



Chapter Five

Management Approach and Concepts

CHAPTER FIVE

Landscape Management Approach and Concepts

Introduction

In order to inform and supplement the park planning process currently being undertaken by the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), this chapter identifies the landscape planning and design issues that should be taken into consideration during the General Management Planning process. Based upon these issues and FCPA goals and objectives, this chapter also provides alternative approaches to landscape management of the White property.

FCPA General Management Planning

A General Management Plan (GMP) is a planning and management document that establishes the park's purpose and classification and management framework. A GMP documents existing site conditions and constraints, the extent and character of natural and cultural resources, any existing facilities, description and location of proposed “management zones,” demographic characteristics of potential park visitors, and recommendations for additional planning.¹ Through the course of the GMP planning process, the following FCPA management goals, objectives, and forecasted park programming needs for the White property have been identified, as have its associated interpretative, operational, and functional requirements.

Management Goals

Management goals for the White Horticultural Park have been derived from FCPA staff and consultant analysis, deed covenants associated with the sale of the property, and several public meetings that were held throughout the course of the planning process. These goals are as follows:

¹ Fairfax County Park Authority. *FCPA Park Policy Manual, Policy 103: Park Planning and Development*, 1998. Available online:
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parkpolicy/parkpolicyframe.htm>

- Respect the deed covenant, which mandates the primary use of this property as a horticultural park.
- Preserve and enhance horticultural resources. The White property is significant in both the quantity and quality of its horticultural resource collection.
- Provide public access for the enjoyment of the horticultural resources contained within the park.
- Consider impacts to neighbors. The White Horticultural Park is surrounded by established suburban residential neighborhoods. Care must be taken in the development and operation of the park to ensure that adjacent and nearby residents are not adversely affected by its presence.
- Link operation, park purpose and goals to complement the Green Spring Gardens and Hidden Oaks Nature Center missions. Both of these parks are located less than three miles from the White property and share similar resources and educational opportunities.
 - Green Springs is a 27-acre park that contains a number of demonstration gardens and educational programs designed to advance the awareness and practice of gardening in Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Historic gardens also complement the 18th century manor house that interprets the agricultural and settlement history of Fairfax County.
 - Hidden Oaks Nature Center is located within Annandale Community Park. It is surrounded by urban woodland that, together with surrounding streams, provides habitat for a variety of plant and animal species. It also contains exhibits and nature trails that complement its educational programs.

Park Programming

Programs should be horticultural in nature and geared toward both children and adults. These may include: garden tours, gardening and nature programs, and demonstrations and lectures. Arts related programs that allow artists and art students to use the gardens as an outdoor studio (i.e., painting the landscape, photography, etc.) should also be accommodated.

Interpretation

The White property represents a relatively large and undeveloped parcel with the beltway and metropolitan Washington, D.C., area. The age and size of the species of plants, their overall good health and condition, the history of the property, its landscape design, and the natural resources found on site make this a unique place worthy of preservation and interpretation. These interpretive opportunities are as follows.

Agricultural History

The White Horticultural Park offers several opportunities to interpret the history of the White property and agricultural traditions and settlement patterns common to Fairfax County that date back to the early 18th century. Once part of a much larger parcel, the land was

subsequently subdivided and used for farming until the early 20th century. The existing ca. 1876 barn on the site conveys its earlier history.

White Family History

The White's purchase of this property in 1939 initiated its transition from an agricultural to a horticultural landscape. Drawn to the site by a large oak tree, the Whites built their home, raised their family, and over the next 65 years, created the landscape that exists there today. The family's love and care of the property is further evidenced by their desire to see it become a horticultural park open to the public.

Horticultural History

This horticultural development is a key component of the site history as it conveys the cultural value of the landscape, its cultivation and stewardship, and ultimately its preservation. Don Hyatt, a shade garden and rhododendron horticultural specialist in McLean, and long time friend of Mrs. White, has stated that the White horticultural collection is significant for several reasons. This includes the lovely landscape design, the variety and size of the plants, and many rare varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas contained within the collection. Through interpretive and educational programs linked to Green Springs Garden and FCPA horticultural programs, this site offers the opportunity to convey this significance and also demonstrate environmentally sound garden techniques—many of which have been employed by the Whites themselves.

