

Del Ray Citizens Association

EXHIBIT NO. 2

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6-21-04

PO Box 2233

Alexandria VA 22301

Established 1954

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council
From: Justin M. Wilson, President
Date: Friday June 18, 2004
Subject: Report of the Open Space Steering Committee

We thank the City Council for the opportunity on Monday evening to provide input to the Council's consideration of the report of the Open Space Steering Committee. We have prepared this memo to supplement the testimony to be provided on Monday evening.

Prior to commenting on the specifics of the plan, we as an Association are appreciative of the considerable progress that has been made on this issue in the past year. In a little over one year, open space acquisition has gone from an issue relegated to political rhetoric, to a concrete plan for evaluation backed up by a dedicated revenue stream. We believe that this represents considerable progress.

We applaud the Council for creating the policy environment for this progress to occur. Furthermore, we applaud the work of the Open Space Steering Committee collectively, and its members individually. They have taken a topic fraught with controversy and crafted a framework for progress.

While we are pleased with the overall product, we are concerned that some aspects of the plan may have an adverse affect on our community and its ability to benefit from this initiative.

“Pocket” Parks: In a community such as ours, the presence of large parcels of land available for acquisition is nearly nonexistent. While we believe large parcels, where available, should be considered, we hope the Committee and the Council will give more serious consideration to the acquisition of smaller parcels of land to create the “pocket parks” often endemic to urban neighborhoods like ours.

Open Space Deficiency: In Section IV of the report, the Committee delineates six criteria that were not considered in their prioritization of candidate parcels. While we agree that most of the criteria are decisions best left up to the policymakers (Council), we believe the second criteria, “Does the benefit provide open space in a neighborhood or area that is deficient in open space?” is one that the Committee and staff are uniquely qualified to render judgment on in their recommendation to Council. Without this type of analysis in its recommendation, we feel the Committee will be examining the parcel in a vacuum.

Existing Open Space: While we realize that the upkeep, repair and improvement of existing open space was not contained in the charge given to the Committee, we continue to urge that Council look at ways to use the dedicated revenue stream to improve the open space already in the City's open space inventory. There are a considerable number of parks, playgrounds and other spaces within our community that could benefit from the dedication of funds to improve their utility to the community. This includes the Mount Vernon Community School/Duncan Library triangle, Mason Mini-Park, Commonwealth Avenue medians, and many others.

In addition to our comments on the specifics of the plan, we also polled our membership for suggestions of parcels that the Council should consider for acquisition and preservation as open space. Some of these parcels were included in the report—others were not.

We suggest the following:

- Intersection of Del Ray Avenue & Commonwealth Avenue
- Intersection of W. Mt. Ida Avenue & Hickory Street
- Intersection of Russell Road & Rosecrest Avenue

- Intersection of West Glebe & Mount Vernon Avenue (properties facing St. Rita's Church)
- Intersection of Howell Avenue & Jefferson Davis Highway
- Mount Vernon Avenue, between Custis & Del Ray Avenue
- Intersection of Lloyd's Lane & Russell Road
- Property within Potomac Yard

We thank you for your consideration and please contact me with any questions. I can be reached at 703-338-2843 or via e-mail at justin@justin.net.