



City of Alexandria, Virginia



MEMO

April 21, 2004

To: The Open Space Committee
Hon. Mayor and Members of Council

CC: Friends of Second Presbyterian Park
Federation of Civic Associations

From: Councilman Andrew H. Macdonald

Re: *Open Space Value of the Second Presbyterian Church property*

The Open Space Committee cites ten reasons why we should not buy the Second Presbyterian Church property. I need only *ONE* to say why we should: It is a large, lovely piece of open space in a congested City. In a City desperate for open space, that's reason enough.

If we keep hamstringing ourselves with all sorts of arbitrary criteria - must hit a bike trail, must adjoin a school, must be near a woodland - we won't buy anything. Indeed, I don't know of any land left in the City that's not already owned by the City that meets all these so-called open space objectives.

I sense that the majority of the Open Space Committee, and Council, need to feel that they are producing something tangible-- such as a bigger, better police station or sports center - for the effort to be meaningful and the cost justifiable.

Open space that does not provide a big recreational service, but enhances our long-term quality of life, is apparently too abstract a goal. But we should be prescient enough to see that it's also our job to safeguard such abstractions even if the political payback isn't so sweet. It's so much easier to say, "hey look at this big sports center I got built for the citizens of Alexandria," than to say, "hey here's six acres of open space where you can go and be quiet, or toss a Frisbee with your 10-year-old son or daughter."

I strongly disagree with the recommendation of the Open Space Committee that we not save this property. It is a fundamental difference of opinion. I'm not sure how to change this mindset, but I plan to continue make that a major objective while I'm a member of this Council.