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Opinion

Lamond property: Save our green space.

Dear editor:

A recent Mount Vernon Gazette article highlighted residential development on the few remaining pockets of green space in the Mount Vernon area. The article pointed out these developments offer such benefits as enabling families to have new homes with all the modern amenities without having to move from the area. However, not all aspects of continued development are favorable. We must consider increased traffic flow on already congested roads, greater demand on public services and, above all else, loss of our precious woodlands forever.

When the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors held open hearings this spring to solicit public comments regarding possible expenditure of monies generated by a proposed bond referendum, citizens eagerly responded. Residents addressed individual and group interests alike. They mentioned soccer and baseball fields, migratory bird sanctuaries, playgrounds, and passive parks. Whatever their ideas, the unifying theme to all their proposals was the urgent need to establish more protected green space and preserve that which still remains relatively pristine in this area.

One outcome of these public meetings was the identification of an 18-acre parcel of mature woodland bordered by Ft. Hunt Road, Morningside Drive and Villamay for acquisition. Known as the Lamond property, at 7509 Fort Hunt Road, this land was very high on the county's plan for

A Citizen Speaks Out

purchase.

Unfortunately, since that time a plan has been submitted to the county for residential development. According to this proposal, the developer intends to bulldoze 92 percent of the mature hardwood forest in order to build approximately 32 large homes. Regrettably, this plan has been submitted just prior to the upcoming bond referendum scheduled for November. If this project is approved, one of the few undeveloped parcels remaining in our area will be irrevocably lost.

Such pockets of urban wilderness

are priceless. What value can one place on habitat for the white-tailed deer, wild turkey and red fox, which reside on the Lamond property? How do you measure the pleasure derived from seeing a red crowned pileated woodpecker swoop from tree to tree in search of insects or of hearing the eerie echoing hoot of a great horned owl? Can we accurately assess the serenity and peace provided by listening to the sound of the wind in the trees? How do we evaluate the noise reduction these buffer trees provide from traffic on busy roads? Consider the shade, air purification and aesthetic qualities these beautiful trees supply.

Without opportunities to walk in the woods, how can you describe the scarlet robe a maple tree wears in the fall or the rustle of leaves underfoot to your young child? When we become morally outraged at the deforestation of South America, can we allow the very same thing to occur in our own backyard?

Resources like the Lamond property are few and far between. Our community leaders have the opportunity and responsibility to exhibit pru-

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dent leadership to save the Lamond property from development. They have the obligation to us, as well as to future generations, to preserve and protect what little green space remains.

To do your part, attend a public meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, August 18, at the Mount Vernon Government Center, and write to: Supervisor Gerry Hyland, 2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria, VA 22306, or to Gil McCutcheon, Fairfax County Park Authority, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035.

Patricia S.M. Markle