

October 16, 2023

Dear Members of the Durham Housing Taskforce,

UNH President Jim Dean told the members of the Active Retirement Association (ARA) at yesterday's meeting and luncheon that UNH anticipates a continuing decline in enrollment in coming years and the university is adapting and adjusting accordingly. We can assume that UNH will keep its on-campus housing, its dorms, fully occupied, regardless of overall student housing demand. So, the decline in student enrollment which UNH is now adapting to, which will have a real impact on Durham since most off-campus student housing is located here in town, will be felt, most directly, in relatively expensive private near-campus housing, both the existing housing developments downtown and those developments out at the edge of campus on the West End.

Herein lies an answer to Durham's and our region's needs for affordable, workforce and seniors (over 55) housing. These existing recently constructed housing projects, initially designed for the housing of students, are either within easy walking distance of food stores, restaurants and pharmacies downtown or are a short UNH bus ride away from such facilities. Their locations are very attractive to seniors (over 55), to workforce folks, to potentially lower income, and to other non-students. They are also exceptionally well located for non-student UNH staff employees as they eliminate the commute to campus.

Thus, the Durham Housing Task Force needs to take a close look at the availability of this already constructed in-town housing stock, and on modifications to its interior design which may be needed, so as to satisfy area housing needs and housing opportunities. There should be little or no need to compete for agricultural land or woodland for new housing with such a broad stock of housing already there in our very center.

John Carroll, Durham