



The University of Vermont

UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

Mayor Miro Weinberger
City of Burlington
Burlington City Hall
149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401

June 30, 2014

RE: City of Burlington, Vermont Downtown Housing Strategy Report, May 2014

Dear Miro,

The University of Vermont values its partnership with the City of Burlington. As has been noted many times in the past, our relationship is symbiotic: UVM students are drawn here by Burlington's vibrancy and its thriving downtown, and the presence of these students, along with UVM's faculty and staff, help to ensure Burlington's economic success. Our partnerships are why Burlington continues to receive accolades such as *Travel & Leisure's* recent ranking of Burlington as the #1 Best College Town in America.

To ensure continued success we must continue to improve in many areas, including around the areas of housing and quality of life. UVM has made great strides in the past 10 years in adding beds to our on-campus housing capacity, improving the percentage of undergraduate students housed, and planning for the future of student housing. We have also worked in partnership with the City to improve quality of life in the neighborhoods, particularly around the topic of noise.

We were pleased to see the City's May 2014 Downtown Housing Strategy Report. It is important that the City continues to plan for the future of the downtown to include diverse housing opportunities for all of its residents. We are also interested in the development and improvement of the housing stock. **With 60% of UVM students receiving financial aid, we have a strong interest in ensuring safe and affordable housing options for students both on- and off-campus.**

We offer the following comments in response to our review of the report and in response to comments made at the June 12, 2014 public forum on the report.

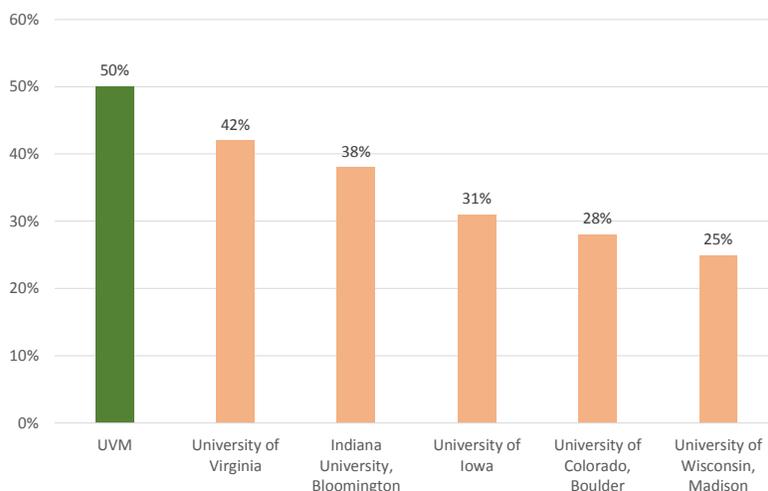
UVM has improved its on-campus housing in the past 10 years

As an institution, UVM made the decision a number of years ago to increase its requirement of on-campus housing within the ResLife system. **In contrast to many public institutions, some of which have no housing requirement, UVM increased its requirement for all students to live on-campus for their first and second years.** Increasing that requirement to 3rd and/or 4th year students has the potential to negatively impact UVM's enrollment and retention goals. We know from research during the Housing Master Plan development that living in downtown Burlington is a draw for UVM students. Of the public institutions located in the "Comparable Cities" section of the housing report (p. 17), only UVM has this two year requirement. The University of Virginia, Indiana University-Bloomington, and University of Colorado-Boulder require first-years only to live on-campus. The University of Iowa and the University of Wisconsin-Madison have no housing requirements for their students. *(source: US News & World Report)*

UVM is exceeding its goal to house 60% of its undergraduate student population. Page 12 of the report cites 52.9% of UVM's students living off-campus. However this number includes graduate students. Typically UVM and the City work to address the undergraduate student population as these are the students with the highest potential to impact quality of life issues (though it should be noted that the vast majority of UVM students do not impact quality of life issues and never receive such citations). **In Fall 2013, UVM's housing capacity for its undergraduate student population was at 63%.** It is important to note that not all students who reside off-campus are living in Burlington. Further, UVM houses a higher percentage of its students than the public institutions in the "Comparable Cities" cited in the housing report. Including undergraduate and graduate students, the percentages at these institutions are outlined in the following chart.



