

Comm. Mtg.  
2-19-03

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*International Champion Chorus - 1986, 1989, 1995, 1998*

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February 19, 2003

The Honorable Kerry J. Donley  
Alexandria City Hall  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3211

Dear Mayor Donley:

The Alexandria Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society and its chorus, the Alexandria Harmonizers, are extremely proud of the close association we have enjoyed with the City of Alexandria since our founding in 1948. We are grateful, too, for the strong financial support we have received through the Alexandria Commission for the Arts and the "in kind" support from the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities in the form of a permanent "home" in the Durant Recreation Center (until it was closed for renovation).

We anxiously await the day when the Durant Center is returned to full use. We care deeply about the project and what it will mean to all users. Once the facility is ready for occupancy we trust that once again we will be permitted to use the main hall and three meeting rooms every Tuesday night, from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Attached is an updated list of issues and concerns we provided to the Park and Recreation Commission on November 7, 2000. We continue to hope that these will be addressed as planning and renovation progresses.

As Alexandria's four-time international champion barbershop chorus, the Harmonizers are grateful for all the high level of support and encouragement we receive from the City. We are often asked about the extent of this support and are pleased to be in a position to respond in such a positive manner. As you know we are extremely proud to be known as the Alexandria Harmonizers wherever we go and whenever we perform, locally, regionally and internationally.

Yours in harmony,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alan Wile".

Alan Wile  
Past President

Attachment: Construction Considerations for the Durant Recreation Center

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**Alexandria Virginia Chapter**

Society for the Preservation & Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc.

## Construction Considerations for the Durant Recreation Center

- **Configuration and location of the loading dock.** As the Harmonizers move risers and other bulky equipment on and off our truck with some frequency, ease of access is important to us.
- **Under stage storage.** We trust this will remain available to us. When we built the stage (with City concurrence and review of the plans), we constructed moveable floor level (under stage) platforms for risers and other bulky equipment so that they would be easily accessible for use on a weekly basis and locked up when not in use.
- **Other storage areas.** We would be most grateful if a storage room could be designated for Harmonizer use (for uniforms and other items to which access is required on chapter meeting nights each week).
- **Electrical outlets.** While we expect the renovated facility will have many outlets, at least one should be located in the middle of each of the long walls of the main room/hall.
- **Mirrors.** Initially we understood that the mirrors (originally on the west wall) would be relocated across the room, on the east wall. Recently, however, we learned that the contractors were unable to remove them intact. This will be a great loss to all users. The mirrors were provided and installed at Harmonizer expense for use in learning and refining the many visual aspects of our performance numbers; other users found they were helpful in enhancing their programs, as well.
- **Windows.** We understand that the windows on the west side of the main room will be elongated. The result will be a considerably larger amount of late afternoon sun/glare (and heat in the summer months). Accordingly, we recommended that a light-baffling system (e.g., blinds or curtains) be installed.
- **Projector screen.** The Harmonizers routinely project music and educational materials onto a "pull down" screen mounted overhead at each rehearsal. While it would seem logical to place the screen at the stage end of the room, the number of risers we must use (because of our size) requires that we orient them toward the long walls. Therefore, it would be best if a screen were centered high on the long east wall. We would gladly provide a projector screen for this purpose.
- **Speakers.** The Harmonizers would like to donate a set of speakers for use by any qualified user of the Durant Center. Each speaker is 24" wide, 21" deep, and 28" high. They weigh 60 pounds each and can take up to 150 watts. Each speaker is comprised of two components. The above dimensions are for the complete unit. If accepted we request that they be mounted high on the east wall of the large room, positioned so that they effectively divide the length of the wall into thirds. They should be cabled to a centralized junction box with two ¼" jacks. Were the mirrors in place on the east wall, as originally envisaged, we would recommend the box be located at the end of the mirrors, preferably at the side closest to the stage. It would be best if the wiring could be installed during construction so that it may be hidden from view.

Comm. Mtg.  
2-19-03

**Old Town Greens Townhome Owners Association**

**Written Comments  
on Potomac Yard Rail Park  
and Potomac Greens Residential Development**

**Submitted by:**

**Jennifer C. Archie, President**

## I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Old Town Greens Townhome Owners Association submits these written comments in response to the draft plans for the Potomac Yard Rail Park ("Dog Park") and Potomac Greens residential development ("P.Greens"), which we understand will be on the City Planning Commission docket on March 4, and could come to the City Council docket for action March 15.

Following a series of public meetings open to all OTG residents, the boards of directors of the two associations were overwhelmingly asked by the residents of these two communities to share a number of questions and concerns about the current plans with interested elected representatives and other potentially affected Alexandria residents. We have prepared these comments to summarize our concerns. While the two associations cannot speak for every resident of Old Town Greens, and the intensity of individual views varies, we believe that the views expressed herein fairly represent the views of the majority of our residents.

First, for the reasons stated in Section II, we strongly oppose the location of a dog park at the north end of our property in the area called the "Rail Park," as presently designed. This land use is as poorly planned conceived now as it was last February, when the Planning Commission resoundingly rejected a plan to accelerate development of this park. The "tweaks" to the plans proposed by the City Department of Parks & Recreation do not and cannot address the fundamental unfairness of directing large volumes of public foot and vehicular traffic onto our private streets, among many other health and safety concerns identified below.

Second, as explained in Section III, we oppose the present designs for the Potomac Greens development. They are materially non-compliant with the Potomac Yard site guidelines in terms of type and number of units, and location and quantity of open space.

Of equal concern, the City staff and the developer have each ignored the guidelines' plain requirement that a pedestrian footbridge be located within the south end of this community, which was a key feature of the plan to Old Town Greens and Potomac Greens residents to the rest of Potomac Yard.

Third, as explained in Section IV, we propose that the City impose a condition on the SUP for these areas, requiring that Potomac Greens Drive be reconfigured to a width and appearance suitable to the scale of the two residential (only) developments now planned to be served by this road. When this street was constructed in 1998 or earlier, the then operative Potomac Yard Design Guidelines contemplated that this would be a major artery servicing a large commercial development.

However, in 1999, the City altered the design for Landbay A from commercial to residential, eliminating any justification for a fast thoroughfare through our neighborhoods. We thank you for your time and attention to our concerns, and look forward to the opportunity to work with City staff and elected representatives, to craft plans for these areas which are fair to all concerned.

