



Fort Ward Park Playground Accessibility

Concept Study to Relocate the Playground

Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Office of Historic Alexandria
Lardner/Klein Landscape Architects, P.C.

February 17, 2023



Purpose and Objectives

- To recognize and respect Fort Ward resources, especially sensitive cultural resources which have significant value to the Fort Community descendants
- To evaluate relocation of the playground to Site B (near the existing playground) and Site D (near the amphitheater); and its potential impacts to cultural resources and natural resources; and to evaluate potential mitigation measures
- To engage the community including the Fort Community descendants, in determining a new playground location

Community Engagement

2022

- **January 22, 2022:** Community Meeting #1 Fort Ward Projects (virtual)
- **May 21, 2022:** Playground Community Meeting #2/Site Walk
- **June 22, 2022:** Playground Community Meeting #3 (virtual)

2023

- **February 22, 2023:** Playground Community Meeting #4 (virtual)
- **March 4 and 11, 2023:** Playground Community Open Houses
- **February 17 - March 31, 2023:** Community Comment
- **April/May, 2023:** Playground Community Meeting #5 (virtual); Determine final playground location
- **June/July 2023:** Begin design development and permitting process for selected location



2015 Fort Ward Park and Museum Area Management Plan

Planning and Implementation Goals for Park Enhancements

- Protect cultural resource areas
- Protect natural resources
- Limit ground disturbance
- Meet ADA requirements
- Coordinate and collaborate with archaeology during all project phases
- Community engagement

Fort Ward Park Accessibility Improvements

- Management Plan Strategy 1.3.2: Enhance Park accessibility and meet ADA requirements
- Comply with American with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates and 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- Resolve complaints received by the Office of Human Rights
- Prioritize park facilities that do not meet requirements:
 - Vehicular parking areas
 - Picnic shelter
 - Playground
- The 2015 Management Plan originally recommended moving the playground to the west side of the park



January 2022 Community Meeting Playground Community Feedback

- Concerns about burials and impacts to cultural resources
- What options have been looked at previously?
- Have other areas of the park have been considered?
- What are other planned/future projects at Fort Ward?

Playground Site Assessment Criteria

- Cultural Resources—Civil War
- Cultural Resources—African American Fort Community
- Natural Resources
- Existing Topography
- Existing Stormwater/Drainage
- Accessible Route
- Accessible Parking
- Grading
- Constructability
- Playground considerations
- Other amenities/uses

Fort Ward Park Playground Accessibility



Fort Ward Park Playground Accessibility



Fort Ward Park Playground Accessibility

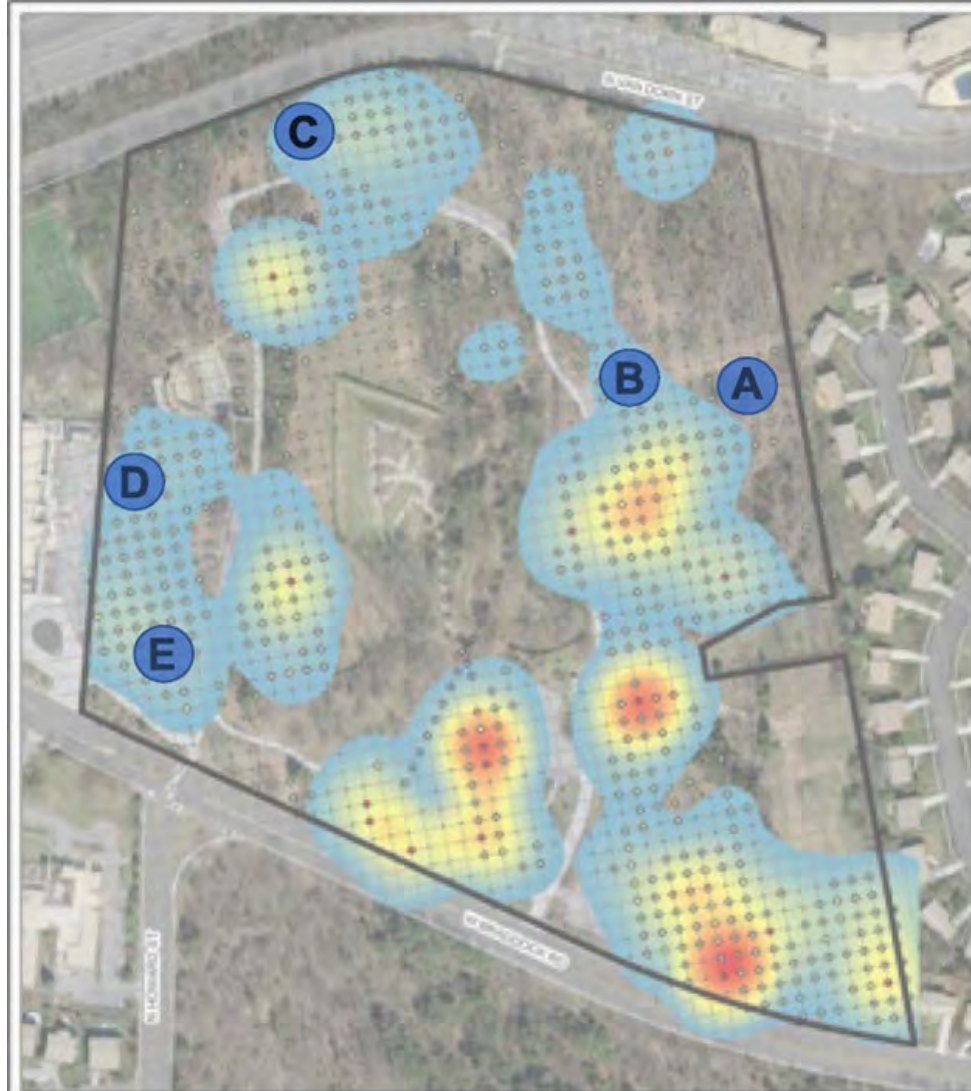


Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
"The Fort" Community

0 200 400 800 Feet



Fort Ward Park Playground Accessibility



Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
Shovel Test Pit Survey Artifact Density

0 200 400 800 Feet



Playground Accessibility Options

Fort Ward Park
Playground Accessibility



- **Site A:** Retain playground in current location and provide accessible pathway
- **Site B:** Relocate playground near the existing playground at the top of the hill (also studied in 2008/2009)
- **Site C:** Relocate playground to area west of the picnic shelter
- **Site D:** Relocate playground to area south of the amphitheater
- **Site E:** Relocate playground south of picnic area 5 (studied in 2020)



