

March 3, 2010

To:

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Dear Distinguished Leaders,

For well over 30 years, as a faculty member and administrator at Syracuse University, I had the great pleasure, even the luxury, of daily walking to work.

Before I moved to the University neighborhood in 1972, I had only a vague idea of how pleasurable and rewarding it would be to live in such close proximity to my work. I have a number of very clear memories of what it was like in the seventies, before the Dome was built and landlords started buying up properties from families. Walking to and from campus, morning and evening, was more often than not an occasion to catch up with colleagues about professional or personal matters as we walked along Euclid Avenue, since so many faculty or staff from the University lived within two or three blocks of Euclid Ave. Walking in groups of two or three, or even more, we would often stop on the corner of, say, Sumner Ave. or Livingston Ave., to finish up a conversation before one of the party peeled off from the rest to head to his or her home. Junior and senior faculty members mixed with colleagues from across disciplines to create a common bond of friendship and shared mission. It was an incredibly rewarding experience that we took for granted then, and began sorely to miss as student

renters began replacing families in the neighborhood. Today it is very rare to see colleagues walking together down Euclid Avenue.

Another of the pleasures of living near campus was the opportunity to host seminars or meetings for students in our homes. Because my wife and I have continued to live on Lancaster Ave, I hosted dinners and other events for my first year advisees until my retirement in 2006. Students were able to walk easily and safely from their residence hall to our home for a late afternoon seminar and dinner. They enjoyed, as well, the opportunity to meet my wife and to experience a more personal connection to the large University. Recently, when I congratulated one of my former advisees who was graduating with honors, her response was, "Thank you. And please tell your wife how much I liked her brownies." That was her memory from four years earlier when she was at our home for a dinner. The number of faculty members who today can have such rewarding personal contacts has been severely diminished as the immediate neighborhood has changed largely to student rentals.

Our two sons were able to walk to and from Edward Smith School and enjoyed many friends their age who also lived in the neighborhood. The loss of families from the neighborhood makes this a much less common luxury, and parental involvement in the schools, which is one of the keys to successful public schools, is correspondingly less. Good friends and neighbors of ours, he a senior faculty member, she a professional and an active volunteer, have recently--and reluctantly--bought a home in Dewitt for the simple reason that their immediate neighbors are now entirely students. The suburbs gain, the city loses.

There have always been students living in the neighborhood, and a healthy mix makes life interesting and rewarding for everyone. And we enjoy our interactions with our student neighbors today. It is simply a question of healthy balance. As more blocks have become almost or completely student rentals, the quality of life declines for them and for all the neighborhood, as well as for the institutions on the Hill. Reversing that downward spiral would be a major gain for the city and its major employers by providing a close livable residential neighborhood where the riches of city life are accessible and affordable and incredibly attractive.

Sincerely,



Michael Flusche
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