



**Keene**  
STATE COLLEGE

Wisdom to make a difference.

# KEENE COLLEGE-CITY COMMISSION REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

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OCTOBER 2016

*Prepared by the Keene College-City Commission*

## FOREWORD

The Report you are about to read is the product of an effort of a new kind for Keene State College and the City of Keene. It was researched and written by members of the College-City Commission to address issues of mutual concern. In the months leading to the fall of 2014, Mayor Kendall Lane and College President Dr. Anne Huot met to discuss the formation of and develop a charge for this Commission. While it is not the first established to bridge campus and community relations, it represents the most significant effort to build partnership and improve communication and understanding between the two entities in recent history.

Throughout the course of 2015 and early 2016, the Commission explored topics of shared concern to the City and College, including housing, communication and relationships, behavioral norms and expectations, alcohol and substance misuse, parking and infrastructure, property and the preservation of the tax base. As the Commission reviewed these topic areas, it relied on the input and voices of over one hundred citizens and more than a dozen experts including City staff and officials, College administrators and private business people. Much of the information they provided and many of their recommendations are reflected in the Report.

The Commission hopes this Report, which outlines short-, medium-, and longer-term recommendations for how to address the issue areas described above, will provide food for thought, incentive for policies and programs, and most importantly, a model for collaboration between the College and the City into the future. In fact, the benefits of improved communication and collaboration between the College and City are evident today. Since the Commission began work on this Report in early 2015, many of the recommendations identified have been acted on or are in the early stages of implementation. Some of these activities and improvements are described below.

- The College continues to grow and enhance its involvement in the community through meaningful opportunities for community engagement and service.
  - ✓ In the 2014/2015 academic year, the College contributed approximately 119,559 volunteer hours of service to the greater Keene community. The total hours include student community service work, service-based trips, service learning courses, clinical hours, and some internships that meet the criteria for community service.
  - ✓ In 2015, the College modified its annual Community Service Day to involve all first-year students by holding this event during Opening Week of 2015. In previous years, this event was voluntary and engaged an average of 200 volunteers. In 2015, nearly 1,000 volunteers participated in this day of service to community.
- To improve the behavior and relationship of students living off-campus with their neighbors, the College and City have worked closely to develop opportunities for education and routine enforcement.
  - ✓ In 2015, the College instituted a mandatory Off-Campus Orientation, which requires that all students who plan to move off-campus attend an orientation program. Topics include tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, off-campus student conduct, and good neighbor relations. Students who choose not to attend are issued a \$200 fine.
  - ✓ A Good Neighbor program is being developed that will serve to educate and raise awareness of students on issues, such as transient noise, citizenship and neighborliness.

- ✓ The Coordinator of Student and Community Relations is now a full-time position at the College that is currently occupied by Robin Picard. Ms. Picard is responsible for developing programs and resources, building relationships and responding to concerns of off-campus students, neighbors, and city partners. She is a member of the International Town Gown Association and attended their national conference in June 2016.
  - ✓ With a purpose to improve police services to students, staff and faculty as well as provide for the needs of the off-campus college community, Keene State College funds one Keene Police Officer each year to serve as the College Liaison Officer (CLO). The CLO maintains an office at both the Police Department and the College, but spends much time in the field networking with various groups and individuals.
  - ✓ A Community Coalition has been formed with staff from the City's Code, Police, and Fire Departments and from the College's Coordinator of Student and Community Relations and Student Conduct Offices. This group meets monthly to maintain communication between the relevant departments/organizations on reactive and proactive enforcement with respect to the campus and community. Additionally, representatives from this Coalition attend Neighborhood Group meetings on a routine basis.
  - ✓ The City has filled two vacancies for part-time housing inspectors in the Code Enforcement Department. Inspectors are out in the community six days a week to monitor adherence to the City Code.
  - ✓ The City recently amended the Noise Ordinance to change the time restriction from 11:00 PM to 10:00 PM in all areas of the City other than the Central Business and Central Business Limited Zoning Districts.
  - ✓ The Office of Student and Community Relations is in the process of building relationships with local landlords to explore avenues to aid in more consistent communication and facilitation of policies.
  - ✓ The City's Code Enforcement Department and the College's Coordinator of Student and Community Relations make weekly visits to houses that have received complaints from residents, and/or violations or warnings from the Keene Police or Code Enforcement Departments.
- The College and the City recognize that the quality and location of housing in the community has a direct impact on the long-term safety, diversity, efficiency, and appearance of the community.
    - ✓ The establishment of the Sustainable Energy Efficient Development (SEED) Zoning Overlay District in 2010 incentivized the development of denser off-campus student housing located near Keene State College that meets green building standards. Since the development of Arcadia Apartments (37 units; 138 bedrooms) and the Mills Apartments (74 units; 230 bedrooms) in this District, there has been a noticeable transition of students living in rental housing in residential neighborhoods to these student-focused complexes. This transition presents an opportunity for neighborhood revitalization and redevelopment in areas that were once replete with student rentals. Neighborhoods are now navigating a transition from student rentals to units that could become owner-occupied or housing for young professionals.

- ✓ The City has implemented a Voluntary Inspection Program, which allows property owners to advertise their apartment or house on the College's online Off-Campus Housing Directory following passage of a housing inspection. This program is ongoing and there are currently between 400 and 500 properties that pass this inspection on an annual basis.
- The College and the City have a history of discussing how to mutually support each other's goals. In 2015, the College and the City negotiated a successful 5-year Municipal Service Agreement that provides a commitment by the College to financially assist the City with the provision of police and fire services, as well as the judicial and investigative costs associated with the direct and indirect impacts of alcohol and substance misuse.