Playground Site Assessment Matrix

Fort Ward Park Playground Accessibility
Site Assessment Matrix
5/21/2022

	Site A: Retain playground in current location; provide accessible path	Site B: Relocate playground to top of hill	Site C: Relocate playground to area west of the picnic shelter	Site D: Relocate playground to area south of the amphitheatre	Site E: Relocate playground to area south of area 5 picnic area
Cultural Resources--Civil War Resources	Archaeological survey testing and historical research indicate that the potential for significant Civil War cultural resources at this location is low.	The rifle trench is within proximity. The playground will be visible from the loop road. A formal metal detecting survey of this area and archaeological survey testing and historical research indicate that the potential for significant Civil War cultural resources at this location is low.	This location is in proximity to the far east perimeter of a Civil War battery. The site is in the sound path of occasional historical artillery programs. The rifle trench is within proximity. The playground will be visible from the loop road. A formal metal detecting survey of this area, archaeological survey testing, and historical research indicate that the potential for significant Civil War cultural resources at this location is low.	Archaeological survey testing and historical research indicate that the potential for significant Civil War cultural resources at this location is low. The location is less visible from the loop road.	Archaeological survey testing and historical research indicate that the potential for significant Civil War cultural resources at this location is low. The location is visible from the loop road.
Cultural Resources--African American Fort Community	Archaeological survey testing and historical research indicate that the potential for significant cultural resources related to The Fort community at this location is low.	Archaeological survey testing and historical research indicate that the potential for significant cultural resources related to The Fort community at this location is low.	This site is within a parcel owned by the Javins family between 1921 and 1934. The location of the Javins homestead was located approximately 100 ft. to the east.	This location is within the bounds of land owned by the James Jackson family from 1894-1925, and immediately north from a lot owned by the John Peters family from 1913 to 1960.	This location is within the bounds of land owned by the James Jackson family from 1894-1913, and within a lot owned by the John Peters family from 1913 to 1960, and the Frank Lewis family from 1922-1935. The footprints of the Peters and Lewis homesteads no longer exist, having been destroyed by the bus loop road for the adjacent school in the 1960s.
Natural Resources	Mature trees surround the current playground site. Species include Red Oak, tulip tree, hickory, maple, persimmon, service berry, dogwood.	The top of hill has sparser trees that include a white oak, dogwood, black cherry, and hickory.	The grove of trees located to the west contains black gum, hickory, red oak, chestnut oak, and persimmon. Vegetation lines the north side of the park along Van Dorn Street.	A grove of trees is located to the east containing pine, willow oak, white oak, persimmon, and black cherry trees. Two kousa dogwood trees are located in the middle of the grass area. Several black cherry trees are located to the west and north.	A 28" cal. willow oak tree is located to the east. Shrubs line the south side. Tree grove located north of area.
Existing Topography	Existing slopes are greater than 10%. Some areas are steeper, 22% slope. Elevational change from the parking lot to playground is approximately +/- 28 feet	Existing slopes range from 10 to 14 %.	Existing slopes are approximately 7.5 - 9.0%	Existing slopes range from 6.0 to 8.0 %	Existing slopes range from 6.0 to 8.0 %
Existing Stormwater/Drainage	A culvert/swale runs down the hill, north of the existing playground site. The 2-5 year old play equipment area conflicts with this swale. Another major drainage way is located east of the playground.	The culvert/swale that runs down the hill should be avoided when siting the playground footprint.	There are no major drainage structures or swales in the vicinity.	There are no major drainage structures or swales in the vicinity.	There are no major drainage structures or swales in the vicinity.
Accessible Route (must not exceed 8.33% in slope)	Requires significant grading to build a pathway that slopes between 1.0 - 8.3%. Grading will impact existing tree and drainage. Pathway could be 600+ feet in length based on study in 2015	Due to proximity to parking, a shorter accessible route would be needed.	Due to proximity to parking, a shorter accessible route would be needed.	Due to distance from parking, a longer accessible route would be needed. The route should connect to the restrooms.	Due to proximity to parking, a shorter accessible route would be needed.
Accessible Parking	Existing parking is available.	Existing parking is available.	Existing parking is available.	Existing parking is farther away.	Existing parking is available.
Grading	Significant grading is required to provide an accessible route.	The slopes at the top of the hill, are less steep than the middle of the hill. Low retaining walls can create a terrace for the playground.	The slopes in this area are generally flatter. Grading of 1-4 feet would be anticipated to create a more level area for the play area.	Grading of 1-4 feet would be anticipated to create a more level area for the play areas.	Grading would be anticipated to create a more level area for the play area. The grade would be raised 3-4 feet with fill soils.
Constructability	The existing parking lot may serve as staging area and construction entrance.	The existing parking lot may serve as staging area and construction entrance.	The existing parking lot may serve as staging area and construction entrance.	Construction access and staging would need to be considered due to the distance away from the loop road.	The existing parking lot may serve as staging area and construction entrance.
Playground Footprint/considerations	The 2-5 year old play equipment area should be removed or modified. The school age equipment receives good shade from the existing trees.	A new accessible playground could be built at the top of the hill, with a smaller footprint, while retaining a portion of the existing playground at the bottom of the hill.	The playground could incorporate nature play due to adjacency to the grove. Van Dorn Street is close by. There is fencing located along Van Dorn sidewalk. Adjacent open grass area.	The playground is located further back from the loop road. The grove of trees may obstruct sightlines/visibility. Playground use may help to activate area.	In proximity to West Braddock Road. Adjacent grass area to the west.
Other Amenities	Picnic areas are located at the top of hill. Restrooms are not too far away.	Existing water is available. Several picnic areas are located here.	Existing water is available. The picnic shelter is in close proximity. Restrooms are farther away compared to the other sites.	Restrooms, picnic areas and amphitheatre are in close proximity. St. Stephens/St. Agnes School is adjacent.	Close to St. Stephens/St. Agnes School. Water spigot is available.

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation

May/June 2022 Community Feedback

Options NOT Preferred



Fort Ward Park
Playground Accessibility



- **Site A:** Building an accessible route would likely impact significant natural resources. Based on elevation change and topography, a route would likely exceed 600 feet in length. For comparison, the picnic shelter pathway is approximately 95 feet long.
- **Site C:** The proximity to Van Dorn Street, the distance from restrooms, the noise from Interstate 395, and potential impacts to vegetation, have made this location less desirable
- **Site E:** Relocating the playground south of picnic area 5 was studied in 2020. This location was not preferred because of close its proximity to the Peters and Lewis homes and potential impacts to those resources

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation

May/June 2022 Community Feedback

Preferred Locations for Study



Site D: On the west side of the park, south of the amphitheater and north of the restrooms



Site B: Near the existing playground- upslope from the existing playground in the vicinity of the existing picnic pads

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Conceptual Study for Playground Site B and Site D



Scope of Work

- ❖ Preliminary Archaeology Assessment
- ❖ Options for Tree Preservation and Stormwater Water Management
- ❖ Test footprints for typical playground area. Assumes playground will have play equipment, site furnishings, an accessible route, trees for shade, and potential opportunities for natural play
- ❖ Evaluate siting for accessibility, impacts, constructability, and other considerations
- ❖ Perspectives and cross sections to visualize the playground in place
Study excludes geo-technical analysis and engineering design

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground Summary of Preliminary Archaeological Assessment



Figure 5. Locations of shovel test pits (light purple circles) and metal detector hits (green circles) and around Option Area B.

- **Site B**

- ❖ **Background:** Site B is part of a 5-acre parcel that passed through the hands of several owners—including the Craven family (1921-1926)—but was never developed.

- ❖ **The findings for Site B:**

- Background research indicates that there was no known activity at this site
- Archaeological shovel testing turned up a low number of Indigenous, Civil War, or Fort Community artifacts
- The lack of any evidence of activity is likely due to the steep slopes which made the landform poorly suited for most uses.

- ❖ **Preliminary Recommendation:** If chosen, and depending on construction impacts, Alexandria Archaeology will develop an on-site Monitoring Plan for ground-disturbing activity at Site B

*Refer to Appendix for full assessment

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

Summary of Preliminary Archaeological Assessment

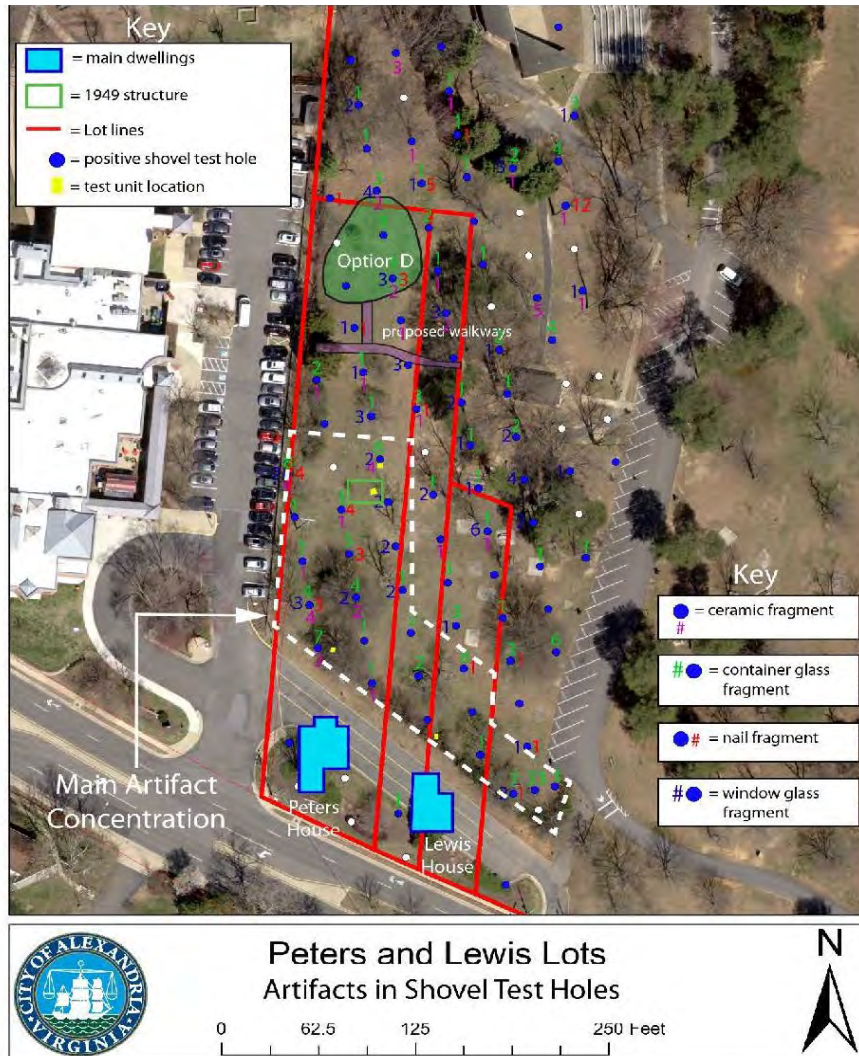


Figure 7. Distribution of artifacts in shovel test holes in and around Option Area D.

- **Site D**

- ❖ **Background:** Site D was part of an 11.5-acre parcel purchased by James F. Jackson in 1894. In 1913 the Jacksons sold John H. Peters 0.75 acres of land located in the southwest corner of their 11.5 acres. The Peters family held the lot until selling it to the City in 1960.