Comparison of Students Housed from Public Institutions in the "Comparable Cities" List from the City of Burlington's Downtown Housing Strategy Report
Percentage of All Students Housed - Undergraduate & Graduate Students



Source: US News & World Report

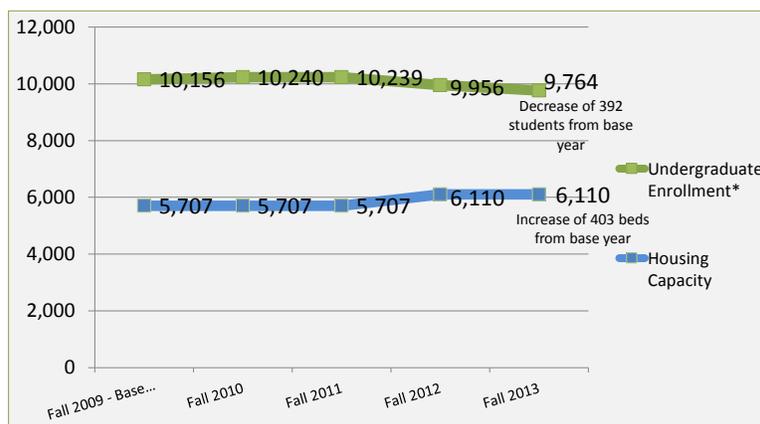
Prepared by Campus Planning Services, June 26, 2014

It should be noted that the City’s housing report used figures from 2011, before Redstone Lofts was open. Page 12 of the report lists UVM’s on-campus beds at 5,707. **That figure should be updated to 6,110 reflect the addition of Redstone Lofts.**

Recent decreases in UVM’s undergraduate enrollment have continued to positively affect the impact of undergraduate students on the market. Since UVM and the City entered into the 2009 Housing Agreement in April 2009, UVM’s bed capacity has increased by 566 beds (163 beds through conversion of McAuley Hall and 403 beds through the construction of Redstone Lofts), while at the same time, enrollment has decreased by 392 students.



**UVM/City of Burlington Agreement on Housing
Undergraduate Enrollment and Housing Capacity Changes
2009 (Base Year) to Fall 2013**



*Undergraduate Enrollment calculated per the terms of the City Agreement on Housing as follows:
 "For the purposes of this agreement, undergraduate students are defined as those who are enrolled in an undergraduate degree program for at least 9 credit hours per semester and have not yet earned a baccalaureate degree.

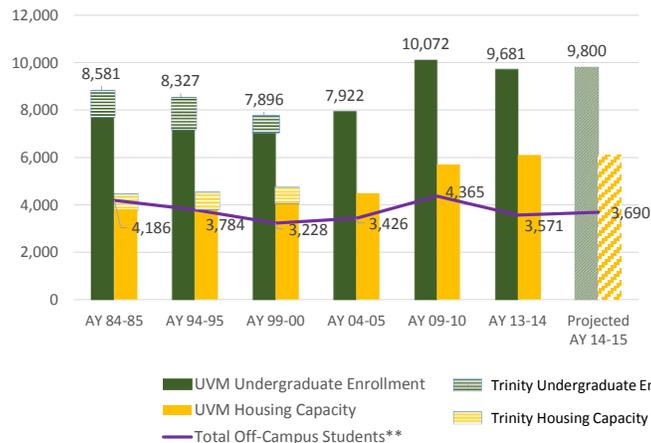
Prepared by Campus Planning Services
June 2014

Since 2004, UVM has added 1,614 beds to our bed capacity. The City’s housing report addresses only new housing built in the City’s downtown (page 4 cites only 222 new units being

constructed from 2002 through 2014). UVM and Champlain College’s efforts to increase student housing should be reflected in the report. The beds were added outside of the downtown area but they have an impact in addressing student housing in the neighborhoods. The following chart illustrates the changes in enrollment, housing capacity, and off-campus students over the last 30 years. Note that only in Academic Years 99-00 and 04-05 were there fewer students off-campus than there were this past Academic Year (13-14). Again, please note that not all of these off-campus students live in Burlington.



**UVM Undergraduate Enrollment, Housing Capacity, and Off-Campus Student Analysis
30 Year Analysis and Projection – AY 84-85 to AY 14-15**



*To best understand the University’s impact and overall student levels within the community, and has been previously reported to the City, Trinity College’s student enrollment has been considered in this analysis. UVM does not have access to Trinity enrollment information for AY 84-85 or AY 94-95. For the purposes of this analysis, the Trinity enrollment figure of 915 in Fall 1985 has been applied for AY 84-85 and the enrollment figure of 1,099 students from AY 93-94 has been applied for AY 94-95. In AY 99-00, Trinity College was in the process of closing and only enrolled 660 students. Trinity’s current bed capacity of 580 has been applied for all years.

**Not all off-campus students reside in the City of Burlington. In Fall 2013, UVM estimated that ~2,200 undergraduate students lived off-campus within the City of Burlington.

*Prepared by Campus Planning Services,
June 24, 2014*

UVM’s juniors and seniors are increasingly interested in living in the Residential Life system. In 2014, 846 juniors and seniors lived in ResLife system housing (this excludes affiliated housing such as Redstone Lofts and Redstone Apartments which are outside of the Residential Life

system). This is an increase of 386 students since 2011. Approximately half of these students are living in programmed housing such as the Honors College (UHeights North) or the Greenhouse program (UHeights South). This suggests that UVM's goal from the Student and Faculty/Staff Housing Master Plan to improve the student experience is being implemented successfully.

