

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Parks and Recreation
Capital Projects, Planning and Design

February 12, 2020

Secretary
U.S. Commission of Fine Arts
401 F Street NW, Suite 312
Washington, DC 20001-2728

To the Secretary:

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) requests the Commission's review of a revised master plan for Francis Field, located at 25th and N Streets, NW.

This is a revision of the "Francis Field Master Plan" plan submitted to your Commission for concept review on January 8, 2009 (CFA 22/JAN/09-04), and, after helpful suggestions from your Commission, given final approval for concept and "phase one implementation" on September 17, 2009 (CFA 17/SEP/09-8).

In its first submission DPR stated that the Master Plan "will guide the use of Francis Field for the next 10-15 years" and "will be implemented in phases as Agency resources are available."

In the ten years since phase one was implemented, it has proven to be a successful plan in terms of both utility and aesthetics.

However, changes to the field itself and to adjacent buildings have convinced DPR that an update to the Master Plan was in order to document those changes.

DPR requested in its initial 2009 submission that "future Francis Field improvements, including construction documents and specifications, be conducted at staff level."

DPR now renews that request with this submission.

Sincerely,



Peter Nohrden, ASLA

Capital Projects, Planning and Design



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Vicinity Map of Project Area

Francis Field is located in the West End neighborhood of Washington, D.C., in the 1200 block of 25th Street NW. It is located on Square 13, and within the original Pierre L'Enfant plan of 1791 for the Federal City.

It is bordered on the west by *Rock Creek Park and Parkway* of which it makes up a part. On the east, it is bordered by 25th Street NW. On the north, it is adjacent to Francis Swimming Pool, a Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) facility, the address of which is 2435 N Street. On the south it is bordered by the property lines of two private buildings, the addresses of which are 2555 and 2501 M Street NW.



Fig. 01. Location of Francis Field, overlay on basemap by D.C. Office of the Chief Technology Officer, GIS, 2017.

The green area shown in the map in Fig. 01 above represents *Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway*, a system of border parks that are part of Rock Creek Park, a unit of the National Park Service.

Site and Surrounding Area Photographs



Fig. 02. Detail, *DC Aerial Photo, Ortho 17*, D.C. Office of the Chief Technology Officer, GIS, 2017.

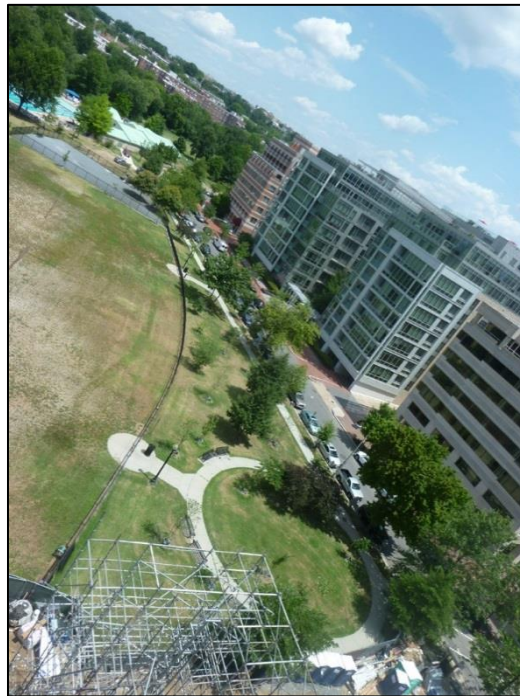


Fig. 03. *View to Northeast with 25th Street NW Buildings*, July 2, 2017.

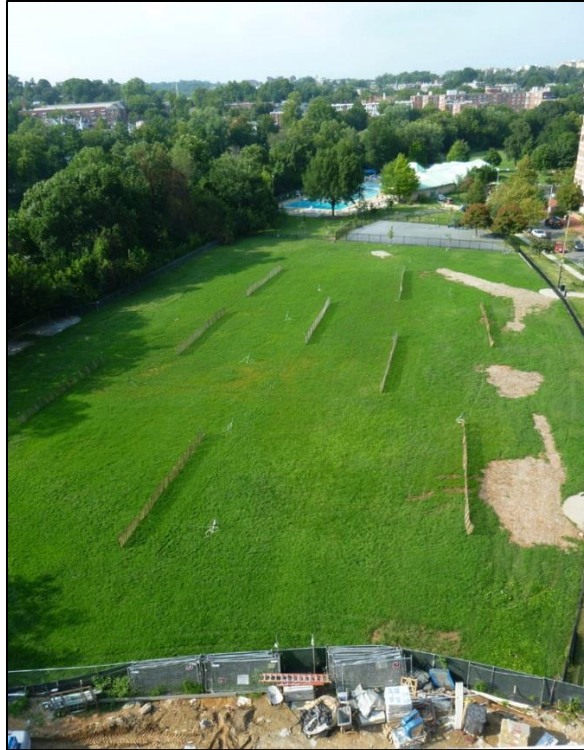


Fig. 04. Turf Restoration and Water Line Installation, July 2, 2017.



