilwoman Redella S. Pepper
Councilman Paul C. Smedberg
Councilman Justin M. Wilson

Dear Mayor Euille and City Council Members:

Re: Citywide Parks Improvement Plan

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

The Park and Recreation Commission is pleased to forward to you the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan which the Planning Staff from the Department of Recreation Parks and Cultural Affairs (RCPA) has been working on for more than a year. It is an important document to guide future use and expenditures in the handful of large parks in Alexandria.

This document is the result of the realization several years ago that in the next ten years the population will be growing at a very fast rate. Over the course of the last ten years the goal of the Open Space Plan was to add 100 acres in order to keep the same ratio of open space per 1000 residents. At the ten-year mark that goal had been achieved. Looking forward to the ten years ahead, staff tells us that in order to keep that same ratio we will need to add 183 acres. The challenge is much greater now.

While we met the first ten year goal, what we know is that most of that was through the acquisition of small parcels. Especially in new, denser developments those small parcels which serve the immediate area are very important. As we look to the future we think that will be the case even more. There are no more available parcels large enough for us to add another facility like Witter Fields to our inventory. And yet the uses that only large parks can accommodate will increase at a rate that correlates with the projected increase in population.

This is the reason why the Commission requested staff undertake a master planning process first for the handful of large parks we currently have that do not have recent overall plans in place. We believe that we must put plans in place for these parks in order to accommodate more use of them over time. There is no alternative. We know that there are citizens who love these parks just as they are, but we also heard at our hearing and saw from the recent update of the Recreational Needs Assessment that there is a need to accommodate more use of and more uses in these large parks. The response to the plans before you has been very positive from both the public and the Commission.

The Commission expressed a number of comments and concerns about some specifics that they wished to have passed on, as we offer our support for the Citywide Parks Improvement Plan (CPIP). We also understand that the CPIP is a guide and that the specifics of the changes in each park will be designed when resources become available. That said, we offer the following comments, in no specific order of importance:

- In this plan, staff has proposed some positive changes for Hensley Park which is a heavily used facility. Last year, there was a lot of discussion about development of this site by a private developer. We now know that land had federal limits on its use and the proposal could not be accommodated. The Commission would like to propose that the City and RPCA undertake a process to determine what type of constructed *public* recreational facility could be built on this site. It could be a place where a facility like an ice rink could be built, perhaps in partnership with the directly adjacent Fairfax County or the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.
- We heard both from the public and from our own Commission that more community gardens would be desired in most places in our City. We would like you to know that the RPCA staff and the Commission are working on a Community Gardens Policy to guide the development of new public gardens. We are drafting that policy in order to guide where and how public land is given over to gardening. We believe that City funding used to put in new garden spaces (money for irrigation systems, soil testing and remediation, trash pick-up, etc.) should be done first in parts of our community where food security is harder to come by, not in the most affluent areas first. We also believe that these new gardens should be in the smaller, left over spaces, not planned in large areas that could otherwise be used for active recreation. The Community Gardens Policy will lay out a menu of garden types, including communal and children's gardens. We do not see a future where a community garden the size and scope of the Chinquapin garden is duplicated. It is not an equitable use of park land over the long term.
- At Four Mile Run Park we heard from one of the neighborhood activists, Kevin Beekman, that we need to highlight several items not included in the CPIP, primarily the entrance to the park off Mt. Vernon Avenue. Planning for Four Mile Run Park came up in the Arlandria Plan over 10 years ago. The Arlandria Plan included concepts on how to enhance the entrance to Four Mile Run Park at the Conservancy Building on Mt. Vernon Avenue. The Community there feels that particular intersection needs to be studied and reconfigured. It currently has the highest number of pedestrian-car incidents in the City. As the park evolves and more nearby residents access the park on foot this will only get worse unless the intersection is reconfigured. The Arlandria Plan was supposed to address certain changes there by 2014. We are attaching the information Kevin submitted to our Commission on this issue as an appendix to this letter and encourage RPCA to work with T&ES to make changes at this intersection.
- The section on Ben Brenman Park suggests that a set of volleyball courts across Holmes Run be removed because of lack of maintenance and use. However the Commission feels it is unwise to remove these courts without first making a commitment to promote them to the general public. They represent an investment of land and capital. They can be used for unplanned play, whereas many other places like this in the City are fully programmed and scheduled. We believe there is a great need in every large park for more facilities like this – small scale but active recreational opportunities. We encourage staff to remove the recommendation to take these courts out and instead focus on getting them used more.