## II. RAIL PARK

One year ago, the Planning Commission unanimously rejected a plan for a "temporary" version of this dog park, pronouncing it one of the most poorly researched, conceived, and planned proposals to be presented to the Commission in recent history. Sadly, the same could be said of the current plans. The concept of locating a large dog park on this parcel of land, which is only accessible through a network of Old Town Greens private streets, down an easement along our private recreational facilities, is fundamentally flawed. No amount of promises to police and "clean up" and fancy entry systems can cure the fundamental unfairness and simply poor land use planning behind the proposal to site a dog park in this area of the yard.

Some ideas are simply bad ideas, even if they found their way into the Potomac Yard design guidelines. The idea to locate a large dog park in this tract of land is simply unworkable. Put simply, bad ideas should not be executed simply in the name of blind allegiance to the Design Guidelines.

### A. This is a Poor Site for a Dog Park.

Those of us attending last year's Planning Commission were left wondering what the constituency was in favor of this location for a dog park, apart from certain members of the City staff. While a number of people spoke persuasively of the advantages generically of off leash play areas for dogs, few could make any case for this particular location. The leading citizen advocate for dog parks noted her serious concerns with the extremely high noise levels from Amtrak and CSX trains, the Metro (which is above ground along the park), and planes departing from and arriving at Reagan National Airport. She stated that she was concerned that dogs who might otherwise behave acceptably off leash, act unpredictably in response to loud noises. She was concerned that when trains or planes were passing by, owners would be unable to achieve their usual (and mandatory) voice control over their pets.

In addition, locating a park on a narrow strip of land, adjacent to high concrete walls that no one can see what is going on that property is a safety concern for users of the park. This area will be very difficult, if not impossible, to police effectively and the safety of those walking their dogs cannot be ensured.

When this use of this land was first put forth, before adopted by Council, all earlier drafts provided for an interesting mix use, including consideration of a much smaller dog park, exercise stations, landscaping and park space. These drafts also suggested tennis courts. Interestingly, while the City changed some language in its legislative process, it did not remove the pictures of that park. If you read page 40 of the SUP, the pictures clearly show peaceful exercise stations, beautiful park areas, and a couple of dogs on leash in a non-fenced city park-like area. We believe that there needs to be clarification from the City as to what its intent was.

**B. Drivers Visiting the Park Will Unsafely Travel and Unfairly Burden Private Streets.**

Last Spring, in rejecting plans for a similar dog park, the Planning Commission acknowledged and expressly agreed with our concerns that as then conceived, the Rail Park was (to quote one Commissioner) a "nightmare" for Old Town Greens residents, because cars traveling to the park would necessarily intrude upon our private streets for parking and turning around to exit the community. The current plans do not - and cannot - resolve this extremely valid concern. Old Town Greens bears the entire financial burden of maintaining our private streets, so it is extremely unfair for the City to shift this additional burden to our private streets.

As designed, Old Town Greens is a network of private streets - again, most without any sidewalks - adjoining two public streets, Slaters Lane and Potomac Greens Drive. Because the City sited our recreational facilities across Potomac Greens Drive from our homes, residents must cross this broad street to access the tennis court and the (new) children's playground.

Although perhaps not an expected development at the time the City first permitted residential developments in this area of Alexandria, Old Town Greens has become a home to more than 50 children. Thus, these children and their caretakers regularly cross Potomac Greens Drive to go to the tennis courts and playground area adjacent to the tennis courts.

Cars (generally belonging to visitors) already travel our private streets at excessive speeds. The City police department lacks the enforcement power on our private streets. Moreover, they have indicated to us that -- even if they had enforcement powers -- they do not have the resources to control access or other issues such as speeding, apart from the most galling, purely hypothetical cases of truly reckless driving.

The Associations have adopted and posted speed limits of 15 mph along the private streets, but cars regularly exceed these speed limits, and the police do not have jurisdiction to ticket for exceeding such private speed limits.

In sum, we are concerned that the increase in car traffic associated with the proposed dog park, particularly by non-residents, will dramatically increase the risk of physical injury to the children living in the community.

The "new" proposal for the permanent dog park includes no meaningful enhancements to address this safety concern, in response to the Commission's agreement with the concerns parents raised last year at the time that a temporary dog park was being proposed. As a glance at the street map for our community readily confirms, the developer's addition of a "turnaround" at the entrance to the Potomac Greens development will not prevent or even meaningfully discourage visitors to the dog park from using the private streets for traveling and parking.

**C. The Long Pedestrian Access Route to the Park Across Private Property Will Create Unsanitary Conditions on Our Private Lands and Unfairly Shift Waste Removal Costs to Old Town Greens.**

The proposed dog park would create a health and safety hazard for the children (and adults) in the OTG community. To address these previously expressed concern, the City Parks Director proposes to have daily waste pickups of receptacles located within the dog park.

This is a fine - if costly - suggestion, but does little to address our concerns that dogs will take the opportunity to relieve themselves along the long (5 minute+) walk through OTG private property to access the park, and that City staff are not proposing to pick up waste from these areas. Like most communities of our size and density, we already suffer from a terrible problem with owners not picking up after their dogs. We incur considerable monthly expense as it is paying a handyman to patrol our common areas and remove dog waste.

Last year, the City planners estimated 300 persons a day would use the park, including as many as ten users per hour. Dogs will eliminate whenever and wherever the urge strikes, most likely in the first few minutes after getting out of the owner's car. Even if 9 out of 10 dog owners are responsible (and pick up waste), this means that dozens of dogs will be eliminating on our private property (the only real "green space" we have to enjoy) on their route to the park. Our homeowners' dues should not have to pay to pick up this waste.

Moreover, given the number of children playing in this area (which includes our private playground), leaving the waste where it falls for a period of days of a week is simply unsafe.

If the City has some magic method to cause (a) all dogs to hold their urine or feces until they reach public property; or (b) all owners to be responsible while traversing on our property, we would be stunned. If they estimate daily waste pick-up is necessary to keep the park cleaned, then it's fair to assume OTG will have to similarly pay someone to clear waste on at least a daily basis. It is unfair to impose such costs on OTG residents.