- ❖ **The findings for Site D:**

- Although located on the back of the Peters' lot, background research indicates that the Peters family did not actively use this portion of the property
- Archaeological shovel testing turned up a low number of Indigenous, Civil War, or Fort Community artifacts

- ❖ **Preliminary Recommendation:** If chosen, and depending on construction impacts, Alexandria Archaeology will develop an on-site Monitoring Plan for ground-disturbing activity at Site D

*Refer to Appendix for full assessment

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation

Cultural Resources Review Procedures

- Based on past archaeological and historical research, the park is divided into “cultural resource sensitivity areas” that identify both Civil War and Fort Community resources
- Alexandria Archaeology reviews all ground disturbing projects proposed for Fort Ward as outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the park under Guidelines for Ground Disturbance Resources as outlined below:

The Review Steps for Cultural Resources:

1. Notify OHA a minimum of seven (7) days before work is to begin in **Yellow** Shaded and **Red** Shaded areas.
2. Courtesy notification preferred for work to take place in **Green** Shaded areas.
3. OHA will review the proposed work site and, when necessary, clearly work with RPCA and T&ES to mark off areas where ground disturbance may occur in accordance with the Management Plan.
4. All capital projects (i.e., planned site improvements) shall include funding and related resources for archaeology in the project timeline and budget. Regardless of location, all ground disturbers must be made aware of the **Call If Finds** requirement in Section IV—Responsibilities of Ground Disturbers, no matter how small the ground-disturbing activity.
5. There will be no disturbance to identified burial locations; all burials will be protected in place. If evidence of burials is discovered during any ground disturbing activities, OHA will immediately update the map showing levels of ground disturbance to ensure that the area of the burials is shaded red. The newly discovered burials will also be protected in place.



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation – Tree Preservation Options



Tree mats were used for equipment access during construction of the Fort Ward picnic shelter pathway



Air spading may be used to loosen compacted soil, to expose tree roots, and to keep critical root systems intact. This application was used for construction of a sidewalk at Ewald Park.

Land disturbance can cause soil compaction and adversely affect tree root systems. A variety of tree preservation measures can be used together to protect existing trees from the impacts of construction. A tree preservation plan as required by the City's Landscape Guidelines will be developed when a final playground site is chosen.

- ❖ Use of tree mats to facilitate construction access through tree preservation areas
- ❖ Prune and elevate limbs to remove dead wood and to provide equipment clearance
- ❖ Install and maintain tree protection fencing throughout the duration of construction
- ❖ Limit disturbance such as grading and excavation within structural root zones
- ❖ Conduct root pruning and air spading where recommended
- ❖ In sensitive areas, limit surface excavation, and use bridging techniques or pervious materials to protect surface roots

Playground Relocation – Stormwater Management Options



Permeable pavement BMP under construction at the Fort Ward picnic shelter pathway

Stormwater management is required and will be determined when a playground location is chosen. As applicable, recommendations from the Fort Ward Drainage Master Plan will be incorporated into the playground stormwater plan. Stormwater management options include:

- ❖ Pervious surfaces (porous playground surfacing, permeable pavers, Flexi-pave, etc.)
- ❖ Establish and maintain new Forest Conservation areas in the park for native species
- ❖ Install and maintain new bioretention basins/rain gardens
- ❖ Install and maintain level spreaders (in low traffic areas of turf cover)
- ❖ Impacts to trees and cultural resources will be closely evaluated when selecting the stormwater management method

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground



Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground May/June 2022 Community Feedback



Concerns

- ❖ Location is in the proximity of the rifle trench
- ❖ Playground is closer to the park road and more visible

Opportunities

- ❖ Appears to have less impacts to natural resources
- ❖ Park restrooms are within walking distance via the park road
- ❖ Existing water source
- ❖ Construction access

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

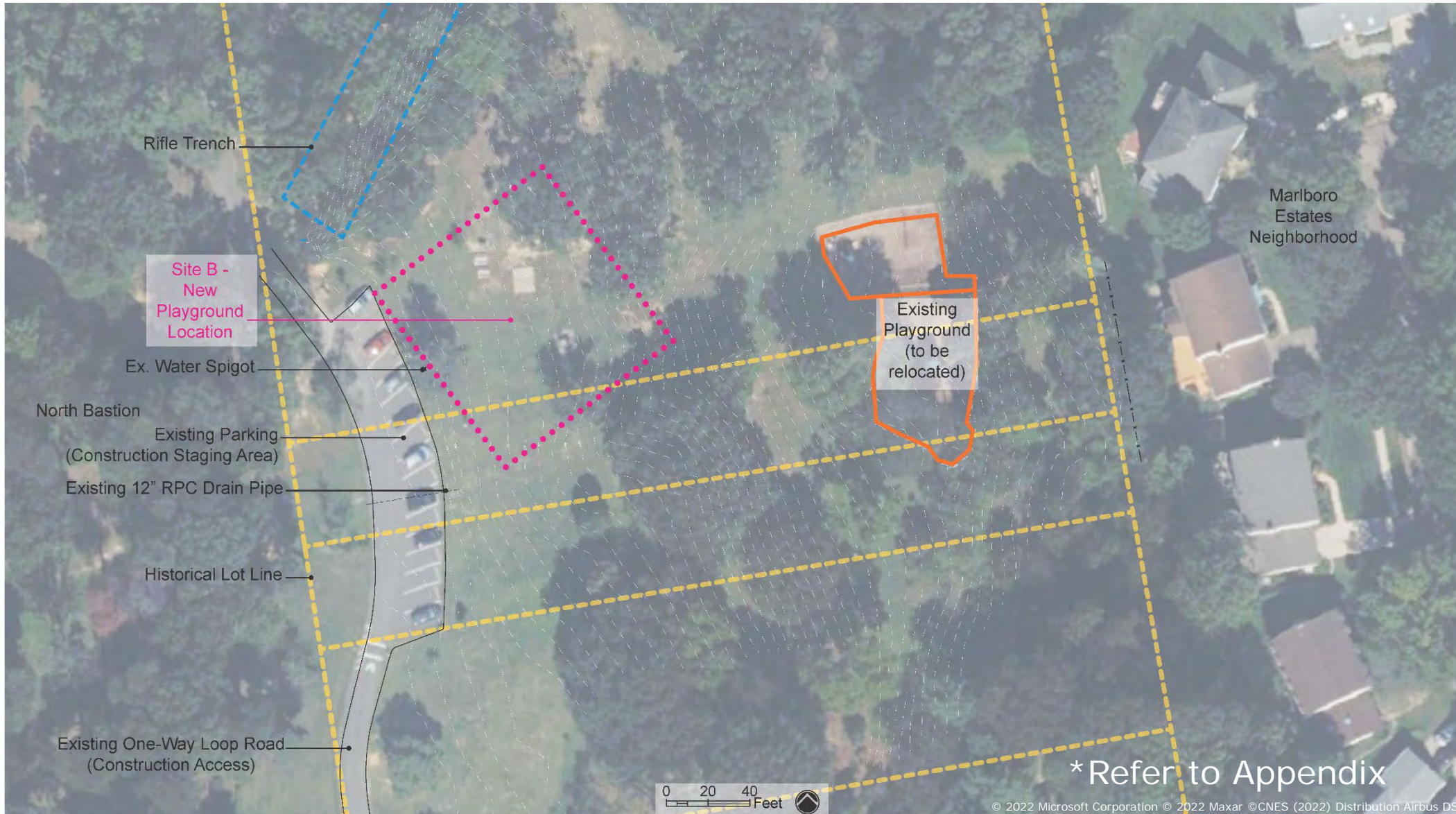
Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground

Topography/Drainage – Slopes range from 10% to 14%



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground *Cultural Resources**

