To grow or not to grow?

University expansion benefits students as well as the community.

Point - Abigail Nocon

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Many people see University Park as a negative element of USC. Instead of just complaining about the surrounding neighborhood, USC should be a good neighbor and make it better for students and for those who live here. In order to improve it, USC must continue to expand into the community.

In 1992, USC President Steven B. Sample created a list of five initiatives that focused on the university’s efforts to make a visible difference in the community surrounding campus. He said USC should provide special education, cultural and developmental opportunities for every child who lives in our neighborhood; work with our neighbors, officials, and LAPD to make the neighborhood safer; encourage more entrepreneurs to establish their businesses here; encourage more USC employees to buy housing; and employ more people who live in the vicinity. These guidelines are perfect for a community that needs help. In order to implement them, however, USC must expand its resources into the community.

Many positive and important volunteer groups have been established through USC Civic and Community Relations to raise the quality of life of its residents and many of their programs take place in local schools or on USC’s campus. If USC bought more property, it could be used to house such things as Troy Camp activities or community meetings. Churches could be rebuilt in better condition and soup kitchens and homeless shelters could be made to support those who are needy. Buying more property could expand our resources for the community if we use the property to house these projects. With more buildings, USC could hire more people and thus better the community by providing jobs as well.

Not only does expanding mean a better life for community members, but students can also use these opportunities to learn and apply what they learn in class to real life. Community involvement can define the college experience. Without expansion, students would not be able to participate in such things as tutoring, mentoring, assist with after-school activities and learning-enrichment programs. Students develop through real-world experience in their areas of study.

Students need to be safe on USC’s campus and the surrounding areas just as much as the community deserves to be safe. Criminal incidents are happening too frequently and at all hours of the day, with crimes committed in public places and around student housing. By expanding and making the community better we can deter crime and help put kids in the right direction so they do not get involved in criminal behavior in the future.

USC students can benefit if the university expands into the community in other ways as well. By revamping the University Village, USC can attract more students to support the businesses there and shop in the immediate community instead of traveling elsewhere to buy groceries or go shopping. Most colleges have a surrounding area that is their own, and some have towns that revolve around them. If USC could change the state of the surrounding community more students would be attracted to the university and want to stay in the area.

Similarly, expanding the UV by adding new stores that attract students can boost the revenues of businesses. Making the surrounding area cleaner, with more small businesses could also attract those considering coming to USC.

Finally, more - and more affordable - housing could be possible if USC continues to purchase properties. And ultimately, as USC grows in prominence and prestige, they will grow to dominate the community. This is a positive course for everyone.