- The Commission continues to be concerned that significant pieces of our current parks and open space, along with those that might be acquired as a result of development SUPs, are at risk of converting to being used for BMPs. While we are all acutely aware that increasing clean water regulations means that the City, along with developers, must do much more to comply with these regulations, the Park & Recreation Commission feels very strongly that our open space resources cannot be used to bear this burden. The BMP under the Monroe Street Bridge is the poster child for what must never be permitted again as a part of development: a by-the-book, steep sided BMP installed by the developer and then given over to the City as a part of their open space obligation. That BMP is technically park land. Certainly BMPs can be “lakes” or “features” but by who’s design and definition? Are these acceptable as park land? Are they USEABLE open space? Useable open space is the deficit that our Commission is trying to address while we contemplate adding many more people to our City over the next ten years. In this plan before you there are “reserved” areas where T&ES would like to put BMPs on existing park land. We would caution that we understand the need to address clean water regulation but it cannot be done by taking large areas of useable open space to do so. There are alternatives but they are more expensive, but so is buying land for parks and recreation, if it can even be found.
- One such alternative is to plan for *every* future artificial turf field – whether a new field or an existing grass field converting to artificial turf - to be planned and built with a BMP under the surface. While a bit more expensive, this proven technology is being employed around the country to address storm water regulations. The new field at the Jefferson Houston school will employ this strategy and we would encourage it at the Four Mile Run field and the other field conversions that are in the City’s CIP funding queue.
- We want to point out that we asked staff to include “re-greening” of several roadways that are currently paved. The first is about half of the “circle” in Chinquapin Park. This road served the houses that were once there prior to it becoming a park. The roadway was left in its original configuration. We asked to have the half closer to the neighborhood behind the park be re-greened by removing the existing asphalt and replacing it with pavers that allow grass to grow in them and water to perk through them while still accommodating vehicles on occasion. By doing this we can make that half of the park seem much larger, much greener, and at the same time it can be used for parking during large events. We do not feel that the “Circle” should be used to park cars for the high school students. That is not what our parks are for.
- The other case is at the end of Commonwealth Avenue, next to the ball fields. We think the pavement there should be taken up and replaced with the same kind of green pavers suggested in Chinquapin and this plan shows that. Located so near Four Mile Run, the environmental benefit will be important, along with visually extending the park into this area. The Director of Planning and Zoning has requested that be done with the caveat that the underlying land still be technically and legally a public right-of-way which could be re-paved in case of a future development. We agree with that, but we would underscore that until such time as it truly is needed for vehicles, let’s be brave enough to make it greener for people.
- We believe that much of the new green open space of the future in Alexandria can and will be developed, or reclaimed, from the existing road system; whether that means taking roads out or constructing parks over them remains to be seen but it will happen. At some point we will have no other choice.

The Commission would like to commend and thank the staff for this document. The Park Planning staff of the RCPA has been creative and thorough in their plans for the future. RCPA did a tremendous job of outreach in the community, listening to garner ideas, concerns and complaints. This document is a tremendous step forward to a future where our large parks will serve our increasing population better. We urge you to accept these recommendations and plans and use them to guide the investments that we know will be made over time.

Sincerely,



Judy R. Guse-Noritake, Chair
Park and Recreation Commission

Cc: Park & Recreation Commission
Rashad Young, City Manager
James Spengler, Director, RCPA
Faroll Hammer, Director, P& Zoning
Rich Baier, Director, T&ES

Alexandriava.gov





38

CITYWIDE PARKS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Table of Contents.....	3
Foreword.....	5
Acknowledgement.....	7
Introduction and Park Plans.....	9
Vision & Objectives.....	11
Methodology & Navigating the Plan.....	16
Recommendations for all Citywide Parks.....	18
Individual Park Plans	
Ben Brenman Park, Boothe Park, Cameron Station Linear Park.....	21
Chinquapin Park.....	35
Four Mile Run Park.....	49
Joseph Hensley Park.....	65
Holmes Run Park System.....	75
Simpson Stadium Park.....	89
Overall Preliminary Cost Estimates.....	103
Appendix	
Public Outreach.....	105
Cost Estimates.....	175
Recommended Sanitation & Recycling Can Locations.....	227
Athletic Facilities Community Allocation Policy.....	231
Archaeology Reports.....	235
2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Executive Summary.....	251

CITYWIDE PARKS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Foreword

The City of Alexandria's Citywide parks, including Four Mile Run Park, Simpson Stadium Park, Chinquapin Park, Hensley Park, Brenman and Boothe Parks, and the Holmes Run Park System, are in need of renovation in order to meet the Citywide recreational and open space needs of residents. As the City grows denser and land is finite, those spaces are increasingly important in providing respite, recreation and gathering spots. This plan sets out to provide a framework for gradual improvement to these sites and the quality of life in Alexandria.

CITYWIDE PARKS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

City Council

William D. Euille, Mayor
Allison Silberberg, Vice Mayor
John T. Chapman
Timothy B. Lovain
Redella S. "Del" Pepper
Paul C. Smedberg
Justin Wilson

Park and Recreation Commission

Judy Noritake, Chair
Gina Baum
William Cromley
Richard Brune
Brian McPherson
Judith Coleman
Jennifer Atkins
Stephen Beggs
Ripley Forbes

Beautification Commission
Youth Sports Advisory Board
Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
Commission on Aging
Four Mile Run Restoration Joint Task Force

Prepared by:

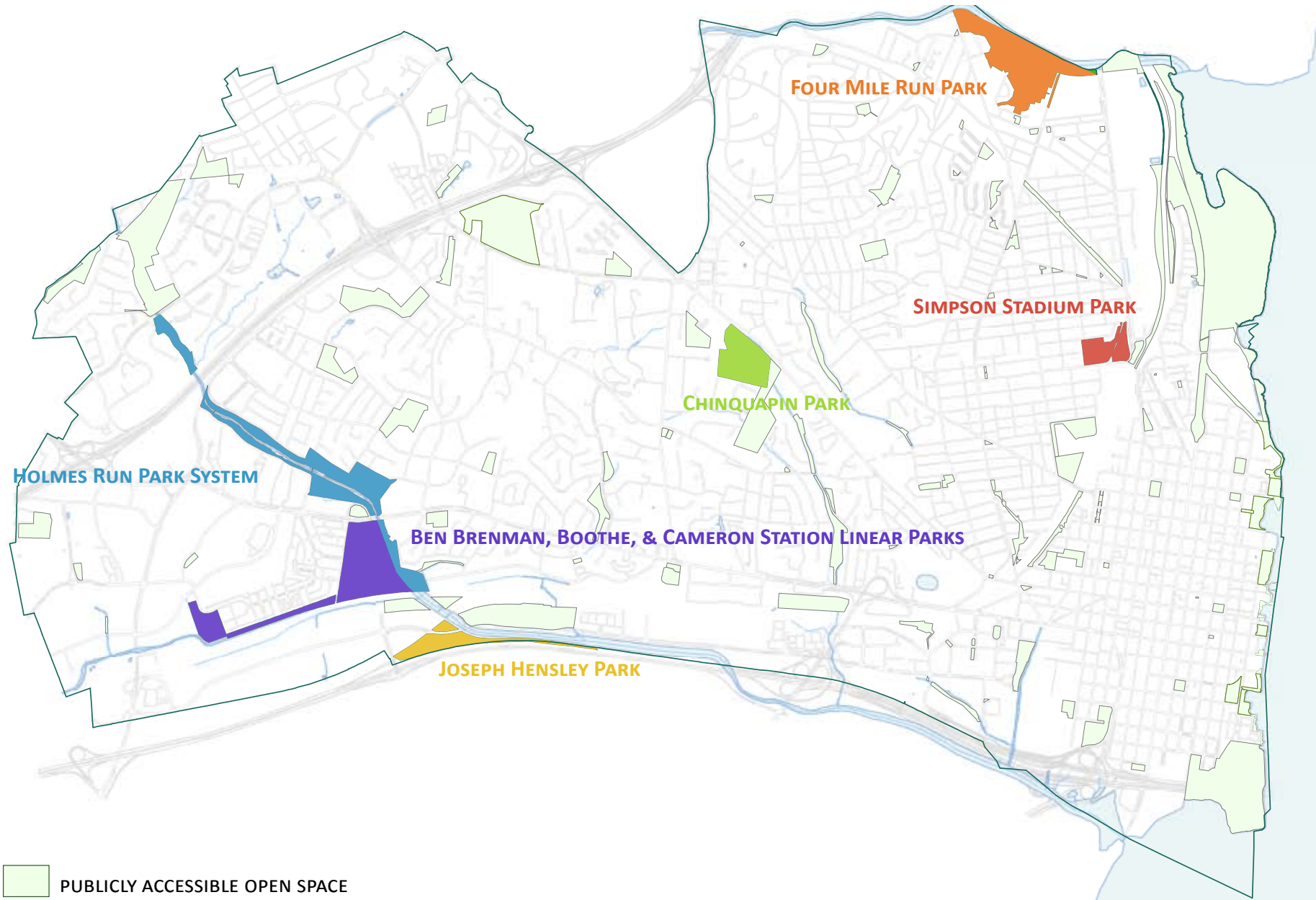
Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Park Planning, Design and Capital Development Staff

In coordination with:

Alexandria City Public Schools
Department of Planning & Zoning
Office of Historic Alexandria
Office of Human Rights
Transportation & Environmental Services

Special thanks to RPCA Interns:

Alex Ray, Amanda Foran, Aaron Bond, &
Eddie Diaz-Etchevehere



Introduction & Park Plans

Classification	Description	Size	Service	Estimated Planning Process Timeline
Citywide	Contains multiple uses within park boundary including; attracts visitors from all over the City Example: Chinguapin Park	15 to 50 acres	0-25 miles from users	2013 – 2014
Neighborhood	May include multiple uses within park boundary; attracts nearby residents Example: Beverley Park.	20,000 sq. ft. to 5 acres	0-5 miles from users	2014 – 2015
Pocket Park	Small open space; mainly single use attracting nearby residents Example: Sunset Mini Park	Under 20,000 sq. ft.	.25-0.5 mile or less from users	2015
Natural Resource Areas	Includes open spaces that are primarily passive-use or preservation areas. Example: Clermont Natural Park	No Minimum or Maximum	Citywide	2015 – 2016
Shared Use	Includes parks that share facilities with schools and recreation centers Examples: Patrick Henry Field	5-20 acres (average)	0-25 miles from users	Included as part of the 2013-2014 Long-Range Educational Facilities Plan
Destination/ Historical	Attracts users from beyond the region, typically because of a particularly unique features. Example: Ft. Ward Park, Waterfront Park System	Varies	0-100 or more miles.	Park Plans completed individually for these sites because of their unique character.
Regional	Includes lands or facilities administered by other regional entities Example: Cameron Run Regional Park	50-75 acres	0-100 miles from users	Planned by external jurisdictions.
Corridors/Linear Parks/Trailways	Includes trailways, corridors and linear parks that serve primarily as linear bikeway corridors; may include ROWs. Example: Metro Linear Park	No Minimum or Maximum	0-100 miles from users	Included as part of the upcoming Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan

The Typologies matrix above outlines how parks and open spaces are classified by service area and size. The Citywide Parks constitute the first phase of the planning process for all parks in Alexandria.

In the summer of 2012, the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) began a multi-year process to develop a series of Park Improvement Plans. Each plan will cover a collection of parks categorized by typology, and will ensure a system of open space that equitably responds to the City's recreational and natural resource needs while efficiently utilizing available resources. All open spaces will ultimately be included within the process, as shown in the timeline on the left, and each plan will be re-visited every ten years to ensure the recommendations are current and to accommodate necessary changes in use.

The Citywide Parks Improvement Plan is the first of the Improvement Plans. RPCA is planning for these parks first because the Citywide Parks impact the most amount of residents and renovation in these parks will influence the recreational uses of other sites. The goal of this initiative is to study and understand the existing conditions and future needs for Alexandria's parks that are over 15-acres, municipally owned, and have multiple uses. The Citywide Parks include: **Ben Brenman and Armistead L. Boothe parks**, **Chinguapin Park**, **Four Mile Run Park**, **Joseph Hensley Park**, **Holmes Run Park System**, and **Simpson Stadium Park**.¹ Through the Citywide Large Park Improvement Plan, RPCA intends to determine budgeting priorities and recommendations for both short and long-term incremental improvements, ensuring that public parks serve Alexandria's needs now and into the future.

The Plan is segmented into seven sections, the first addressing the shared vision, objectives and recommendations for all large parks, followed by individual plans for each of the six parks. Each Park Improvement Plan contains background, public feedback, recommendations and cost estimates. **Packaged together, these individual plans strive to meet a vision to improve existing open space, impacting the health of Alexandria's natural environment and its people.**

¹ This Office of Historic Alexandria is currently leading a community-driven management plan for Fort Ward Park.

“The first consideration in preparing this plan is how best to provide the types of areas and the kind of facilities most needed by the several neighborhoods. No one park can meet all the park and recreation needs of the City. In preparing the plan it must be decided what program to follow and what special action to take which will establish a park system that fits in with the means that may be afforded. The program should be adequate to answer the deficiency existing, reasonable to attain the objectives desired, and possible to maintain the improvements created.”

- A Park Planning Program for Alexandria, The Planning Commission, City of Alexandria, VA, September 3, 1940



Holmes Run Park

Vision + Objectives

There are many reasons why we are planning for improvements to our Citywide Parks. First, the City is growing increasingly dense and land is less available for acquisition of new open space, therefore, we must take full advantage of the parks we have and ensure that they offer the variety of recreational needs that a dense city requires. This includes opportunities for passive relaxation, organized sports, early childhood development, family fun, and individual athletic activities.

We must also make investments in the parks to simply maintain them for years to come. Many of the park fixtures, such as utilities and furniture, and features, such as playgrounds and dog parks, are reaching the end of their useful life. Yet, rather than merely replace them in-kind, we need to determine whether these are the appropriate mix of uses and in the right location. Throughout this planning process we asked the questions: **Does this park meet today's needs and does it meet tomorrow's needs? We then considered, if it doesn't, how can we improve the Park so that it does?**

To determine the needs of the parks, we approached the plan in two ways: 1) an active public outreach strategy and 2) by conducting a statistically accurate Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment (see appendix for findings). The public outreach on this project included twelve public workshops (two for each park), online surveys, and "mobile workshops" which entailed staff taking surveys and draft plans to park users at events, adjacent businesses, community centers, and in the parks themselves. We assumed that those that use the parks have the best knowledge of what improvements the sites need. Secondly, RPCA, working with a consultant, conducted a 2011 and 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment by sending a survey to demographically and geographically representative households. With over 600 responses for each year, we can confirm that the results are accurate in depicting residents' needs.

Using this dynamic approach of both qualitative and quantitative research, we prioritized the improvements. Given current financial uncertainties, the Department knows that it will not receive funding for every Capital Improvement Program request that it puts forward. There is not an expectation that all park plans can be paid for at once. Instead, this plan uses citizen input and considers other external considerations to determine how to address park improvement incrementally over time. Therefore, most of the recommendations in the plan can be implemented independent of other projects.