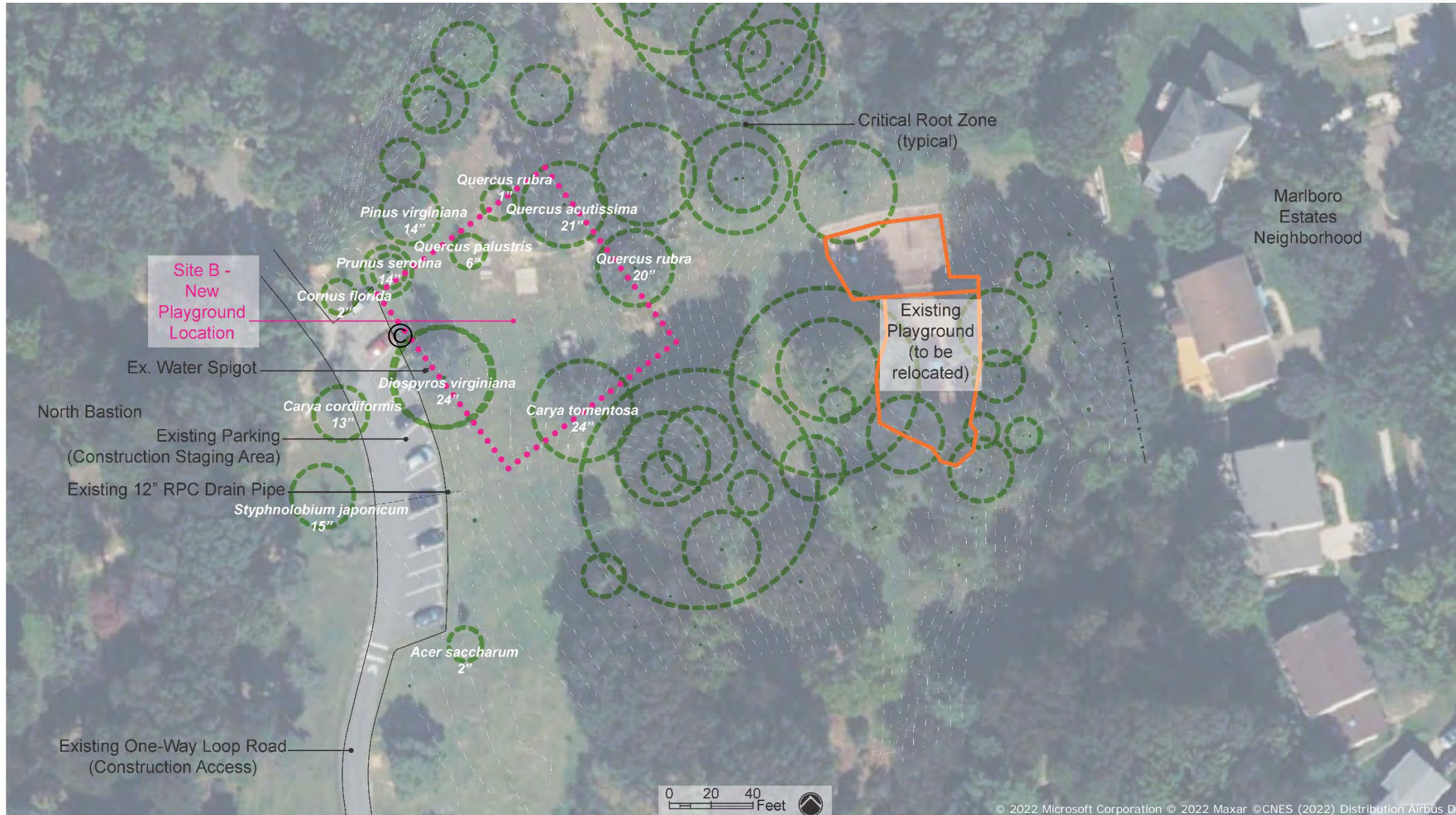


*Refer to Appendix

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground

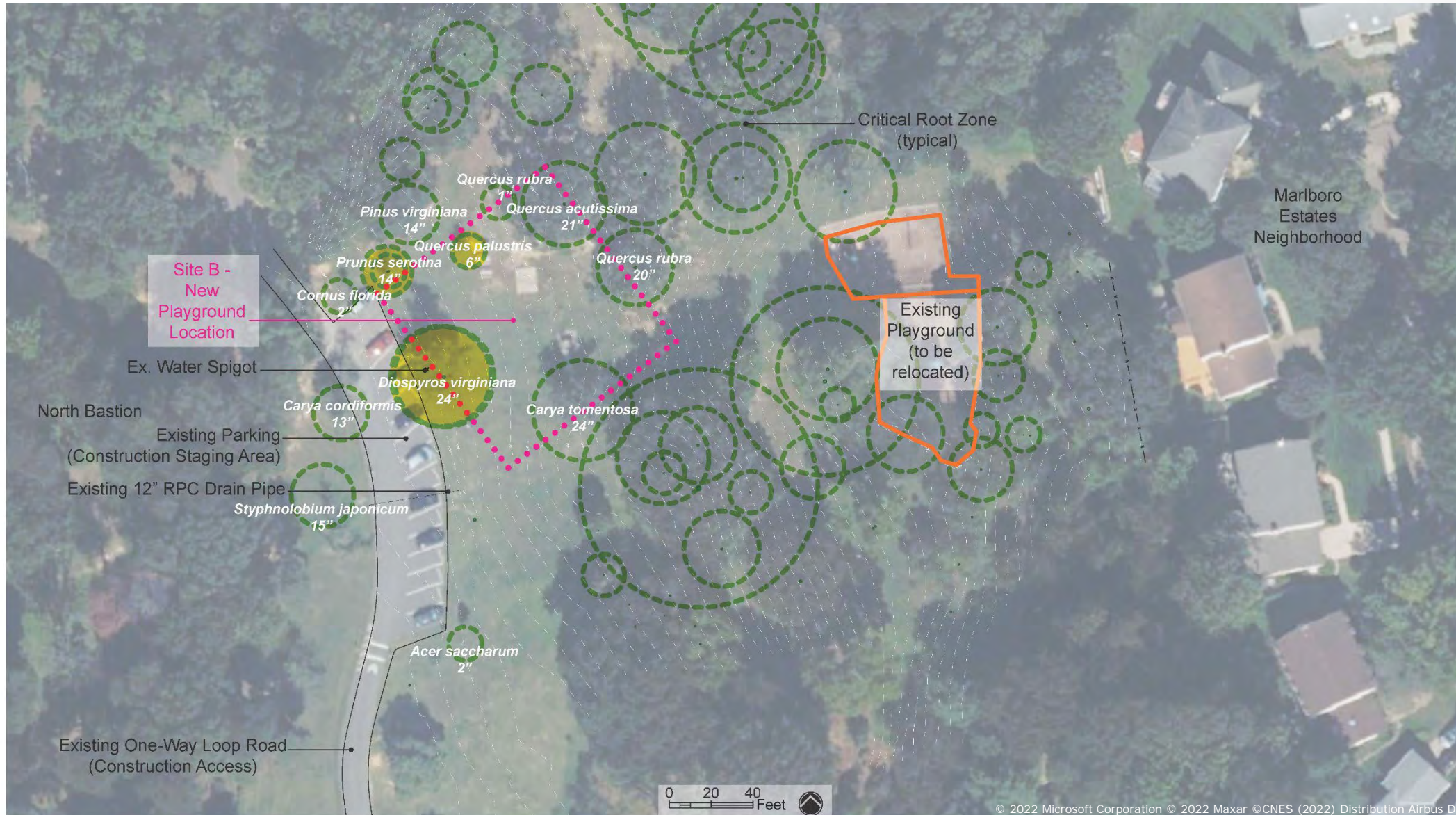
Natural Resources – Critical Root Zones



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground

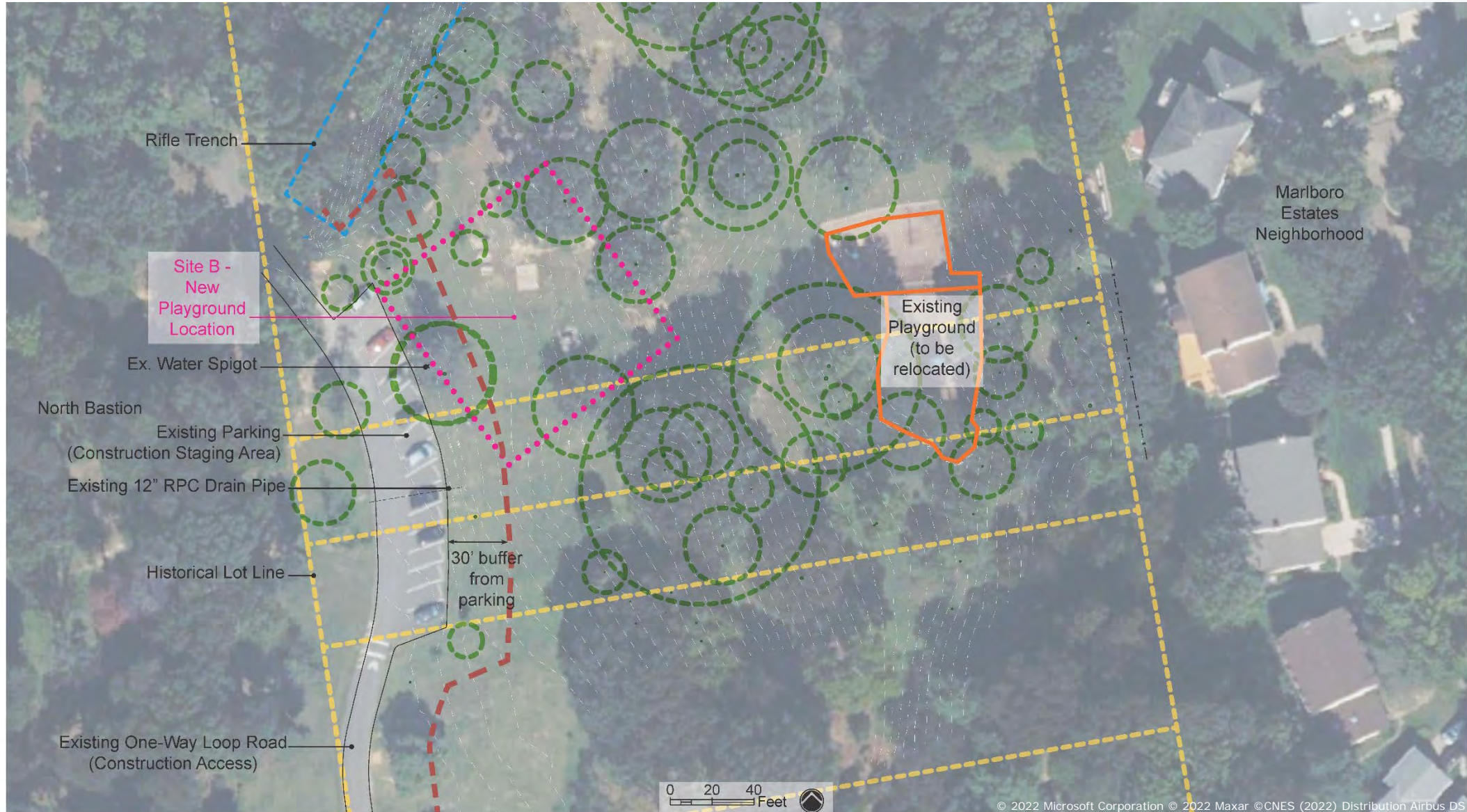
Natural Resources – Trees likely Impacted



