

Stadium coming to UR campus? / Public meeting is held on proposed facility; crowd voices concerns

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The University of Richmond held an open-to-the-public informational program regarding the school's proposed on-campus football facility last night. About 70 attended at UR's Jepson Alumni Center. Two views reflected the theme of the 90-minute session led by Spiders Athletic Director Jim Miller.

Allen Ferguson, who lives in a neighborhood that borders UR, said "My anxiety is getting the people here and getting them away from here."

Game-day traffic, and overall traffic in the UR area unrelated to the proposed facility, surfaced as the evening's top subject in comments primarily made by university neighbors.

After other audience members echoed Ferguson's concern regarding traffic, Mimi Gill, Westhampton College Class of 1949, spoke. Her position: it should be a realistic expectation of those who purchase homes near a university that there will be a steady stream of vehicles around campus, and that a school has a right to expand.

Gill's comments drew the only applause of the night.

"I think it's a tempest in a teapot," she said of traffic worries. In an interview later, Gill added that many university neighbors take advantage of UR grounds for various activities and, in exchange, should be willing to accept campus growth.

Following Miller's opening presentation, which included conceptual designs, approximately a dozen audience members asked questions and offered opinions. UR's Board of Trustees has not yet granted final approval for construction of the facility, which would be built on the site of First Market Stadium (adjacent to the Robins Center) and have a seating capacity, including temporary end-zone stands when necessary, of no more than 9,000.

Responding to questions about game-day traffic - five or six home football dates per regular season - Miller said traffic studies have been performed on UR's behalf, and more will be done.

"Believe me, we know traffic is the most important issue," Miller said. "We want this to be successful. The best way to fail is to not have a good traffic plan."

Miller emphasized that the stadium's capacity would be slightly less than that of the Robins Center, home of Spiders basketball since the early '70s, and that football crowds tend to arrive and leave games in a staggered manner. Basketball crowds typically arrive shortly before tipoff and leave immediately after the game's conclusion, Miller said.

UR does not plan to build new roads or parking lots in conjunction with stadium construction. Miller said UR believes the 4,000 on-campus parking spots will be sufficient to handle a football crowd.

A second informational session will be held at the Jepson Alumni Center on Tuesday at 7 p.m.

(more)

## SPIDERS' ATTENDANCE

UR's average football attendance at city-owned UR Stadium (cap. 21,319) during the past decade:

2006: 7,263  
2005: 6,066  
2004: 5,968  
2003: 6,812  
2002: 6,209  
2001: 9,211  
2000: 11,118  
1999: 11,277  
1998: 13,629  
1997: 9,079

## FACTS AND FIGURES

1929: Opening year of City Stadium, the off-campus stadium in which UR still plays home games.

1983: City Stadium renamed UR Stadium. UR pays city \$1 a year to lease it. UR maintains the facility.

2003: UR Board of Trustees votes to pursue expansion of First Market Stadium for football purposes.

2003: UR Board of Trustees estimates the cost of the 6,000-to-9,000-seat, on-campus facility at \$11 million.

2004: FieldTurf, a synthetic-grass surface, installed at First Market Stadium, at a cost of \$750,000.

2005: UR approves funding plan, commits \$5 million, matching the pledge of an anonymous donor.

2005: UR estimates cost of the on-campus stadium at \$20 million, nearly twice original projection.

2006: UR passes fundraising goal of \$20 million that was set for construction of on-campus stadium.

2009: The earliest possible season for an on-campus Spiders football game at First Market Stadium.