As a result of the efforts described above and many others, there have been noticeable improvements in the relationship between the College and the City as well as in the relationship between students living off-campus and surrounding neighborhoods. In 2016, the Police Department reported notable reductions in noise complaints, unlawful possession of alcohol arrests, and open container violations City-wide in the fall semester of 2015. With respect to noise complaints, there were 180, a 33% reduction compared to the preceding 9-year average of 270. There were 86 unlawful possession of alcohol arrests, a 52% reduction compared to the preceding 9-year average of 180, and 27 open container violations, a 60% compared to the preceding 9-year average of 68. In addition, representatives from the Southeast Keene Neighborhood Group have observed that their relationship with students living in the areas surrounding the College campus has significantly improved, becoming less adversarial than in prior years.

Although, we are encouraged by the recent progress that has been made, we recognize there is much more work to be done. The Commission will continue to address issues and opportunities of shared interest past the release of this Report, and will routinely evaluate the community's progress at implementing its many recommendations. Into the future, we are looking forward to identifying and exploring new topic areas of focus and to helping foster new partnerships between the College and City communities.

On behalf of the College City Commission,

Dr. Christopher Cusack  
Co-Chairperson

Dean Eaton  
Co-Chairperson

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was prepared by the Keene College-City Commission with support from the City of Keene Planning Department. The contributions of the following individuals and organizations listed below were essential to the development of this document. In addition, the Commission would like to recognize the many community members not mentioned below who provided input, including those that participated in the March 2014 Public Forum at Heberton Hall.

- **New Hampshire Listens**
  - Bruce Mallory, *Director*
  - Michele Holt Shannon, *Associate Director*
- **Keene State College**
  - Dr. Anne Huot, *President*
  - Kent Drake-Deese, *Associate Dean of Student and Director of Residential Life*
  - Jessica Gagne Cloutier, *Coordinator of Community Services*
  - Pat Halloran, *Academic and Career Advising Director*
  - Dr. Gordon Leversee, *Dean of Sciences and Social Sciences*
  - Dr. Brian Quigley, *Counseling Center Director*
  - Casey Wilson Justice, *Coordinator of First Year Residential Experience*
  - Cassandra Stepanek, *Student*
  - Allison Riley, *former Coordinator of Student and Community Relations*
  - Dr. Andrew Robinson, *former Vice President for Student Affairs and staff to the College-City Commission*
- **City of Keene**
  - Mayor Kendall Lane
  - Med Kopczynski, *City Manager*
  - Brian Costa, *Chief of Police*
  - Kyle Macie, *College Liaison Officer*
  - Rhett Lamb, *Assistance City Manager/Planning Director*
  - Kurt Blomquist, *Public Works Director*
  - Karen Purinton, *Former City Planner*
  - Tara Kessler, *City Planner and Staff to the College City Commission*
- Regina Wright, *Wright Rent*
- Tim Zinn, *Southeast Keene Neighborhood Group*

### COLLEGE-CITY COMMISSION

#### *City of Keene:*

- Richard Berry
- Bettina Chadbourne, Councilor
- Cynthia Georgina\*
- Emily Hague, Councilor\*
- Paula Jessup
- Philip Jones, Councilor
- Marcia Kayser
- Darryl Masterson
- Ted McGreer\*

#### *Keene State College:*

- Christopher Cusack
- Hannah Elliott
- Christine Hrynowski
- Caitlin Licence\*
- Dottie Morris
- Robin Picard
- Kelly Ricaurte
- Maggie Rice\*
- Atticus Rollins
- Bart Sapeta\*
- Mike Welsh\*

## BACKGROUND

The members of the College-City Commission were named and began meeting in November of 2014. The Mayor Kendall Lane and President of Keene State College Dr. Anne Huot formed this Commission following discussion and the creation of Commission charge earlier in the year. The charge of the Commission was to “facilitate long range planning and (to make) short and long term recommendations to [Keene State College] and the [City of Keene] on issues of mutual concern.” Identification of these issues followed a community meeting in March of 2014 at Heberton Hall in which four themes were identified and developed:

1. Housing and Neighborhoods
2. Infrastructure and Parking
3. Citizenship
4. Property / Tax Base

During the first months of the Commission’s work, it became apparent that the theme of citizenship also included the theme of behavior and is closely aligned with the themes of housing and neighborhoods. Concern in the aftermath of the 2014 Pumpkin Festival prioritized these issues to the top of the list. The Commission thus set to work on these two themes first.

Work began by collecting background information and distributing it to Commission members. This included prior reports by the City of Keene (COK) and Keene State College (KSC), such as the Proactive Law/Code Enforcement Report of 2002 and the KSC Economic Impact Analysis, as well as transcripts and summary reports from the aforementioned March Forum at Heberton Hall and a December 2014 City Council Public Meeting about the Pumpkin Festival held in the Mabel Brown Room at KSC.

The Commission also contracted the assistance of New Hampshire Listens to collect and analyze this information and to write a report on how best to structure recommendations that address the concerns and priorities of the Keene community on these issues. The work of New Hampshire Listens included a high-level stakeholders meeting in March of 2015 in which organizing questions and frameworks were developed. These were used to bring productive structure to a public meeting held on April 14, 2015 in Heberton Hall. At that meeting, which was attended by over 70 residents of Keene, eight groups held professionally facilitated and transcribed discussions. The report produced by New Hampshire Listens, “Good Neighbors: A Community Conversation to Strengthen College-City Connections and Relationships,” is available to the public at <http://www.nhlistens.org/reports>.

The “Good Neighbors” report identified six themes or findings around which to make the Commission’s recommendations. These themes are listed and briefly summarized below:

1. Communication - Create two-way communication strategies that emphasize a respectful communication culture with all residents and students. Ensure an emphasis that includes the positive contributions being made by KSC and the vast majority of students.
2. Building Relationships - Focus on personal, close relationships between students and neighbors through mentoring, adopt-a-street, and expanded service opportunities.
3. Traditions and Celebrations - Invite residents to participate in student events, such as the New Student Convocation, and develop shared traditions that engage the KSC and COK residents together, including through community service opportunities.
4. Alcohol and Substance Use - Recognize that abuse of alcohol and other drugs is a community issue, not just a KSC issue, and take proactive steps to reduce abuse.