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

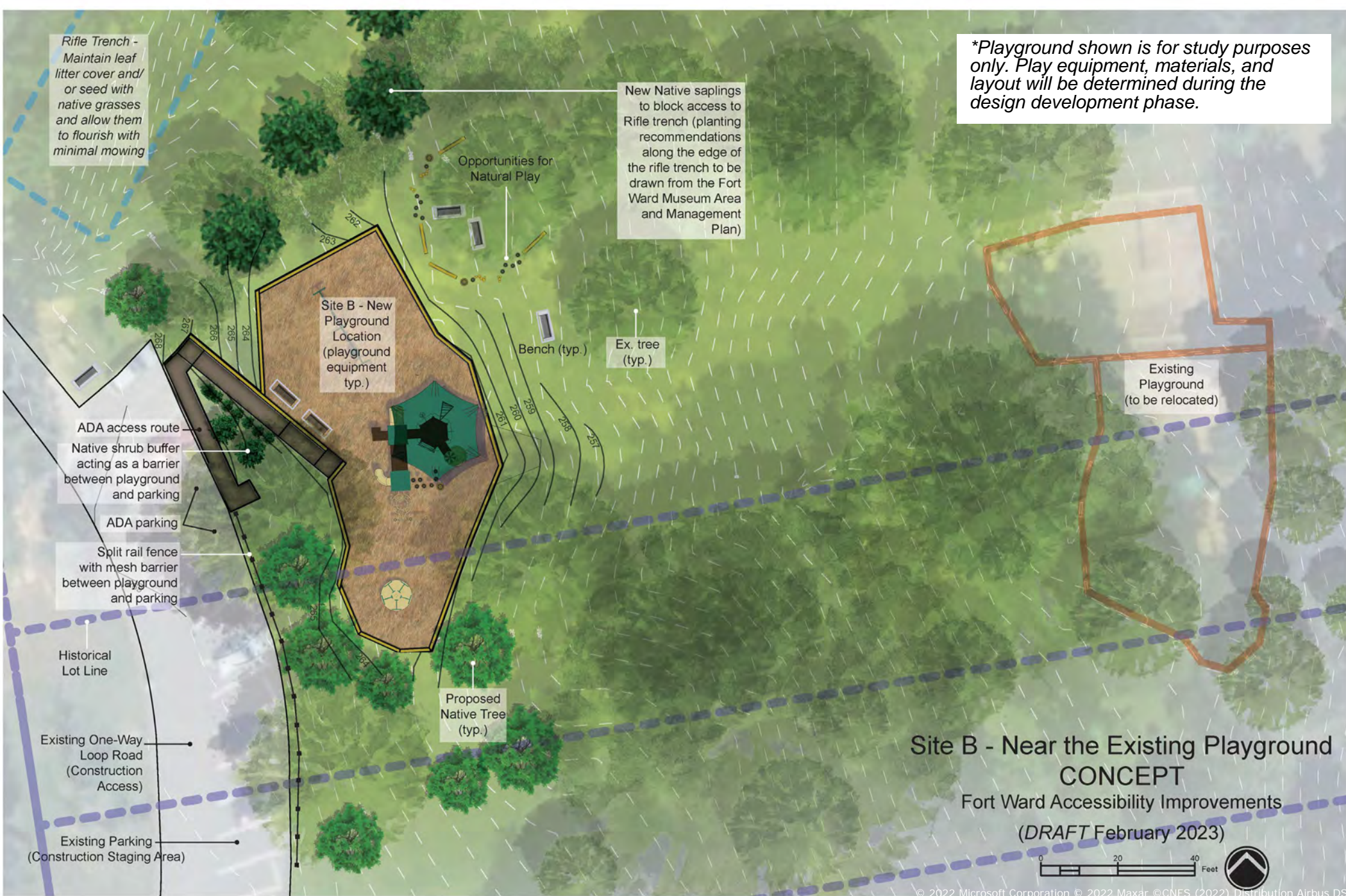
Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground

30' Buffer from parking & park loop road





Site B, Near the Existing Playground Conceptual Study



Rifle Trench -
Maintain leaf
litter cover and/
or seed with
native grasses
and allow them
to flourish with
minimal mowing

New Native saplings
to block access to
Rifle trench (planting
recommendations
along the edge of
the rifle trench to be
drawn from the Fort
Ward Museum Area
and Management
Plan)

**Playground shown is for study purposes
only. Play equipment, materials, and
layout will be determined during the
design development phase.*

Site B - New
Playground
Location
(playground
equipment
typ.)

Existing
Playground
(to be relocated)

ADA access route
Native shrub buffer
acting as a barrier
between playground
and parking

ADA parking

Split rail fence
with mesh barrier
between playground
and parking

Historical
Lot Line

Existing One-Way
Loop Road
(Construction
Access)

Existing Parking
(Construction Staging Area)

Proposed
Native Tree
(typ.)

Bench (typ.)

Ex. tree
(typ.)

Opportunities for
Natural Play

Site B - Near the Existing Playground
CONCEPT
Fort Ward Accessibility Improvements
(DRAFT February 2023)



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FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground

Conceptual Study– Perspective A



PERSPECTIVE LOCATION - PLAN VIEW



A - Southeast view

**Playground shown is for study purposes only. Play equipment, materials, and layout will be determined during the design development phase.*

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site B, Near the Existing Playground

Conceptual Study– Perspective B



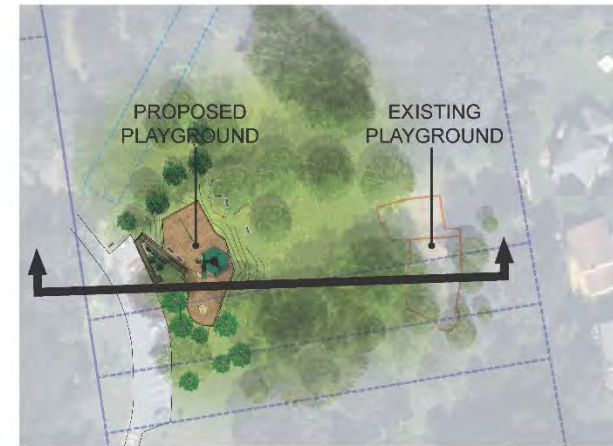
B - Northeast view

**Playground shown is for study purposes only. Play equipment, materials, and layout will be determined during the design development phase.*

