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Dear Greater University of Florida Community,

I am writing today to express my concern over the decision to close so quickly the UF Graduate and Family Housing Complexes of University Village South (UVS) and Maguire Village, the latter of which was dedicated in honor of our family, starting with my grandfather who served as Presidents of the Student Body, UF Alumni Association, and Florida Bar. But my concern stems not from the fact that Maguire Village bears my name, but because I believe it may be wasteful to close so quickly and not in the best interest of the taxpayers and graduate students to demolish affordable housing units which may still have some useful life.

While it is true that there are many competing needs at a large University like UF, affordable housing for graduate students needs to be one of them, and it is pretty apparent that removing 348 units of housing in one big demolition that can easily shelter 700+ people is problematic to that end. However, I do not know enough about the factors which brought about this decision, but I would welcome the University to release such info, because at the moment the justification has not been made public, nor has it been made with critical input from graduate student stakeholders.

Being 40+ year old buildings, it is possible that up to one third of these apartments are in need of repair and investment, but that does not mean that 100% have to be demolished in Spring 2023 as current plans call for. Perhaps UF could instead consider a phased approach, where only those buildings which are unsalvageable would be closed for remodeling (or demolished if absolutely needed), allowing most units to remain occupied until a future date when they likewise might need remodeling or rebuilding. In any case, UF claims residents living there now are under no danger, so UF should respect the commitment made to them and not require them to move out prematurely, and instead let them stay as long as they need.

UF should also consider immediately reversing their decision to not accept new residents into perfectly livable units at Maguire Village and UVS, even if only until 2023 or whenever the selected buildings are taken offline. Leaving units empty benefits no one, especially while there is a high demand for on-campus housing with open space to breathe.

The question to ask might be whether UF has duly considered that these affordable housing units are essentially a significant part of the compensation provided against the cost of a modern graduate education. Many graduate students make close to minimum wage, so discounted, safe, and proximal University housing is critical for their financial survival. Removing these apartments in effect takes away this benefit and increases the amount of loans these students must take out.



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By demolishing all 348 units in one fell swoop, many graduate students are thrown into a fight for the limited on-campus housing remaining. Data for Gainesville shows that these graduate students will have to pay on average 150% of the price for apartments off-campus that they would be paying at these on-campus villages.

While future graduate students will be indefinitely affected if these otherwise low maintenance apartment units are lost, the recently accepted graduate students may feel like they are victims of a “bait and switch”. Graduate school is a full time, low-paying job, and this essentially subsidized housing is needed to help the most vulnerable students stay safe and graduate without unnecessary financial hardships.

A balanced approach is needed moving forward, one which considers limiting wastefulness of valuable housing infrastructure, graduate student needs, and future uses of campus land. Weighing the needs of graduate students is just one component of UF’s strategic planning but demolishing all of Maguire Village and UVS in 2023 (even the hundreds of perfectly livable units) without the approval or input from the graduate students who live there is detrimental to UF’s efforts to recruit the best and the brightest for years to come.

I encourage a postponement of this decision to allow for further study and consensus gathering. Choosing to reinvest in these Villages and the graduate students who call them home may be found in the end to be the more prudent decision.

Thank you,

Raymer F. Maguire, III, Esquire