

Edited highlights from individual testimonies at the March 26, 2009 Planning Board Hearing by members of Residents for Reasonable Development (RRD), in response to the Master Plan Draft.

I am a true supporter of the sciences and understand the importance of research and development. However, I believe that we must also balance the idea of having a science city with common sense. A Science City like the one proposed by the Park and Planning Draft would be plausible if you were starting from scratch in an undeveloped area. However, as you know, this is not the case. This area is already developed with numerous housing areas and businesses on all sides. Our streets are already filled to capacity. While I know plans for the CCT and road infrastructure are in the works, the Residents for Reasonable Development feel the addition of 40,000 more jobs to this area would cause traffic to stagnate.

I realize the Park and Planning Draft is attempting to deal with the huge volume of traffic. However, it will be virtually impossible to move this amount of traffic in and out of the area in a timely manner. The five elevated interchanges that are planned are not just costly, but they in no way fit in with the existing suburban neighborhoods. According to the Transportation Appendix that accompanied the draft, the traffic models that were run show that the traffic congestion is going to be overwhelming. First of all, the traffic standard was raised from the suburban standard of 1450 cars per lane per hour to the urban standard of 1600 cars per lane per hour just so it could appear plausible at all. According to Fig. 25 in the appendix, there will be 21 intersections that will be at or above the 90% of the urban standard. These 21 intersections do not even include the proposed 5 interchanges that are being proposed for our busiest intersections. This kind of congestion would be an unprecedented change for our area.

The Mission Hills neighborhood runs parallel to Great Seneca Highway and borders Belward Farm. The draft calls for the CCT to run the length of the farm where it would then go out onto Muddy Branch and finally connect back onto Great Seneca Highway. The CCT would cross the only entrance into our neighborhood. It is already extremely difficult to enter and exit our neighborhood during peak driving hours. The addition of all of the traffic and the CCT would create an impossible situation for our neighborhood. I implore that you insist on changing the route of the CCT. Please move the CCT route from Muddy Branch and instead use the proposed route introduced by the Residents for Reasonable Development which would send the CCT directly back to Great Seneca Highway after the third LSC stop on Belward.

Belward Farm sparks emotion in many area residents. What Mrs. Banks envisioned when she deeded the property to JHU was a CAMPUS dedicated to research and education. Mrs. Banks did not consider a “Biopolis” on Belward. Some consider her vision as shortsighted and outdated, but RRD and I believe that there is a unique and viable way to build this campus, preserve the farmstead, AND allow for the creation of something truly precedent setting. I think of it as JHU Belward Preserve.

What RRD and I envision is a Central Park-like, “greenscape” on Belward that would fit seamlessly into the fabric of the area as it moves from East to West. A compact walkable urban area anchored by transit would be built on the eastern portion of the property. Transit could loop

back out to Key West Avenue and return to Great Seneca HWY, and a road could still connect across to Muddy Branch. Buildings could still be built allowing for the required classroom and research space. The farmstead would be visually accessible, and the open space could be just that – open lush, green park, meadow, and trees. JHU Belward could be utilized as an agricultural, recreational and historical park. It could be a prime location for cultural arts, music, fine arts, and festivals. A win-win situation could be celebrated by Montgomery County Park and Planning and JHU.

RRD proposes creation of an Open Space Preservation Initiative that would award TDR credits to the property owner – in this case, JHU, who could then utilize these credits at their classroom property in LSC central or market them to other developers in Gaithersburg West. This would provide JHU with the ability and the financial incentive to create a true Research CAMPUS, a place where scientists, educators, students, etc., could enjoy the natural space in large swaths instead of in smaller trails and patches. Surrounding residents would see a development come into play that would fit the fabric and feel of the suburban area in which they live, and the increase in traffic could be minimized. This would still ensure an increase in jobs and development, but the density would be moved east.

Unlike neighborhoods around Metro stations that have been designated growth centers for a long time, specifically designed and planned with logical foresight, this proposed plan is a complete transplant of a city – plunked into the middle of suburbia! Despite the fact that the CCT has by definition a lower ridership than a Metro, the high density urban plan appears to be modeled on the Metro station city-scape.

What happened to the long range plan for this entire suburban community? In this case we never heard of the notion of a high density urban center until JHU sprang it at a community meeting not so long ago. It certainly was not in the original master plan and we strongly believe as evidenced and described in earlier presentations, that this density is absolutely not necessary for all or any of the research that JHU plans to undertake there. Also noted this evening was the very viable idea of a research center surrounded by a park setting. Think what the benefits would be to have our own mini Central Park in the middle of the county! What foresight that would demonstrate and such a gem for generations to come, and what a showcase for JHU and the county.

So imagine a master plan that takes away suburbia and transplants a major city environment with all its implications – 5-7 elevated interchanges, 21 overall interchanges, car capacity as you heard which will exceed 1600cars/lane/hour – unprecedented numbers for even a urban setting and high-rises that are more characteristic of downtown urban settings. With the 60,000 jobs planned for this area the result will be the largest urban center in the county, this is bigger than Bethesda which accounts for 45,000 jobs. Did we bargain for this? And is this right for these neighborhoods? Absolutely No!