If we do not act, we risk having our Parks deteriorate and not serve residents outdoor recreational needs, a great loss to the historical economic investment made in these resource-rich public spaces. This plan is important because it strives to improve existing open space, which impacts both the health of Alexandria's natural environment and its people. The City's Strategic Plan aims to ensure that the City's natural and built environment is healthy and that its residents are thriving. In the broadest sense, by implementing the recommendations in this plan, the City can move towards meeting these goals by providing the best outdoor recreational opportunities and natural resources possible for its residents. At a more micro-level, and as explained on the following pages, this plan aims to meet the following objectives:

1. **Increase accessibility to the City's large parks and their facilities**
2. **Design public spaces that meet multiple community needs and balance passive and active uses**
3. **Steward and cultivate the parks' many natural resource assets**
4. **Strengthen the network of Citywide Parks and its role in connecting the community**

Objective 1

Increase accessibility to the City's large parks and their facilities:

Most of the citywide parks are located within residential neighborhoods and also support citywide recreational programs. Therefore, they serve as primary parks for many of Alexandria's residents. Park users travel by foot, car, bike and bus to visit but the lack of formal and inviting entrances to the parks is a barrier for current and potential visitors. All entrances should be brought up to standards for universal accessibility. Well-designed access points are needed to better connect the parks with their surroundings and increase pedestrians use of the space.

Access within the park's also need improvement. Each citywide park accommodates a diversity of recreational uses, however, these activities are poorly connected and sporadically scattered throughout the parks. The circuitous layout of the citywide parks reflects years of piecemeal planning. Throughout the community process, participants expressed concerns with safety and visibility in some of the parks, particularly because of many inaccessible or obscure pathways.

1.1 Improve Park Circulation

Poor circulation is a ubiquitous concern in the citywide park system. Visitors too often feel overwhelmed, secluded, or unsafe due to the lack of connectivity in the parks. In order to establish an enjoyable park experience, different park activities must be integrated by a safe and clear set of paths.

- Design pathways to meet and exceed the 2010 ADA Standards.
- Promote park programming and activities that are accessible to all.
- Install standard wayfinding signage throughout the sites that promotes park resources and is easily identifiable and clear for all park users
- Develop sufficient and easily navigable vehicular paths and parking lots to support athletic programs in an urban environment

1.2 Improve Park Entrances

Many park users enter the park wherever convenient due to the lack of attractive, formalized entrances. Some of these "desire lines" can be a hazard to users or the park's natural resources. Paths need clear and safe gateways connecting them to their surroundings communities.

- Increase the number of welcoming and universally accessible entry points.
- Enhance linkages with public transportation, bike and pedestrian routes.
- Provide a standard number of park benches and bike racks at each park entrance

1.3 Linkages

A Citywide Parks trail system could dramatically increase connectivity within the city, making it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to move through the City and access destinations in different neighborhoods.

- Link citywide parks with pedestrian, bicycle, and trail systems
- Link citywide parks to other regional, neighborhood and pocket parks.
- Initiate public outreach to share citywide park opportunities to residents and welcome their use of the citywide parks.

Objective 2

Design public spaces that meet multiple community needs and balance passive and active uses:

Throughout the community engagement process, the City garnered over 600 survey responses and facilitated a number of workshops where many Alexandria citizens shared their park needs and input. The needs covered a wide range of issues and especially varied in citywide parks that have a number of well-organized and specific user groups. While the needs of different user groups seem divergent, they may all be addressed comprehensively. With an organized approach to hearing and acting on community input, we can balance the different interests of park users and collaborate to determine priorities for park improvements. In order to make these parks accessible and attractive to all of Alexandria's citizens, park space must be designed to include a range of both passive and active recreational uses, while also respecting the parks' natural resources.

2.1 Match Space with Community Needs

This plan's community engagement process is just one means to hear the needs of park users. There must be a long-term process for listening to residents needs and making park planning accessible to all. A park is successful if it has utility and value to its users.

- Conduct citywide parks and recreation needs assessment every two years
- Develop an effective and organized method for continuously hearing community's desired use of the park and responding to the changing needs.
- Design spaces and programs that are contextually relevant to residents

2.2 Balance Passive & Active Uses

At times, certain parks become dominated by organized sport activities, at the expense of including other individual recreational opportunities. Yet, both the 2011 and 2013 Needs Assessment indicate that the majority of park users desire opportunities partake in individual park uses. More user needs would be addressed by creating space for both passive and active recreation and integrating those spaces into one cohesive plan.

- Improve and create spaces that accommodate sports participants and spectators
- Improve fields and facilities for active users
- Create spaces for passive enjoyment of the bucolic character of parks
- Improve picnic and congregating areas
- Install infrastructure necessary for large special events
- Promote community health by designing park features that support active living

2.3 Follow the RPCA Cost Recovery Model to guide an appropriate balance of fee based and unmonitored uses

In 2013, City Council approved a Resource Allocation and Cost Recovery Model specific to Alexandria. The model drew from citizen focus groups and the 2011 Needs Assessment to guide the recreation fee schedule. The model recommended that programs with the highest community benefit receive the highest subsidy while those with a strong individual benefit receive little or no subsidy.

