



FCPA- Resident Curator Program  
Margaret White Gardens- Application Evaluation  
**Frequently Asked Questions**



**Q: An application for the curatorship of White Gardens is currently under review by Park Authority and Resident Curator Program staff. What is the evaluation process and what are the opportunities for public input?**

A: One application is under consideration by the RCP evaluation team for curatorship of the White Gardens house and barn. This application is not for curatorship of the gardens in the park. The application is available for review on the [White Gardens Webpage](#).

In accordance with the program's procedures, an evaluation team consisting of relevant Park Authority and County staff was convened to lead a series of meetings over a 30- day public comment period. These include working meetings of the evaluation team, which are open to the public to observe, as well as a public hearing during which the applicant shares a presentation with opportunity for public questions and comments. Written questions and comments were accepted via [parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov) during the 30-day public comment period ending on April 13, 2022.

A virtual public hearing was held on March 29, 2022. Additional meetings of the RCP evaluation team to review and discuss the application were held on March 2 and April 6, 2022. Recordings of these meetings are available [here](#).

The 30-day public comment period has been extended through **May 13, 2022**. Members of the public are asked to email questions and comments to [parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov). Once the public comment period closes, the evaluation team will reconvene to score the application using the program's criteria and forward its recommendation to the Park Authority Board for review. If selection of the curator is made, the leasing process begins, which consists of a Board of Supervisors public hearing before final approval.

In accordance with the program's procedures, proposals are evaluated using the following criteria: proposed use and public benefit/access, rehabilitation plan, experience and qualifications, overall proposal organization and presentation, and public response.

**Q: Is the White Gardens house designated as historic?**

A: Yes. The White Gardens house is a two-story brick residence designed by D.C. architect Joe Harry Lapish and built in 1939. The house was designated historic in 2018 when it was approved by the Fairfax County History Commission for listing on the [County's Inventory of Historic Sites](#) (IHS). The house exemplifies the cultural, economic, political, and historic heritage of the county, while serving as a visual feature of community identity. The house retains many of its character-defining features, including decorative brick segmental arches over windows, enclosed wrap-around porch addition, U-shaped wood staircase with decorative wood railing, and original wood chair rails, baseboards and crown moldings. Properties listed on the County's IHS are eligible for inclusion in the County's Resident Curator Program (RCP).



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**Q: Does the deed and Master Plan allow for a resident curatorship on the property?**

A: The John C. and Margaret K. White Horticultural Park Master plan from 2006 enumerates the goals and objectives of the park, as primarily a horticulture park. These include preserving and enhancing the horticultural resources, ensuring that sensitive resources are appropriately maintained and preserved and promoting stewardship, educational, and interpretive opportunities, all to produce a quality, passive user experience. The deed, also outlined in the Master Plan, allows the house to be rented for residential use if any revenue produced is used for horticultural park purposes. Under a residential curator lease, investments made by the curator go directly toward improvements to the leased historic structures, with no revenue accrued. Residential curatorship of the house and barn is not to interfere with the current and future natural resource management or public use of the park as outlined in the deed and park's master plan.

**Q: What would be the role and responsibilities of a resident curator at White Gardens?**

A: The Resident Curator Program enables the County to enter into long-term leases with qualified tenants who agree to rehabilitate and maintain publicly owned historic structures in accordance with established preservation standards, while providing reasonable public access.

A resident curator lease would allow for approved use and rehabilitation of the historic structures, which in the case of White Gardens includes residential use of the house and use of the barn. The leased boundary around the structures would be kept to a minimum to not interfere with public use of the grounds, with an area designated for curator parking. In addition to fulfilling required improvements to the historic structures within the first five years of the lease, the curator is responsible for ongoing maintenance of the leased area for the duration of the lease.

In accordance with the terms of the lease, the curator is required to provide reasonable public access to the historic structures. This typically occurs in the form of an annual open house event, though there are other virtual opportunities to explore as well.

Use of the barn is to be shared with Park Authority staff in coordination with volunteer efforts.

**Q: What responsibilities would the curator have for the natural resource management of the park?  
Will the RCP evaluation team consider the applicant's skills and experience in horticulture when selecting?**

A: Curator responsibilities will not include care or maintenance of the natural resources in the park, or any concern outside of the leased curator property. The RCP evaluation team will consider the experience and qualifications of the applicant as they relate to the proposed use and rehabilitation of the house and barn.

Should the curator be interested in contributing to these broader park efforts, this would occur on a volunteer basis with oversight from the appropriate Park Authority branch, and any donation of the curator's time or resources would not count toward the curator's required investment as written into



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the lease. The existing management, oversight and operations related to the horticultural collection and to park maintenance will continue uninterrupted by the addition of a curatorship of the house and barn. Use of the barn will be designated in the lease as shared with Park Authority staff and park volunteer programs.

**Q: What improvements to the house and barn are required of the curator by the Resident Curator Program?**

A: For curatorship of the house, the program requires the curator to undertake the necessary improvements outlined in the [2021 Adjusted Treatment Plan](#). This document modifies the 2017 Treatment Plan for the property by removing improvements already made to the structure, while accounting for inflation. The total estimated project cost for the house is \$270,930.

