

Meagan, please share these comments with the Planning Commission members

These are my reflections on the comments made to the Planning Commission at their September 13 meeting.

The University district is a desert of affordable housing for low-income workers, bipoc families, and workers who want to live in Burlington and not have a car. The University and UVMC is planning to provide some housing for their grad students, staff, and young faculty in South Burlington. Those renters are more mature, experienced at living on their own, and make very good neighbors on our streets overwhelmed by 20-22 years olds living anonymously on their own for the first time without parent, university, or societal expectations for neighborly conduct.

UVM is enrolling 11,500 students a year now, up 500 students since the Fall of 2021 according to their website. They are able to provide beds for 6250 students with the collaboration of the Redstone Real Estate Firm. That means that UVM is expecting the neighborhoods around the university to absorb 5250 students. These students provide a strong revenue source for the University without their having the expense of providing for them on campus. In essence undergrads are what we Vermonters call "a cash cow" for the wealthy University. Many undergrad renters are sophomores despite what the university says because they do not have a good tracking system to know where their students live. Lisa Kingsbury may not know the numbers, but neighbors who interact daily with the students know. There are ordinance violations all over with more students in a rental, noise levels, underage drinking, and bonfires. Exhausted longer-term residents are expected to monitor and report violations by undergrad neighbors, playing the role of property manager. Our undergrad neighbors move every June 1 with new students replacing them.

Comments about the esthetics and heights of the buildings and green space on Trinity Campus indicated that the people commenting did not live among the undergrads on a street with a majority of housing for student rentals. Trinity campus may accommodate a high density of housing for students similar to Redstone Campus or the Athletic Campus. If the Planning Commission accepts the esthetic comments and UVM's proposal as is only, then the Trinity Campus will a beautiful, serene green island with an area in Ward 8 that is overcrowded by undergrad renters packed into rentals.

Allowing UVM to only increase its housing by only 500 beds, the Planning Commission will be missing an opportunity to improve and increase the affordability, availability of rentals to non-undergrads in the dense urban area near our commercial district. The streets for undergrad rentals will continue to be crowded with more students, cars, and be unaesthetically pleasing with limited green space.

Sharon Bushor's comments about traffic on Colchester Avenue and on the campus green space reflect the concerns we neighbors on University Terrace have had for years about traffic on Main Street, our street, and nearby campus green space during college opening. It is really the result of poor planning and management by the University, judging from my positive experience helping my children enter the Universities of Wisconsin and Michigan.

In conclusion, UVM's proposal will have little impact on its neighbors in the larger University district. It will impact the housing crisis, moving more development out to the valuable farmland, causing more traffic congestion coming into the city.

The recent report that the Morrill Land Grant Program provided money from the sale of indigenous peoples' land helped UVM establish its College of Agriculture. Its neighbors are not indigenous people, but UVM is taking advantage of Burlington residents by creating a housing demand, allowing collaborating real estate investors to house their students by outbidding families and others who would like to live in the housing in our well-regarded city.

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