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July 28, 2020

Mayor Lauren Poe
Commissioner Gail Johnson
Commissioner Reina Saco
Commissioner Gigi Simmons
Commissioner Harvey Ward
Commissioner David Arreola
Commissioner Adrian Hayes-Santos
City of Gainesville

By e-mail

Dear Mayor Poe and City Commissioners:

However it is measured, UF's footprint in Gainesville and Alachua County is undeniably large. Our main campus alone takes up 2000 acres. Our employees live in every corner of the city and county. And our students leave their impression everywhere they go, whether working, maintaining a residence, or recreating. We often take this impact for granted and, as a senior administrator at UF, I am reminded of how important it is to keep our commissioners informed of the university's plans for the future and how those plans may impact the city.

It is in that spirit that I am writing you today. As you may recall, UF's master planning efforts have evolved on two fronts over the last four years. In 2016, we created our strategic development plan, a plan that examined UF's impacts within the context of our host city, Gainesville. Among other things, this plan focused the university's attention on looking eastward, on partnering with you to renew downtown Gainesville, and on supporting the great neighborhoods that surround our campus. In 2019, we then turned our attention to the campus proper and focused our planning efforts on campus infrastructure and facilities.

One planning issue that frequently gains attention concerns our plans for student housing. With over 50,000 students, we know that where our students reside makes a difference in our community. The closer those students are to our campus, the more our footprint is effectively reduced, but at the same time the more our campus community influences the makeup of longstanding neighborhoods surrounding

UF. Despite the fact that our student enrollment numbers have remained relatively flat for many years, housing construction around the UF campus has proliferated.

As you all know well, UF cannot control the development or operating actions of the private development community that hosts much of the student housing in Gainesville on privately owned land that the local governments regulate.

What we can control is the housing that we do own on UF's campus—approximately 10,000 beds—as well as the future housing plans we have for undergraduates, graduates, and families. In 2018-19, UF undertook a comprehensive housing master planning effort with the assistance of VMDO, a nationally recognized architectural firm specializing in higher education housing. The resulting plan was extensive and ambitious, touching on the much-needed renovation of over 1600 beds, the demolition of nearly 1300 beds, and the construction of 1900 new beds serving our honors students, general undergraduate population, and student-athletes. Importantly, the plan does not in any way propose that we will build any new housing off campus or that we will urge others to do so.

Likewise, UF's strategic development plan does not include any intent to directly or indirectly redevelop the important neighborhoods east of 13th Street, or anywhere else in the region.

In addition to all that we are dealing with in terms of COVID-19, other societal issues figure prominently—issues of which UF must continually remain mindful as we make plans for the future. I am pleased to note that President Kent Fuchs has challenged UF's senior leadership—and the entire UF community—to become a positive change against racism and for equity. Among a series of important steps, he has charged us to “work with East Gainesville community leaders and residents to develop specific and sustainable programs and activities that will contribute to improving the community's educational and economic well-being.” This will be important work for us all in the months and years ahead.

We are grateful for your partnership as we look for ways to make a stronger, healthier Gainesville. UF's leadership understands that a thriving, well-functioning hometown that creates opportunity for everyone is good for all of us.

Thank you for your strong leadership in these difficult and challenging times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlie Lane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a stylized "L".

Charlie Lane