

**From:** [John Snell](#)  
**To:** [Meredith Crandall](#); [Jack McCullough](#); [Pelín Kohn](#)  
**Subject:** VCFA Master Plan and PUD application to the Development Review Board  
**Date:** Monday, January 2, 2023 11:03:21 AM

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I write regarding the proposed development application from the Vermont College of Fine Arts for their campus, their new Master Plan and campus PUD. I may or may not be able to attend the first hearing on January 3, 2023 but wanted to submit my comments for the record.

I have several concerns in general about the application, made more relevant as a neighbor on First Avenue, *especially in regard to the proposed request to change existing conditional uses to permitted uses*. My interest is not to stop an orderly change to the property or properties but rather to retain the rights of neighbors and other concerned citizens to have a say in the processes involved.

While our property at 17 First Avenue does not directly border that of the College, we have in the past been significantly influenced by what happens “up there.” As an example, in the late 1970s there was a great deal of commuter traffic, mainly in individual automobiles, between (then) Norwich College and (then) Vermont College, much of it channelling up First Avenue, very often at speeds far in excess of reasonable or posted limits; at the time there were many young children on the street, as is again the case, and we were fortunate to have not had a serious injury or accident; enforcement of speed limits by MPD, always difficult in such situations, proved ineffective.

More recently we have regularly experienced significant vehicular traffic, again often traveling in excess of the speed limit, as the “residential sessions” at VCFA begin or end; an added problem is that West Street often becomes challenging to navigate during these sessions with the addition of many more parked cars; in particular, there have been on occasion, difficulties in making turns onto West from First, a concern when trucks, whether a large fire truck or commercial semi-trailer, are involved.

Truck traffic and related noise of the many service vehicles needed by the College has also long been a issue; again, First Avenue is often the connector for truck traffic from Barre Street despite it being a neighborhood street, often with parking on both sides, and used frequently and heavily by pedestrians, especially children going to or from school. The current street designation of First Avenue does not seem to account for these realities.

The application leaves open options to significantly increase parking, both in existing permitted areas and as added angled parking on West and College Street. I fear we could end up with a very different neighborhood, worse from both aesthetic and a safety perspectives, if all of these changes occur, especially in an incremental fashion. We need to retain our rights as neighbors to understand more fully and review these changes as they occur.

I am also concerned that the future possible uses and/or preservation of the College

Green is not clearly addressed. That Space has long been an important part of the neighborhood and, while VCFA has continued the tradition of encouraging public use, I have concerns the use of the space could change significantly, including possibly the addition of structures. At a minimum, we need to have a chance to respond to any such proposals in the future.

It appears the College would, under several scenarios, act as the administrator of a "condominium" with regard to maintenance of the grounds and buildings. I have concerns, given the current condition of the roofs on several buildings as an example, about whether such needs would be adequately prioritized and funded.

Make no mistake, I look forward to having the College properties well and appropriately used long into the future. They are not only an important economic force in the city, but also a wonderful addition to the culture and social fabric of the city. My primary concern is that we the public, especially neighbors, be able to retain the right to comment and have an influence on what that future might hold.

I ask that you share this email with members of the Development Review Board, and ask them to extend their review to additional hearing(s) to give the public more time to respond to a very complex proposal.

Thank you,

John Snell  
17 First Avenue  
Montpelier, VT 05602  
802-272-5361

**From:** [phyllisruby2022@gmail.com](mailto:phyllisruby2022@gmail.com)  
**To:** [Meredith Crandall](#)  
**Cc:** [William Fraser](#)  
**Subject:** VCFA - Final Review Campus Development  
**Date:** Monday, January 2, 2023 1:19:40 PM

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Dear Meredith,

I had lived in Montpelier since 1988. I have owned the property at 15 College Street since October 1999. It is my unresearched opinion, that the residences on College Street are primarily single family, with a few 2 to 4 family units. Parking has been a concern in the past. I had to ask the City to put up a “no parking sign” in front of my walkway, as VCFA students routinely blocked my access to the street. (There is no sidewalk in front of my property). This was especially problematic during the winter when my shoveled walkway was blocked by a car. I am aware that VCFA students also parked cars on Kemp Street and Summit Street. On occasion, excessive noise at night was a problem.