Natural History

The preservation of this site and its woodland habitat also provides opportunities to interpret natural plant communities found within the County and link these to interpretive and educational programs found at the Hidden Oaks Nature Center.

Operations/Maintenance

The White Horticultural Park will require a horticultural maintenance plan that is manageable by FCPA staff. It is anticipated that the park's hours of operation will be similar to those at Green Springs (grounds open from dawn to dusk; gates locked by 7:00 p.m. during the summer months and by 5:00 p.m. during the winter months). It is also anticipated that the perimeter of the park will be fenced for security, with points identified for designated access. It is possible that an on-site/resident caretaker will be responsible for management of the property.

Functional/Use Requirements:

Based upon forecasted park programming, interpretation, and operations, the following functional/use requirements have been identified:

- Designation of horticultural preservation areas to ensure that the most sensitive resources are appropriately maintained and preserved for public enjoyment.
- Development of educational and interpretive programs (as discussed above), possibly supplemented with interpretive signage, displays, and/or exhibits.

- Preservation of the quiet and contemplative environment to provide visitors with the opportunity to fully enjoy the natural environment and views afforded by the park.
- Enhancement of natural features, such as the pond, for interpretive, educational, and ecological purposes.
- Management of stormwater to ensure that new uses do not adversely impact the existing hydrologic systems on the property or within the larger watershed.
- Development of the following features in order to accommodate the site program:
 - Vehicular access road providing park ingress/egress. Safety and maintenance vehicles will require access to the buildings.
 - Parking area accommodating a minimum of 25 vehicles. A standard size turnaround will be necessary at the parking area.
 - Pedestrian access from neighborhood sidewalks.
 - Pedestrian walks that provide links between and among key areas/features within the park.
 - Pedestrian trails that provide access to the woodland areas.
 - Visitor welcome/orientation area; possibly including visitor amenities such as restrooms, drinking fountain, etc.
 - Maintenance and utility area for safe and dry on-site storage of equipment and supplies (riding mowers, Cushman-type vehicles, etc.).
 - Composting area may also be needed.

Planning and Design Considerations

This section identifies landscape planning and design opportunities and constraints that should be taken into consideration during the planning process as a result of field investigations undertaken in support of this management plan. It also identifies design parameters and guidelines established by FCPA, in accordance with the *FCPA Policy Manual, Strategic Plan, and Natural Resource Management Plan*, concerning park development.

Natural Resources

In its role as the primary steward of Fairfax County's natural resources, FCPA is responsible for managing resources on parklands in order to retain representative species and communities, maintain ecological processes, and protect rare or unusual resources. As this management plan has identified, the woodland communities represent tree species associated with an oak-hickory forest, including northern red oaks, black oaks, scarlet oaks, white oaks,

chestnut oaks, and all hickories, as well as a variety of associated tree species and understory shrubs. These woodland areas provide much needed bird and animal habitat in a predominantly suburban environment, and should be protected to the greatest extent feasible.

Horticultural Resources

As this Landscape Management Plan has identified, there are many rare and significant ornamental woody plant species found within the park. These horticultural resources are what make this park special and provide opportunities to create a lovely open space and gardens to be enjoyed by the public. Park programming must balance the needs of preservation and maintenance of these resources with their public access and enjoyment. Opportunities exist to further enhance and/or expand these resources through park development and programming. It is important to recognize that this park will require regular and specialized labor to maintain the health and attractiveness of the horticultural resources. Volunteer support will be key and skilled staff may need to be allocated to the site. Further studies concerning the identification of rare, threatened or endangered native species may also be necessary prior to undertaking site development.

