

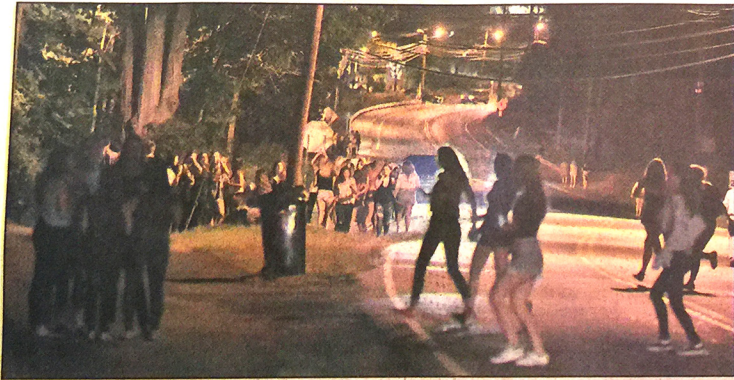
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On a recent Thursday evening in Storrs, there were a number of private house parties with University of Connecticut students. At this South Eagleville Road location, there was such a party. The owner of the property, however, said it was a private party for invitees only. He was however having a problem with uninvited students showing up and wanting to get onto the property.

Beyond the borders

UConn party scene spreading to neighborhoods

Editor's note: This is the first in a two-part series on how the University of Connecticut's party scene has changed and how local residents and police are coping.

By **COREY SIPE**
Chronicle Staff Writer

STORRS — While typically college students and partying go together, town and university officials, along with residents, are concerned about changing patterns of the stereotypical college party.

Ten to 15 years ago, Carriage House and Celeron Square apartments off Hunting Lodge Road

TAMING THE HUSKIES

were almost the only place where crazy parties took place on the weekends — especially during the former “Spring Weekend” celebrations that became famous, then infamous.

Meanwhile, wild on-campus parties have become a thing of the past.

UConn Police Department Chief Hans Rhyhart said “we haven’t

seen many (parties) traditionally in campus locations, the residence halls are not and have not been known for big parties for the past 10 years.”

Today, it appears party patterns have changed and while the overturned vehicles and rioting from past Spring Weekends and other celebrations are rare, a new celebratory scourge has arisen.

While campus officials are happy things have changed, it seems the parties have moved off-campus into quiet neighborhoods, upsetting many residents.

Some quiet neighborhoods have

(UConn party, Page 4)

UConn party scene expanding outward

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been taken over by students as single-family homes are converted into college student rental units as a business enterprise.

Increasing enrollment at UConn is forcing students to move off-campus and there are not enough apartments to cover increased demand. In fact, John Armstrong, UConn's director of off-campus services, and Janell Mullen, Mansfield's assistant planner and zoning enforcement officer, said 420 single-family homes have been converted to student rentals with more expected.

"With only 11,000 people, we are a tiny town and there are only so many single family homes. How many more can we convert before we don't have a town anymore?" asked council member Virginia Raymond at the Sept. 12 Mansfield Town Council meeting.

Expressing equal concern about these parties going to off-campus neighborhoods, Rhynhart said his department works with the Mansfield resident state trooper's office to respond to these issues, especially since the university's student code of conduct includes off-campus activities.

"We have extra staff on Thursday through Saturday nights and are proactive with high visibility patrols," Rhynhart said. "It's still early in the semester and a lot of what we see is weather dependent. We have had really nice weather and that usually equates to more people going out and having gatherings."

Once upon a time, word-of-mouth was the only way students could get the word out about potentially wild parties.

Not the case anymore thanks to modern, digital technology.

Rhynhart said gatherings of just a small number of students can "quickly go out of control due to social media and could balloon into a party from a few hundred people to a thousand."

He said "incidents (at converted single-family homes) on Hunting Lodge Road have historically increased over the last 10 to 15 years," but there have also been more gatherings on Route 195 and Separatist Road.

Rebecca Shafer, co-founder of the Mansfield Neighborhood Preservation Group, a group of residents concerned about the increase of student rentals, said these are "pop-up parties. Nobody knows where they will be."

As an example, she talked about a particularly noisy party recently held at a Hillyndale Road house, which is located in a residential neighborhood with 200 other homes — all one-acre lots.

She said students played beer pong, had loud music and yelled obscenities that could be heard by many neighbors — this after receiving a "welcome back" visit from Armstrong and Mullen asking them to respect their community.

Shafer said students were "arguing with police about how they had a right to be partying in the neighborhood."

These parties can attract up to 300 people transported by Uber, causing more traffic.

Individual fraternity members often live in different rental units so they can move the party to different places, she said, sometimes after just a few hours.

"These are gatherings which are

inconsistent with other neighborhood activity," she said, adding fraternity rush gatherings are not allowed in the residential zone Shafer lives in.

Shafer admitted there are some students who are trying to be good neighbors, adding "50 percent are loud parties and the other 50 percent are in crowded basements as they are trying to keep the noise down."

Mansfield Resident State Trooper Sgt. Richard Cournoyer wrote in an e-mail that "where we see single-family rentals, we have seen a decrease in issues, but much work remains to be completed in this area."

Armstrong agreed, stating that while the frequency of issues is decreasing, the volume of students attending these gatherings are increasing and can involve hundreds of people.

On a recent Thursday night, several fairly quiet parties were going on in houses along North Eagleville Road and some even had bouncers at the foot of driveways for crowd control.

UConn senior Zack Dukoff, a fraternity member and political science major, said fraternities are "spending their dues on hiring private security and sober monitors."

He said students want to have more controlled house parties because, in part, there are not enough bars on-campus.

Meanwhile, hiring private security is a measure that has helped reduce troublesome parties at Celeron Square and Carriage House, Rhynhart said.

Dukoff went a step further, though, advocating for daytime parties because "everyone likes to

be outside. It's easier for people to see cars and stop people from coming in if they aren't invited."

However, Shafer contends these daytime parties have proven to be disruptive to residents as well, including to senior citizens and other vulnerable people who will not call the police for fear of retribution.

Mansfield Town Council member Ben Shaiken said, on a recent Saturday, he was surprised to see many students walking along Route 195 at 2 p.m. on their way to a daytime party. "There were kids sitting on the curb, but the real problem is that it's a safety issue for students," he said.

In the past, such large groups of students walked around in the evenings.

As for one recent Thursday night — a traditional college party night — Dukoff said police busted the party after "a few intoxicated girls crossed in front of the police," as they were doing normal patrols.

"I can't see why the police cannot be more cooperative with us and just make sure that nobody gets hurt and that there are no illegal activities," he said, adding "I think college students can have fun responsibly and legally."

The town recently imposed a nine-month moratorium on multi-family residential facilities so it can adopt new regulations to better accommodate future development, including housing intended for students.

However, Shafer said she is hopeful that proposals, like a high-rise apartment building on King Hill Road, will eventually come to fruition, allowing some rental units to revert back to single-family homes.