5. Norms, Expectations - Hold high expectations for behavior on and off campus, hold violators accountable with clear consequences, focus on the first thirty days for new students, and work to build pride in KSC's service programs so that is what the College is known for.
6. Housing - Increase on-campus housing and work with landlords to create consistent and enforceable expectations for landlord accountability and tenant behavior.<sup>1</sup>

Further development of these themes can be found in the report itself and is described in the recommendations that follow. When the Commission received an advance copy of the “Good Neighbors” report, members decided to group these findings into three areas (Items 1, 2 and 3 - Communication, Relationships, and Celebrations; Items 4 and 5 - Behavioral Norms and Expectations and Alcohol and Substance Abuse; and Item 6 - Housing) and to assign the work of fact-finding and drafting recommendations to three subcommittees. The Commission meetings during the summer of 2015 were dedicated to the work of these committees and to the task of drafting and editing an initial report and recommendations.

In September 2015, the Commission released an initial report, which outlined short, medium and long term recommendations. At this time, the Commission began to study the themes of parking/infrastructure and property/tax base. Throughout the fall and winter of 2015, the Commission met with staff from the College and City to better understand the issues related to these themes and identify potential areas for improved coordination and collaboration. In addition, the Commission looked to relevant reports and plans developed by or for the City and/or College (e.g. KSC Campus Master Plan, Keene Comprehensive Master Plan). These documents contained strategies or recommendations for making improvements around these themes. The Commission utilized information shared by staff and existing plans as a starting place for discussing and developing recommendations.

Recommendations included in the Report are broken into **short (0 – 6 months)**, **medium (6 – 12 months)**, and **long (greater than 1 year)** term items but are not otherwise prioritized. While this Report includes recommendations that address priority concerns and issues identified at the time of writing, it is intended to be a dynamic document that is periodically revisited and updated. At least once a year, the College City Commission plans to evaluate the progress made at implementing the proposed recommendations. This review would also be a time to address any conditions and opportunities that were unforeseen at the time of the Report’s development.

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<sup>1</sup> New Hampshire Listens, “Good Neighbors: A Community Conversation to Strengthen City-College Connections and Relationships.” Summary report from public forum, Keene NH, April 14, 2015. P. 3.



# HOUSING

The “Good Neighbors” report from New Hampshire Listens lists student-housing issues as one of the key areas in which to place effort to strengthen College-City relations. Specifically the authors of the report write:

*Participants discussed the high proportion of rental housing and non-resident landlords. It was recognized that there are significant efforts to bring more students back into campus housing or to the new housing that is being constructed adjacent to campus. Participants expressed concern about the number of tenants allowed to live within apartment units, a perception of weak enforcement of fire and safety codes in rental housing, and the need to revisit the “disorderly house” ordinance.*

*It was also recognized that reducing student rentals in the community could open up affordable rental housing for young families, making Keene a more desirable place to live and work and helping to balance the increasingly older population of the City.*

*A common theme across all groups focused on the roles and responsibilities of landlords to create consistent and enforceable expectations for behavior and to be accountable to the City and College for their actions. Absentee landlords were especially cited as a concern in terms of creating housing conditions that can lead to unsightly and disorderly situations. Lack of communication among landlords, College personnel, and City officials was a concern expressed in many of the small groups.<sup>2</sup>*

After reviewing background documents<sup>3</sup>, notes from prior public forums, and after inviting community experts<sup>4</sup> to make presentations and answer questions before the College-City Commission, we suggest the following short, medium, and long-term recommendations:

## Short Term Recommendations (0-6 months)

- 1) Complete a more thorough documentation of ongoing or current initiatives by KSC and COK regarding off-campus housing. A partial list of these initiatives (we are certain that there are more) includes:
  - a) A mandatory new off-campus housing orientation with presentations by KSC officials, COK inspection officers, and Keene Police Department (KPD) for all students intending to live in rental units. Students face a \$200 fine for non-attendance, and 800 students participated in spring 2015.
  - b) Formation in 2014 of a Keene Community Coalition consisting of representatives from KPD, COK Code Enforcement, and KSC. This group has monthly meetings with minutes distributed to supervisors and administrators at KSC and COK.

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<sup>2</sup> “Good Neighbors” p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Public Forum Summaries: March 5, 2014 (Heberton Hall) and December 2, 2014 (Mabel Brown Room Keene State College); “Proactive Law/Code Enforcement: A Report to the Community” Med Kopczynski and Art Walker, December 4, 2002; “Our Neighborhoods, One Year After: A Progress Report” City of Keene, June 2011; “Keene State College’s Economic Impact on the City of Keene and Cheshire County” Cathy Turrentine, Institutional Research, Keene State College, (undated); “Proactive Code Report Update” memo to the Planning, License and Development Committee, Keene City Council by Med Kopczynski and Brian Costa, May 12, 2015; “University of Massachusetts and the Town of Amherst: A Safer Community Through Partnership” report produced by Edward Davis, LLC, September 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Kent Drake-Deese, Associate Dean of Housing and Director of Residential Life, Keene State College; Allison Riley, Coordinator of Student and Community Relations, Keene State College; Medard Kopczynski, Assistant City Manager, Code Enforcement, City of Keene; Kyle Macie, Keene Police Department.