Invasive Species

Non-native invasive plant species within the White Horticultural Park have been identified as a result of this study. Recommendations regarding their control and removal are contained in Chapter Four. The FCPA Natural Resource Management Plan identifies the threat posed by non-native invasive plants in degrading native habitats and reducing plant and wildlife diversity and abundance. As this plan calls for the development of a Park Authority policy addressing native plants and the planting, cultivation, and removal of invasive plants on parkland, recommendations contained within this report may need to be integrated into, and if necessary adapted to, the larger FCPA policy once it is developed.

Cultural Resources

In its role as the primary steward of Fairfax County's cultural resources, FCPA is responsible for preserving and protecting the site's significant cultural resources. These include the ca. 1876 barn and the White residence, as well as the gardens and horticultural resources contained within them. Opportunities exist to adaptively reuse these resources to accommodate the park program. Both the barn and the residence may require modifications for public use to ensure structural soundness, code compliance and universal access. If these resources are reused, their overall character and integrity should be respected. The hill in the upper garden is also a landscape feature of interest, as it is the location of an old quarry site. Further research should be undertaken and its interpretative potential identified and integrated into the park's program, where appropriate.

Wildlife Habitat

As mentioned earlier, the 13-acre White property provides much needed and relatively rare wildlife habitat in an increasingly suburbanizing landscape. While development of this Landscape Management Plan did not include an inventory or assessment of wildlife populations, a significant bird population was observed during the field inventory. The FCPA Natural Resource Management Plan identifies several tools to assess wildlife populations, including a List of Indicator Bird Species that provides an efficient and cost-effective tool to

identify key bird species and what their abundance may suggest about habitat change or other environmental factors. Extensive research data on birds is readily available and some bird species can be an effective indicator of environmental health. It is recommended that a wildlife assessment be conducted within the White Horticultural Park in order to best guide management practices on the property.

Water Quality

In its role as the primary steward of Fairfax County's natural resources, the Park Authority is also responsible for preserving and restoring aquatic environments, including water habitat quality, which provide for the reproduction, growth and survival of appropriate aquatic life. In addition to protecting water quality through mitigation of stormwater runoff from newly developed areas within the park, there are opportunities to enhance the water quality and aquatic habitat contained by the small spring-fed pond. This feature also has the potential to be a key horticultural resource through its installation of aquatic plants.

Walks and Trails

There are several existing informal (grass and earthen) paths located on the property that accommodate access to and through the gardens and woodland, and several more formal (brick) paths surrounding the residence. However, these walks and trails are not part of an integrated network. The opportunity exists to link these paths together to access key features and create a more continuous experience around the perimeter of the park.

Accessibility

In accordance with FCPA park policy, walks and trails should provide accessibility for all populations by complying with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and other legislative mandates to the extent feasible under site constraints. Based upon the park's educational and interpretive program, it is expected that pedestrian walks and trails that provide access into the park and connect key features (parking areas, visitor contact station, residence, gardens, demonstration areas, etc.) be ADA compliant. Woodland trails accessing key interpretive features or exhibits should also be ADA compliant. Woodland trails that do not access key features and are intended to be more rugged in character, should be designated as "backcountry" trails and do not need to be ADA compliant.

Sustainable/Best Management Practices

In accordance with FCPA park policy, new facilities should be designed and developed in such a way as to maximize their life expectancy. Consideration should also be given to the materials chosen for new development in order to ensure that they are environmentally sensitive and sustainable. Recommendations concerning sustainable management practices to preserve horticultural resources and rehabilitate declining horticultural resources and plant communities are discussed previously in Chapter Four of this report.

Adjacent Property Owners

Opportunities exist for the White Horticultural Park to provide community open space that can be viewed as a collective amenity to the surrounding neighborhoods. In order to be a

good neighbor, development and programming of the White Horticultural Park must respect the privacy and security concerns of adjacent property owners.

Community Input and Preferences

Community input and preferences regarding park programming and development has been solicited and gathered through several public meetings and workshops as part of the GMP planning process. This input must be considered throughout the course of this study and incorporated into the final plan.