In short, no realistic measures have been offered to address this health and safety issue.

**D. Siting the Park Next to OTG Private Recreational Facilities Will Unfairly Increase Liability Exposure to OTG, and Encourage Trespass on Such Facilities.**

As a practical matter, it will be almost impossible to keep the public out of the tot lot and tennis courts. Signs indicating that it is private property will have little effect, as OTG is a large community where not even all residents know one another by face or name. Dog owners will have every reason to bring their children and drop them off in the playground while they run their dog in the adjoining public park. This poses potential liability issues for OTG if a non-

resident's child is injured while trespassing on our private playground.

In private meetings, City staff has suggested this risk can be eliminated by the installation of electronic security access devices on our tennis courts and playground, at the City's expense, similar to the devices being proposed for the dog park itself. First, we question whether the acquisition and annual operation and maintenance costs associated with such equipment is even a rational expenditure of public resources for the dog park itself, given the lack of any discernible public constituency for the location of a dog park in this area. Secondly, the developer has refused to identify any vendors of such equipment to us, nor even to answer the question about whether such devices are currently available on the market, and if so, whether they operate reliably and at what cost. We should not be expected to accept on faith that such equipment (a) exists; (b) is reliable; and (c) is feasible for the Associations to operate and maintain from a fiscal standpoint.

#### **E. Recommendation for Action**

The premise that existed four years ago when the SUP was adopted doesn't exist today -- that the adjacent landbays (which were wrongly assumed would not be occupied by families with children) would wish this area to be a dog park. We believe it is reasonable, indeed responsible, to take into account the community concerns as presently constructed.

To that end, the OTG association boards recommend the City appoint a citizens advisory board to determine how to best use this space efficiently. We recommend that the board be comprised of:

- 3 members from the OTG community
- 3 members of the new community, once residents have moved in, and
- 3 members of the great Alexandria Community

We believe this makes the most sense -- involve directly the communities that live there in the decision making process. We are not aware of any urgency to develop this difficult piece of land; indeed, we believe the greater community benefits from the open space and further believe many of our community's concerns could be addressed in future years, once the bridge over various rail tracks permits the park's main entrance, which is from the west near a straightened Route 1.

### **III. POTOMAC GREENS RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

#### **A. The Proposed Development Lacks Sufficient Open Space to Support the Proposed Level of Density.**

The proposed development is just too dense. By design, these houses have no backyards. Indeed, with the exception of an occasional row of shrubs (euphemistically deemed "private open space"), they have no yards whatsoever. The residents of this development must therefore rely on community open space for any outdoor activity: to throw the Frisbee, to let their kids run around, or simply to relax outdoors on a nice day.

The current plans propose to either build on or pave virtually all but 2.43 acres by its own calculus. They say that out of roughly 18 acres of buildable land,<sup>1</sup> houses and pavement will occupy about 15.4 acres.<sup>2</sup> First of all, we stress our disagreement with the conclusion expressed in the the design guideline criteria that 2.5 acres is sufficient green space for a community of this density. But even accepting 2.5 acres as the baseline, how the developer “gets there” is extremely suspect. The developer’s plans count towards “opens pace” totals parcels that cannot lawfully be considered “open and usable space” under the City’s zoning ordinance, and the design guidelines for this parcel.

For example:

- The neighborhood park at the south end includes a 12-foot wide access road, counting this road as approximately 1,440 sq. ft. of the supposed “open space.”<sup>3</sup>
- The neighborhood park at the south end counts an 8-foot wide sidewalk as approximately 3,200 sq. ft of the supposed “open space.”<sup>4</sup>
- The “Central Park West” includes land (in the Metro right-of-way) that is not even within the boundaries of the parcel (“Landbay A”) for which approval is sought, counting this land outside the parcel as approximately 7,800 sq. ft. of the supposed “open space.”<sup>5</sup>
- The neighborhood park at the north end includes an area that is open (and green) today, but will be paved and become part of the Metro station as soon as it is built, counting the future Metro Kiss-and-Ride as 13,173 sq. ft. of the supposed open space.

These are just a few examples. Only The developer knows what other non-green and/or non-open space they are counting towards their “open space” totals. But just with the above examples, subtracting out those roads, sidewalks, Metro stations and the like, one must revise the amount of “open space” downward by more than 25,000 sq. feet, or more than one-half of an acre, which is materially non-compliant, given the 2.5 acre requirement stated in the Guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> The acreage of buildable land is derived by subtracting the wetlands (resource protected area, or RPA) and scenic easement acreage (totaling 15.8 acres) from the total site area (33.7 acres).

<sup>2</sup> This number subtracts the community open space (2.4 acres) and so-called “private green space” (0.2 acres) – meaning isolated shrubs and bits of grass – from the total buildable area.

<sup>3</sup> The portion of this road within the area counted as “open space” is approximately 120 feet long, times 12 feet wide is 1,440 sq. ft.

<sup>4</sup> The portion of this sidewalk (labeled as a “bike trail”) within the area counted as “open space” is approximately 400 feet long, times 8 feet wide is 3,200 sq. ft.

<sup>5</sup> The developer plans indicate that 0.179 acres of WMATA lands “is being considered as neighborhood park space.”

**B. The Proposed Plan Does Not Follow the Design Guidelines Approved in 1999 for this Landbay.**

The developer has claimed in meetings with Old Town Greens residents that the Design Guidelines expressly authorize it should be allowed to pave and build this development of this density. That is simply not true. The proposed plan departs radically from the guidelines, and the developer cannot now use the guidelines to shield its proposal from scrutiny.

This development (i) contains more buildings than the guidelines allow, (ii) provides less open space than the guidelines require, and (iii) omits important features included in the guidelines.

1. Too many buildings.

Most saliently, the developer's proposal contains more buildings than the guidelines allow. The guidelines allow 174 townhouses and 70 stacked units – a total of 209 buildings. The developer proposes 227 townhouses. This is many more townhouses than the guidelines allow; 26 more buildings than the guidelines allow. It's a very simple point: the developer proposes to build more than they are allowed.

