

Del Ray Citizens Association

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- submitted by
David Fromm

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May 16, 2009

Dear Mayor Euille and members of City Council,

At the April meeting of the Del Ray Citizens Association, the membership voted unanimously in support of performing the study. Although it was acknowledged that there are important issues and questions to be addressed, it was felt there could be significant long-term benefits for the city and that this was an opportunity for the city to achieve goals espoused in numerous city initiatives related to smart growth, open space, transportation, and being an eco-city.

The attached article, which was printed in the Gazette Packet and the Alexandria Times, provides background on the history of the proposed land swap, the questions and issues that need to be addressed, and the potential long-term benefits to the city.

One persistent problem has been the lack of graphics showing what is possible. Attached are some illustrations to help overcome that difficulty.

- The first graphic shows the combined park, open space, and playing field area as it current exists and after the proposed land swap. It would make for a major contiguous park system.
- The second graphic highlights the sizes of existing and planned fields, and a significant portion of Braddock Fields.
- The third graphic shows the possible arrangement of 3 large soccer fields and one large baseball field.
- The fourth graphic shows 3 smaller soccer fields, one smaller baseball field, and how a significant portion of Braddock Fields fits behind George Washington Middle School.

The DRCA requests that you approve adding the study of the combined area of Land Bay L, the George Washington Middle School, and Braddock Fields to the Planning Department's work plan.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,
David Fromm
President

Celebrating 100 years of the Town of Potomac
1908 - 2008

To the editor,

On July 27, 1954, an article on the front page of the Gazette Packet reported that the City of Alexandria was "woefully lacking in both indoor and outdoor recreation areas." Fifty-five years later, the City is still 30 acres shy of the goals stated in the Open Space Master Plan. Now, in 2009, one problem is that there are fewer options for acquiring significant amounts of open space.

Potomac Yard is one of the few regions of the City with a large acreage of undeveloped land. In particular, Land Bay L, the area south of Monroe Bridge that extends down almost to the Braddock Metro, comprises (after subtracting 5 acres for roads) approximately 12 acres. It could potentially be developed with as many as 358 townhouses.

At the Potomac Yard community workshop held at George Washington Middle School at the end of January 2009, 7 of 9 tables (about 60 participants) expressed the opinion that serious consideration should be given to swapping Land Bay L (the area south of Monroe Bridge that extends down almost to the Braddock Metro) for the Braddock Fields which are adjacent to George Washington Middle School and the Braddock Metro.

The motivation was that if Land Bay L could be swapped for the approximately 3.5 acres of the Braddock Fields, the city would realize a significant net gain of over 8 acres of open space. The total space would be about 12 acres which, when combined with those at the expanded Simpson Park, around the bridge, and the Potomac Yard Linear Park, would make for an impressive major park system. It would also place density next to the Metro. No further analysis of the cost or benefits was done at the workshop.

Because of the opinion from the workshop, Eric Wagner, chair of the Planning Commission and the Potomac Yard Planning Advisory Group (PYPAG), and Faroll Hamer, Director of Planning and Zoning, asked the full PYPAG workgroup to consider the concept. PYPAG decided not to evaluate the concept in detail as part of their work plan. Instead, they would review a basic feasibility or threshold study to be performed by city staff.

