

BELWARD FARM – A NEW VISION

1. In the past five years the metropolitan MD-VA-DC commercial office market has changed considerably:
 - Montgomery County has [11 million sq ft of vacant commercial office space](#) with little hope that it will once again be filled at equivalent or higher per-sq-ft rates.
 - The suburban office complex has been declared [a relic](#).
 - It is the policy of GSA to locate federal offices within [a 1/2-mile walkable distance to Metrorail Stations](#) and Belward Farm is 5 miles from the nearest Metro station.
 - “A more sustainable mix of uses” was recommended in a study for the Planning Board by [Partners for Economic Solutions](#) for the single-use office complex proposed on Johns Hopkins Research Campus.
2. Based on these factors, the proposed development on Belward Farm needs an update.
3. We are recommending a concept that would be a win-win for everyone and we urge Johns Hopkins to consider having an “agrihood” built on Belward Farm. An agrihood is a residential community built around, and integral to, a working farm. Depending on the size of the working farm it could produce the fruits and vegetables for the residents and the community at large. It could also be a hub for locally sourced food crops and products from the Agricultural Reserve. Belward Farm would be an absolutely perfect agrihood.
4. Belward Farm could reflect a new vision for Johns Hopkins with fresh organic food along with sociability, exercise, education and an emphasis on wellness through positive change that might include:
 - A Johns Hopkins Health and Wellness Center which could offer integrative medical services and could serve as a place where doctors from JHU could see local patients.
 - The Belward agrihood would be a great location for the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future with its emphasis on improving our food system and strengthening local and regional food capacity.
 - A neighborhood with a grid pattern of streets with sidewalks and an eye toward sustainability, sociability, health and wellness could be built around the organic farm.
 - The existing barns and structures could be repurposed into an artisan foods village to promote and sell products and produce from Belward Farm as well as farms in the Ag Reserve such as fruits, vegetables, meats, milk, wine, cheese, eggs, flowers, baked goods and honey. Pottery, woven goods, art and handmade furniture could also be offered.
 - The existing homes and structures would be a great location to hold classes in healthy cooking, canning and sustainable deer-resistant landscaping with native plants. Classes and field trips to the farm would be an ideal way to teach children the importance of fresh healthy food as well as where their food comes from.
 - A farm-to-table restaurant would be a perfect addition.
5. An organic farm with its fruits, vegetables, classes, and events has been known in other agrihoods to be such an effective draw that a marketing budget for the homes in the neighborhood could be unnecessary. At Prairie Crossing, an agrihood north of Chicago, feature articles about the new local food farm helped to drive sales more effectively than ads in the real estate section of the Chicago Tribune
6. According to David Brown of Knopf & Brown and attorney for the Banks family, some technical issues regarding the zoning and the deed would need to be addressed, but if Hopkins and the family are on the same page regarding the agrihood, he doesn't see a problem in working through the issues.

ATTENDEES:

Johns Hopkins:

David McDonough – Assistant Director, Real Estate Division

Leslie Weber - Director of the JHU Montgomery County Campus and of Government & Community Affairs for Montgomery County.

Community:

Caroline Taylor – Executive Director, Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Diana Conway – Past President of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance

Donna Baron – Coordinator, The Gaithersburg – North Potomac – Rockville Coalition

Greg Glenn - Co-Founder, CEO & Farm Manager, Rocklands Farm, Poolesville, MD

Lisa Cline – Resident of Washingtonian Woods and founder of Sensible CCT

Magda Clyne – Resident of Mission Hills

Margaret De Arcangelis – Preservation Services Director, Preservation Maryland

Mike Watkins – Founder and principal of Michael Watkins Architect, LLC, an architecture and town planning firm, Kentlands.

Paul Hlavinka – Founder of the Muddy Branch Alliance and resident of Westleigh

Russ Dalin – President of the HOA of Washingtonian Woods

Not attending but concurring:

Jeff Jex – President of the Mission Hills HOA