2. Too little open space.

As demonstrated in section A above, the proposal contains less open space than the guidelines allow. The guidelines provide the following:  
the following:

*There shall be a minimum of 2.5 acres of open space in this parcel. This acreage shall be located at more than one location as organizing elements of the plan. An open space shall be located between the new development and Old Town Greens and incorporate the existing pond and substation building as part of the parkscape. The main purpose of these open spaces is to provide an attractive address and localized open space for the neighborhood residents. The minimum dimension of such spaces is 40 ft by 80 ft. Parks shall be framed by residential one-way streets.*

The proposed plans depart materially from these requirements. For starters, the developer's own calculations put the total open space amount at 2.43 acres: less than the "minimum of 2.5 acres" that is required.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, as noted above, even this figure is inflated. The developer relies on counting roads, Metro stations, and land that is not even within the parcel in order to arrive at its 2.43 acre figure. Subtracting the likes of these paved or fenced-in areas, the real figure turns out to be no more than 1.9 acres.

But 1.9 acres still is an exaggeration, for the developer tries to count additional areas that are clearly not considered open space within the meaning of the guidelines. The guidelines provide that in order to count as open space, "[t]he minimum dimension of such

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<sup>6</sup> Guidelines at 44.

spaces is 40 ft. by 80 ft.”<sup>7</sup> Open space, then, must at minimum be each of 40 ft. wide, 80 ft. long, and 3,200 sq. ft. total. The developer’s plans count as “open space” several parcels that do not meet this minimum requirement, and therefore under the guidelines cannot be considered toward the open space totals.

The developer counts as open space two small triangles of land in the northwest and southeast corners of the entrance circle. Neither of these measures 40 by 80, nor does either (at 1,329 and 944, respectively) contain 3,200 sq. ft. total.

The developer counts as open space a rectangle of land that appears to be the shared yard of four units, but that it describes as the “South Muse [sic].” This parcel is substantially less than 80 feet long, and (at 2,771) is also less than 3,200 sq. ft. total.

The developer counts as open space a shared yard among units that it describes as the “North Muse [sic],” that, while approximately 40 feet wide, is less than 80 feet long and (at 3,105) is less than 3,200 sq. ft. total.

A large part of the developer’s “open space” comes from the “Southern Park,” a developer’s euphemism that is particularly offensive to those Old Town Greens residents who bought their homes along the boundary with Potomac Greens in reliance on the express language of the guidelines requiring this park to be an “organizing element” of the plan. Instead, the developer proposes less than one-third of an acre, which wraps like a gerrymandered congressional district around the pump house, the catch basin, the road to the pump house, and various fence lines. While these long and oddly-convoluted strips of land may add up to 17, 888 sq. ft., there is not a single portion of this parcel that measures 40 ft. by 80 ft. The “Southern Park” is an amalgamation of small and essentially useless strips of land – including a gravel driveway -- and it cannot count as “open space” under the guidelines, much less the required “parkscape” or “organizing element” required by the guidelines for this area.

This is not a technicality -- refusing to acknowledge these small parcels as “open space” is not mere hair splitting. The purpose of the 2.5 acres is to provide “neighborhood parks,” in which residents can play, relax, or otherwise enjoy the outdoors. Tiny strips and triangles of land do not serve this purpose, nor do small mews that feel more like someone’s yard than a “neighborhood park.” The 40-by-80 minimum dimension represents a judgment that this is the minimum size that accomplishes the purpose for which these “neighborhood parks” are intended.

These small and scattered bits of land are smaller than is required to count as open space, and do not provide usable and attractive “neighborhood parks.” Because they cannot count towards the “open space” totals, The developer’s “open space” calculus must again be revised downward – by a total of 26,037 sq. ft., or about six tenths of an acre.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Guidelines at 44.

<sup>8</sup> The erroneously-counted open space includes 26,037 sq. ft.: 8,149 sq. ft. among the entrance triangles and the “Muse” parcels, and 17,888 sq. ft. within the southern parcel.

The actual amount of open space in Potomac Greens, then, is approximately 1.1 acres, out of 18 acres.<sup>9</sup> This does not even approach compliance.

3. Missing features.

The developer's plans omit two important design features required by the guidelines: there is no "parkscape" at the south end of the development, and there is no pedestrian footbridge over the Metro tracks. These features are critical to the overall design, and The developer's failure to include them renders its plans defective.

a. Southern park.

The guidelines require a "parkscape" to be located "between the new development and Old Town Greens."<sup>10</sup> That park has always been viewed by planners, residents, and developers alike as representing a buffer between the two communities. Multiple illustrations in the guidelines consistently depict a significant space between the two developments.<sup>11</sup> Even Crescent Resources' own drawings – for example in the brochure it sent by mail to all residents in June, 2002 – have always depicted this park as a significant buffer. That park is important, and it is there for the benefit of Old Town Greens residents at least as much as for Potomac Greens residents.

The developer, however, has unilaterally deleted that park. In its place, it proposes an amalgamation of small strips that snake around the various existing structures and are criss-crossed by roads and sidewalks. These small and rather useless strips of land do not even meet the definition of "open space" under the guidelines. It cannot possibly count as the "parkscape" required by the guidelines and envisioned by planners, residents, and indeed the developer itself.

b. Pedestrian footbridge.

The guidelines also require a "footbridge over the Metro tracks"(p. 40; illustrated at page 101, and also in Crescent Resources depictions as crossing both the CSX tracks and the Metro tracks) to link the Potomac Greens and Old Town Greens communities to the rail park, and ultimately to the rest of Potomac Yards.<sup>12</sup> This is not a typographical error or a "misprint" as the developer has bizarrely suggested. Drawings in the Guidelines clearly depict the footbridge over the Metro tracks, and indicate its placement at the southern end of the *Potomac*

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<sup>9</sup> This figure excludes both the erroneously-counted open space as just described, and also excludes the and previously-described parcels (Metro station, pool , etc.) that cannot be considered as "open." Likewise because this point is derived from the guidelines (which do not count as "open space" front yards and the like) this figure excludes the 0.2 acres of "private green space" that The developer seeks to use in its calculus.

<sup>10</sup> Guidelines at 44.

<sup>11</sup> Guidelines at 44, 101, 103. *See also* Guidelines at 5, 15, 26

<sup>12</sup> Guidelines at 40.

