THE DAILY CLIPS

August 24, 2012

News, commentary, and opinion
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Initiative divides ECU students, profs
By Wesley Brown
Friday, August 24, 2012

Carl Swanson, and his wife, Jane, have never owned more than one car. Their next-door neighbor, a house rented on Lewis Street by three college students, has three, each vehicle straddling the front walkway leading into the house.

The sight worries the East Carolina University history professor, who believes such code violations will be too much for the city to handle if four-bedroom homes between Elm, Fifth and Reade streets are opened up to a fourth renter.

“It’s a fantasy,” Swanson said of the idea the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative will bring stability and growth to the Tar River University area. “I don’t see how it will improve the neighborhood by any stretch of the imagination.”

The future of the historic riverfront community now is being questioned by its residents, including a large percentage of ECU professors and students who live in the area.

While professors like Swanson oppose the permit program proposed by Greenville City Councilman Max Joyner, many students are in favor of a change to the three-decade-old law that caps at three the number of unrelated people who can share a home in the city.
An elite class

A growing number of ECU graduates are beginning to room with other young adults in Greenville to save money and to live in a house of high quality, Matt Paske, ECU’s student body vice president, said.

City zoning laws limit the ability of young professionals to reach out to others and take full advantage of what Greenville has to offer, Paske said.

“Networking is a key component” of life after graduation, said Paske, a fifth-year senior.

Paske said ECU graduates represent an elite class of men and women in Greenville who more and more frequently are taking on leadership roles in the city and helping the economy expand.

If Joyner’s initiative fails to pass, it could hinder the student body from choosing Greenville as its home after graduation, he said.

“Although stereotypically students are seen as party animals that disrupt the peace, in reality, they are driven individuals who are not only working hard to obtain high grades for graduate school, doctoral programs and occupations,” Paske said. “They are also working towards ECU’s model — to serve.”

Paske said that as more ECU students start to move into the university area, more landlords will begin to reinvest in the area. Then more homes will fill to capacity, and crime will level off, he said.

But professors see a different future for the neighborhood — one marked by declining property values that will lower the tax base and make it harder for city staff to pay for resources needed to control the rising number of code violations in the area.

‘Incredible neighbors’

Chris Mansfield, a health sciences professor at ECU, has lived in the Tar River University district since city zoning laws were changed in 1981 to limit single-family homes to three unrelated people.

Mansfield said his next-door neighbor, a gentleman who lives in Fayetteville, has for the past 15 years rented to no more than three college students and always has seemed to turn a profit.

“Most of them have been incredible neighbors … and are still good friends,” Mansfield said of the student renters.
Mansfield described the neighborhood as a wonderful place, but as a member of the city’s Redevelopment Commission, he said he fears that if the area becomes even more dominated by renters, it will lose what charm it has left.

Homes will fall into disrepair, while streets and yards will become overrun with cars, trash and debris — problems Mansfield said will lead to more work for code enforcement, parking control and police officers in the city, not to mention sanitation crews.

Swanson agreed with Mansfield’s points adding that the problem already is getting worse.

City codes are unenforced, cars are parked in yards, homes are slipping under minimum housing standards, landlords are expanding their rentals without permission and as a result, Realtors in Greenville are “steering home buyers” away from the university area, Swanson said.

“This is an open invitation for more of the same,” Swanson said.

‘Give it a chance’

Most students said Joyner’s plan deserves a shot.

“Might as well,” ECU junior Skylar Poole said of passing the initiative. “It has its protections.”

The Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, in its current form, would require landlords to get a zoning permit, have three off-street parking spaces and include a crime-free addendum in all rental agreements before allowing a fourth roommate in a home.

Plus, the proposal mandates a civilian work group be established to pursue revitalization funding and to enforce policies.

“Who knows?” Poole said. “It could help the economy, both in the neighborhood and downtown.”

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Progress at UNC but ...

To give credit where it’s due, Chancellor Holden Thorp of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has made some positive if belated changes in the academic support structure that surrounds the university’s athletes. It’s true, of course, that these changes came after (and during) multiple investigations going back to a football scandal and subsequent punishments from the NCAA, and after evidence of academic fraud related to the apparent connections between athletes, their counselors and the Department of African and Afro-American Studies came to light.

Nevertheless, Thorp has at last cut the chain-of-command connection that existed between the academic support program and the Department of Athletics. Those who run the sports-entertainment extravaganzas have no business getting involved in the academic supervision of the stars of the show, who are supposed to be students first. And some other oversight improvements have been made, all of them good.

But a more constructive goal out of these painful and damaging revelations would be to completely overhaul this system of academic counseling and guidance for athletes. Overhaul, as in putting an end to it.

If this university really believes in the “Carolina Way,” really stands behind the conviction that all athletes should be qualified students capable of achieving an academic degree and not just gladiators in the minor leagues for professional sports, then let them be part of the regular student body, which, by the way, has access to academic counseling and tutors and other support features. Making athletes part of some separate academic setup isolates them and does them no favor. And if that means the university can’t complete for those stars who want to be “one and done,” so be it.
More Firms Bow to Generation Y's Demands
To Retain Young Workers, Companies Offer Special Incentives; Some Older Employees Cry Foul
By LESLIE KWOH
Updated August 22, 2012, 9:39 a.m. ET

They're often criticized as spoiled, impatient, and most of all, entitled.
But as millennials enter the workforce, more companies are jumping through hoops to accommodate their demands for faster promotions, greater responsibilities and more flexible work schedules—much to the annoyance of older co-workers who feel they have spent years paying their dues to rise through the ranks.