In preparation for tomorrow’s meeting before the DRB, I just accessed the Report you submitted on December 29, 2022, to the DRB regarding the VCFA application. I have not had the opportunity to thoroughly review your Report. I request that the meeting scheduled on January 3, 2023, be followed by another meeting so that members of the community, like myself, can have sufficient time to review your Report and submit comments about the VCFA application, which was posted on the DRB website in mid December, 2022, as well as your Report.

As a preliminary matter, I am opposed to the elimination of the Conditional Use Process for VCFA. I believe the process has been successfully utilized to date. It allows neighbors and other community members to participate in the review of proposed future uses of the VCFA Campus. If the DRB changes the Conditional Uses to Permitted Uses as part of the Campus Development PUD approval, residents of Montpelier would have no input in the uses, which could result in substantial and unforeseen changes in the neighborhood.

More specifically, I have concerns about certain proposals and/or disagree with certain findings and/or request clarification as follows:

1. V. Uses – There is no definition of Group Home.

Multi-family dwellings (5 or more units) is inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood.

There is no indication of the number of guest rooms in the proposed Bed & Breakfast or Inn. Anything more than 4 units is inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood.

A restaurant which offered take out would dramatically increase the traffic on College Street. Although VCFA has had a cafeteria and café, it mostly catered to VCFA students or local residents who walked to the businesses.

What is the scope of a rural enterprise?

2. IX. Vehicular Access – I don’t know when College Street was designated as a “minor collector route.” Certainly, since Towne Hill Road in East Montpelier was

paved, College Street has been used as a bypass from Main Street to Barre Street. It is not primarily

used for local traffic. I suspect that more motorists access College Street from either Main Street or Sibley Avenue than from East State Street. In addition, East State Street, which is designated as a "major collector route," ends at College Street. Motorists either turn right or left onto College Street. It is illogical (or perhaps inaccurate) that College Street is not also designated as a "major collector route."

Angled Parking on West Street and College Street - West Street is narrower than College Street. Angled parking on either street would significantly cut into the width of each street, impeding traffic flow of motorists, snow removal, and street cleaning. It would also endanger bicyclists who frequently ride on College Street.

I appreciate your consideration of my comments. Please either provide me with a list of email addresses for the members of the DRB and City Council or circulate my email to them. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Phyllis Rubenstein

**From:** [Christine Lilyquist](#)  
**To:** [Meredith Crandall](#)  
**Cc:** [Barrette Bill](#)  
**Subject:** VCFA application comments  
**Date:** Monday, January 2, 2023 2:07:47 PM

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My husband and I have lived on First Ave since 2012.

Concerns I have on permissions requested are:

--The area is basically residential with low traffic (mainly the vehicles that are now allowed to bypass downtown). I know college campuses; normally they are on large pieces of land, and while they have food service, laundry, gyms, etc., those services do not impact the communities around them, either for use or service. Presenting a plan as if the suggested uses are simply building on present uses is misleading.

--I would like more information from the college concerning its aims and its general plan. I do not understand why administrative offices are being kept here, when the work of the college is in the West. How does that work? What exactly is meant by "Administrative offices"? What is the benefit to the school? Is presence here temporary?

--After the earlier public meeting, I thought that some materials were to be made available to residents: that did not happen. I would like a tour of the facilities so that we, who are supposed to have input on what happens there, can visualize how realistic or practical such ideas are, judged from our experience in the neighborhood. It's possible that most people might find the new uses agreeable; personally I wouldn't be able to say without some feeling for the space.

--Even though you wrote me a month ago about the time schedule for "final application/review by DRB staff/and meeting at which a vote might be taken," I think that is short, as things stand.

Yours, Christine Lilyquist

**From:** [Joe Castellano](#)  
**To:** [Meredith Crandall](#)  
**Subject:** RE: 36 College Street VCFA Final Campus PUD proposal for tomorrow's DRB meeting  
**Date:** Monday, January 2, 2023 3:20:08 PM  
**Attachments:** [Comments regarding Final Review of Request for Campus PUD Approval by the DRB 1.2023.pdf](#)

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Good afternoon, Meredith,

I hope that you had a Happy New Year.