- c) Coordinated COK inspection of rental units (the “Voluntary Inspection Program”) before listing them on KSC student off-campus living website. This program is reported to have increased inspections to between 500 and 600 units per year.
  - d) Addition of new KSC conduct officers to provide greater capacity to enforce conduct issues and pursue violations off campus.
  - e) Hiring of two code enforcement staff by the COK to replace vacant positions during the summer of 2014 despite budget pressures.
- 2) Coordinate the above initiatives and others mutually agreed upon between partners (if not already happening).
  - 3) Improve communication of the initiatives to external constituencies. This should be provided via one central portal run by KSC or COK or both. An initial systematic effort at publicity of this portal and information should be part of the medium term efforts below.
  - 4) Recommend that KSC and the COK’s code enforcement staff publish sample lease language online containing binding provisions regarding conduct and substance use/abuse that parallel, where possible, expectations now in place at residence halls. Model language is now being collected by the City and the College and should be reviewed and released for possible use over the medium term. Encourage use of this language by all landlords; especially, those who have passed a voluntary inspection.
  - 5) Recommend that KSC’s Coordinator of Student and Community Relations position, formerly occupied by Allison Riley, be expanded to full-time and quickly refilled. This position should also establish relations with off-campus, large-scale housing facilities.
  - 6) Require that students report their local address for KSC records, perhaps in order to complete class registration. These addresses (not names) could be shared with City officials. Doing so would help with KSC and COK resource allocation.
  - 7) Continue an appropriate level of KSC and COK partnered membership in the International Town Gown Association (ITGA). This membership enables access to the conferences, news, research reports, and networking that is beneficial to relevant administrators and members of the College-City Commission.
  - 8) Actively encourage the owners and managers of new off-campus private apartment buildings for student renters to meet with representatives from KSC and participate in the landlord association. In addition to the typical array of issues we think it is beneficial for these owners and managers to be in communication with KSC about its policies regarding residence hall life and behavior. The differences between these and policies in the private apartments should be clear to everyone, including students, and all should be aware of conduct expectations and other policies that follow students to these residence hall-like but less regulated settings.

## Medium Term Recommendations (6 months – 1 year)

- 1) Ensure that the programs listed above are continued and given the resources needed to be successful. Participants in Commission meetings noted funding needs to be identified for key programs. These include adequate staffing to conduct inspections of rental properties and to answer community calls and continuation of the KSC Community Outreach Coordinator.
- 2) Determine the best approach to working with landlords for quality assurance and consider offering an incentive to keep properties clean, safe, and up to code. In the past an ordinance has been explored and even drafted, raising questions of where it would focus (behavior or property condition/maintenance), and whether it can be made enforceable. At the same time we hear that other New Hampshire communities have adopted similar ordinances. The questions around this option should be explored to produce a more final policy answer. In addition, we have learned of adoption of an “Unruly Gatherings Ordinance” in 2013 by the City Council in the college town of Eugene, Oregon.<sup>5</sup> This measure should be explored as an alternative or supplement to one on disorderly housing.
- 3) Facilitate the establishment of an association of landlords in Keene, using KSC and COK resources together. Among the benefits such an association would bring to the City, renters, and administrations would be coordinated input on possible ordinances like those above, development and exchange of best practices for things such as tenant applications and lease language, and possible self-enforcement on issues such as appearance and maintenance.
- 4) Further develop an active approach to incentivize students living off-campus to be good citizens. Among the steps discussed by the Commission are:
  - a) Encourage KSC to explore pre-approving listings of all off-campus housing, giving KSC more awareness and control of the types of housing available to students and further reinforcing that off-campus living is a privilege.
  - b) Increase student rental neighborhood patrols by KPD and increase prosecution of conduct violations by students committed off campus
  - c) Explore the possibility of making off-campus living an earned privilege and not an automatic option for upper-level students – perhaps requiring students with behavioral records or issues to be on probation and cleared before being permitted to move out of residence hall. Likewise, consider offering off-campus options to excelling freshmen and sophomores.
- 5) Aggressively pursue current efforts at KSC to expand the number of classes taught on Friday. As calls to KPD for noise and behavior issues begin their weekend increase on Thursdays, increasing Friday classes might mitigate this behavior.
- 6) Encourage either additional COK Code Enforcement staff or different enforcement emphases and changes to City Code to ensure housing stock is not degraded.

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<sup>5</sup> The ordinance can be reviewed at:  
<https://uodos.uoregon.edu/Programs/SubstanceAbusePreventionandStudentSuccess/OrdinanceonUnrulyGatherings.aspx>

### Long Term Recommendations (1 year or greater)

- 1) KSC will continue to coordinate with COK on its Residential Life Master Plan and will integrate this plan into the KSC Campus Master Plan. This plan develops goals for things such as on and off campus housing numbers. The committee was pleased to learn that KSC intends to increase the percentage of students living on campus. Input in future drafts from landlords should also be solicited and incorporated.
- 2) Revise the Comprehensive Master Plan for Keene to incorporate information and objectives from the Housing Plan for KSC. The plan should also consider types and locations of off-campus student housing, and explore zoning incentives for off-campus housing areas.
- 3) Seek partnership with businesses and other entities to assist in conversion of rental housing back to owner or non-student occupation in target neighborhoods. The Commission sees the need to proactively plan for the possibility that demand for housing may decline in some of the neighborhoods where it is currently high. To plan for this, the COK should first identify properties best suited for alternative uses. Prior work by the Heading for Home Coalition, the Cheshire Housing Trust, the Keene Housing Authority, and the Monadnock Economic Development Commission should be brought in to this effort.
- 4) Explore and consider using zoning designations that control the placement of alcohol vending with regard to student rental concentrations (COK).
- 5) Explore the possibility of other mechanisms besides KSC website listing to incentivize quality and management of off-campus student housing.

## COMMUNICATION, RELATIONSHIPS & CELEBRATIONS

The breadth of these topic areas makes it inevitable that work on them will not be finished with this report. Two of the most important recommendations are therefore among the first ones on the list in this section: increasing the frequency and regularity of high level COK and KSC communications, and formalizing the structure and function of the College-City Commission. Both are recommendations that became evident to members during the work of the Commission as opposed to being generated by the work of New Hampshire Listens or called for specifically in public meetings.