*Greens* development (not merely at the southern end of the Rail Park, as also depicted in the guidelines).<sup>13</sup> The developer is plainly aware of this requirement, as Crescent Resources and CAP before it were aware for years. For example, the footbridge is plainly depicted in the plan drawing that was mailed by Crescent Resources to all the surrounding residents in June 2002. A gargantuan version of this depiction is proudly displayed in Crescent Resources' Potomac Yard offices for all to see. The plans state the requirement in plain English, they draw it in plain view, and Crescent is (and has been) plainly aware of this requirement. It is not a typographical error.

Rather, once constructed, the footbridge will be an important link between the communities on the east and west sides of the tracks, and will provide access to residents of Old Town Greens and Potomac Greens to the remainder of the development – including the town center as well as various parks and playing fields. A path over the CSX tracks only (e.g., a path that lands inside the Rail Park, but not Potomac Greens) is not convenient to a resident of the Potomac Greens development, or the northern part of Old Town Greens. To go from those areas to the town center, for example, would (absent a footbridge) require one to go south to the cut-through and then back north to the destination – a half-mile or more out of one's way.

The developer, it seems, has unilaterally deleted the footbridge. Yet this will not be an easy structure to retrofit, and will require a significant piece of land for its landfall. It must be high enough to clear the concrete barrier on the west side of the Metro tracks, and its landfall must therefore provide substantial room for the pedestrian and wheelchair ramp down to grade. Even if it is not required to build the footbridge at this time, the developer must now set aside enough space for the landfall, so that it might eventually be built. The Guidelines require a footbridge, and the developer cannot simply ignore that requirement.

#### **IV. AS A MATTER OF SAFETY AND AESTHETICS, POTOMAC GREENS DRIVE MUST BE ALTERED TO REFLECT THE RESIDENTIAL (ONLY) CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS.**

Old Town Greens residents are also deeply concerned that our longstanding concerns about excessive speed and dangers to pedestrians in our community will be greatly exacerbated by (a) Potomac Greens construction activities; (b) dog park traffic (in the unfortunate event that there were to be a dog park); (c) retail traffic associated with the new shopping center; and (d) eventually, Potomac Greens resident traffic.

Potomac Greens was designed and built in the mid-1990's as one of the broadest streets in the City of Alexandria, in accordance with now defunct plans to include major commercial development on Landbay A parcel now being proposed as the Potomac Greens residential only community.

For better or worse, the City designed us a community with almost no sidewalks, and put our recreation facilities away from our homes, across this wide street, without any pedestrian cross walks, or any basic traffic calming methods or crosswalks to prevent cars from racing down the road at speeds in excess of 35 mph. Traffic calming and control is not an issue

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<sup>13</sup> Guidelines at 101.

that can or should await completion of Potomac Greens construction activities. Fortunately, the planned use of the land to our south changed from commercial to residential after the street was built, so we now have the opportunity to correct this planning error. Potomac Greens residents will have to traverse their own development, all of Old Town Greens, and then queue up in the long line on Slaters Lane to begin their commutes. With the current straight, broad speedway configuration of Potomac Greens Drive, they can be expected to travel this thoroughfare at speeds far in excess of those that would be safe or appropriate for a residential neighborhood, with recreational facilities located across the street.

We respectfully request that the Director of Transportation impose conditions on the pending applications requiring the construction of treed medians, pedestrian cross walks, or other suitable techniques to slow construction and residential traffic along this unnecessarily wide street. We propose that the road be narrowed by the construction of a grassed/treed median, that pedestrian cross walks be constructed, and/or stop signs be added along the road.

2-19-03 CM

Received by CC, Sent to  
CM, P&Z, Recreation

Alexander J. Krem  
701 Hawkins Way  
Alexandria VA 22314

23 February 2003

Kerry J. Donley  
Mayor  
301 King Street  
Alexandria VA 22314

future  
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Re: Proposed development of Potomac Greens subdivision

Dear Mayor Donley,

Thank you for organizing your last City Council Meeting in our neighborhood. And thank you for the patience and charm with which you listened to your citizens and their concerns. You make a good mayor. The city will be less without you in that chair.

As we discussed on the night, the Planning Commission is now reviewing plans to develop Potomac Greens, at the North end of Alexandria. The citizens of Alexandria look forward to a sensitive and sensible development.

A proposal has been made to the Planning Commission by Crescent Resources / EYA which will be discussed on 4 March 2003. As you know, I believe that *the current proposal will have a significant negative effect on the future of Alexandria*, particularly the residents of Old Town Greens. This will hurt not only those of us who will be living next to the new development, but citizens in the surrounding neighborhoods as well.

The proposed development calls for *ultra-dense housing*. This does not seem good for people. Visit New York City if you are in doubt. In the approved Design Guidelines, 209 buildings were planned. This seemed far too many to me. Now the developer is proposing to build 227 homes -- an increase of over 10% from the very disturbingly high previous figure. (As no stacked units are planned, total households will go down under this plan. Nonetheless, total buildings will go up and open space will be affected.) None of these proposed houses will have front or back yards. Passageways between houses will be narrower than the legal minimum for interior office hallways. Estimates are that over 85% of the useable land will be built on or paved. This is not the future I would wish on Alexandria and its children.

I have had a quick look at the proposed plans. The developer's *calculation of "green space" violates the originally approved Design Guidelines* in many ways. Worse, the calculation appears to be intentionally misleading. In its calculation, the developer includes fenced-in areas, sidewalks, some roads and other paved areas, tiny scraps of unusable land -- some as small as 900 square feet -- even the proposed metro station and land outside the development itself. I understand that the proposed development will be denser than Old Town or Del Ray. It may even have less green space than local public housing projects like The Berg.

No park is now planned between Old Town Greens and the new development, despite repeated written representations by the developer and its predecessor for a 2.5 - 3 acre buffer. These representations were used to sell the homes in Old Town Greens. I believe Old Town Greens residents will have a legal claim against both past and present developers for misrepresentation, and perhaps fraud, and am now reviewing the facts and our legal options. I do not know what the Planning Commission has informally indicated to the developer as what might be acceptable. However, if it has done anything to indicate that there is no need for the promised buffer to Old Town Greens, I believe such an event would seem to represent a breach of faith with us and might subject the City to liability, as well.

