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August 1, 2012

Ms. Linda Carroll  
Bluegrass Trust for Historic Preservation  
253 Market Street  
Lexington, Kentucky 40507

Dear Linda;

This is in response to your letter to Dr. Capilouto and Dean Brennen of June 18, 2012 concerning the general area of campus located near Washington Avenue and Limestone Street. Your letter addressed the potential for future University construction in an area of campus currently occupied on the site of the former Matthews garden now serving as a native species woodland undergrowth facility.

At the outset, I believe it appropriate to note that President Capilouto spent the first several months of his tenure listening to the University's various constituencies, including our own faculty, staff, and students, and government, business, and civic leaders in Lexington and across the state. In addition, he formed a University Review Committee of faculty and staff to review the University's current status and make recommendations for our further growth and success. Following that substantial input and in consultation with the Board of Trustees, the President identified two areas where substantial attention and energy need to be directed: the need to transform the University's aging infrastructure and further strengthen the experience of our undergraduate students. All of our discussions and planning have been built around those areas of emphasis.

Addressing your letter directly, you partially stated: "Specifically, sources have advised our office of the intended demolition of 658 South Limestone (the Ligon House) and 660 South Limestone, (the Mathews House and Garden). We were further advised that this demolition would be for the purposes of renovations which are to be made to the College of Law building, including constructing a surface parking lot which would be dedicated to the use of the College of Law."

We appreciate your interest and views and this response is likewise meant to fully and responsively set out issues and observations on the part of the university administration:

(1) It is important to consider this area of campus in the context of overall university land capacity and our acquisition boundary. In the early 1990's the University of Kentucky, as part of a campus master planning exercise self-imposed an acquisition boundary around the university to protect neighbors and to advise property owners well in advance what properties if they become available that we would potentially purchase. Since then the university has honored this boundary with internal growth needs gradually consuming more and more of our land capacity. Future planned growth will continue to consume more and more additional land, surface parking lots, and recreational space as well. Our recently announced plans to increase on campus housing beds will add to the pressure on existing land capacity. Internal growth pressure within our boundaries is increasingly an issue for the university going forward.

(2) The cost of new and or replacement buildings combined with state funding challenges has reached a point whereby new solutions to facility needs are mandated. The high cost of a new replacement Law School previously discussed for Scott Street had simply reached a point of being financially non attainable. That said the university then looked at major renovation and expansion of the existing building. At issue is tens of millions of dollars in cost savings by doing a renovation and expansion of the Law building. The expansion will require demolition of the houses and a likely relocation of the undergrowth forest facility. A parking lot specifically for this facility has not been planned. The timing of such a Law School expansion has not been established.

(3) The university appreciates our “historic” assets. We have recently funded significant repairs to one of our houses along Maxwell Street. We likewise have put funds into Spindletop Hall repairs as well as into Carnahan House repairs. However, when considering houses within the core of campus we simply do not have the financial or space availability to say we can permanently protect these homes that once bordered a university but are now within the central campus itself. Should demolition be required of these houses, we will produce full historic documentation and photographic records of the buildings.

(4) Our Washington Avenue corridor contains some of our poorest and most outdated and inadequate building stock. Much of it simply needs to be removed and rebuilt with modern educational facilities. In an effort to be fully transparent, I recently met with Biology Department faculty and staff to share what I believed to be the increasing likelihood of major renovations and new facilities over the next decade directly along the Washington Street corridor. I suggested to them that we work now to consider alternatives for relocating the woodland undergrowth facility to a more appropriate and more protected university property. It seems to me prudent to begin those conversations now when long term needs are being discussed, rather than in a rush later as a facility project begins. I do believe growth pressures and space needs in this area will make relocation of this facility highly likely within the next decade.

In conclusion, our land-locked university must utilize our limited available space very carefully and strategically. In the new financial world UK operates within, we must shepherd our resources strategically and carefully.

I would be happy to meet with you and tour the area in question and discuss the above issues in more detail.

Sincerely,



Bob Wiseman  
Vice President for Facilities Management

BW/cb

c: Eli Capilouto, President  
David Brennen, Dean – College of Law