- Ensure that park areas with the highest public benefit, such as passive open space and natural areas, receive the most tax subsidy
- Invest in areas that can generate user fee revenue, and therefore, help subsidize the community benefits
- Seek implementation strategies that reduce capital and maintenance expenditures



Objective 3

Steward and cultivate the parks' many natural and cultural resource assets:

All of the citywide parks have natural features that are rare to urbanized environments. Part of what makes Alexandria such a unique place is that it contains open space where its residents can connect with and enjoy nature. Holmes Run Park System, Brenman and Boothe Parks, and Four Mile Run Park are all located close to water and contain precious natural resources. Each of the parks has its own set of natural resources that add value to the City and provide opportunities for environmental education in the urban landscape. Many of the citywide parks also have historical associations and contain resources that highlight significant historical events reflecting the diverse lifestyles and activities of Alexandria's past inhabitants. Identification of these cultural resources enrich the visitor experience and connect with the past. Through best practices and low impact design, we must conserve the city's valuable natural and cultural resources in order to retain their importance for the generations of Alexandrians to come.

3.1 Natural and Resources

In order to create favorable conditions for Alexandria's broad diversity of habitats, the plans for the citywide parks must work in concert with the City's natural resource management plans. This includes protecting valuable wetland and water resources, and ensuring continued ecological health through best practices, invasive species management, and protection of indigenous vegetation and habitat.

- Explore and implement best practices for energy efficiency including a more effective water management system and renewable energy technology
- Plant trees of appropriate native species to increase the park canopy and produce a multi-aged and diverse tree community, per the Urban Forestry Master Plan
- Better distribute trash receptacles and add permanent recycling containers to meet Eco-City goals

- Initiate community outreach to educate the public on Eco-City goals related to the environment and park stewardship
- Encourage Friends of the Parks groups and partnerships with organizations to co-maintain and support the park
- Use best practices for Storm Water Management in order to meet the reduction goals of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load
- Increase opportunities for community gardening, per the City's Community Garden Guidelines (in draft form as of writing of this Plan)
- Adhere to RPCA's Environmental Sustainability and Management System (in draft form as of writing of this Plan).

3.2 Historical and Archaeological Resources

The plans for citywide parks must take into account the City's stewardship role in the preservation of cultural resources. This includes identification and evaluation of areas with historical significance so that information about the past can be recovered and resources can be protected and interpreted.

- Research the history of each park and the potential for discovery of archeological resources.
- Conduct archeological investigations, as needed, to identify locations of significant resources prior to development, per the City's Archeology Protection Code
- Integrate the history and archaeology of the park enhancements through the inclusion of interpretive elements.

Objective 4

Strengthen the network of Citywide Parks and its role in connecting the community.

The citywide parks draw residents from all over Alexandria and set the stage for a multitude of activities. With so much converging at one site, each park has the potential to be a social incubator for its surrounding neighborhoods. The parks could embody and express the unique story of their primary users through local art and events. In addition, the citywide parks system, as a whole, has the built-in capacity for connecting different communities across Alexandria. Those who use the citywide parks meet people from other city neighborhoods as well as visitors from outside the city. Therefore, the citywide parks system has the potential to significantly increase the physical and social connectivity within Alexandria. A network linking the various citywide parks not only helps Alexandrians access different destinations and neighborhoods of the city; it also creates opportunities for Alexandrians to meet one another and build a larger, more diverse community.

4.1 Community Development

The citywide park system can become a vibrant microcosm of Alexandria life. Each park is located in a different setting within Alexandria with its own unique history, neighborhood and culture. Individually, the parks should embody and showcase their surrounding community assets.

- Provide opportunities for public art in each of the large parks in areas identified by the Office of Arts' Public Art Master Plan (in progress)
- Invite a diverse array of community events and venues to take place in citywide parks
- Establish themes within each park based on its history, connection to natural resources, and/or unique neighborhood character
- Provide public spaces that facilitate community gathering and places for interaction
- Create opportunities for residents and local businesses to become involved in park stewardship and planning processes



Methodology & Navigating the Plan

Each of the following plans include four sections including background, community feedback, recommendations, and implementation. RPCA staff used a multi-pronged approach to gather information and develop these sections, as follows:

Background

The six parks each have a rich history and meaning within their adjacent neighborhoods. In Spring and Summer 2012, staff reviewed existing plans and documents, gathered qualitative data from City Staff, and conducted site observations and park inventory. The Office of Historic Alexandria provided background on each of the Park's historic use and evolution into a Park. In some cases RPCA staff also conducted oral interviews with long-time park advocates and neighbors.