UVM continues to plan for the future of student housing

UVM has developed a Student & Faculty/Staff Housing Master Plan to address the future of our housing through 2026. This plan addresses both programmatic and physical needs to continue to improve the student experience at UVM and in doing so, improve recruitment and retention. The concepts of the plan can be viewed at:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~plan/housingmasterplanconcepts.pdf>.

UVM has entered into a public RFP process for an On-Campus First-Year Housing and Dining Project on Central Campus. This project is intended to replace the Chittenden, Buckham, Wills (CBW) or "shoeboxes" residence halls and to begin the implementation of our Housing Master Plan goals by housing first-year students near the center of campus where they can build community and be better supported. It will also remove obsolete buildings and improve on the housing experience. The demolition of CBW will remove 391 beds from our inventory and the new project will be 450-650 beds of new student housing. **This project has the potential to add 59-259 beds to our on-campus bed capacity.**

UVM is in the process of identifying alternative locations for temporary housing to address the gap between the demolition of CBW in 2015 and the opening of the new project in 2017.

Depending on the success of these alternative options, UVM may consider longer-term use of these arrangements beyond 2017. The alternative locations currently under consideration are outside of Burlington's neighborhoods.

Students are interested in UVM-affiliated housing in a downtown location. Student surveys for the Housing Master Plan asked students about their interest in additional UVM-affiliated housing for juniors and seniors. **The first choice for location for affiliated student housing by over a 2:1 ratio is downtown Burlington. 82% of students surveyed indicated they would be interested in a downtown housing project.** Less than 50% of students surveyed indicated they would be interested in the same type of project on-campus.

UVM must carefully plan the use of its land for the long-term. Working in partnership with the City of Burlington, UVM was able to increase its lot coverage allowances and height limitations on certain areas of Central Campus and South of Main Street. Currently, UVM is planning for on-campus housing as recommended by the Student and Faculty/Staff Housing Master Plan. **We must continue to plan for the long-term by following the guidelines of the Campus Master Plan and following smart growth strategies that will allow us to develop within our campus boundaries over time, thereby protecting residential adjacencies and ensuring UVM's presence in Burlington over the long term.**

UVM has supported, and will continue to support, the initiatives that promote quality of life in neighborhoods, all of which help stabilize neighborhoods

UVM's Office of Student and Community Relations works towards building positive community interactions in Burlington's neighborhoods, including leading the Community Coalition. This coalition is made up of University students and staff, City administrators and leaders, and community members who look for ways for the University and community to collaborate on quality of life issues and partnerships involving students as responsible community members. See www.uvm.edu/~oscr for the many other programs the Office of Student and Community Relations implements throughout the year.

UVM students are expected to adhere to the Student Code of Conduct when they are off-campus and are held to UVM's Statement of Expectations for Off-Campus Students. (see www.uvm.edu/cses/?Page=offcampus.html for more information) UVM receives notice of violations committed by our students from the Burlington Police Department (BPD) and students are held accountable for actions off campus through a three-tiered system. Sanctions are upheld based on the number and severity of violations and can be as serious as suspension or dismissal from the University.

UVM works directly with the Burlington Police Department to address student issues on weekends. Joint patrols are held with BPD and UVM Police Services officers. Additionally UVM provides up to \$90,000 per year in funding for additional BPD officers to work neighborhood patrols during busy fall and spring weekends. UVM is also funding an intern to work directly with BPD to share information and coordinate efforts around problem houses and other issues. Another UVM-funded intern will work with the City on mapping properties in the downtown area.

UVM cannot spend tuition dollars on revitalizing neighborhoods from a perspective of buying, renovating and making properties available to new renters and owners.

The University views its role in Burlington's housing issues in the above items: continuing to improve on our current and future Residential Life and affiliated housing projects and assisting in quality of life issues. The City's report suggests that UVM should also be funding improvements to revitalize neighborhoods as students move to more structured UVM housing. UVM cannot spend tuition dollars for this function. However, the City could use the omnibus payment portion from the Payment for Services Agreement (about \$200,000 annually) for that purpose if they chose to do so.

In closing, I would like to reiterate the importance of the partnership between the University of Vermont and the City of Burlington. We remain committed to this partnership and the projects that have brought success in improving the quality of life for all residents in the City of Burlington over the years and look forward to continuous improvement in the future.

Sincerely,

Thomas Gustafson
Vice President for University Relations & Administration

cc: Thomas Sullivan, President, University of Vermont
Jane Knodell, Chair, City Council Community Development and Neighborhood Revitalization Committee
Brian Pine, Assistant Director for Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization, CEDO