

**McKownville Improvement Association
Founded 1924**

To: Assemblyman Ron Canestraro
Legislators Office Building Room 926
Albany, NY 12248

From: Donald Reeb, president, McKownville Improvement Association, and
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Subject: State University Purchase of
Residential Property in McKownville

Date: August 6, 2011

The University at Albany announced it is looking to buy a 9-acre residential parcel in McKownville.

The McKownville parcel contains two homes and a barn and abuts the “ring road” of the University. Judge John Holt-Harris once owned the 9-acre parcel and it, in turn, abuts on two sides 15 homes in McKownville, on Norwood Street and Waverly Place.

The ring road serves, since the University was built, as the line of separation between the neighborhood and the University. Promises were made when the University was constructed that the University would not acquire any more land or residential properties in McKownville. Until now, that promise has been honored by every president—from Evan Revere Collins to present. More recently, President Karen Hitchcock honored it when McKownville residential property near the Western Avenue entrance to the University came on the market.

The University admitted that it has no plans at this time for the 9-acre parcel--that is, the University never expected to own the property. It came on the market and, having no respect for the historic relationship with the neighborhood, is now planning to buy it if, as President Philip said, it could agree on the price. The asking price is \$1.6 million; it is assessed for

property tax purposes at \$597,000. The University at Albany Foundation is expected to be the buyer.

The McKownville neighborhood benefits greatly from having the University as a neighbor. However, the University benefits greatly from having the neighborhood as a neighbor. Union College spent millions on its neighborhood trying to make it safe for its students and employees---the University at Albany gained that benefit free—just as the neighborhood gained the benefits of having the University as a neighbor without cost.

It could be shortsighted for the University to endanger the quality of the neighborhood.

The 9-acre parcel with its two hills and thick woods shields the neighborhood from the University. The construction of a parking lot for the proposed new football stadium, the most likely use of the parcel, would increase the storm water problems already besetting the neighborhood, increase noise, diminish tranquility from the lights and traffic and diminish the value of property while reducing the tax base for our McKownville (volunteer) fire department.

The University has deep pockets----private buyers will not compete for residential land with the University. The construction of eight or so homes on the site, what the community assumed would happen on the site, is not what is upsetting to the neighborhood—**it is the land grab by the University.**

The more than 3,000 residents of McKownville are asking for your help. The historic bargain with the University—the University stays on its side, the neighborhood stays on its side of the ring road—need be respected.

NB— about 30 years ago, others and I did a “cash management study” and a “fire department staffing study” for the City of Cohoes when I was director of the Financial Management Center at the University. I trust that both of these reports served Cohoes well when you were Mayor. I have been retired from the University since 1999 though in 2011 I received the “Virginia Horan” Award from the Guilderland Democratic Party for outstanding community service.