

The University and the City

There is no doubt the relationship shared by the University of Vermont and the City of Burlington is characterized by many mutual interests and synergies, and that the success of UVM and the City are closely intertwined. We must and we do depend on each other to thrive. And, through strategic collaborations, new initiatives and investments we have made some excellent progress together over the years in addressing problems, resolving concerns, and building a strong and respectful relationship. Contrary to difficult town/gown relationships in other municipalities, our collaboration is a good one and our problems are relatively manageable.



However, there are persistent challenges near campus and in Burlington's neighborhoods, despite the hard work and good faith by all who are trying to address them. We are committed to working with the community to look for new, comprehensive ways to make progress on these issues.

What's been done

Here are some of the highlights of the progress we have made in recent years:

- To support the economic stability of the City (and pay for services it receives), UVM makes an annual payment of about \$1.2 million to Burlington; this is primarily for fire services, but includes an "omnibus" payment that the city uses to address other impacts the University has on the City.
- An additional payment of over \$700,000 is made by UVM for real estate taxes, code enforcement, permitting, recording, vacant building, and stormwater fees.
- In response to ongoing conversations with the City about the need for more student housing on campus, we've increased on-campus housing by 1,300 beds in the last ten years.
- With the opening of the Redstone Lofts, UVM now houses 61% of undergraduates on campus, more than many other colleges and universities.
- The Lofts project, along with Redstone Apartments, gives juniors, seniors, and graduate students the option of living on-campus in independent apartment-style housing (instead of in neighborhoods).
- We are in the process of developing a long-term Student and Faculty/Staff Housing Master Plan that will guide the future of our housing over the next 15-20 years.
- To address quality of life issues many UVM departments collaborate to offer resources and programs, including Student and Community Relations, Student Life, Residential Life, Greek Life, Police Services, University Relations, Transportation Services, and Campus Planning Services.
- We are involved in a wide array of ongoing programs and initiatives, including Good Neighbor Programs, Have-A-Heart, Community Coalition, Spring cleanup efforts, Student-neighbor liaisons, joint BPD/UVM Police patrols, late-night programs to attract students to campus, and opening weekend programming (there is a more complete list of Student and Community Relations initiatives below).
- We provide resources to the City (up to \$90,000 this year) for additional Burlington Police officers to patrol neighborhoods most impacted by students.
- We created a shuttle system, including late-night shuttles, to promote safety and reduce foot traffic in neighborhoods.
- Some years ago, we took the step of requiring second year students to live on campus, which is not the norm among public universities.
- Recently, in response to concerns from neighbors, we altered the routes of our shuttles and purchased new, quieter, buses.
- To regulate the flow of traffic from campus to S. Prospect St. the University installed a gate activated by approaching cars from S. Prospect St. only.

- To facilitate street by street improvements in neighborhoods impacted by student renters the University purchased large recycling totes for rental units on Isham St.
- Alternative Spring Break students conducted a survey of people on Isham, Bradley, and Buell Streets to assess the climate of the streets, to assess needs, to see if the initiatives put into place are achieving the outcomes desired, and to solicit ideas for additional projects that could be supported by the University and the Community Coalition

This is not an exhaustive list, but is an indication of the many efforts that we have made to improve the quality of life in Burlington.

Our students – rights and responsibilities

Students have the same rights and responsibilities as any other community member in Burlington. They pay rent, purchase goods and services, and contribute to the vitality and economic stability of our city. UVM encourages responsible student behavior from the time students arrive on campus – through Orientation, Residential Life, Student Life, communication with students and parents, the Student Government Association, Student and Community Relations, and other offices.

At the same time, the University is strongly committed to holding students responsible for their actions. Students face consequences from UVM for infractions that happen both on and off campus, and we follow up on every student identified. In fact, last year 36 students were either dismissed (15) or suspended (21) for misconduct.