Fig. 05. View to South, along Rock Creek Park, after Tree Planting, May 17, 2017.



Fig. 06. View to South: 2501 M Façade Replacement and Construction Easement, March 3, 2018.



Fig. 07, Francis Field after Turf Restoration, May 27, 2018.

Scope, Program, and Goals

1. Update the Master Landscape Plan of 2009

A landscape plan for Francis Field was ordered on July 9, 2007, by the District of Columbia Zoning Commission in a Planned Unit Development case for the conversion of office buildings on 25th Street NW to residential use. This was Z.C. Case No. 06-35.

The Zoning Commission applicant, Vornado/Charles E. Smith, hired Oculus, a professional landscape architectural firm, to produce the required landscape plan for approval by DPR.

DPR was the applicant to the Commission of Fine Arts for concept review, with the description, "Master Plan for Renovation and Phase I Improvements." The full Commission reviewed the case at its January 22, 2009, meeting. It approved the master plan concept and made recommendations, including that "affected parties such as the National Park Service and the local community" be consulted. (See CFA 22/JAN/09-04.)



Fig. 08. Oculus, for DPR. *Francis Field: Master Plan - Revised*, September 3, 2009.

The ownership and management of the National Park Service (NPS) for the western portion of the field was discussed and defined in this CFA case. It was the position of NPS that no structures, including baseball backstops and storage sheds, were to be erected on the NPS portion of the field, which was purchased and preserved as a landscaping feature of Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway. It was to remain in as natural a state as possible,

The Commission respected this view, while recommending that more attention be given to the design of the areas outside the playing field as a "neighborhood park."

All benches, paving, trash receptacles, and other features were thus located on the east side of the field, adjacent to 25th Street NW.

An improved design, shown in Fig. 08 above, was submitted and approved on the consent calendar at the Commission's meeting of September 17, 2009. (See CFA 17/SEP/09-8.)

2. Record the Locations of New Elements, Gates, and Hydrants

In 2015, a dog park requested by the community was added to the north end of the field by DPR. This was not a structure, but a fenced area with a surface of crushed stone. It was confined to the portion of Francis Field under DPR management.



Fig. 09. Francis Field, *Actual Conditions versus Master Plan*, April 2016

Another significant change to the field's architecture was the expansion of 2501 M Street NW, one of the two private buildings at the south end of the field. This involved the replacement of the façade of the building, as well as an extension of the building to its north property line, changing the footprint of the building. (See photograph in Fig. 06.)

In addition, certain elements of the 2009 plan had not been implemented. Some concrete walkways indicated in the 2009 plan were never poured. Benches facing those non-existent walkways were not installed.

The comparison graphic in Fig. 09 above shows the existing conditions in a photograph taken on April 25, 2016, and the 2009 Master Plan. Vehicle access gates were no longer accurately marked due to the dog park construction.

Trees and other plantings were removed at the south end of the field for the 2501 M construction easement, but had not yet been replaced.

DPR agreed with community groups, including the Friends of Francis Field (FFF), a party in the 2007 zoning case, that a revision of the 2009 Master Plan was in order.

3, Complete the Restoration of the Rear-Field Easement

A temporary construction easement on the southern portion of the field was granted to the developer of the 2501 M building. It permitted the removal of 9 trees and required restoration and enhancement of the rear-field landscaping afterward.