Community Feedback

To gather a sense of the Park characters, RPCA staff observed park uses during various times of day and spoke to park users while on-site. RPCA staff then collected park information from the Community by holding public workshops for each park to discuss park needs, distributing an online survey asking for feedback, and placing hard copy surveys in boxes located at entrances to the park and in the mailboxes of adjacent neighborhood homes. 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. Over 585 Alexandria residents responded and 45 attended workshops.¹



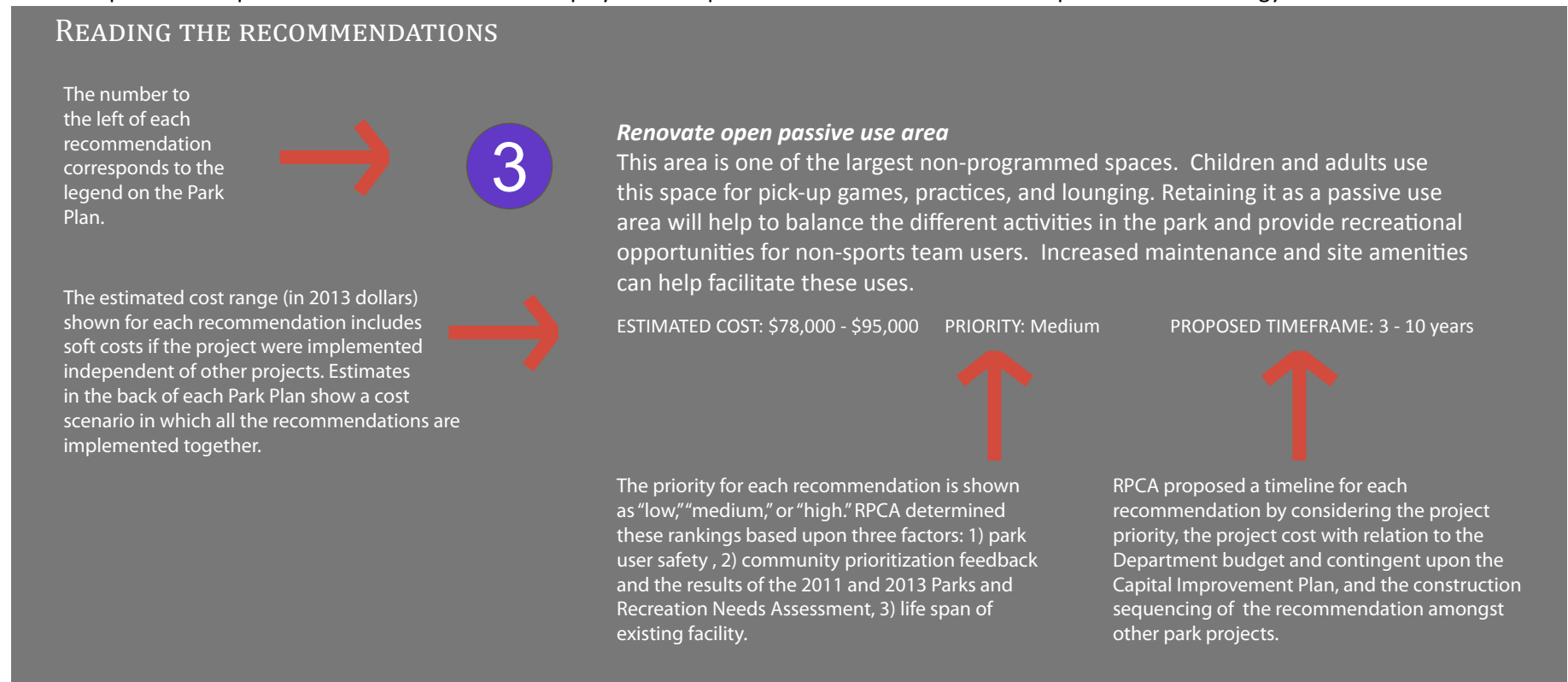
¹ RPCA acknowledges that results of the workshop and survey were not statistically accurate. Rather, the responses are from those who saw the survey and chose to participate. While this is a sample of park users, it is not representative of all users. As an example, through sports permitting, we know that many more soccer and ballfield users visit the parks than are reported through the survey. For this reason, the information was supplemented with site observation and additional data to inform recommendations in the Park Improvement Plans.

Recommendations & Implementation Strategy

To develop draft plans and recommendations, Park Planning Staff used information collected from the existing conditions and community input. Information was gathered based on the following set of questions: Did we hear you? Have we considered the needs of everyone who uses the park? What else can be improved? What is the priority?

In Spring 2013, staff presented the draft plans to the community for feedback at interactive public workshops, local business and community centers with “mobile workshops,” flyer-ing neighborhoods, and using an online survey. Since that time, staff refined the plans to represent the community comments and then developed an implementation strategy for each recommendation, which includes a cost, priority rank, and proposed timeframe. Staff worked with an external cost consultant, Pennoni Associates, to ensure accuracy and account for all aspects of a project, including potential soft costs (contingency, engineering, survey, geotechnical, environmental and permitting work costs). These cost estimates do not include operating costs. Prior to the implementation of any recommendation, operating costs, if any, must be considered. The appendix contains complete cost estimates by line item cost for each recommendation.