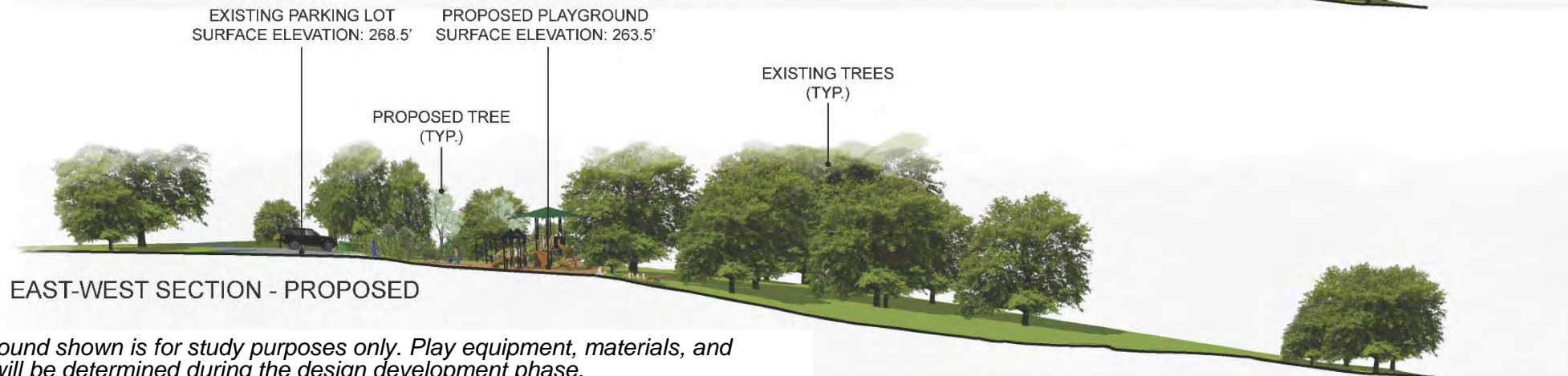
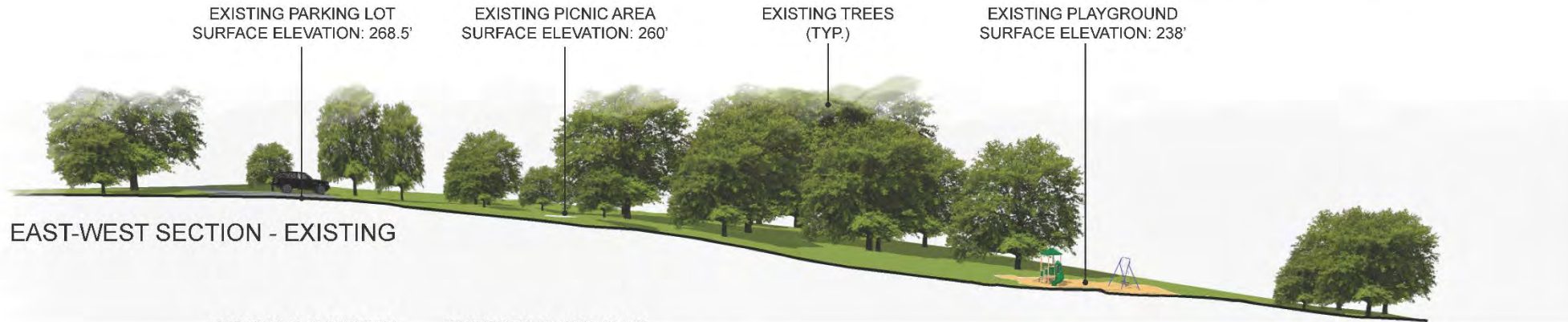
Site B - Near Existing Playground Sections

Fort Ward Accessibility Improvements

(DRAFT February 2023)



SECTION LOCATION - PLAN VIEW



Site B, Near the Existing Playground Conceptual Study - Section Elevations

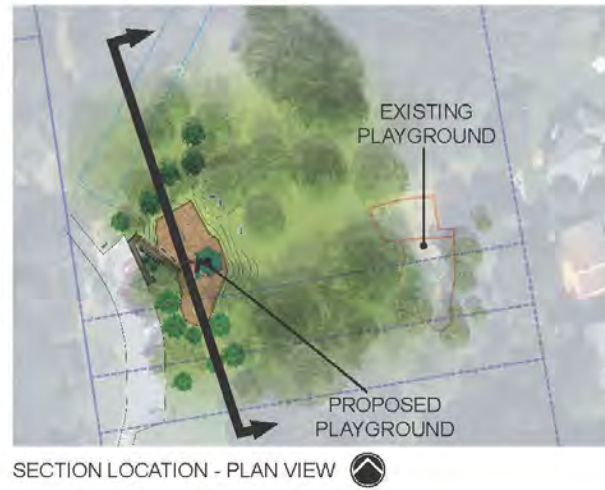


**Playground shown is for study purposes only. Play equipment, materials, and layout will be determined during the design development phase.*

Site B - Near Existing Playground Sections

Fort Ward Accessibility Improvements
(DRAFT February 2023)

**Playground shown is for study purposes only. Play equipment, materials, and layout will be determined during the design development phase.*



Site B, Near the Existing Playground Conceptual Study – Section Elevations



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater





FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

May/June 2022 Community Feedback

Concerns

- ❖ Location is on land formerly owned by the Peters and Jackson families
- ❖ Playground is less visible from the park road
- ❖ Construction access
- ❖ Impacts to trees

Opportunities

- ❖ Park restrooms are located within the area
- ❖ Existing water source
- ❖ Proximity to amphitheater and picnic areas
- ❖ Parking availability