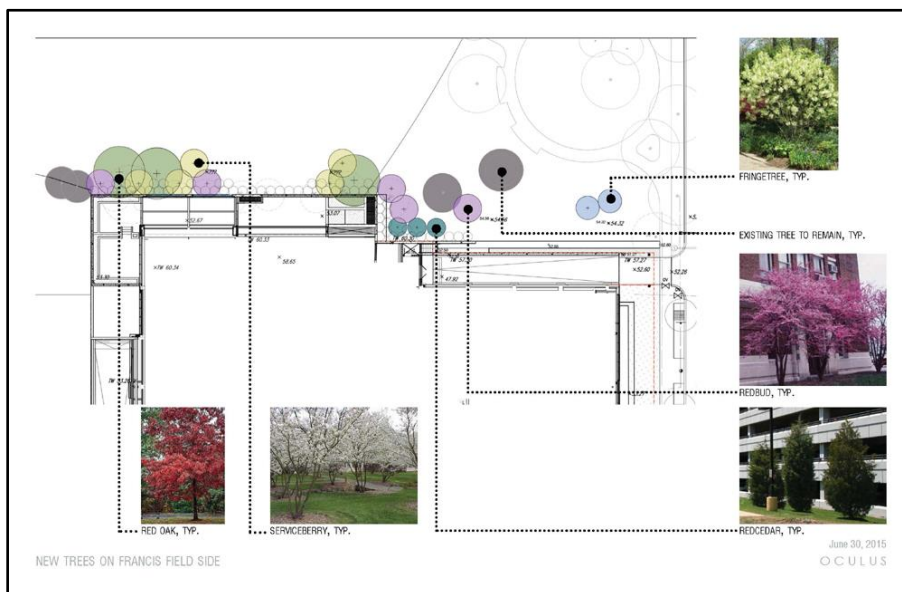


Fig. 10. Oculus for Core Group, *New Trees on Francis Field Side*, June 30, 2015.

Pursuant to the Shipstead-Luce Act, the applicant, PRP Real Estate Management, and its architect, the Core Group, began a series of submissions to the Commission beginning in 2014. (See SL 14-12.)

Oculus, as a sub-contractor for Core Group, drew a plan for the restoration of the rear-field construction easement and the planting of new trees on Francis Field. It is shown in Fig. 10 above. This drawing and others, were submitted to the Commission. (See SL 16-003.)

Due in part to construction delays in the 2501 M project, only a few of the trees indicated in the plan in Fig. 10 were planted by the summer of 2018.

The Urban Forestry Division of the D.C. Department of Transportation, in July 2018, requested to plant 11 new trees at the southern part of Francis Field as part of its own tree-planting program.

By this time, DPR and FFF had reached a partnership agreement for to develop a revised Master Plan for Francis Field with a professional landscape firm, using private funding.

Oculus, which had drawn the 2009 Master Plan, and was already working on the 2501 M project was chosen as the architect..

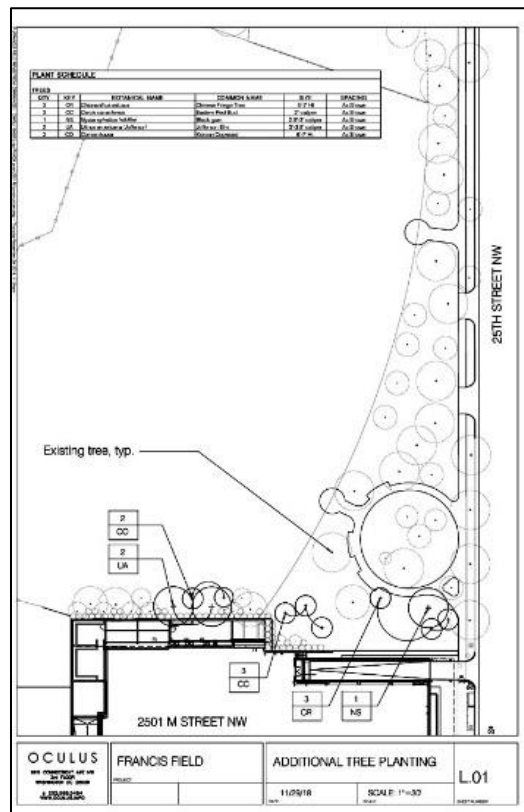


Fig. 11. Oculus, for FFF. *Additional Tree Planting*, November 29, 2018.

Under this agreement, the placement of the requested DDOT trees on the field was designed by Oculus in a preliminary plan that was then incorporated into a revised rear-field landscape plan, which is a sub-plan of this submission, and shown in the section below.

That sub-plan completes and enhances the partially implemented 2015 plan shown in Fig. 10.

Revised Master Plan

No major structural changes are indicated in this plan submitted for review, nor are the dimensions of the playing field, dog park, or other areas increased or reduced.



Fig.13. The 2009 plan is shown on the left. The Revised Master Plan is shown on the right.

