

Common Questions About the Proposed Student Residences at Salve Regina University

Some people say that the planned residences will increase traffic in the neighborhood. Is this true?

Once the residences are completed, nearly 400 students will be walking to class instead of driving from off campus. Removing this many students and their cars from city streets can only mean a lot less in terms of commuter traffic. Traffic patterns around campus may shift, but commuter traffic will be reduced. Harmful emissions from hundreds of cars driving to and from Salve Regina every day will also be significantly reduced.

What are some of the compromises Salve Regina has made to accommodate concerns from neighbors?

The University has consistently been flexible and reasonable throughout this process, reflecting our commitment to be a good neighbor. Salve Regina has acted in good faith by designing the new residence halls in a way that conforms to the dimensional requirements of the R-60 zoning district.

Salve Regina has also engaged fully in the city planning process. The University sought and received Planning Board approval for the original proposal and agreed to a one-year project delay to coincide with work done to better align Newport's building process with the state. During the delay, the University subsequently revised site plans based on neighborhood and historic district feedback, significantly reducing the scope and scale of the residence halls. Building "A"/Watts was lowered by 9 feet while Building "B"/Wallace was reduced in length by 60 feet. The two buildings now have a distinctly different character, including bay windows and different siding textures. Each building was also rotated 90 degrees, removing larger facades from the street.

What do experts say about how the new design for the residences fits the historic character of the neighborhood?

The new construction aligns with and is complimentary to the University's historic neighborhood. The new design was endorsed by Grant Marani of Robert A.M. Stern Architects, a national preservation expert who has historically served as an arbiter of what constitutes appropriate design in the neighborhood. In addition, the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission has found that the project will not adversely affect the historical significance, integrity or character of the Bellevue Avenue National Historic Landmark District as a whole.

Some people say that the construction of the new residences will impact Newport's tourism industry. Is there any evidence of this?

Salve Regina, our historic campus buildings, and other higher educational institutions have long been a part of Newport's tourism draw. Construction of a new building on our campus will only enhance that interest. The new buildings are designed to accommodate undergraduate students and summer conference/camp attendees. They are not hotels.

What are the benefits to the city of approving the residences?

Salve Regina's tradition of preserving, adapting and building structures to complement the historic aspects of the neighborhood will continue. National recognition and awards for the University's historic preservation efforts date back to 1997. The re-design of the new residences reflects Salve Regina's tradition of complimenting its historic neighborhood surroundings.

As part of the project, the University will also restore the William Watts Sherman House to its prior historical significance by removing the unsightly, 1950s-era addition. The goal is to revert this important structure to a more appropriate, accurate version of the original.

The project will also support approximately 300 local construction jobs while the city will receive an increase of approximately \$141,000 in annual payments through the state's payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) program.