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

Topography/Drainage – Slopes range from 6% to 8%



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

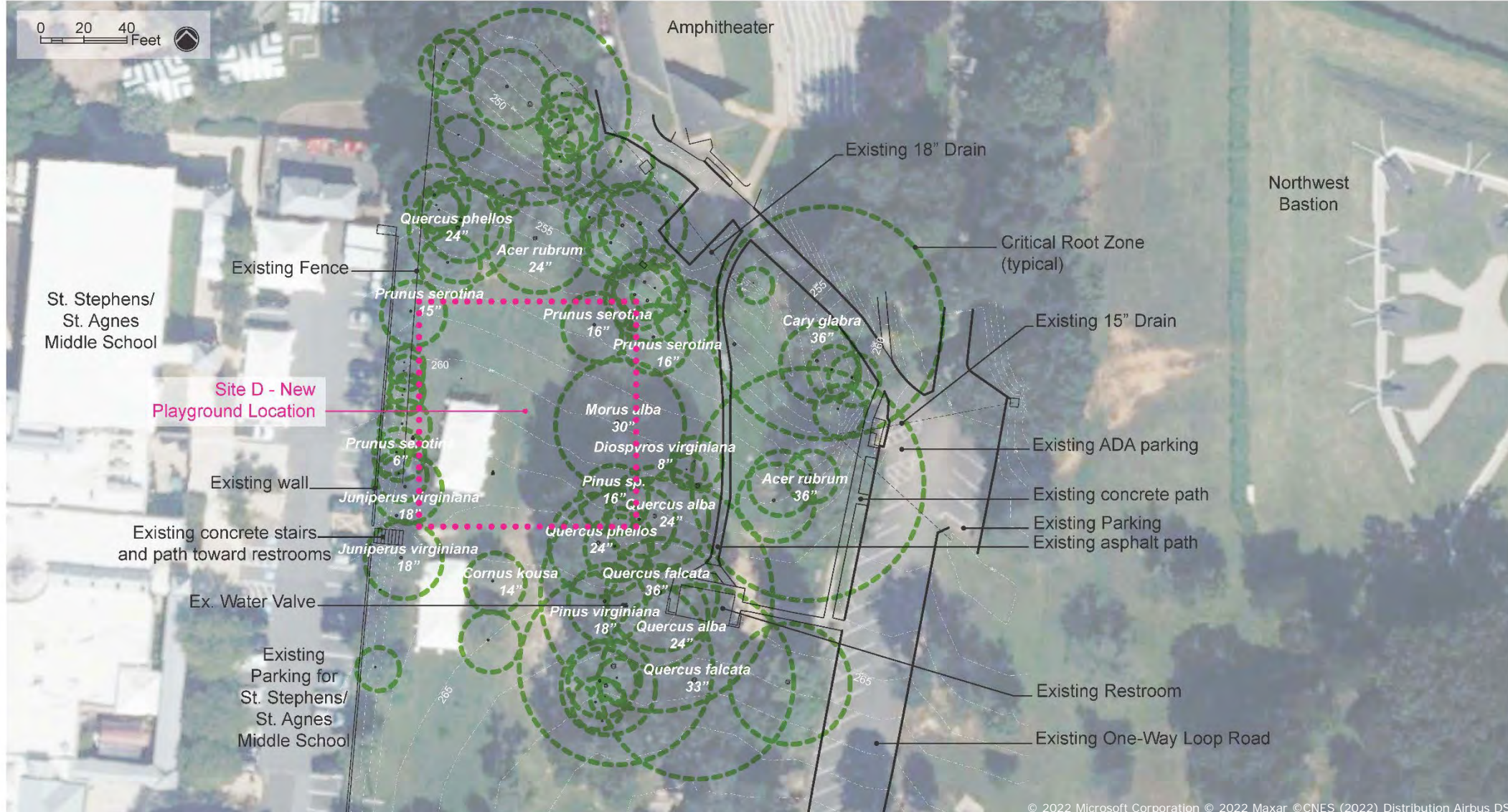
*Cultural Resources**



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

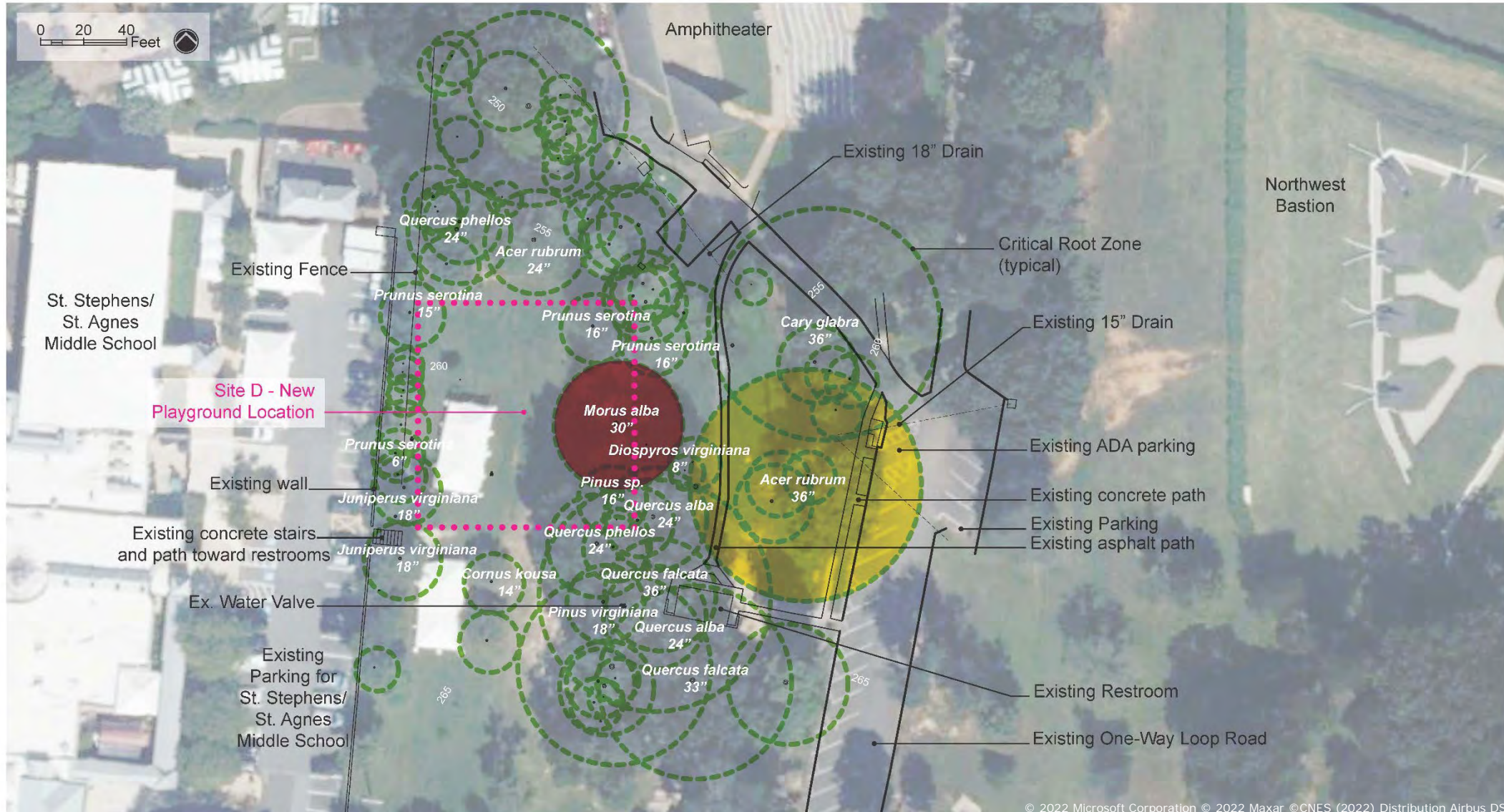
Natural Resources - Critical Root Zones



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

Natural Resources – Trees likely Impacted



FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

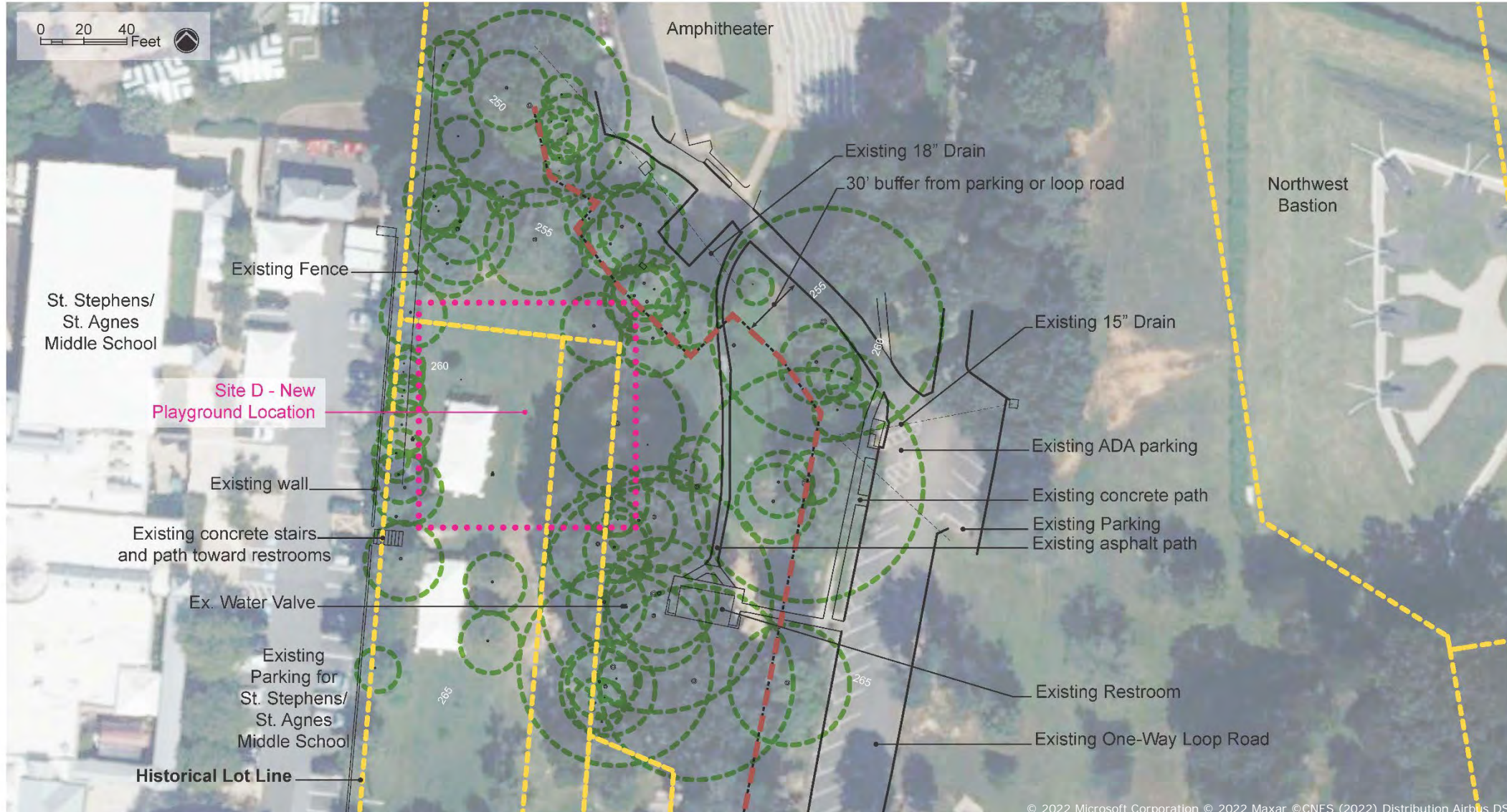
Construction Access

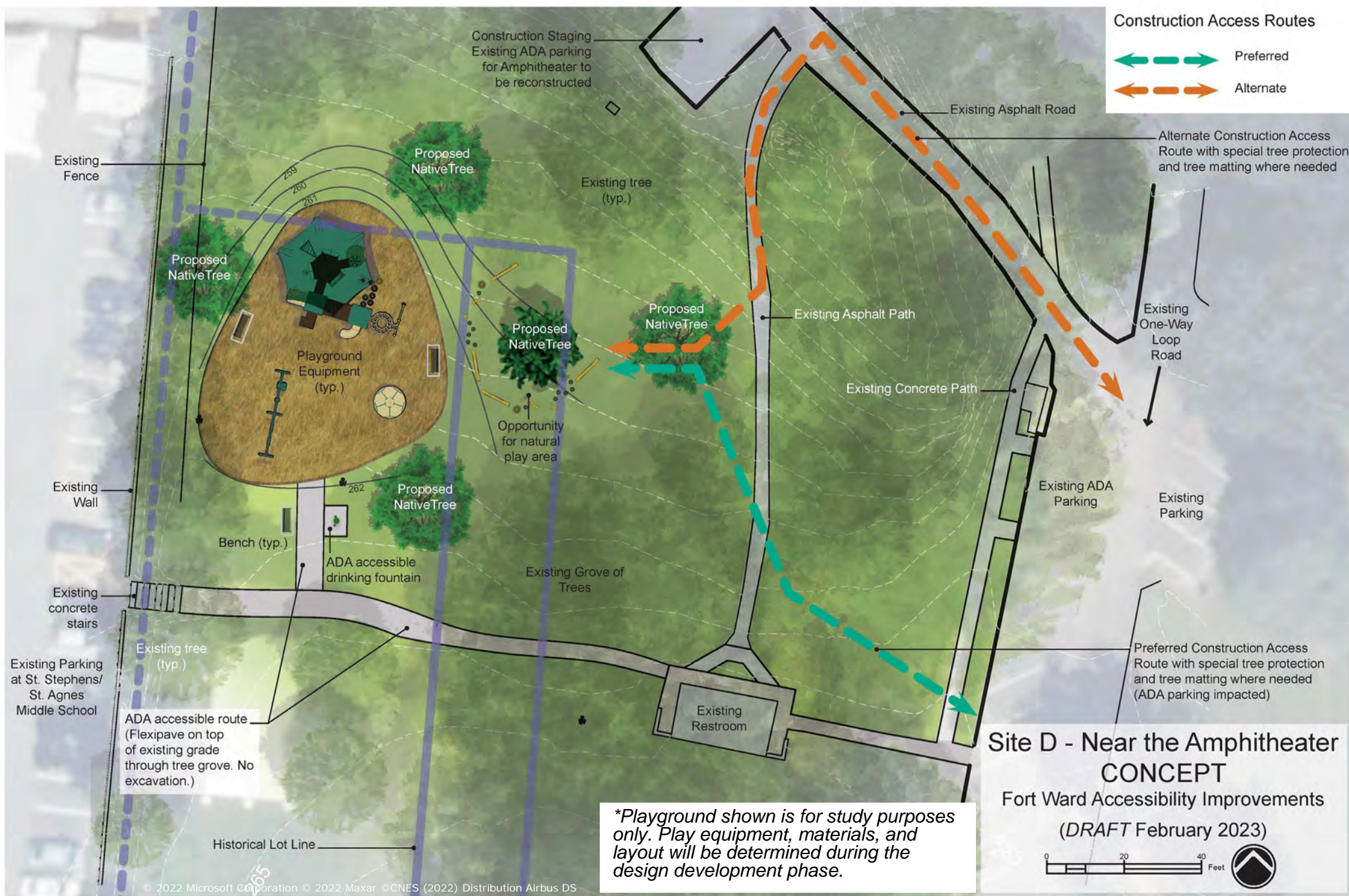


FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

30' Buffer from parking & park loop road



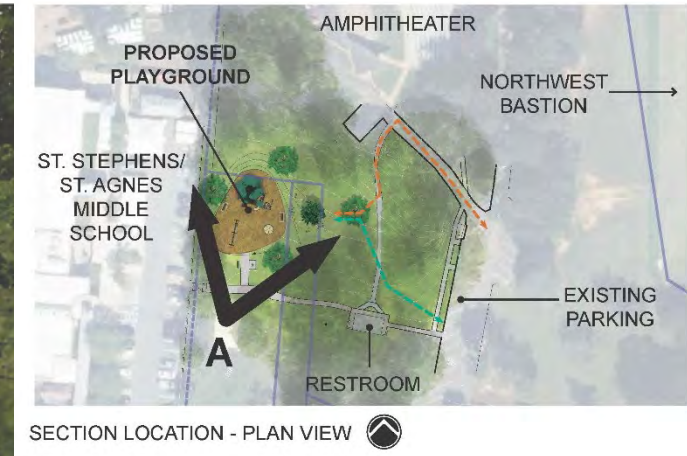


Site D, Near the Amphitheater Conceptual Study

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

Conceptual Study – Perspective A

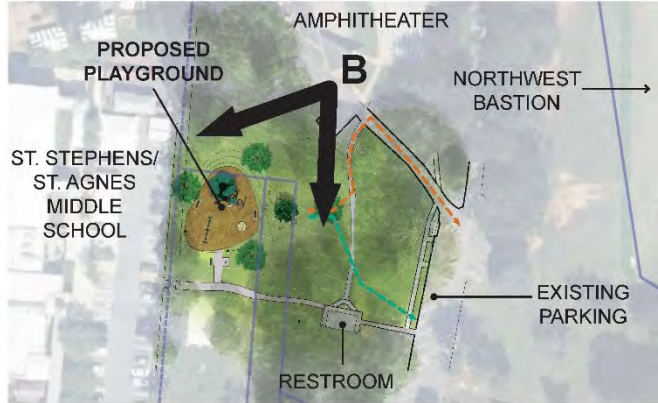


A - Northeast view

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation - Site D, Near the Amphitheater

Conceptual Study – Perspective B



SECTION LOCATION - PLAN VIEW

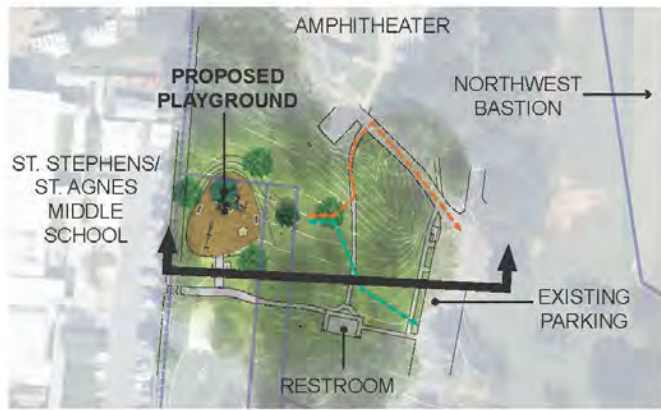


B - Southwest view

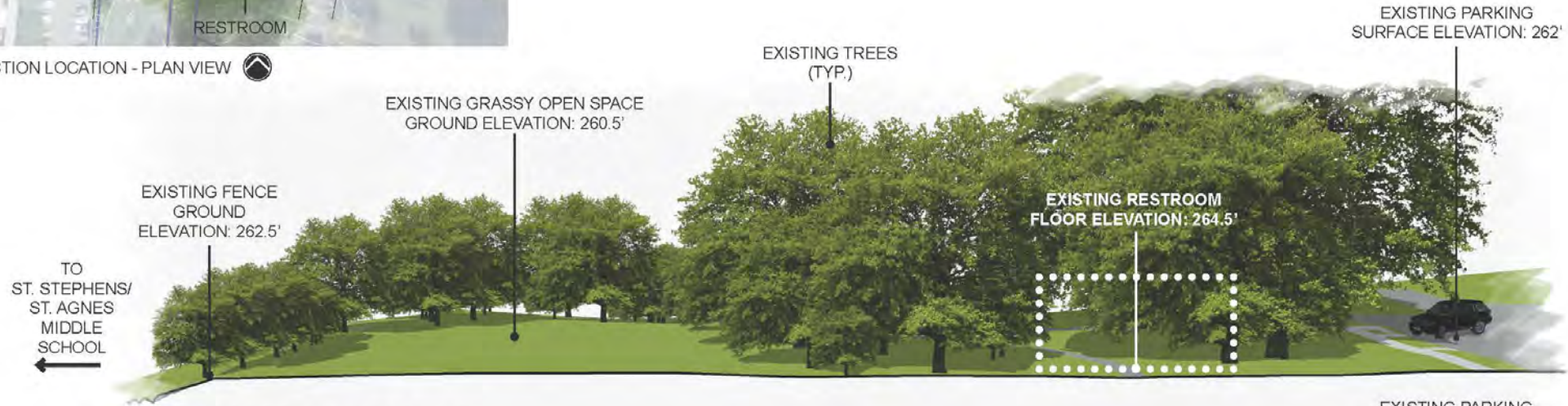


Site D - Near the Amphitheater
 Sections
 Fort Ward Accessibility Improvements
 (DRAFT February 2023)

Site D, Near the Amphitheater
 Conceptual Study – Section Elevations



SECTION LOCATION - PLAN VIEW



EAST-WEST SECTION - EXISTING



EAST-WEST SECTION - PROPOSED



Site D - Near the Amphitheater Sections Fort Ward Accessibility Improvements (DRAFT February 2023)