As demonstrated in the photograph in Fig. 07, the 2008 Master Plan was well thought-out and designed. When the playing field turf is properly maintained, the design results in an aesthetic success and provides an appropriate transition area between the natural environment of Rock Creek Park and the urbanization of the modern West End neighborhood.

The Revised Master Plan at the right of Fig. 13 shows the park area on the west side more accurately “as built” than the 2009 plan. The revised plan shows the existing concrete walkways, lights, and benches as they exist today. A storage shed indicated on the NPS portion of the field, at the southwest in the 2009 plan, is also eliminated.

A pedestrian gate that existed in 2009 on the Rock Creek Park side was not included on the 2009 plan but is marked on the revised plan..

Two new hydrants, which were installed as part of the 2017 improvement project to restore running water to the field (see photograph in Fig. 04) are also marked.

The Rear-Field Sub-Plan Three Sheets

The restoration of the rear-field construction easement was partially completed, but would be changed in part by the addition of the trees requested by DDOT.

The first sheet of the sub-plan, Fig. 14A is shown below. It includes the plantings that were made by the spring of 2018 (see photograph in Fig. 06). It is consistent with the 2015 plan shown in Fig. 10, but it does not include the additional DDOT trees shown in Fig. 11.

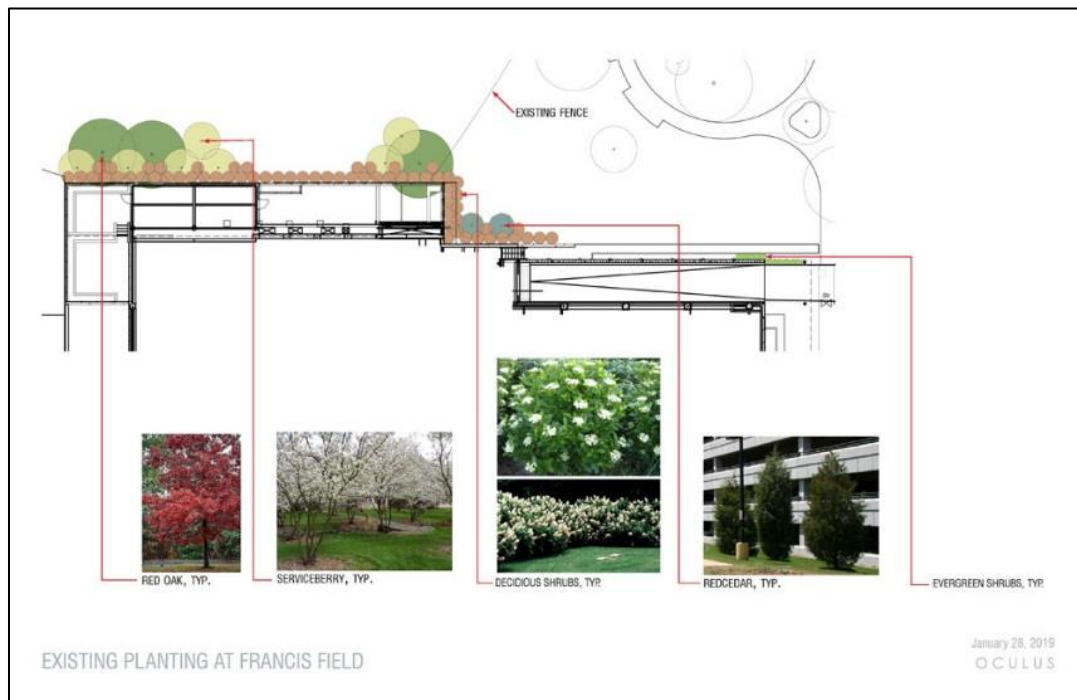


Fig. 14A. Oculus for FFF, *Existing Planting at Francis Field*, January 28, 2019.

Fig. 14B shows the 11 new DDOT trees, in addition to the trees already planted.