The Commission was repeatedly called upon to investigate and make recommendations about how communication and relationships could improve the understanding between the KSC community and the citizens of Keene. In particular, we were asked to address the role of student behavior and its impact on community relations and make suggestions on how to improve and maintain a positive, productive relationship. Excerpts (below) from the report by New Hampshire Listens describe the Keene community's perspective on these issues. Embedded in these excerpts are many important and worthwhile recommendations, some of which are now underway and some of which are repeated in the section that follows:

### **Communication: A Two Way Street**

*Improved communication “on all sides” was raised by all groups. Participants discussed the value of creating two-way communication strategies and activities that are respectful of students as well as neighbors. Proactive steps to create positive relationships between students and neighbors should begin with communication outreach efforts initiated by the College (e.g., keeping neighbors informed about College activities and inviting residents to College events such as the “Clap-In” at New Student Convocation) as well as by neighbors (e.g. creating mentoring and “adopt-a-first-year-student” programs that make students feel welcomed by the City). It was felt that focusing communications on students’ first 30 days on campus about their role as citizens in the larger community would be especially valuable.*

*Communication should also emphasize the positive contributions that the College makes to the overall community, what some people described as the “vitality” that the College brings to the City. It was stated that 95 percent of students make positive contributions to the community. It is the stories of these students that should be amplified in media accounts and public forums. Stories about disruptive or destructive behavior on the part of a few students should not be interpreted to represent the lives of all students. Similarly, behavior of some residents does not represent that of all residents.*

### **Building Relationships through Community Connections**

*Participants discussed the need to focus on personal, close relationships between students and neighbors through mentoring, adopt-a-street, and expanded service opportunities. Long-term relationships between students and neighbors that last over the four years that a student lives in Keene are highly desirable. These relationships can take the form of mentoring, engaging in mutual service activities, and linking community work to academic credit. The purpose of such relationships should be framed as creating values and activities that promote a sense of “one community” on the part of students and City residents.*

*Many participants discussed the core community values that emphasize safety, honesty, a sense of community, courtesy, and friendliness that they experience in Keene. These shared values are seen as the basis for positive relationships among residents and the College. Relationships between students and neighbors should reflect these values and strive to preserve them. One threat to these values is a sense of isolation on the part of*

*students, when they feel they are not connected to the larger community, or when they are not aware of opportunities to participate in the life of the City. Students who come to KSC from other states might especially be at risk for feelings of isolation.*

### **Traditions and Celebrations**

*Residents as well as College students and staff expressed a great deal of pride and satisfaction with Keene as a place to live, work, learn, and play. The City is seen as friendly, accessible, culturally diverse, economically healthy, rich in natural beauty, family-oriented, and committed to public service. These core values and attributes can be sustained through continuing traditions, celebrations, and rituals.*

*The value of such traditions and celebrations, especially those that involve both the College and the wider community, was emphasized by many participants. In light of the decision by the City Council to not license the Pumpkin Festival next year, participants discussed other forms of cultural events that can instill pride, bring people together, and become venues for safe, respectful means to celebrate what is best about Keene. As mentioned earlier, inviting residents to attend College functions that have special meaning, such as the First Year Clap-In at the New Student Convocation, was seen as a means to include neighbors in campus life. Making a tradition of community service during First Year Student Orientation was also suggested.*

*Essentially, participants desired to create social activities that are safer, healthier, and a source of pride compared to those activities that result in damage to neighborhood property (often related to alcohol abuse). Community service activities in which students and residents work side-by-side can also create the sense of “one community” that many spoke about. Awards for students who exhibit high levels of civic engagement and service could become part of the community’s traditions. Expecting students who live in off-campus housing to reach out to neighbors, introduce themselves, offer to assist in neighborhood clean-ups, and otherwise contribute positively to life in those neighborhoods should become part of community norms. Joint campus-community events connected to the Clarence DeMar Marathon, the Film Fest, Earth Day, the Cohen Center, the NH Dance Institute, and Taste of Keene were all mentioned as examples of opportunities to build on existing traditions and cultural resources in ways that can unify the City and College.<sup>6</sup>*

As part of our information gathering process, we reviewed background papers<sup>7</sup>, and spoke with individuals in the community including Mayor Kendall Lane and the former Coordinator of Student and Community Relations, Allison Riley. We also talked to Kemal Atkins, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management at Keene State College.

One of the notable things we learned is that the management of KSC and COK celebrations is an issue in other places besides Keene. The “Safer Communities” report describes escalated gatherings and celebrations in recent years at the University of Connecticut, and Penn State University in addition to the University of Massachusetts, where rioting associated with the “Blarney Blowout” in Spring of 2014 necessitated the deployment of police in riot gear and resulted in over 50 arrests. Analysis in that report reveals that communication – between students, the College, and the City – is one of the keys to the management and prevention of such events. Several of the following recommendations make use of that report. Based on recent history the most pressing situation that needs addressing is the behavior of students in the community. Problems with alcohol and the illegal use of drugs, partying, noise and destruction of property are common.

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<sup>6</sup> “Good Neighbors,” pp. 6 – 7.

<sup>7</sup> In particular the “Safer Community Through Partnership” report prepared in September 2014 by Edward Davis LLC for the University of Massachusetts and the Town of Amherst.

The objective of any program to improve behavior and promote citizenship through communications is to educate the students about acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, good citizenship, and community expectations. There are several related groups involved in communications including students, KSC administration, faculty and staff, neighbors, parents of students, COK officials, and the larger community.