Without the promised buffer, *where will local children play?* In the traffic circle that is now proposed? In the pocket parks that will soon be converted to quasi-private parks for those homes that abut them? At the North-end of the development which may soon be converted to parking for the Metro? What sort of development do we want for our children? And for their children? I urge that you act to ensure the promised park to the South of the development.

When Old Town Greens was built, it was build without sidewalks. The theory then was that this would be a community of "empty nesters", and there was no need to cater to children. Wrong. I understand that there are now at least 60 children living in Old Town Green – children who will spend their childhoods playing in the streets because the city planners allowed the development to go forward without sidewalks. Now, it seems the developers are urging an equally bad mistake – a development without meaningful parks. Please look at the proposed plans. If you do, I hope you share my concerns.

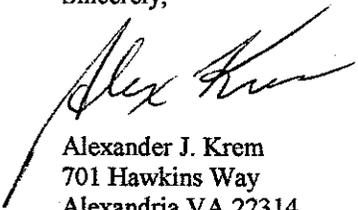
I also have some concern for *increased traffic*. Our neighborhood will be greatly affected. An estimated **450 more cars will be on our two North-South streets each day** -- excluding visitors. If the proposed dog park (a singularly bad idea, I think) is allowed, even more traffic will flow down our streets. Developers are planning for almost 650 new cars. This will increase noise, traffic, and risk to our children (who have no sidewalks to protect them), ourselves, our property and our serenity. It will also put more pressure on local parking. It will create more **delays at the intersection at Slater's Lane and GW Parkway**, a traffic problem that is almost intolerable now each working morning.

With respect, I urge you to:

1. Review the developer's plans to ensure that the developer "plays fair" in its calculations and that the original Urban Design Guidelines are not compromised. If possible, *reconsider those guidelines in order to create a less dense, greener development*, which will reflect well on the community and your own vision for Alexandria's future.
2. Ensure that *adequate green space* is reserved. Counting tiny scraps of land, traffic islands, metro stations and future metro parking lots should not be allowed.
3. Ensure that increased traffic does not create a *safety issue* for residents of Old Town Greens.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Alexander J. Krem  
701 Hawkins Way  
Alexandria VA 22314  
(703) 299 1202

2-19-03 CM

future

February 20, 2003

Mayor Kerry Donley  
 City of Alexandria  
 301 King Street  
 Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mayor Donley,

I am writing this letter in protest of the *severely* flawed, but easily remedied, plans presented by the developer, EYA, for their Potomac Greens development north of Old Town Greens. The flaws in the plans are numerous and obvious, including but not limited to:

1. **MUCH TOO DENSE A POPULATION PLAN—CONTRARY TO THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT**

- 227 buildings as opposed to 196 first proposed in 1999!
- The concept plan calls for a **MAXIMUM** of 209 buildings!

2. **VIRTUALLY NON EXISTENT GREEN OR OPEN SPACE**

- Only 2.6 acres out of 18 acres designated green space, most of which is at the far North End of the development and therefore virtually unusable by the majority of the population.
- No open park area between the two developments, contrary to both requirements and written representations calling for a 2.5 to 3 acre buffer. (A deck sized Tot-Lot is substituted)
- Farcical so-called green or open spaces, including a gravel road that encircles a pump house, a 2 foot grassy perimeter around the pump house, a run-off pond, a fenced-in swimming pool area, the bushes in front of homes and the middle of a traffic circle.
- **None of the homes have either front or back yards or even a living level deck to barbecue on!**
- 4 feet spaces between buildings!! Many codes call for at least 5 feet for an interior hallway!

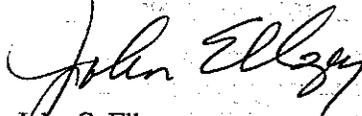
3. **EXTREME TRAFFIC SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES.**

- **ONLY ONE** traffic entrance and exit that **MUST** go over coal train railroad tracks! What happens in the event of a large multi-alarm fire or terrorist attack and the train is on the tracks?
- The Planning Commission is making traffic projections using 3 year old traffic studies ... studies made even before Old Town Greens was finished!
- A likely minimum of **400** additional cars attempting egress from Potomac Greens Drive onto Slater's Lane and GW Parkway daily!
- The added traffic from the proposed Potomac Yards Dog Park will also be using this same street as its only ingress/egress!

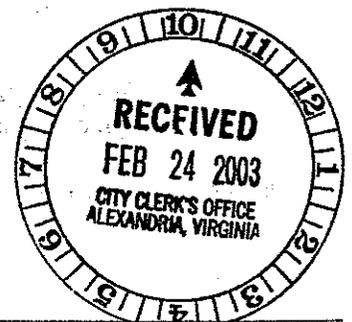
I submit that these plans amount to nothing more than a covert attempt by the developer to skirt certainly the intent, if not the letter, of the development goals of Alexandria. And, if allowed to be implemented, will establish an unfortunate precedent for all future Old Town Alexandria developments. An unfortunate precedent that Alexandria, a town long known for its unwavering resistance to the scourge of "urban sprawl", someday will rue!

I urge you to reconsider and redraw these plans to make them conform more to the ideals of history, quality of life, beauty and health that Old Town Alexandria has esteemed for almost three centuries.

Sincerely,



John C. Ellzey  
 President



**PERRYTON RADIO, INC.**

Received by CC, CM, P&Z

2-19-03CM

February 20, 2003

Mayor Kerry Donley  
City of Alexandria  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

*did not speak*

*future*

Dear Mayor Donley,

I am writing to you to express my grave concerns regarding the proposed Potomac Greens Development just north of my community, Old Town Greens. It has been brought to my attention that significant changes have been made to the guidelines and plans that were represented to us by the City and NV Homes at the time of the purchase of our home in June of 2000.

I believe that these changes will have an extremely detrimental impact on the quality of life, safety, traffic and sense of community and neighborhood that currently exists in Old Town Greens.

What happened to the proposed 3.5 acres of "green space" originally proposed between the two developments? In reviewing Potomac Greens architectural plans I see virtually no green space with the exception of the open field at the far north side of the development.