Employers, however, say concessions are necessary to retain the best of millennials, also known as Generation Y, which is broadly defined as those born in the 1980s and 1990s. They bring fresh skills to the workplace: they're tech-savvy, racially diverse, socially interconnected and collaborative. Moreover, companies need to keep their employee pipelines full as baby boomers enter retirement.

It is estimated Gen Y will comprise more than 40% of the U.S. workforce by 2020, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, far outnumbering any other generation.

A little over two years ago, Chegg Inc., an online textbook-rental service based in Silicon Valley, was struggling with high turnover among its millennial employees.
Chief Executive Dan Rosensweig gleaned from millennials' exit interviews that they felt there was too much bureaucracy and not enough communication, utilization of their talent or fun. They also wanted the option of leaving the office at 2 p.m. and continuing their work at a Starbucks.

Like other companies looking to accommodate these younger workers, Chegg had to tread a fine line. Too much special treatment, and older workers would feel neglected. Too little, and younger workers would leave.

Mr. Rosensweig and his management team eliminated some middle-management positions to give younger hires more exposure to projects, and they introduced an unlimited paid vacation policy. He said no one has abused that policy.

The annual turnover rate among millennials has since fallen by 50% each year for the last two years, Mr. Rosensweig said. "If they don't feel like they're making a contribution to a company overall quickly, they don't stay," he said. "If you provide them with the right environment, they'll work forever, around the clock."

Some critics contend that Gen Y is no different from previous generations. Kevin Coyne, a 57-year-old business strategy professor at Emory University, said many of the qualities that define millennials are simply signs of youth. As a young McKinsey & Co. consultant in the 1970s, he recalls overhearing a manager describe his generation as being disloyal and rebellious.

But that hasn't stopped companies—especially those located in less-hip locations—from providing younger hires with unique incentives. Aprimo, an Indianapolis-based software maker, all but guarantees recent college graduates a promotion within one year, assuming performance is up to par, through its OnTrack program, which was launched in 2005 to lure young talent to the Midwest. So far, 100% of participants have received a promotion and salary bump.

The initiative, which rotates new hires among three business units, has helped double the share of millennials at the 1,200-person company to roughly 20%, said Aprimo President Bob Boehnlein. The retention rate for graduates of the program at the five-year mark is 85%.

When OnTrack began, Aprimo's older workers weren't enthused. Mr. Boehnlein said he met individually with each manager to explain how the strategy would help the business. "I had to strong-arm a little bit," he
recalled, but said the managers eventually came around when several of the young hires became top performers.

Likewise, some baby boomers cried foul when the U.S. division of Schneider Electric SA, SU.FR -1.35% a French energy-efficiency specialist, launched an 18-month rotation and mentoring program for Gen Y workers. Management responded with leadership development and training for older workers to help them manage—and feel less threatened by—millennials, said Jeff Drees, president of the company's U.S. division. Still, when a few "blockers" remained resistant to the changes, Mr. Drees said he was forced to let those managers go.

At Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc. some older managers changed their feedback tactics to accommodate the influx of younger workers.

"Managers here usually give quarterly feedback sessions. Millennials want it after a presentation," said Jane Borkowski, vice president of human resources.

The Lakeville, Mass., company also decided to scrap its policy of an 8 a.m. workday start to accommodate young hires who make the one-hour commute from Boston, where they prefer to live, Ms. Borkowski said. The company now has more flexible work hours.

The suggestion came from a newly formed "Culture Club," a committee of Gen X and Gen Y employees.

"We know we're competing against a lot of companies located in Boston, and we know we're going to have to think differently if we want to keep young people here," she said.

A 2010 Pew Research study found that while baby boomers—generally born between 1946 and 1964—cited work ethic, respectfulness, and morals as their defining qualities, millennials chose technology, music and pop culture, and liberal leanings—followed by superior intelligence and clothing as their defining qualities. Millennials are also likely to prioritize lifestyle over salary, and to foresee changing careers.

These generational differences may be why baby boomers often gripe about their younger colleagues as arrogant kids who don't know how to dress appropriately, deal with customers or close deals, said Shirley Engelmeier, a diversity consultant who advises Fortune 1000 companies on employee engagement.
But their impatience, she adds, shows an ability to question the status quo and devise new ways of doing business.

Andrew Leavitt, 26 years old, said many in his age group just want the opportunity to stand out without dealing with routine or hierarchy. The Princeton University graduate accepted a job as an account planner at Ogilvy & Mather in 2010, but said he was disappointed to find his days consisted mainly of status reports and client calls.

A year later, he moved to a small brand strategy and marketing agency, CreativeFeed, where he was promised more responsibility. Since joining in September, Mr. Leavitt, an account executive, said he has gotten the chance to meet with clients, give presentations and work with different department heads.

Still, he predicts he'll eventually move on. "I mean, what kind of millennial would work for the same company their whole life?"

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