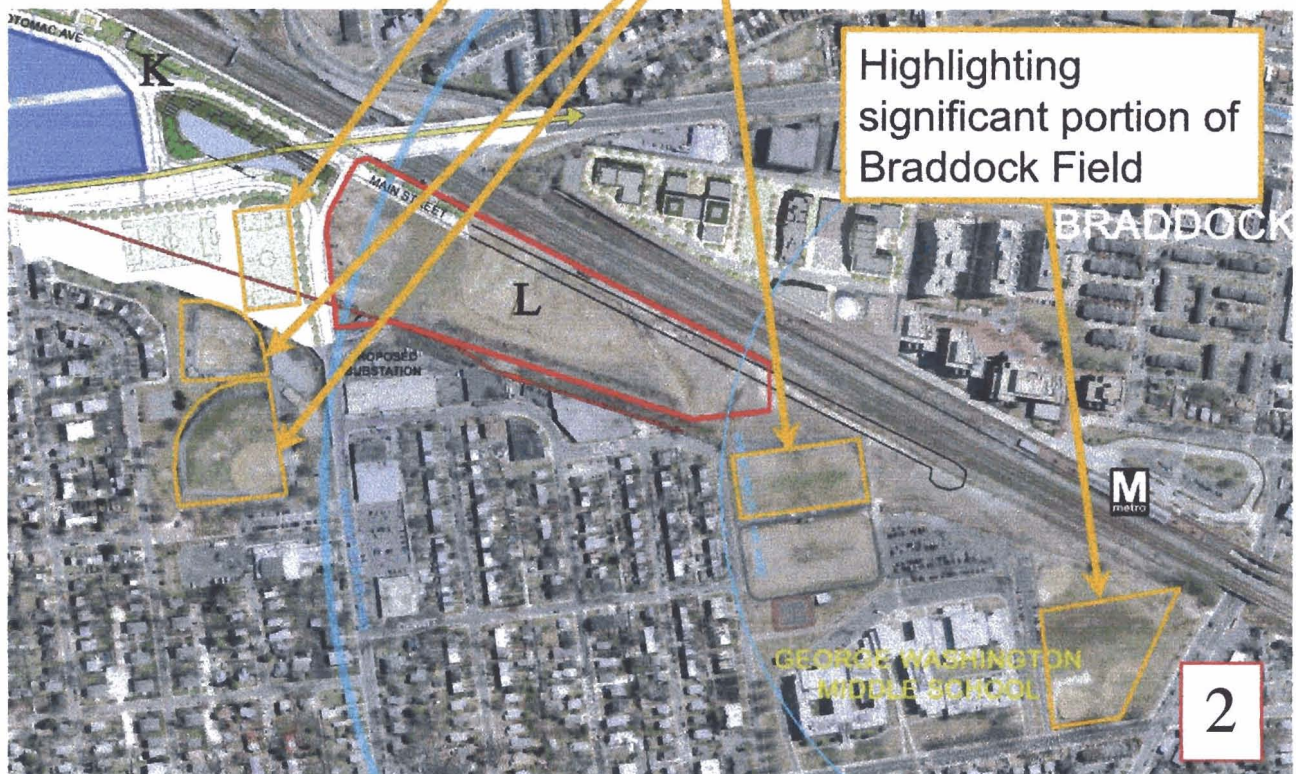
There are a lot of questions and challenges to be addressed, including:

- First and foremost, can the area behind GW Middle School, including the parking lot, when combined with Land Bay L be configured so there are useful playing fields that meet the needs of the school now and in the future? Will developing Braddock Fields hem the school in, reducing its potential capacity? How will the parking at GW be replaced?
- Or is this an opportunity to create a true campus for GW Middle School?
- Land Bay L is somewhat odd shaped. Do we really get useful space for the sports fields that the city needs?
- How accessible will the new open space be for the neighborhoods that now enjoy close proximity to Braddock Fields?
- How dense will the development be? Does the full density of Land Bay L transfer, or is it a value swap, which assuming the Braddock site to be more valuable, would result in less density?
- Will the traffic be worse than what will come from the townhouses planned for Land Bay L? Ideally being located next to a Metro will reduce automobile usage. Can the "Main Street" from Potomac Yard be extended down to carry some of the traffic instead of dumping it at the intersection of Mt. Vernon and Braddock Avenues?
- The developer would really prefer to build townhouses in Land Bay L and can submit a plan for those townhouses in June 2010.

These are significant challenges that need to be answered, but if there is an opportunity to have a net gain of 8 to 9 acres of open space and increased density at the Metro, shouldn't the City seriously explore that opportunity?



Highlighting sizes of planned & current fields



Showing possible placement of large fields



Showing possible placement of smaller fields