Development Constraints

There are several constraints associated with park use and development in addition to those mentioned above. These also need to be considered in the planning process:

- Horticultural resources. The horticultural resources contained within the White property, particularly the extensive collection of rare rhododendrons and azaleas contained within the Upper and Lower Gardens, constitute a development constraint. These resources need to be preserved in order to protect the significance and value of the park to the citizens of Fairfax County. Use and development of these resources should not detract from the quality of these collections, either directly or indirectly.
- Deed restrictions. There are several use restrictions associated with the property deed. These include provisions that:²
 - The property shall only be used primarily as a horticultural park and shall not be used for golf or equestrian activities and athletic fields.
 - The residence may be used for park-related purposes such as a museum or visitor center. The residence may also be rented for residential use so long as the revenue derived from it is used for park purposes.
- Vehicular access points. There are five roads that lie adjacent to or terminate at the White property line, and which could provide vehicular access to the site, refer to Figure 1-2. These include Princess Anne Lane, Rolfs Road, Kerns Road, Goldsboro Court, and Horseman Road. [Note: FCPA is examining these alternatives as part of the master plan process. This plan only considers impact to horticultural resources at each entrance alternative].
- Emergency Access: Emergency vehicle access into the site is also required. According to County regulations, an 18' wide paved access road, with less than 6% slope, must be located within 100' of the structures. If a turn-around area is necessary, emergency access vehicles (fire trucks) require a minimum 48' outside turning radius. If the current driveway will provide this turn-around, it will need to be widened.

² Special Warranty Deed with Retained Life Estate by and between Margaret K. White (Grantor) to Fairfax County Park Authority (Grantee), October 1, 1999.

- Slopes. While the topography of the park is generally flat to gently rolling, there are a few areas of the landscape where the slopes exceed 15%. These are located on the east side of the property near the entry to the existing driveway, and on the northeast side of the property, just east of the upper garden. Unless absolutely necessary, development within these areas should be limited to mitigate the need for regrading and the required woodland clearing associated with cut and fill operations.
- Buffers. Based upon FCPA park policy guidelines, a 50' buffer is required between new park development and the park property line in order to mitigate conflicts with adjacent properties. In most areas, the existing woodlands provide this buffer. A vegetative buffer will need to be established along the southwest boundary of the park.

Landscape Management Approach Alternatives

Based upon the management goals, programming requirements, interpretation opportunities, operational and functional requirements, and planning and design considerations identified above, three alternative approaches to landscape management and development within the White Horticultural Park have been identified. These alternatives are described in more detail below and are illustrated by conceptual graphics, see Figures 5-1 through 5-3.

Concept One: Minimize physical change to property and provide minimal site management

- Operations:
 - Hours of operation: Daily 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 - User experience would be short-term, self-directed, and casual during limited hours. No visitor support facilities (i.e. water fountain, restrooms) or on-site staff.
 - Site management/maintenance supported by volunteers.
 - During peak bloom season, limited, scheduled, self-guided garden tours provided.
 - Proposed parking spaces: 25 spaces
 - Projected Average Daily Users: Up to 30/day
- Entire house remains as a caretaker's residence only, with no public use. An on-site/resident caretaker will have limited responsibility for management of the property.
- An interpretive kiosk located at the edge of the field becomes a point of orientation for visitors and captures the views from the house.
- Existing footpaths and trails are cleared of debris and maintained for unprogrammed visitor access.
- Great lawn area is preserved as open space or meadow.

- Benches are placed near trails and along the edge of the lawn and forest for resting and contemplation.
- Small interpretive signs are installed along the trails and pathways.
- Barn structure is stabilized and preserved, but public use/access is not provided.
- Non-native and invasive plant species are removed and managed to prevent further infestation.
- Perimeter fence is installed. Gates are added at key points for controlled access to the property.
- Small maintenance/equipment storage building is constructed in the small parking area behind barn.
- Vegetative screening is added along the southern border.
- Existing gardens are maintained with volunteer help, but not expanded.