How can these developers in good conscience count as "green space" a small "tot lot", small patches of what appears to be grass, a shrub, sidewalks, roads, and gravel roads around the pump house. None of these could possibly be used for outdoor activities of any kind. I believe that, unless the city has changed their definition of "green space", the developer is definitely trying to "bamboozle" the public.

Traffic and safety are also great concerns of mine in that there is *only* one road in and out of this area. And for the city and the developers to state that a three year old "traffic study" shows that the added 470 cars will produce no added traffic problems indicates gross miscalculations. Have they seen the lines trying to get on to the GW Parkway off Slater's Lane during morning drive time?

Also, I hate to think of what might occur if an emergency situation should require all of us to exit our neighborhood simultaneously. Or what if a large fire should occur and multiple pieces of fire equipment should need to get into the development when the only way in or out is across the coal train railroad tracks... the safety dimension becomes even more acute.

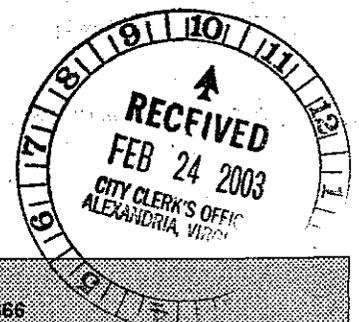
The first proposal in 1999 called for only *196 buildings* while the current plan *far* exceeds those guidelines as they now want *227 buildings*. This kind of density will destroy the character of our neighborhood. Do we want to look like all the other "sprawl developments" that are devouring this area? And the proposed dog park with the only entrance on Potomac Greens Drive, if approved, will only exacerbate the problems of parking, traffic, safety.

I would respectfully suggest that additional opportunities are needed for input by the public prior to the premature approval of these plans. This development would very likely be precedent setting for the future developments that most assuredly will take place in Alexandria, and it would be foolhardy to approve something that would be detrimental to the image of Alexandria far into the future.

I am compelled to stand strong insisting that growth be smart, well thought out and well planned with consideration of those already residing in Old Town.

Sincerely,

*Sharon Ellzey*  
Sharon Ellzey  
President



*Dad  
not  
Speak*

*Received by CC, Sent to  
CM, F&Z, Whitmore*

*2-19-03 CM*

701 Hawkins Way  
Alexandria VA 22314

*future  
+1*

24 February 2003

Dear Mr. Mayor,

As a father of five daughters, you may appreciate more than anyone on the City Council the value of open space for children to play. You have a unique chance to see that our children and their children grow up in a beautiful and safe community. Thanks for all you have done as mayor in this regard.

Please ensure that the Potomac Greens development conforms to the spirit and letter of the approved guidelines. Better, please urge a re-evaluation of that very dense plan to achieve a more attractive and humane balance. See to it, please, that future generations have adequate green space and that traffic is not a problem to our children's safety.

We all want an Alexandria that is friendly to children. I think that dense projects without yards, with minimal green space, and with built-in traffic problems that can only get worse, will create an unwholesome community, regardless of the quality of each townhouse.

For your information, the residents of Old Town Greens were promised a 3 acre park between their homes and Potomac Greens. In writing and more than once. We purchased on that basis. I do not know what has happened since those promises were made, but I believe that we have a right to the benefit of our original bargain. That seems fair and just. The approved guidelines did not fulfil those promises, yet still contemplated a buffer. Now the developer hopes to scrap that buffer altogether in order to squeeze more homes onto the land. This does not seem right.

I also worry about the traffic impact on Old Town Greens. A huge traffic increase is projected. An additional 400 - 600 cars a day (depending on the dog park) will travel up our narrow streets (streets largely without sidewalks, thanks to the desire of a previous developer to maximize units and a planning commission that did not value the safety that sidewalks provide young and old. The already very difficult intersection at Slater's Lane and the Parkway can hardly accommodate existing traffic. This will only get worse. These changes will hurt our community, I believe.

Please re-establish the balance between good development and over-crowding. Please do everything you can to see that Potomac Green is developed with fewer houses and more green space. I think we have already gone too far with the approved Concept Plan and urge a re-evaluation.

The future will judge your time as mayor by the vision and grace you show in such developments. And I am confident that the future will also reward such vision.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

*Joan Mitchell*

Joan Mitchell  
(703) 299 1202



Did not  
Speak

2-19-03EM

Received by CC, Sent  
to CM, PZ, Recreation

February 22, 2003

Mayor Kerry Donley  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Future #1

Dear Mayor Donley,

The purpose of this letter is to express my concerns and displeasure about a planned development adjacent to Old Towns Greens, located off Slater's Lane in Alexandria, Virginia. After 36 years of active service as a U.S. Naval Officer, I retired and purchased a new town home in Old Town Greens, built by NV Homes. To date, my wife and I have thoroughly enjoyed living in Alexandria. After 22 moves, we looked forward to putting down roots and our home of choice was Alexandria. I am currently employed as a civilian government employee working in the Senior Executive Service at the Pentagon for the Department of the Navy.

Before we purchased our town house in Old Town Greens, we asked about the future development of the land adjacent to our property. We were told that there would be space between our property and whatever new development was being planned. We were told that there would be a park with ample green space between Old Town Greens and the next development. Apparently, much has changed since then. The proposed plans for Potomac Greens are much different than the original plan presented to us. I am very concerned about the changes and wanted you to be aware of these concerns so you can better represent the Ellis family as homeowners in Alexandria.

My concerns are as follows:

1. DENSITY - There is too little "green space" planned in the Potomac Greens development. In fact, it appears to be much denser than any other area in Old Town. One of the major positive aspects of Old Town is that the government leadership has maintained the charm of the area by demanding sufficient "green space" for use by citizens while providing a pleasing appearance. A major factor in influencing my wife and I to buy in Old Town Greens was that a large "green space" would be located between Old Town Greens and the planned development to the North (now known as Potomac Greens). The current development plans have reduced this planned "green space" to practically nothing. This is highly unsatisfactory and not in consonance with what we were led to believe. Also, we question whether the planned development is in concurrence with guidelines in place at this time.

2. TRAFFIC - In reviewing the plans, there appears to be only one access into and out of the Old Towns Greens and Potomac Greens developments. With the heavy traffic already being encountered on Slater's Lane particularly during commuting times, the situation will be intolerable. Alternative means or options for egress and ingress have to be found as well as the consideration of parking demands. The new development should not commence until these unsafe and impractical circumstances are resolved.