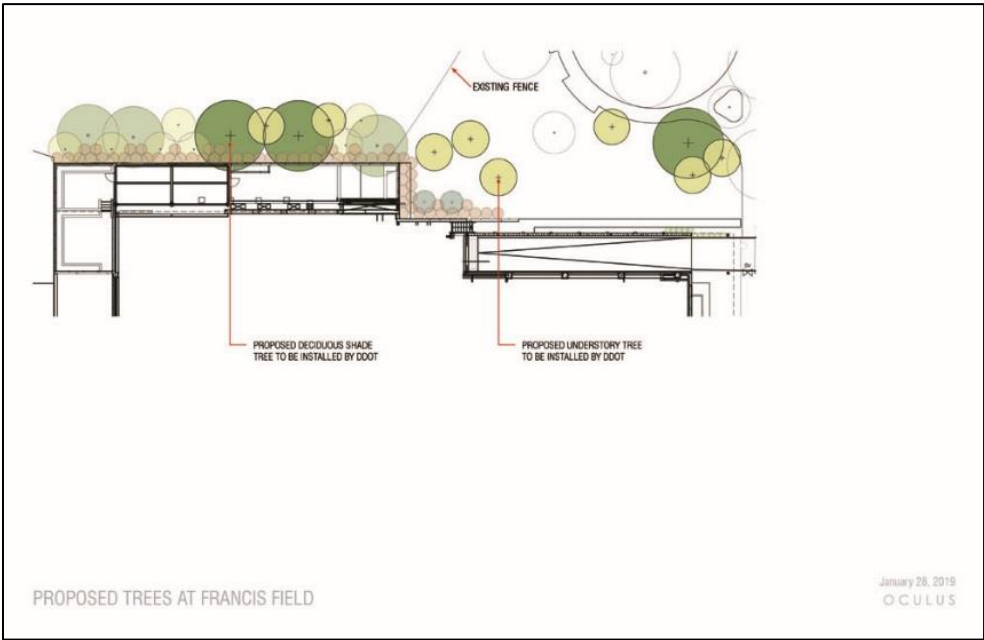


Fig. 12B. Oculus for FFF, *Proposed Trees at Francis Field*, January 28, 2019.

Figure 14C below shows additional plantings of shrubs to provide a more diverse and aesthetic treatment.

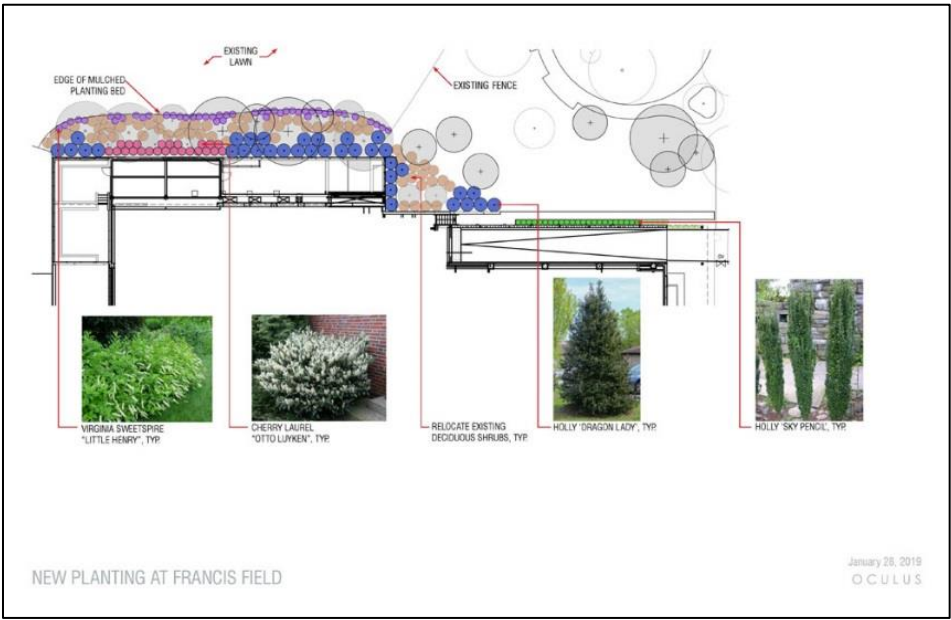


Fig. 14C. Oculus, *New Planting at Francis Field*, January. 28, 1919.

PDF File Table

Figure	PDF Title	Pages	Page Size	File Size
For Reference				
Fig. 08	FF_Master_2009.pdf	1		
Fig. 10	FF_RearField_2015.pdf	1		
Fig. 11	FF_trees_2019.pdf	1	11 x 17 in	119.23 KB
For Review				
Fig. 12	FF_master_2019_CFA.pdf	1	24 x 36 in	872.58 KB
Fig. 14A, 14B, 14C	FF_RearField_2019_CFA.pdf	3	17 x 11 in	4.25 MB