

August 24, 2009

Ronald J. Daniels, President
The Johns Hopkins University
Office of the President, 242 Garland Hall
3400 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, Md. 21218

Dear President Daniels,

In a discussion of ethics, W. D. Ross argues that there are “seven right making features of moral action”. One of those is the “Duty of promise-keeping: A duty to act according to explicit and implicit promises, including the implicit promise to tell the truth.”

The residents, who have lived in Gaithersburg and North Potomac for 30 years, knew Elizabeth Banks and knew what she wanted for Belward Farm. And we know what Johns Hopkins promised her. There are Johns Hopkins employees who knew Ms. Banks and admit that the current plan is not what she wanted. Doesn't JHU have a moral obligation to live up to its part of the agreement even though it has powerful attorneys who can handle the legal aspects of skirting the intentions of the deed?

Elizabeth Banks sold Belward Farm to Johns Hopkins at a gift price with restrictions that were clearly understood by all, verbally if not as clearly stated in the deed because she **trusted** JHU. Yet despite the restrictions accepted by JHU in order to purchase the farm for a much reduced sum, it is proposing a massive and intrusive commercial complex on Belward Farm. By doing so JHU is clearly abrogating its social, moral and ethical responsibilities to Ms. Banks and the community.

Johns Hopkins may have the resources to reinterpret contractual agreements to their benefit, but at what point do they consider the ethics of breaking a promise to an elderly woman who trusted them? At what point does JHU have the responsibility to consider the harmful effects their actions will have on the community? At what point does the pursuit of money take a back seat to morality and ethics?

David McDonough insists that JHU needs 15,000 people on the farm in order to cure diseases. He says that JHU needs 15,000 people on the farm to justify the Corridor Cities Transit. The same logic could be used to say that 30,000 people on the farm could cure twice as many diseases and justify a bullet train. But why stop at 30,000? Why not put 1,000,000 people on the farm to cure all of the world's diseases and justify a heliport? If Belward Farm were an island without restrictions regarding what could be built, perhaps that could be done.

However, Belward Farm is directly adjacent to established suburban residential neighborhoods with over 25,000 homes within 2.4 miles of the farm. Our roads are approaching gridlock. Residents cannot get out of their neighborhoods now because of the congestion. Yet JHU has decided, despite their commitment to Ms. Banks or the negative effects of their actions, to build an overpowering development on Belward Farm.

Most organizations are cognizant of the effect their actions will have on those around them. The description of Centennial Campus in North Carolina states: “All development is undertaken with consideration of preserving, connecting and enhancing these natural areas. This area will be designed to blend seamlessly with the surrounding neighborhoods and be a link to the community beyond.” Yet JHU has the audacity to assume it should be given *carte blanche* to build an outrageous commercial complex which is in its own self-interest regardless of the effect on others.

In your response to my previous letter you stated:

“Many of the concerns you raised have been addressed in the materials that Johns Hopkins has already submitted for public record.”

In reading through my previous letter to you I cannot see one concern that has been addressed. In fact, the current proposed development is even more overwhelming and intrusive now than it was when I wrote my previous letter in May. And if David McDonough and your attorneys had been able to strong-arm the Planning Board even further, it would be even worse.

You also stated: “Johns Hopkins also strives to create strong ties in local communities and is committed to enhancing the vitality of communities in which we have an active presence.”

I can assure you **nothing** could be farther from the truth when it comes to Belward Farm. You will destroy our community. Many of us who have lived here for over 25 years will be forced to move out of the area if this development is approved. We have seen the entire area developed over the years but nothing will be more destructive to our community and our lifestyles than the massive development planned for Belward Farm.

If there is any truth to the statement that JHU is “committed to enhancing the vitality of the communities in which we have an active presence”, which of the following commitments are you willing to put into a legally binding document in order to assuage the fears of the community?

1. The population density proposed for Belward Farm will be reduced to less than 4,000 so it will not overwhelm the surrounding community.
2. The character of Belward Farm will be maintained with minimal grading and leveling of the contours of the land.
3. The architecture used on the farm will be visually compatible with the community and the historic farmstead.
4. The buildings on Belward Farm will be in scale with the historic farmstead and the surrounding established residential neighborhoods.
5. The Corridor Cities Transitway will not traverse the farm causing auto and pedestrian havoc on Muddy Branch Road.
6. The original intentions of the deed will be enforced. Belward Farm will be a minimally intrusive educational or medical campus that will continue the legacy of the 100 year-old Civil War-era farm and will be in scale with the surrounding community.
7. The community will have an active and meaningful part in determining the development plans for Belward Farm.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Donna H. Baron
Coordinator
The Gaithersburg - North Potomac - Rockville Coalition