Although I expect Alexandria to continue to grow and provide adequate and well designed housing, recreational space, with reasonable parking and traffic flow, I do think that the responsible leadership of Alexandria has to carefully consider all development plans with the goal of protecting the citizens of Alexandria from ill-conceived or unreasonable ideas. I am not against growth as long as it is done correctly.

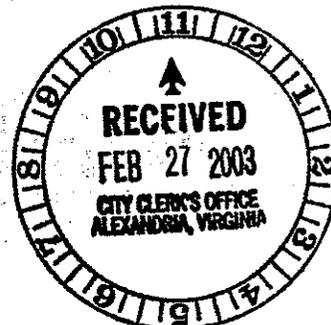
I respectfully request that you give my concerns your closest attention and do what is "right" for the town of Alexandria and the citizens of Old Town Greens.

Thank you for your time and your assistance.

Very respectfully,

Winford G. Ellis  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy (ret)

707 Hawkins Way  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(703) 838-2901  
jeroellis@aol.com



2-19-03 CM

CC rec'd.  
sent to COM, PEZ,  
Recreation  
CM 2/19  
Future

Did not  
Speak

February 25, 2003

Mayor Kerry Donley  
City Council  
301 King Street  
Alexandria VA 22314

Dear Mayor Donley,

I have recently reviewed site plans for the Potomac Greens Development that is slated for the property north of my home in Old Town Greens. I write to express concerns of neighbors and myself about these plans because they are significantly different from what was represented to me when I purchased my home in 1999.

My concerns address a number of issues that have the high probability of impacting our community in a negative way, namely:

- Absence of the promised park space (2-3 acre buffer) between Old Town Greens and any new development
- Lack of green or open space within the proposed development
- The high density of the proposed Potomac Greens Development; with 227 units, it is considerably more than the maximum allowed in the Concept Plan
- Drastically increased traffic through our neighborhood and the related safety and parking implications; this will add to the already-congested situation on Slaters Lane during the morning rush hour as well

At the time of purchase, I was told by NV Homes that there would be residential development at some time to our north. My neighbors and I do not contest the development, but rather the notable changes to the Concept Plan and the impacts that these changes indicate.

I chose to live in Old Town Greens because of its charm, proximity to the Capital and Old Town Alexandria, lovely parks and open spaces, and the bike path along the river – in short, for overall quality of life. I could have chosen to reside in a high density town home development in other parts of Northern Virginia at significantly lower cost but opted for this neighborhood based – in part – on assurances about the new development. Having reviewed the site maps for Potomac Greens, I contend there is a serious breach of trust at work. As such, I implore you, colleagues on the City Council and members of the Planning Commission to hold the developer, Crescent Resources LLC, accountable to the original Concept Plan.

Lastly, I inquire about the effect this development will have on the George Washington Memorial Parkway immediately to the east. The proximity of the development to the parkway seems likely to exacerbate the existing and serious problem of standing water on the roadway. During heavy rain events, this situation produces hazardous driving conditions for this main thoroughfare into/out of the City of Alexandria. I am available to discuss these issues and can be reached at the contacts listed below.

Sincerely,

*Jane M. Knecht*

Jane M. Knecht  
716 Hawkins Way  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
703/535-3142, [jknecht@erols.com](mailto:jknecht@erols.com)

cc: Crescent Resources LLC



GREGORY MINJACK  
700 ARCH HALL LANE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

Sent to  
CC, Com, P&Z/  
Recreation  
CMP/19/03

February 24, 2003

Did not  
Speak

Future

Kerry Donley  
Mayor  
City of Alexandria  
Suite 2300, City Hall  
301 King Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Mayor,

I am writing to alert you to a looming problem with the proposed Potomac Greens development and the effect that it will have on the entire City if allowed to proceed under the plan presented by the developers at a recent community meeting.

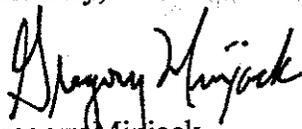
Based on the developer's current plan, the proposed development has significantly and materially deviated from the approved guidelines. From a quantifiable deficit of promised green space to a quantifiable excess of units, the Potomac Greens plan is a real threat to the quality of life in the North-end of the City. The current plan also promises to negatively affect the lives of all Alexandria residents who have to pass through the North-end of the City to get to Crystal City, the Airport, and DC.

In addition to the size and scope of the proposed development, the dog park and footbridge / pedestrian overpass beg innumerable problems for the City and its residents. **Ask your planning staff how they think a footbridge of the scale needed to traverse the Metro tracks will "land" between the Metro barrier and the adjacent city street.**

The dog park, planned to be wedged into a long narrow tract of land between a very noisy Metro and a children's playground, will not only cause major traffic disruptions, and pose danger to adults and children using adjacent recreational areas, but it presents other safety risks as it will be screened from view by trees and bushes from all sides (most other dog parks are visible from all angles for monitoring by the public and police). **Ask the police how they plan on monitoring this blind and inaccessible area.**

I urge you, the City Council, the Planning Commission, and the planning staff to hold the developers to the guidelines for the Potomac Greens development agreed to in 2001. Letting them chip away at standards involving density, preservation of green space, traffic mitigation, and safety is not acceptable to City residents.

Sincerely,

  
Gregory Minjack



2-19-03 CM



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
RICHMOND

MARIAN VAN LANDINGHAM  
CITY HALL  
301 KING STREET  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:  
PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS  
APPROPRIATIONS  
MILITIA, POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

FORTY-FIFTH DISTRICT

February 13, 2003

Mr. Philip Shucet, Commissioner  
Department of Transportation  
1401 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Mr. Shucet:

VDOT has surplus land in Alexandria near the Monroe Street Bridge that the city and the Northeast Citizens' Association are anxious to develop into a park for the neighborhood. VDOT has previously indicated to the city that this land cannot be disposed until a contact is let for the bridge, which may be years from now.

I would greatly appreciate your help in reconsideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Marian Van Landingham

Enclosures (Related Material)

Cc: Honorable Kerry Donley, Mayor *thanks!*  
Northeast Citizens' Association  
Richard Baier, Transportation & Environment Services