The difficulty of developing specific recommendations within these topic areas is their overlap with other sections of the report. From an interest in KSC-COK relationships, communication, and celebrations it is certainly easy to second the call elsewhere in the report for a new landlords' association, collection and maintenance by KSC of a listing of off-campus student addresses, consideration of greater professional authority for KSC Campus Security, exploration of new ordinances within city code, and continued and expanded efforts by KSC to address alcohol and drug use. Possible recommendations in addition to those developed elsewhere in the report follow:

### **Short Term Recommendations (0-6 months)**

- 1) Complete more thorough documentation of ongoing or current initiatives by the KSC and COK regarding communications, relationships, and celebrations. A partial list includes:
  - a) Establishment of the Mayor's special committee on celebrations and events. To date, the Fall Festival Committee has decided on the theme of cultural diversity for a fall 2016 festival, and has obtained conceptual approval from the Council's Planning, Licensing and Development Committee. The concept of this festival involves collaboration between several entities including the City and the College, making it a truly community-based festival.
  - b) Integration, starting fall of 2015, of a community service activity into orientation for all incoming KSC freshmen.
  - c) Integration of KSC culture in the community by invitation, such as KSC's letter to the editor in the Keene Sentinel inviting the community to participate in the fall 2015 'Clap-In' on campus.
  - d) A history of internships and engaged learning partnerships between the COK and KSC. An example of this is the City Manager's teaching of KSC's course in Public Administration which resulted in numerous student placements in COK offices over the years. Geography, Architecture and Environmental Studies students have also participated over the years in regular research projects and the production of reports for the COK's use in planning, recreation, and green space protection.
  - e) Community invitation to, and use of, KSC's arts and cultural facilities and activities.
  - f) "Spirit of Place" activities including adopt-a-street program.
  - g) Annual KSC awards, including the President's Council Award, presented to faculty, staff, and student organizations for community service work.
- 2) Once these efforts are more comprehensively documented, they should be publicized effectively and updated when necessary.
- 3) Establish a regular/monthly meeting between the Mayor and the KSC President. Each might be accompanied by a staff member or College-City Commission chair. The purpose of these

meetings is to share issues and concerns and to place needed issues on the agenda of the College-City Commission.

- 4) Add emphasis where possible in ongoing College strategic and co-curricular plan to items that complement communications, relationships, and celebrations.
- 5) Formalize the membership and operation of the College-City Commission. Topics to be decided include terms, selection of chair/co-chairs, meeting location, staffing and resource contributions from the College and the City. Ensure that the Commission addresses remaining focus areas in its charge, including Infrastructure and Parking and Preserving the Tax Base, with a deliverable being a report equal in substance to this one.
- 6) Note array of recommendations from New Hampshire Listens report where excerpted above and implement where possible.

#### **Medium Term Recommendations (6 months – 1 year)**

- 1) The COK and KSC should expand and coordinate their current monitoring and use of social media. The purpose of this recommendation is to assist with events, both to gather and share information about planned parties and public assembly and to provide clear and up-to-date information to the public. This recommendation mirrors one made in the “Safer Communities” report to Amherst and the University of Massachusetts (pp. 45-6).
- 2) Coordinate regular planning efforts of all sorts between City and College in addition to those specified earlier around housing, construction and facilities.

#### **Long Term Recommendations (1 year or greater)**

- 1) The COK and KSC should evaluate the communication, training, collaboration, and situation assessment strategies suggested for campus security and city police in the “Safer Community” report, especially those aimed at event planning and preparation (particularly those in Sections 6.1 – 6.3).
- 2) Attempts should be made in future events when norms and relationship expectations are violated to hold opportunities to renew understanding and promote healing. An example of this in the past would be the community hearing held in December after Keene’s fall 2014 Pumpkin Festival.



## NORMS/EXPECTATIONS & ALCOHOL/SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The “Good Neighbors” report by New Hampshire Listens suggested two related themes for recommendations around behavioral norms and expectations and alcohol and substance abuse. These are summarized as follows:

### **Alcohol and Substance Use**

*A common concern shared by participants, whether from the City or College, focused on the effects of alcohol and other drugs on the community. The discussions did not frame this as just a college issue, but as a shared challenge that reflects larger social trends. The increased use and harm of heroin was noted by several groups, in addition to continuing concerns about drinking and marijuana. These concerns are linked to a sense that the community is less safe than it used to be, especially at nighttime...*

### **Norms and Expectations**

*Participants often raised the topic of clearly defined and communicated norms and expectations for responsible, civic behavior - what the Commission means by “citizenship.” As noted throughout this report, accountability for one’s actions is crucial to maintaining a vibrant, safe, respectful community. This begins with the communication of high expectations for behavior on and off campus and consistent efforts to hold violators accountable, with clear consequences for violating community norms. Several groups noted that the reputation of the City and the College is unfortunately influenced by a “party-school” identity associated with the College and the lack of enforcement of drug laws in the community. The 2014 Pumpkin Festival disturbances added to that perception.*

*Participants discussed both sanctions and incentives for fostering positive behaviors among all members of the community. There was agreement that there should be clear, enforceable rules regarding acceptable behavior both on and off campus, and that these expectations should be communicated emphatically to students during their first weeks at the College. Restorative justice approaches to violations of civil norms were mentioned as effective ways to address actions that harm property or people. Coupled with a focus on rules should be opportunities to become engaged in community service, working alongside Keene residents to instill a sense of mutual pride and shared responsibility. Businesses that serve or sell alcohol, landlords who rent to students, and college officials charged with enforcing campus regulations all need to act in ways consistent with community norms and laws and be accountable to the larger community in that process.*

*Several groups put forward the idea of “adopt-a-street” programs for students who are living in off-campus housing as a way to create shared expectations for maintaining safe, clean, strong neighborhoods. Such efforts are not simply about maintenance but about working side-by-side with neighbors and taking on leadership roles to instill pride and accountability. It was suggested that neighbors welcome students to their communities at the beginning of the school year in order to create positive and mutual relationships and communicate shared norms and expectations. The recently implemented mandatory orientation program for students living off-campus was seen as an important step in creating clear expectations for responsible behavior. In addition, when students graduate from KSC, they should be encouraged to “stay, work, and play” through employment opportunities. Knowing that such opportunities might be available will create more a greater sense of responsibility and belonging throughout a student’s time in college.*

*A particular challenge noted by many is the increasing use of social media in ways that promote anti-social or destructive behavior. It is believed by some that use of social media can encourage behavior that damages the community as well as foster a sense of isolation. Yik Yak was especially pointed out as a challenge to maintaining civility and respect. Specific efforts to create expectations for responsible and civil use of social media were seen as important for assuring improved community relationships.<sup>8</sup>*

During the information-gathering process for these issue areas, the Commission heard from four members of KSC staff about education and intervention services available to students for substance abuse issues. We also heard from KPD Chief Costa about police efforts to change unwanted behavior and enforce alongside KSC. Further, we also heard from COK Code Enforcement about their efforts to improve housing problems. Finally, we heard from a landlord about successful lease language to curb behavior problems, and we heard from neighbors in southeast Keene about their efforts to change behavior.<sup>9</sup> Input from social service agencies and non-profits in the community working to reduce substance abuse was lacking and needs to be directly sought out.

