

## LAND USE

## Build It (Farm It!) and They Will Come

"Where do we go with this?" posited the fleece-clad Bob Baldwin facing the 50 or so

participants at the close of the two-day inaugural conference of the Baldwin Center for Preservation Development. The conference's subject: "Residential Development and the Working Landscape: Collide, Contain, Co-exist, or Coalesce."

Robert H. Baldwin, Jr., has an open demeanor and a self-deprecating sense of humor that puts the participants gathered at the newly constructed Baldwin Center at ease. As president of New Hampshire-based Qroe Development, he is invested in the success of Bundoran Farm, the 2,300-acre "Preservation Development" project located in southern Albemarle County.

Located at Bundoran, the Baldwin Center houses a non-profit foundation with the mission to showcase innovative practices in rural land use planning and development, agricultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. Named in honor of the late Robert H. Baldwin, Sr., a pioneer in the use of development to preserve New England farmland and the early visionary for Bundoran Farm, the Center, designed and built by GeoBarns of Vermont, is a modern riff on the traditional barns found on the property.

The Symposium's invited participants came from all over the country with a variety of backgrounds: farmers, developers, non-profit land conservation organizations, government officials, and leading academics, in order to gather at the Center and share their



Participants included Steve McLean, co-founder of McLean Faulconer, Inc. Realtors, and Tayloe Murphy, former Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources



Symposium Leader Robert H. Baldwin, Jr.

experiences, perspectives, and expertise related to the preservation of working agrarian landscapes.

"When it comes to the mixing of residential development and farms, historic exurban settlement patterns seem to have reflected either a collision of the two uses, resulting in an unhappy outcome, or containment of uses, a subtly hostile approach," Baldwin said to open the symposium. "We believe that if planned right, the uses could, at the least, peacefully coexist and very possibly coalesce into a mutually beneficial arrangement. The Symposium's goal is to explore that hypothesis."

Baldwin's hypothesis and business plan for the Bundoran Farm project depends on the predicate that home buyers will appreciate the beauty of the Farm, the guaranty and protection of its open space and the concept of a true working farm as a self sus-

taining "amenity" and, most importantly, will be willing to pay a 25-to-30% premium for it.

At the conclusion, Bob Baldwin asserted that the most important task for the Center was the ability to demonstrate that, through the prospective success of Bundoran Farm and other projects, rural development can "deliver." This is where theory versus the harsh reality of the worst real estate market in generations comes in to play. Baldwin acknowledges this reality but believes demographics and values are on his side. In the words of his late father: "given the current market sentiment toward green development and sustainable development, it'll (preservation development) practically be mandatory in the future". While Bob, Sr. bought the farm, Bob, Jr. has bet the farm on that future.

— Edward H. Carter, part-time Albemarle resident and a director of BlueLine Conservation, a Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit brokerage, conservation finance, and eco-services firm.