If a prospective curator is interested in use of the barn, the curator will be required to make the priority improvements outlined in the 2021 Adjusted Treatment Plan. The total estimated project cost for the barn is \$57,296.

**Q: What improvements has the Park Authority already undertaken at the White Gardens House?**

A: The Park Authority has made numerous improvements to the house in recent years and is preparing for additional improvements to be completed in 2022. The improvements were made to prepare the house for the RCP and offer an attractive situation for curators. Maintenance since 2018 has included mold remediation, roof repairs, wallpaper removal and painting, wood window rehabilitation and weatherization, porch addition, roof repairs and HVAC replacement. Infrastructure work in 2022 will include public water and sewer connections.

**Q: How will the Resident Curator Program and its evaluation team address any additional proposals in the application which go beyond the scope of the house and barn?**

A: The applicant puts forth a detailed work plan for carrying out the tasks required for the house's rehabilitation. Similarly, a detailed work plan is presented to carry out required improvements to the barn. The proposal includes reasonable public access to these historic structures. These proposals are under consideration by the evaluation team.

The parameters of the Resident Curator Program require that when the program's evaluation team is considering an application for curatorship, it adheres to strict evaluation of these required responsibilities. Consequently, the evaluation of any additional proposals offered by applicants for improvements outside the scope of the historic structures and beyond the capacity of the RCP evaluation team, requires separate review at a later date. These proposals are not for consideration for approval under a resident curator lease.

Beyond the scope of what is required for a resident curatorship at White Gardens, the applicant proposes investment into the following: restoration of the greenhouse, contributions to parking



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improvements for visitors, an ADA facility for visitors, use of multi-media for interpretive guides and tours, and public events related to the park and the property's heritage.

Of these additional proposals, the evaluation team will consider the proposal of the current applicant to restore the greenhouse. While it is not a requirement for curatorship of the house, it is an improvement which would directly impact the house and is worthy of consideration as a significant piece of the dwelling's heritage.

The other proposed investments outlined in the application with broad impact to the park and its operation would require a separate review and public comment process at a later date. The RCP evaluation team will not consider these proposals during its evaluation and scoring of the application.

If the prospective curator is interested in participating in the natural resource maintenance efforts throughout the park, the curator will work with the appropriate branch of the Park Authority for direction and approval, on a volunteer basis.

**Q: How does the Resident Curator Program determine the length of the lease?**

A: According to the Park Authority's Enabling Legislation, the Park Authority must establish a Fair Market Rental Value (FMRV) for the property. The Resident Curator Program uses the FMRV in a formula to derive the curator's lease length, considering the additional anticipated expenses that the curator will incur each year. An adjusted FMRV is determined, using anticipated annual occupancy and maintenance costs. This reduced FMRV is divided into the total estimated cost of rehabilitating the structures to determine the length of the lease. Considering the current applicant's proposed investment into the house, barn and greenhouse, the lease would be approximately 24 years. The longest lease available through the Resident Curator Program is 29 years. Leases cannot be 30 years due to zoning regulations.

**Q: How would curatorship of the White Gardens house and barn affect public access and use of the park?**

A: By signing the RCP lease, the resident curator acknowledges the public nature of the park and existing park regulations. Unlike other sites leased through the program, the boundary of the RCP leased property at White Gardens will be kept close to the house and barn to not interfere with park operations and public use. The lease will specify shared use of the barn with Park Authority staff and in coordination with volunteer efforts. Natural resource management will continue uninterrupted, as will future volunteer opportunities. The permitting process for the public to host large events at the park will remain in place.

**Q: What is being done currently toward natural resource management at White Gardens?**

A: The natural resource management of the park falls outside of the scope of the Resident Curator Program, and as a result is handled by a separate branch of the Park Authority's Resource Management Division. Heritage Conservation Branch's Resident Curator Program staff and the Natural Resources Branch of the Resource Management Division work closely together to ensure FCPA missions and operations align and compliment the significance of White Gardens.



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The Park Authority utilizes trained professionals to conduct mowing and periodic spot treatment of invasive plants, throughout the year, as established best practices for meadow management.

Prior to the meadow installation, \$8,303 was spent on invasive plant management. Additionally, staff and volunteers from Green Springs Gardens conducted invasive plant removal around the horticultural area of the park to address invasive ivy and other species.

The Invasive Management Area (IMA) program manages invasive plants over FCPA's 25,000 acres and to find out more information about IMA, [please visit the IMA webpage](#). The IMA program is working closely with the [Tree Rescuers initiative from Plant Nova Trees](#). This is a group of volunteers interested in helping countywide to save the trees covered in invasive vines and promote the health of planted seedlings. [Please visit their webpage](#), if you are interested in volunteering or donating to save the trees in this park.

For additional information on the Ecological Restoration Plan at White Gardens, as part of the Helping Our Land Heal Program, please visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/nature/helping-our-land-heal>.

**For additional information please contact:**

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