I'm submitting my comments regarding the VCFA's Final Campus PUD proposal that is to be discussed at tomorrow evening's DRB meeting. I hope that you can pass this along to members of the DRB.

I also am hoping that you will be able to clarify some of the staff comments that I read in the packet. On page 8 where it discusses uses under 3406E, specifically, there is a staff comment that states "Shall be allowed in a Campus Development as a permitted use".

I was just wondering if the position of the staff is that all of the uses proposed be permitted with all of the current conditional uses being approved as permitted uses. Could you clarify this for me?

Thanks,

Joe Castellano

## Comments regarding Final Review of Request for Campus PUD Approval by the DRB

Good Day,

My name is Joe Castellano. My wife, Gail Carrigan and I live at 3 Sabin Street, which is located approximately 2 blocks southeast of the VCFA's campus. The VCFA, due to its size, is the largest property owner in this section of town and anything that the college does has an outsized impact on the residents who call this neighborhood home.

Many of us realize that the business model for the college has changed significantly due to various social and economic factors that have impacted many similar institutions throughout New England. **However, the proposal to have 16 of the allowable 31 approved uses under current zoning be changed from conditional uses to permitted uses should not be approved.**

For one, any one of the uses, if permitted, would only be subject to an administrative permit approval. Until a sign with a large red Z were to be posted on one of the buildings, none of the abutters or of the community would have the ability to voice any concerns they might have regarding that use.

The first meeting that VCFA had with the DRB last year was well-attended with over 30 concerned property owners in the College Hill area voicing their concerns about allowing the VCFA to have the conditional uses allowed under current zoning be converted to permitted uses. The DRB, in turn, asked the VCFA to come back when they could streamline their request with a smaller list of uses to be considered to be permitted and come in with a more well-defined proposal.

The VCFA hired White and Burke to assist them with this updated proposal. However, I see that the proposal they have submitted for approval does not differ from what the DRB initially turned down as being too broad in scope.

**Therefore, I am asking the DRB to not approve the VCFA's Campus PUD Approval Request based on what has been submitted.**

Sincerely,

Joe Castellano

Jan. 2, 2023

Dear: Montpelier Development Review Board Members, City Council and Zoning Administrator

As a Montpelier resident in the VCFA neighborhood, I have concerns regarding the proposed PUD Campus Master Plan and would request that you vote no on this proposed plan. The proposal would seemingly provide the current or any future property owners the opportunity to convert the buildings to a number of commercial uses without going through the processes necessary for conditional uses. This is a residential neighborhood, and the surrounding properties are primarily restricted by the current zoning to residential use. Significant changes to the campus could alter the character of the neighborhood.

I would worry about significant increases in vehicle traffic. This is a neighborhood with many children, my own included, that like to walk, ride bikes and play with their neighbors and friends. An increase in vehicle traffic could increase the risk of potential injuries to our children. Approving the PUD Master Plan, reduces our ability as a neighborhood and community to consider the risks involved with a potential change in use at the campus that could increase vehicle traffic.

Real estate values have risen significantly in the last few years, which has reduced the ability of many Vermonters to move. Low inventory of available housing and rising interest rates have further impacted the potential for Montpelier residents to move to various neighborhoods. Because of these trends, it is important that we as a community consider the impacts of potential real estate changes on our residential neighborhoods. The purpose of zoning regulations is to regulate development and allow community members to have a say in the character of the neighborhood. Because of the limitations in the real estate market at present, zoning regulations have added importance to residents that cannot afford to move if the character of their neighborhood changes.

I am not opposed to changes to the VCFA campus, but I do not support a change to their zoning regulations, which would allow the owners of the property to make considerable changes without community insight. It is paramount to allow citizens a democratic process. I request that you consider voting no, to retain our community's right to voice concerns regarding potential future changes to the VCFA campus.

Sincerely,

Christiana J. Martin  
Homeowner at 28 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Montpelier, VT