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Elaine Amir  
Director, Montgomery County Campus

An Invitation for Continued Dialog  
March 18, 2009

Dear Community Leader:

Since December 2007, Johns Hopkins University has been working collaboratively with local residents, property owners, and County officials in the formation of the vision, mission, and plan for the development of the JHU Belward Research Campus and the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center. We are eager to continue this connection with the community as the Gaithersburg West Master Plan moves through the review process this year and during the more detailed planning stages in the years ahead.

The Gaithersburg West Master Plan provides a long-term vision for the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center: To create a vibrant, world-class center for science, healthcare and education; to provide knowledge-based jobs for our children; and to transform what is now a predominantly auto-dependent commercial area into a great transit-oriented place to live, work and play.

In recent weeks, I have noticed a number of references in letters and comments coming from the community that address the timeframe and the advantages and disadvantages of this new research center. While I am encouraged by the interest in the plan, I am dismayed of late to see community correspondence that includes information and statistics that may alarm readers and that are totally without basis.

I would be happy to meet with you and your community organization face-to-face to discuss the details of this plan, but first let me draw your attention to some of the most salient issues.

**Timeline:** The timeline for the full build-out of the Belward Research Campus and the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center is 20-30+ years. This development will not “pop up” overnight. We are not even expected to break ground until 2012 or 2013, at the earliest.

**Staged Development and Adequate Infrastructure:** The proposed Gaithersburg West Master Plan requires that roads, schools, public facilities, funding for the Corridor Cities Transitway, etc., be in place before development can occur. This is called “staged development.” Johns Hopkins University fully supports these development controls.

**Belward Site Development:** It is true that Johns Hopkins University is advocating for taller buildings in order to accommodate research and ensure a greater amount of usable green space for the community (i.e., parks, walking and bike paths, forested buffers, etc.). The proposed plan will allow for up to 45% green space and provides a vibrant urban village area to encourage greater walking, biking and transit ridership. In comparison, the current approved plan for Belward has 25% green, open space and acres of surface parking lots.

**Schools:** Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) officials have been determining what additional school facilities might be required to address the needs of the new community during the next 20-30+ years. For example, the draft master plan provides for the potential of a new elementary school at the redeveloped site of the current Public Safety Training Academy.

**Jobs:** The proposed Gaithersburg West Master Plan calls for an additional 22,000 jobs above the currently planned for 38,000 jobs, for a total of 60,000 jobs. These additional jobs will be created over a period of 20 to 30 years and will provide a significant boost to our economy over the long-term, including \$122 million in new income tax revenues that will benefit the County. These revenues will help ensure that we have adequate resources to help sustain our vibrant school system.

**Community Involvement:** There has been extensive community involvement during the planning process. Johns Hopkins University has held 6 open community meetings and 2 full-day charrettes, and responded to numerous requests for small group or individual meetings. The community meetings and charrettes were advertised via flyers (hand delivered to local communities as well as posted at area businesses), email notices, signs posted around the Belward Research Campus, and notices in local newspapers. In addition, the Montgomery County Planning Department has held 4 community meetings in which Johns Hopkins representatives have participated.

If you look at the proposed Gaithersburg West Master Plan, you will see that changes have been made in response to community feedback. These changes include an expanded "historical designation" area around the Belward farmhouse (from the current 7-8 acres to a proposed 10-12 acres) and expanded forested buffers around the Belward property's edge.

I encourage you to share this information with your organization's members. Again, we would welcome the opportunity to speak at an upcoming meeting to explain the vision and the plan and to address any concerns you may have.

The planning process is just beginning and your input on how we reach this vision is key.

Sincerely,



Elaine Amir

**Contact to set up a meeting in your community:**

Robin Ferrier, Communications Manager  
rferrier@jhu.edu or 301-315-2896

**For more information about community meetings held to date:**

<http://www.mcc.jhu.edu/vision2030/>