

Paran Creek Apartments Launches in the Fall

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This fall will see the launch of the Paran Creek apartments—a new, experimental housing community for Bennington students in North Bennington, a short walk from campus.

With fluctuations in student demographics, the College was looking for additional housing space that would jibe with the Bennington approach of creating vital living and learning communities that enrich students' educational experiences.

The solution was the Paran Creek apartments. The College is leasing the converted industrial building on Scarey Lane in North Bennington from a developer, HRH Management, which has, over the past 8 years, successfully converted several adjacent factory buildings to modern residential apartments.

While this is not Bennington's first foray into off-campus student housing—Welling Townhouse, also in North Bennington, houses 14 students in a cooperative living situation—it is a new approach to living and learning here.

Each of the 24 apartments in the Paran Creek building will house three to five students, all of whom will have their own furnished bedrooms as well as shared, furnished living rooms and kitchens, and full bathrooms. There will be a central community space in the building—designed and outfitted by Bennington College—consisting of a large living space, a rec room, and small group study or meeting rooms.

The setup will allow for small groups to exist within the larger structure of the Paran Creek building. As Andy Schlatter, Associate Vice

President for Facilities Management and Planning at Bennington, explains, “A group of students with similar interests or lifestyle preferences could opt to live together and set up their living space based on shared values, but still exist within the larger community of the apartment building. The building offers a more flexible array of possibilities for student-structured living arrangements.”

About 66 students will take part in the experiment in the coming academic year; the building will be able to house 85 at its maximum, eventually. Apartments are offered to second, third, and fourth+ year students, who can either apply as a group to occupy one multi-bedroom apartment, or individually, to be matched up with others in a unit. One unit will be occupied by a staff member from Student Life, and two are set aside in the first year for faculty housing as well. The building will function as an off-site campus building, with regular checks by Campus Safety and secure key card access.

The building will be connected to campus by a walking path that is planned for construction this summer. When completed at the start of Fall term, it will take approximately 10 minutes to get from Paran Creek to central campus on foot. There will also be a separate bike route, and Campus Safety will offer shuttle service 24/7. The building will be fully accessible by students with disabilities, as well.

But even more than a comfortable, safe, and congenial place to live, Paran Creek will offer students a chance to learn, too. “This is a place for students who have some experience under their belt to take a step towards independent living,” explains Schlatter. “Closer to what they may experience once they leave Bennington, but with the advantage of a strong community of staff and peers to support them while they learn what it is to live on their own.”