Ms. Bank's deed specified that the Belward farm should be developed for agriculture, academic, research and development, delivery of health, medical care and services or related purposes only. According to Webster and Oxford dictionaries, the words "related" and "associated" have same meaning. Certainly hotels, housing, restaurants, theaters, and commercial buildings are not associated with research activities. Montgomery County has three research campuses: NIST, NIH and FDA. None of these campuses has housing, commercial office buildings, theaters, or restaurants.

I am an engineer at NIST. I was involved in feasibility study, planning, programming and review of construction documents for 21st century state of the art advanced measurement lab. Not a single research laboratory building at NIST is higher than 4 stories. NIST is famous for standards and technology not only in USA, but through out the world. NIST has only 3000 scientists, not 17000 as JHU proposed. It is the quality of scientists, not the quantity of people, that is required to do the research.

I am a member of Residents for Reasonable Development, whose alternative plan for Belward-LSC allows for reasonable growth while by preserving green space and minimizing the impact of development on our environment and shared infrastructure. As a biotech professional, I **support** the growth of life sciences R&D and business in our county. I am concerned, however, about the scope of the draft plan under consideration.

Our nation's most vital and productive biotech centers did not come into being as a result of government mandates, but rather emerged from the vision and hard work of dedicated scientists and entrepreneurs, often in collaboration with premier academic research institutions. Regrettably, it is impossible to determine whether the present plan will foster the kind of innovation and economic growth that some have predicted, since Johns Hopkins has not articulated a clear vision for Belward, let alone a detailed proposal for how this land will be utilized.

It is worth taking a look at other successful research campuses in order to get some sort of benchmark for the Belward-LSC development.

Consider the Scripps Research Institute, which is among the largest and most reputable non-profit biomedical research organizations in the world. The Scripps campus in La Jolla, CA has 2800 staff and 1M square feet of facility space. The newly established Scripps facility in southern Florida will have about 500 staff and 350K sq ft. of space. Biopolis in Singapore, which has been touted as a model for Belward-LSC, is projected to have about 2 M sq ft at completion and 2000 staff.

By these standards, the size and density of the proposed development are truly excessive: **20 million** square feet of commercial space, ~5 M of which would be in Belward, and **60,000** employees overall. These numbers beg the question of what JHU **actually** plans to do with this land. Will this be a world-class research campus or a commercial real estate venture? [I note

that none of the business leaders who have spoken here in support of developing Belward-LSC has made a case for the **scope** of development proposed in the draft plan.]

Finally, I am quite concerned about the traffic congestion that will inevitably result from the proposed development. Rather than integrate residential communities with Belward, the increased traffic volume on Muddy Branch Rd, Great Seneca Hwy and Key West Avenue as well as the planned CCT route along Muddy Branch will effectively sever whatever links might exist between the neighboring communities and the Belward campus. I maintain that this scale of development is simply incompatible with the live-work-play community that the planning staff claim to be seeking.

Let me give some comparisons between the draft Master Plan and what we consider reasonable development. Rather than the Master Plan's fully built commercial space of 20 million square feet with 60,000 jobs, we'd like the limit of commercial build-out across the six traffic zones to be 12 million square feet with 36,000 potential jobs. That is still a 15,000 job increase over today and almost a doubling of commercial square footage. On LSC Belward, a reasonable limit would be 2 million square feet, not the 4.6 million that Ms Sturgeon presented, and certainly not the tripling of the F.A.R. density from 0.3 to 1.0 as this plan proposes. The Belward Farm was decided to be a site for Research and Education, and was expected to be a low density research & education campus. Now Belward and Science City appear to have evolved into an indistinguishable commercial real estate development project.

I am concerned about the confused state of the staging plan as put forward in the Draft. Although the overall plan has six traffic zones, the staging requirements and build-out numbers only apply to three: the LSC Central, West, and Belward. The 6 million commercial square feet allowed in Stage 1 is less than the currently existing 6.9 million in the plan area.

The developers have painted a rosy portrait of a pot of gold waiting if only they build a rainbow pathway. When I asked Johns Hopkins whether they had any commitment from NIH to move facilities to this Science City, the answer I got was a clear **No!** In fact, we have not been told of any major funded research effort or entity that might take up a significant piece of the new commercial construction. We are being asked to sacrifice our residential community and quality of life, for what could become mostly office space.

The Transportation Plan assumes that there will be a 30% non-auto driver mode share. It boggles the mind (and really overheats the models) to assume 30% of people working in this area would not be driving their cars. What about the road impact of all the people who will live in the new housing units and will be commuting to jobs outside this area? We, the taxpayers of Montgomery County, will be stuck with the bill for the infrastructure development, and the gridlock.