The example below explains how this information is displayed in the plan and the reason behind the implementation strategy:



Recommendations for All Citywide Parks

Throughout the community feedback process, RPCA found that many of the existing conditions and improvement needs were consistent in all six parks. To efficiently use resources, RPCA recommends addressing the following issues in coordination:

Improve Wayfinding throughout the Park System

Throughout the parks, various welcome, rules and regulation, and historical/educational signs are scattered about. There is no consistent graphic conformity to them and the locations are often haphazard. Furthermore, as pointed out through community feedback, park users are often lost in the Parks, particularly when trying to find athletic facilities. Developing a wayfinding program through the parks, coordinated with the City's newly adopted Wayfinding guidelines and graphic standards, can help orient and direct park users while also giving the parks a tidier look. Better placed and clearer rules and regulations signs can also help educate the Park users on appropriate park behavior.

ESTIMATED COST: \$80,000 - \$100,000 (includes all 6 parks)

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years

Provide Improved Trash Receptacle Locations and Recycling Program

Many of the trash receptacles in the Parks are in locations difficult for sanitation trucks to access and off the typical path for park users. Some of the trash receptacles are also in poor condition and not standard. Standardizing the trash receptacles and moving them to locations that make more sense for usability and maintenance will help the parks look cleaner and better control litter. In addition, recycling receptacles are needed in all six parks in order to support Alexandria's Eco-City principles. (See the appendix for proposed receptacle locations).

ESTIMATED COST: \$145,240 (see page 229 of appendix for breakdown by Park)

PRIORITY: Medium

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 10+ Years

Include Universal Accessibility in all Plans

The City and RPCA are committed to ensuring that people with disabilities are able to enjoy full and equal access to all of the City's parks and their amenities. Any renovation or park improvement proposed in the plan incorporates designs that meet or exceed the U.S. Department of Justice's 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design. In some cases, RPCA has prioritized projects in the plan that have particularly poor access. In addition, RPCA will utilize the expertise of the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities for support and guidance on accessibility improvements to park pathways and facilities.

ESTIMATED COST: Included in all other cost estimates.

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: N/A

Locate Public Art in Collaboration with the Office of the Arts Public Art Master Plan

In 2012, the Alexandria City Council adopted a policy to grow the City's public art into an inspired and engaging program that reflects the City's unique history, people, cultural identity, and future aspirations. To support this growth, the City has commissioned the development of a Public Art Master Plan. The Public Art Master Plan, currently underway, will set priorities for the location and funding of projects which may include the Citywide Park sites.

ESTIMATED COST: N/A

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: Underway

Establish Parking Policy and Standards

In the parks with athletic facilities, particularly Simpson, Four Mile Run Park, Hensley, and Brenman, parking is a big concern for participants, spectators, and park neighbors. Many of the fields are used by more teams at the same time than the adjacent facilities were designed to accommodate. When the fields are not in use, however, the parking lots appear as under used pavement in open space. As a result, in May 2013, the Park and Recreation Commission approved an Athletic Facilities Community Allocation Policy that includes Athletic Field Parking Design Standards (Section C, see appendix), providing parking ratios per players on the field. In addition to implementing these guidelines, the individual park plans indicate where parking lots can be renovated or re-stripped.

ESTIMATED COST: N/A

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: N/A

Upgrade Utilities in the Parks to Support Park Uses, including Special Events

In order to proceed with any major park renovations or improvements, the City must first identify any supporting infrastructure and utility upgrades at the sites. This includes water, electric, gas and storm sewer. Many of the existing utilities are at the end of their useful life and/or cannot support additional services. Additionally, improved utilities will provide core pieces of special event infrastructure required to host large and small public festivals and events. An initial inventory of the sites will help determine what needs replacement, when, and how it may impact park improvements.

ESTIMATED COST: \$100,000 - \$150,000 for upgrades per park

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years

Install Additional Bicycle Racks in the Parks

Many park visitors bike through the parks but because there are limited bike accommodations they do not stop to enjoy the open space. Other park-goers drive when they could bike. Adding additional bike racks would encourage people to change their mode of transportation when visiting parks. This recommendation is applicable to all six parks and the racks could be installed simultaneously in all of them.

Per the 2008 Alexandria Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Master Plan, the “inverted U” type bicycle rack is the City standard. The location for the racks will be highly visible, mainly at park entrances or adjacent to major uses. The number of bike racks at each park will depend upon the specific location.

ESTIMATED COST: \$25,000 - \$40,000

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 1-3 Years

Complete a Documentary Study and Archaeological Evaluation and Incorporate Interpretive Elements

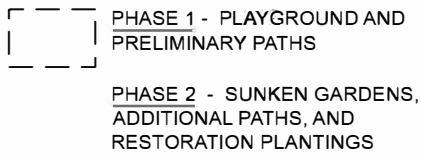
The completion of the Documentary Study and Archaeological Evaluation, as appropriate for each site, will allow for an understanding of the history of the site and the locations of significant resources. These are needed for current and future interpretive, planning and management decisions and can guide the potential placement of interpretive markers and/or other interpretative elements to educate residents about the area’s history and enrich the visitor experience by providing a connection to the past.

ESTIMATED COST FOR STUDY: See each Park Plan Overall Costs

ESTIMATED COST FOR INTERPRETIVE ELEMENTS: See each Park Plan Overall Costs

PRIORITY: High

PROPOSED TIMEFRAME: 3-10 years, unless triggered by a preliminary site plan



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

57



