

Master Park Plan for Fellows Property

DRAFT

I. Introduction & Background

In 1999, City Council passed a resolution resolving to initiate a master planning process for each park in the City. Since then master plans have been created for Donald S. Frady Park, Cherry Hill Park, Madison Park, Roberts Park, Cavalier Trail Park, Isaac Crossman Park, Lincoln Park, West End Park, Howard E. Herman Stream Valley Park, Big Chimneys Park and Berman Park.

In 2019, the City of Falls Church purchased the property located at 604 South Oak Street. Commonly known as the Fellows Property, the property is approximately 1.9 acres nestled between Parker Avenue and Fellows Court and is across the street from Oak Street Elementary. The property previously featured the home of City resident Lydia “Betty” Fellows.

The Master Plan for Fellows Park will begin the development process for the park and will establish clear and concise plans to guide future development of the park, while serving to protect and preserve the City’s open space and natural resources.

The approved Master Park will guide the park use and development into the future.

A. Park Purpose

1. Preserve and protect natural resources
2. Provide environmental education
3. Promote environmental stewardship
4. Provide a variety of passive and limited active recreation activities for all age groups

B. Desired Future Visitor Experience

1. Visitors will be able to participate in a variety of passive and limited active recreational activities.
2. Visitors will be able to enjoy a natural park scape with passive recreation activities such as observing wildlife and the inclusion of some form of urban agriculture.
3. Visitors will be able to enjoy a natural park scape with possible limited active recreation to be explored.
 - Walking
 - Biking
 - Creative Play

4. Through the utilization of an outdoor educational venue and/or interpretative information, visitors will be able to learn more about environmental issues such as resource protection.
5. Visitors will be able to learn more about the history, importance and uses of present natural resources to the Indigenous people and early settlers of the City.
 - See [Fellows Property Master Plan Draft - Comment Matrix](#) - Category: Section B – Desired Future Visitor Experience (#5) [Page 1]

C. Park Themes

1. Neighborhood Park
2. Interpretive Park
3. Natural Resource Area

D. Property Description

As previously noted, the Fellows Property is a 1.9 acre parcel of land along South Oak Street, between Parker Avenue and Fellows Court, directly across the street from Oak Street Elementary. Structures on the property were removed in Spring of 2020. The 1.9 acre parcel is largely undeveloped with the exception of the original foundation of the Fellows home, original well and an existing storm water structure toward the back of the property. Preservation of the existing well with the intent to repurpose well water for urban agriculture or other uses. The rich variety of perennial plantings, shrubs, under-story trees and canopy trees ensure visual interest and color throughout the changing seasons. A good portion of the property is open and grass covered but there are a considerable number trees, brush, and shrubs on the property. Four exceptional mature trees on the property are designated as City Specimen Trees and are labeled. The property is also a wildlife habitat. Public access to the park is currently available from South Oak Street.

E. Park Designation

This plan describes the current resources in the park, and makes recommendations for the preservation and future development of the park. Fellows Property serves as a Neighborhood Park because of its natural beauty and the ability to enjoy a peaceful contemplative walk on the natural trail. Neighborhood Parks serve residents from the entire City. Natural Resource Areas are designated in order to conserve, protect and provide public use and enjoyment of an area rich in natural resources.

II. Description of the Conceptual Development Plan Elements

- A. New Plan Elements** (This is an ongoing list of suggestions from the community. Please understand, not all items can be accommodated in the available space.)

1. Park Access

Park access from South Oak Street is the preference from a majority of survey respondents. However access should still be included from Fellows Court and Parker Avenue.

2. Interpretative Signage

The fact that the park is a Natural Resource Area and abundant with wildlife make it an excellent location for informal environmental education. Interpretive signs will be added to provide information about wildlife habitats, natural resources and the historical value these resources had to Indigenous people and early settlers of the City.

The extent of the signage should be designed so as not to overwhelm the natural feel of the property. This should be considered in the number, placement and material used.

3. Benches and Picnic Tables

A few benches could be placed within the park for park users to sit and enjoy the contemplative nature of the park. Additional benches and tables suitable for picnicking, completing homework, or playing board games could also be included.

4. Pathway(s)

Pathway(s) to enable users to access desired locations within the park. Material to be used for pathways is still to be determined. Possible pathway options include:

- A. Pathway to enable access to areas within the park.
- B. Pathway to allow visitors to walk the full perimeter of the park.

5. Nature Trail

A nature trail highlighting particular uses and historical value of natural resources that are native to our region.

6. Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture comes in a variety of forms. One or more forms of urban agriculture could be included in the park. Possibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Fruit trees
- Community garden
- Planting of plants that attract pollinators
- See [Fellows Property Master Plan Draft - Comment Matrix](#) – Category: II – Description of the Conceptual Development Plan, A) New Elements – 7. Urban Agriculture [Page 5-7]

7. Natural Play Area

A natural playground without a traditional structure will provide children with the ability to explore and test their boundaries in a welcoming and safe space. Children will have access to a mud table, tires, lumber, pots, pans, buckets, boulders and logs. The inclusion of a natural play area will encourage children to develop an appreciation for the natural environment.