### Short Term Recommendations (0-6 months)

- 1) As with other recommendation areas we suggest a more thorough documentation of ongoing or new initiatives by KSC and COK regarding behavior and substance use and abuse. A partial list of the many efforts now underway includes:
  - a) The hiring of a new Alcohol and Other Drug Coordinator by KSC to help administer education and other programs.
  - b) Expanded residence hall programs and information postings around alcohol and substance use, including expanded education during summer and early semester freshmen orientation.
  - c) Increased communication to students during move-in fall 2015 occupants of problem households were contacted resulting in fewer reports than previous years.
  - d) New fines for substance and alcohol offenses.
  - e) More aggressive pursuit and enforcement of conduct violations by KSC, including those committed off campus.
  - f) Expanded use of surveillance video monitoring and evidence gathering in the aftermath of escalated gatherings like Pumpkin Festival and celebrations after sporting events.
- 2) As there seems to be little knowledge of the efforts described above and others like them KSC and COK should be particularly committed to expanding this list and publicizing it. This will improve the understanding within the community of work that is already being done. At the same time it will create an atmosphere in which, according to the “Safer Community” report, students and others will be less likely to violate behavioral standards. They are less likely, for example, to violate standards if they are versed in the consequences and if they are aware that their actions might be captured on film.<sup>10</sup>
- 3) Recommend that the COK allocate additional funding in the FY16-17 budget for increased police patrols in problem neighborhoods.

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<sup>8</sup> “Good Neighbors,” pp. 7- 8.

<sup>9</sup> Questions asked of experts included:

- What current programs are relevant to substance abuse and communications?
- What’s working well in your program(s) and what could be improved?
- What are new initiatives the Commission should consider?
- How do we remove the incentives for big parties?
- Could the college set up a community relations office?

<sup>10</sup> Safer Community, p. 41.

### Medium Term Recommendations (6 months to 1 year)

- 1) Encourage coordination among faculty and staff at KSC to ensure students at risk are directed to prevention programs. For example, more could be done to train and engage faculty in ways to direct students into prevention programs and also staff from other areas of KSC (e.g., Athletics, Greek Life, Clubs and Orgs, etc.).
- 2) Recommend to KSC and COK the addition of another law enforcement liaison officer to assist with legal prevention and enforcement. The KPD has a practice of proactive enforcement and education, which would be better implemented with the addition of more staff capacity.
- 3) Following a recommendation to UMass and the Town of Amherst in the “Safer Community” report, we urge a “thorough review of current and new on and off campus entertainment venues”<sup>11</sup> aimed at evaluating the number and attractiveness of places for students to gather and do things that do not involve the sale and consumption of alcohol. These may be venues that count as celebrations. The College should consider promoting student awareness and use of such temporary options.

### Long Term Recommendations (1 year or greater)

- 1) Increase levels of prevention presentations at KSC Orientation and Welcome Days in a meaningful, strategic, and integrated way.
- 2) Consider expansion of the scope of KSC’s current work with addictions/substance abuse issues from its current level of resources while also managing risk on behalf of KSC.

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11 Safer community p 50.

## PARKING & INFRASTRUCTURE

When the Commission was first established by Mayor Lane and President Huot in 2014, the themes of parking and infrastructure were identified as priority focus areas. Although the NH Listens Report did not directly address these themes, they remain topics of mutual concern to the City and College. In its review of this theme area, the Commission investigated current and continuing issues related to on- and off-campus parking and infrastructure considerations such as roadway design and safety, stormwater management, and the potential impact of possible future KSC development. They began their work by examining the strategies and recommendations included within the City and College's current master plans and by consulting individuals with considerable knowledge of and experience working on these subject areas in the City.

While the demand for parking is a significant concern for both the City, with respect to the downtown, and the College, with respect for students and staff, both entities recognize the importance of employing a diverse mix of strategies to meet this need. The Keene Comprehensive Master Plan underscores both the importance of increasing on-street parking and the need to reduce parking demand by enhancing multimodal transportation options. The Plan also addresses the importance of Complete Streets, improving walkability within the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods and the preference for structured parking facilities over the creation of new surface lots. Similarly, the KSC Campus Master Plan calls for improving options for non-motorized transportation as a way to reduce parking demand. Both Plans emphasize the importance of improving the design of streetscapes and roadways to consider the safety of all users and to increase linkages between important destinations in and around the campus with Keene's downtown.

In addition to reviewing parking and transportation infrastructure needs, the Commission examined the impact of stormwater on areas surrounding the College and discussed ways the City and College could work together to better address management of stormwater and development within the floodplain. They also discussed the potential impacts of a large development, such as a wellness complex, would have on the City if it were built on vacant land owned by the College on Gilbo Avenue. The recommendations developed by the Commission related to these topics are detailed below.

### Short Term Recommendations (0-6 months)

- 1) The City and College should address the issue of pedestrian and bicyclist safety along the areas of Main and Winchester Streets near KSC's campus by co-sponsoring a community forum on the topic and by identifying funding opportunities for installing traffic calming and Complete Streets elements.
- 2) The City, KSC, and community will work together to identify opportunities for additional pedestrian crossings and improved lighting across Main Street, in the areas between NH 101 and the Marlboro and Winchester Street roundabout, and across Winchester Street between the NH Route 101 roundabout and Main Street.
- 3) The City will utilize and raise awareness of the recently adopted Complete Streets Policy (November 2015) and Design Guidelines, especially, when designing or redesigning/reconstructing roadways in densely populated neighborhoods and areas of the City.

