

**From:** Gabrielle Sealy [<mailto:gksealy@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 30, 2014 1:19 PM  
**To:** Brian Pine; Mayor's Office  
**Subject:** Draft Housing Plan: Comments

Dear Brian and Mayor Weinberger,

We are writing in response to the draft Housing Plan. The Burlington Downtown Strategy Report prepared by HR&A Advisors was fairly comprehensive and has some good suggestions/solutions for moving forward, as well as areas that are highly concerning. Below are sections of the housing plan and comments follow.

***Why this Housing Plan and why focus on downtown?*** *The City commissioned a study to evaluate the City's chronic housing shortage and to identify potential solutions. The Downtown Housing Development Strategy found a variety of reasons for the persistent housing affordability crisis and offered solutions. It should be noted that the scope of the study was downtown Burlington as defined by the "central business district" plus a 1/2 -mile radius. This geographic focus was informed by both the planBTV and the City's recent Neighborhood Development Area designation. However, many of the action items in this plan have city-wide implications and applicability.*

**Comment on above:** There is no question that there is a housing shortage in Burlington. Multi-unit housing should be built in the downtown core, not in neighborhoods. One area of focus from this report (the area within Pearl St to College St, South Willard to South Union) is a NEIGHBORHOOD, not downtown. In the report, you show 2 areas within this neighborhood to have either a dorm or multi-unit housing. We live in this neighborhood with many residential owner occupied homes. Each year more homes are turning over to rentals as the city continues to treat our neighborhood like "downtown". This housing plan should apply to the downtown core area only and not in the neighborhoods.

***Support creation of off-campus purpose-built housing for 2,200 students over the next decade:*** *Purpose-built, appropriately managed housing for 2200 of the 4650 undergraduate students living off campus – along with agreements from the academic institutions not to increase the number of students living off campus – would simultaneously free up a tight housing market and address an enduring quality of life challenge within the City. One way for the City to incent the creation of more off-campus student apartments is to make them exempt from IZ requirements provided the units are occupied by under-graduate and graduate students enrolled in Champlain College or UVM.*

**Comment on above:** This is a great first step, but UVM needs to be held accountable for housing more of their students. Below is the table from HR&A showing housing of students. UVM is not housing even half of their students. If UVM addressed this issue the quality of life in our neighborhoods would greatly improve. The City needs to play an active role in making this happen through the MOA with UVM. Only the City has the ability to hold UVM accountable.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Enrollment, 2010-2011*</b>	<b>On-Campus Beds, 2010-2011</b>	<b>Estimated # of Students Living Off-Campus<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>% Students Living Off-Campus</b>
University of Vermont (including medical students)	12,122	5,707	6,415	52.9%
Champlain College	2,000	1,220	780	39.0%

St. Michael's College	2,500	2,000	500	20.0%
Burlington College	185	24	161	87.0%
Albany College of Pharmacy	150	116	34	22.7%
Vermont Technical College (full-time students)	300	22	278	92.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,257</b>	<b>9,089</b>	<b>8,168</b>	<b>47.3%</b>

**Neighborhood Stabilization Strategy:** *The necessary corollary accompanying an effort to construct more purpose-built, managed student housing is a proactive strategy for areas of Burlington with large concentrations of students to incentivize the gradual conversion of student rentals to housing for families, retirees, empty nesters and young professionals from all across the income spectrum. There are some promising models nationally that involve focused efforts to attract a new mix of property owners in neighborhoods with similar characteristics. The City must work with other employers to develop innovative ways to re-purpose student rentals if the potential to stabilize neighborhoods can ever be fully realized. The City will pursue the development of a soft second mortgage program to assist first-time homebuyers in a specific target area with down-payments, closing costs and rehab for code compliance.*

**Comment on above:** This neighborhood stabilization strategy will happen more naturally if the above happens (UVM provides more housing for their students). The key here is that student housing needs to be built out of the neighborhoods. The plan currently shows student housing in select neighborhoods (coincidentally our area). Families need housing in Burlington too. We need more families to move back to the neighborhood which would create a balance.

**Parking Minimums:** *Requiring the acquisition or creation of a minimum of parking spaces for each new housing unit substantially increases the cost of the unit (thus pricing many residents out of the market) and contributes to a surplus of unnecessary (and underutilized) parking spaces on land that could be better used. The existing minimum parking ordinance in the downtown substantially increases the cost of downtown housing, is a barrier to investment in the City, and importantly – given that City has a long history of building much of the downtown parking required by the minimum parking ordinance – results in wasteful government spending on a highly inefficient parking system*

**Eliminate Parking Minimums:** *Eliminating parking requirements in the downtown and perhaps other sections of the City would allow builders to determine necessary parking for each project, more accurately reflect true parking demand, and avoid unnecessary cost increases that drive up the costs of housing in Burlington*

**Comment on above:** Finding parking is an ongoing issue in Burlington. There may be parking areas identified as underutilized, but in the neighborhoods, it is very difficult to find a parking spot. Only after we receive the results from the parking study, if there are identified **downtown** areas where parking is not an issue, the parking requirements for current/new buildings could be reevaluated, but absolutely, the requirements should not be altogether eliminated.

Thank you,  
Gabrielle & Mike Sealy