8. Equity and Accessibility

Parks are a free amenity in the community and can be enjoyed by all regardless of race, abilities, religion, sexual orientation or economic status. Any development or improvement to this property will be done so with the intention of being inclusive and implementing best ADA practices to ensure accessibility.

9. Resource Education Area

A small designated space to be used by Recreation & Parks Department and the City Schools to provide more formal environmental, wildlife and, natural resource education. If a resources education area is determined to be appropriate, it could be implemented in the master plan or added to Howard E. Herman Stream Valley Park.

10. Lighting

Lighting installed should meet Dark Sky standards to preserve the wild life habitat and limit light pollution. Possibility of increased lighting along the perimeter of the park to ensure the safety of patrons.

- See [Fellows Property Master Plan Draft - Comment Matrix](#) – Category: II – Description of the Conceptual Development Plan, A) New Elements – 11. Lighting [Page 8-9]

11. Storm Water

Mitigation of storm water by natural features. Potentially using low lying areas that collect storm water for this purpose.

- See [Fellows Property Master Plan Draft - Comment Matrix](#) – Category: II – Description of the Conceptual Development Plan, A) New Elements – 12. Storm Water [Page 9-10]

B. Enhancements

1. Trees

A through survey of all existing trees on the property will be conducted. Addition or deletion of trees will be determined as needed. Native trees will be used in the park to replace trees as needed and to maintain the canopy which features trees at a variety of heights and in various stages of growth. Tree maintenance on the existing trees will be completed as needed and as money is allocated for such work. Trees and limbs that fall will generally be left in the park to provide habitat for wildlife. The City will always protect trees in accordance with the City's current greenspace maintenance plan.

2. Shrubs and Other Greenspace

The City will always protect shrubs and greenspace in accordance with the City's current greenspace maintenance plan.

C. Open Space

The City will conserve and maintain existing parks, open space and natural resources. This park and the open space in the park will be preserved.

D. Conclusion (To be determined.)

Parks are vitally important to the community, users and the overall sustainability of the City of Falls Church. Preservation and conservation of Fellows Property is critically important to both the City and the region.

The park provides the City a unique opportunity to establish a well-managed biological habitat that can be used...

An important piece of all master plans is to engage the public. Below are the steps that shaped the development of this Master Park Plan:

- Public input survey was conducted online in May of 2020. For the Fellows Property survey results, please click [here](#).
- Public Meeting was held in November 2020. For the video recording and meeting agenda, please click [here](#). For the meeting minutes, please click [here](#).
- On January 6, 2021 Kim Haun, Arlington County's Urban Agriculture Coordinator, presented on Urban Agriculture practices during virtual meeting of the Advisory Board of Recreation and Parks. For the video recording and agenda, please click [here](#). For the meeting minutes, please click [here](#).
- On March 3, 2021 Stacey Evers, founder of Grow a Row FC and Co-Chair of the Urban Agriculture Work Group of the Fairfax Food County Council presented jointly with Cory Suter, Co-Chair of Urban Agriculture Workgroup of Fairfax County Food Council during the virtual meeting of the Advisory Board of Recreation and Parks. Their presentation highlighting the accomplishments of the Fairfax County's Urban Agriculture Work Group. For the video recording and agenda, please click [here](#). For the meeting minutes, please click [here](#).
- An onsite public meeting occurred on May 5, 2021. For the meeting agenda, please click [here](#). For the meeting minutes, please click [here](#).
- September 8, 2021- Fellows Property Master Plan First Draft presented at the Advisory Board Meeting of Recreation and Parks. For the video recording and agenda, click [here](#). For the meeting minutes, click [here](#).
- October 2021 – Fellows Property Master Plan Draft edited.

Future steps include:

- December 1, 2021 Advisory Board of Recreation and Parks meeting to review Master Plan Draft. For calendar information, please click [here](#).
- January 2022 community input meeting to review Fellows Property Master Plan.
- **Future.....**
- **Future..... Council formally adopts.....**

Some items have been removed since the development of the initial draft of the Fellows Park Master Plan. Items removed and additional items can always be added to this document. The following have been removed:

- Picnic Shelter
- Mountain Bike Pump Track
- Pond
- Kiosks and/or Markers
- Performance Area
- Dog Park
- Athletic Field
- Invasive and Problematic Plant Removal
- Certification as a Wildlife Habitat
 - For comments submitted on these items, please see page 13-16 of See [Fellows Property Master Plan Draft - Comment Matrix](#).

This is important both for the transparency of the process and the quality of the eventual Master Plan.

The City of Falls Church is committed to the letter and spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This document will be made available in alternate format upon request. Call 703-248-5077 (TTY 711).