### **Medium Term Recommendations (6 months to 1 year)**

- 1) The City, College and the NH Department of Transportation will routinely communicate and coordinate with each other on the design and construction of relevant infrastructure projects, including the Winchester Street Reconstruction and the Multiuse Bridge across NH 101 (also known as South Bridge).
- 2) The City will examine the feasibility of installing pedestrian activated flashing beacons, and/or other measures to improve nighttime visibility and pedestrian safety at high volume pedestrian crossings near KSC's Campus. An area of focus might be the intersection of Winchester Street with the Cheshire Rail Trail, near Foundry Street.
- 3) To pilot potential roadway improvements and raise awareness of Complete Streets concepts, the City, College and/or other partners should consider organizing short-term demonstration projects similar to the "Rethink Marlboro Street" Complete Streets demonstration sponsored by the City in September of 2015.
- 4) If College considers the development of land outside the current campus boundaries, it will work with the City and other partners to study the potential impacts of such development (e.g. traffic, economic, visual, etc.) on the community. If the College was to consider developing a Wellness Complex at its property on Gilbo Ave, it would be important to first study the potential impacts of this facility on traffic and parking during large events.
- 5) The College will work with HCS, the operators of the KSC Campus Shuttle and the Keene City Express, to better understand student utilization of these services, and to discuss the possibility of changing routes/schedules as a way to increase student ridership.

### **Longer-Term Recommendations (1 year or greater)**

- 1) The College will work with the City and/or other partners to explore opportunities for improving pedestrian/bicyclist connectivity between the KSC Winchester Street Parking Lot and the KSC Campus.
- 2) The City, College, and other partners will work together to develop a vision/plan for improving pedestrian, bicyclist and motor vehicle connectivity in the neighborhoods between Gilbo Ave and KSC Campus, specifically, in the area of Ralston Street. In the event that the College develops land on Gilbo Ave, it will be important to open and maintain Wilson Street as a through-way.
- 3) The City, College, and relevant neighborhood groups should examine the impact of and discuss ways to address on-street parking in off-campus neighborhoods near the College, specifically, on Adams Street and Elliot Street.
- 4) The College will work with the Monadnock Alliance for Sustainable Transportation (MAST) and/or other partners to enhance the travel options available to students/staff commuting to campus and to reduce the demand for parking on-campus. These options could include attracting a car-sharing program such as zip-car, creating a ride-board to facilitate car- or van-pooling, and expanding the green bike program. The College might also consider offering incentives to students who walk or bike to campus instead of driving an automobile.
- 5) The College should establish a protocol for communicating information on its stormwater management and drainage infrastructure with the City beyond a project-by-project basis.

## PROPERTY & TAX BASE

KSC is a vital economic engine for the City of Keene. According to the 2012 Report, “Keene State College’s Economic Impact on the City of Keene and Cheshire County,” the College contributes an estimated \$165 million annually to Keene and the surrounding area through direct and indirect economic inputs. Statewide, the College contributes an annual \$352 million. In addition, the College employs 870 individuals, enrolls 5,600 students, and contributes over \$1.4 million in donated volunteer time from students, faculty and staff.

Despite these economic benefits, there is concern for how potential expansion of the College might impact the City’s tax base. The College, which is exempt from paying local property taxes as per NH RSA 72:23, currently owns 214 acres of land in Keene with a total assessed value of \$186.5 million. This amounts to a total of approximately \$6.2 million annually of deferred tax payments to the City, School District and County. If the College were to purchase additional land in the community, it could have an impact on the City’s tax base, depending on the type of development and proposed uses.

In 2015, the City and College worked to address some of this concern in their re-negotiation of the Municipal Service Agreement between the two entities. This Municipal Service Agreement (MSA) was renewed in early 2015 and is a five-year agreement that outlines an agreed upon schedule and amount of payment by the College to the City to offset the cost of certain services such as fire and police services and judicial/investigative costs. Payment from the College to the City is scheduled to increase with each future agreement.

In its review of this theme area, the Commission examined the impact of the College on the City’s tax base and discussed the importance of the College to the regional economy and overall community vitality. In addition, the Commission researched how the current MSA between the College and City compares to other MSAs between colleges and universities in NH with their host community. The Commission also heard presentations from Dr. Huot, President of KSC, and Gordon Leversee, Dean of Sciences and Social Sciences, which underscored that the College does not have plans for property acquisition. The following is a list of short-, medium-and longer-term recommendations that were developed from the Commission’s research and discussions on this topic area.

### **Short-Term Recommendations (0 to 6 months)**

- 1) The City, College, and other partners should utilize data from the KSC Economic Impact Study to advertise and market the City of Keene to potential employees, students, employers, etc.

### **Medium-Term Recommendations (6 months to 1 year)**

- 1) The Institutional Research Office at KSC should further study the direct and indirect economic impacts of the College on the surrounding community. This study should build upon the 2012 Economic Impact Report conducted by the College to further consider the impact of volunteer efforts of both students and faculty in the Community, public events hosted by the College, and the cultural resources provided by the College. This study might also examine the impact of the City on the College as host-community.
- 2) The College should voluntarily submit plans for development and/or redevelopment on-campus to the City of Keene Planning Board for advice and comment.

### **Longer-Term Recommendations (1 year or greater)**

- 1) The City and College will coordinate with each other as they work to update and develop their respective Master Plans. Both entities should communicate routinely about the implementation of, and revisions to, these Plans as they relate to the other. Long-range planning efforts should address the importance of balancing the needs of both the College and the City with respect to property and tax base.
- 2) The College, City, and other partners, such as large employers, will work together to address opportunities for economic revitalization of neighborhoods surrounding the KSC campus. This work may involve increasing communication between the College, City, and large employers in the area regarding future plans for property acquisition (if any). It may also involve establishing an incentive program(s) to encourage homeowners to occupy and renovate properties in these neighborhoods.
- 3) The College and City will work together to renew their Municipal Services Agreement in 2019.