Site D, Near the Amphitheater Conceptual Study – Section Elevations



SECTION LOCATION - PLAN VIEW

EXISTING GRASSY OPEN SPACE
GROUND ELEVATION: 260.5'

EXISTING TREES
(TYP.)

EXISTING RESTROOM
FLOOR ELEVATION: 264.5'

TO THE
AMPHITHEATER
←

NORTH-SOUTH SECTION - EXISTING

PROPOSED PLAYGROUND
SURFACE ELEVATION: 261.5'

EXISTING TREES
(TYP.)

PROPOSED
TREE
(TYP.)

EXISTING RESTROOM
FLOOR ELEVATION: 264.5'

PROPOSED
ACCESSIBLE ROUTE
SURFACE ELEVATION: 264'

TO THE
AMPHITHEATER
←

NORTH-SOUTH SECTION - PROPOSED

FORT WARD PARK ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Playground Relocation

Site B and Site D Conceptual Study

Community Feedback and Engagement



- **February 22, 2023:** Playground Community Meeting #4; 7 p.m.
Meeting Registration Link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_CcgDVY2kTTGkflL7zPQS2Zw
- **March 4 and 11, 2023:** Playground Community Open Houses, 10 a.m. - Noon
St. Stephens and St. Agnes Middle School, 4401 West Braddock Road

Comments and questions may be submitted through March 31, 2023

Community Comment Form: <https://www.research.net/r/JR8WR3X>

Community Engagement:

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/parks/fort-ward-park-and-museum-area-management-plan#CommunityEngagement>

Project Manager:

Judy Lo, ASLA, PLA

Principal Planner, Capital Development
Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

judy.lo@alexandriava.gov

703.746.5490



Community Comment Form
Scan QR Code



APPENDIX

- Alexandria Archaeology, Preliminary Archaeological Assessment, Fort Ward Park, Option Area B and D, January 2023