A comprehensive approach

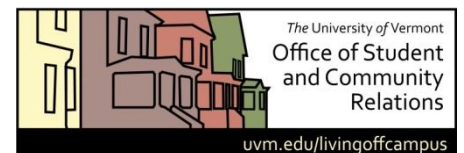
To address persistent challenges we believe that a comprehensive approach is called for. A continued and revitalized effort would include City and University staff, law enforcement, landlords, code enforcement, purveyors/suppliers of alcoholic beverages, students, other higher education institutions, and others. We need to find ways to think more creatively and comprehensively to make further progress on these challenging issues. UVM is open to a broader dialogue and new approaches, with the understanding that there may be some resource implications – on all sides. We welcome any and all thoughts, reactions, and ideas for next steps.

Building on successful partnerships

The Community Coalition provides a forum to discuss issues and strategize about new initiatives, share resources and information, and take action. The Coalition, comprised of members from across the City and the University, meets monthly throughout the academic year. Students, neighbors, landlords, city officials and staff, UVM and Champlain College staff and administrators meet to discuss effective ways to address neighborhood concerns and opportunities and to take action on them. The Coalition is co-chaired by the Student Government Association (SGA) and the Office of Student and Community Relations.

Office of Student and Community Relations (OSCR) – Initiatives and Services

Off Campus Living Workshops: Held in the Fall each academic year to educate students about their rights and responsibilities as tenants and citizens of Burlington. Attendees of the 3-hour workshop receive a UVM Preferred Renters Card to show to potential landlords. Panelists include representatives from the Code Enforcement Office; Burlington Police Department; Vermont Tenants Inc.; Vermont Apartment Owners Association; City Council; Community Support Program; OSCR; and UVM Police Services, as well as off-campus students and landlords.



Student-Neighbor Liaison Program: Each year between 10 to 20 student and non-student liaisons are recruited to work on their streets to develop community and to provide a link to the University. Liaisons have access to Neighborhood Grants for community development projects. Some liaison projects: Welcome Bags for new student residents; Hyde Street Triangle O.N.E.der Dome; neighborhood clean-ups; “Meet Your Neighbor Day” at the Davis Center with Burlington families; and Isham Street Green Belt Gardens and Blueberry and Herbal Community Garden.

Conflict Resolution Services: These services are provided by the OSCR for our students, neighbors, and landlords. Recent sessions involved several Greek fraternities and a local business regarding behavior and property maintenance; a local landlord and tenants whose activity was disruptive to the neighborhood; and a group of neighbors, a City Councilor, and a landlord who rented primarily to students whose property was causing a nuisance to the neighborhood. All of these sessions had successful outcomes according to the individuals involved.

Spring Move Out Project (SMOP): Every year, this event diverts from 11 to 20 tons of goods from city green belts and the landfill. Students moving out of rental units receive “The Seven Spring Move Out Tips” brochure to help plan how to properly dispose of their unwanted goods. In addition, the SMOP team (Burlington Code Enforcement Office, Chittenden Solid Waste District, UVM, Burlington Community and Economic Development Office, ReSOURCE, and Champlain College) holds a recycling event on Loomis St. for students to drop off unwanted items in good shape for community members and local non-profits to pick up to re-use. Working with neighbors in the West Hill Neighborhood Association, we added a second event in 2011 on Bradley St., which the neighbors reported was a huge success.

Response to Problem Houses: The OSCR visits problem properties that have UVM student tenants when a call or email with a specific address has been received. OSCR works in a coordinated way with City Councilors, Champlain College, the Burlington Police Department, and landlords to address problem residences. Recent successes have involved landlords taking actions that change the behavior of their tenants.

Welcome Bag Canvassing: Each Fall OSCR staff, SGA Senators, and neighbors deliver Welcome Bags to about 500 households and have conversations with the off-campus student residents about living successfully in the community as a tenant and a neighbor. Bags include UVM’s Off Campus Living Survival Guide and Vermont Tenants Inc.’s Renting in VT brochure, as well as CCTA guides, Resource Magnets, a Bicycling Map, and the Guide to Sustainable Living in Burlington.

OSCR Appointments: The OSCR staff meets with UVM students and their families, faculty, and staff to answer questions and to provide resources regarding finding off-campus housing and navigating life off-campus.

Greek Neighbor Relations Sessions: In the Fall and Spring semesters, our office provides these sessions to Greek chapters as part of their efforts to educate new members about responsibilities expected of Burlington residents, opportunities to get involved in neighborhoods, and ways to create positive relationships and safer and healthier neighborhoods.

Have a Heart Events: These events take place in the Fall and Spring with the SGA members, Greek community members, and UVM administrators and staff. Volunteers hand out to students Lake Champlain chocolate hearts and fliers created by local children reminding them that neighbors live “just a wall away” and to be aware of the impact of walk-by noise and disruptions on our neighborhoods. Information is also provided about the off-campus late night shuttle schedule and taxi cab companies that take CatScratch.

Landlord Workshop: The OSCR sponsors this workshop with the Burlington Code Enforcement Office and the Vermont Apartment Owners Association. UVM also presents on the resources landlords can utilize, such as our office’s conflict resolution services; the university’s outreach and education efforts and materials, like the Off Campus Living Workshops and the UVM Preferred Renters Card; and the messages we share with students about the importance of creating good relationships with their landlords and their neighbors.

Letters to Landlords of Tenants Who Receive Party-Social Event Noise Violations: Our office provides assistance when needed to the Burlington Police Department to mail letters to landlords.

Parent Letters and Workshops: Letters about expectations for Burlington residents are sent to parents of first- and second-year students. Parents of second-year students also receive information to assist their student in making a smooth transition to off-campus living. During Homecoming and Family Weekend, the OSCR holds a workshop about living off campus. Parents are encouraged to talk with their student about the responsibilities that come with being a Burlington citizen and neighbor.

Tier 2 Neighbor Relations Sessions: Each month the OSCR co-facilitates Neighbor Relations Sessions with the Center for Student Ethics and Standards for students who have received what are considered Tier 2 violations off campus.

Meet Your Neighbor Day: This event is held in the Fall at the Davis Student Center. We invite kids and parents to tour the Davis center and meet our students to raise awareness about the community and who lives there and to foster relationships.

Leadership Trek Neighborhood Canvass: First-year students work with the OSCR to deliver letters to neighbors about the University's Week of Welcome activities and to survey residents about neighborhood concerns and ways to build community between students and neighbors. Survey responses increase the awareness of new students about the community they are joining and provide guidance to the Community Coalition members as they plan their work for the coming year.

Babysitter Mingler: Held in the Fall and Spring, this event provides an opportunity for parents and kids in need of babysitters to meet UVM students that want to babysit. Over 400 students, parents, and children participated in last year's events.

Marketing and Outreach: We have found that an effective means of communicating the impact of late-night activity on families and to build positive relationships is to create messages from local schoolchildren to college students.

Catamount Classes: The OSCR partners with Student Life to offer fun and informative classes to off-campus students and neighbors. Some of the classes we have held: "Cooking Healthy on the Cheap" with City Market," "Doctor Your Bike" with the Bike Users Group (BUG) and Bike Recycle Vermont, "Green Your Cleaning" with Purple Shutter Herbs, and "Weatherize Your Off Campus Home - Save Some \$\$\$" with Button Up Vermont.

Dean of Students, Student Government Association President, and Burlington Police Chief Letter to Students: Every Fall and Spring, the OSCR facilitates the creation of this letter about expectations for living off campus; city ordinances, and getting involved in making positive change in the community. The letter goes out to students via the SGA President's e-mail newsletter and the Residential Life listserve, and is sent as a press release from the Burlington Police Department to local media.

Transfer Student Socials: Each year the OSCR partners with Student Life, the Admissions Office, the College of Arts and Sciences Transfer Advisor, and Student Financial Services to offer Transfer Student Socials in the fall and spring. These socials are hosted at the Pearl House and provide an opportunity for transfer students to meet each other and learn about UVM resources and how to get involved on and off campus.

UVM Service Network: The OSCR partners with this group of UVM members representing community-service-related offices and programs on campus. These members serve as advocates/ambassadors for a broad range of community engagement activities and offerings.

Town Gown Group: This group's mission is to enhance the quality of off-campus life for both UVM students and the neighborhoods in which they live. The membership is comprised of representatives from UVM departments and

organizations whose work can impact the community: the Dean of Students Office, Student Life, Greek Life, Student Government Association (SGA), Police Services (UPS), University Relations, Campus Planning Services, Residential Life, Student and Community Relations (OSCR), and Center for Student Ethics and Standards (CSES).