



Community Conversation  
on  
Student Housing  
Symposium  
October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014

*Final Report*

# Community Conversation on Student Housing

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## Background

The Flagstaff community faced a difficult issue in the spring of 2014 regarding the development of a student housing project. The proposed project brought to the forefront differing opinions, models and issues related to developing new housing complexes for students. The project threatened displacement of current residents and potential diminishment of the quality of life for long-term residents of neighborhoods targeted for development. Following the withdrawal of the proposed development by the developer, County Supervisor Liz Archuleta reached out to the City of Flagstaff and Northern Arizona University with a proposal to conduct a Community Conversation on Student Housing. Both the City Council and the NAU President agreed to partner with Coconino County to host the event. A Steering Committee formed to design the Conversation. The Steering Committee identified three distinct phases of the conversation: Education, Engagement and Action, as optimal to help the community gain better predictability about where new student housing could be developed. The partners committed to the first phase and conducted a one-day educational symposium. The following are highlights of the Symposium.

## Purpose

- To host a community conversation that begins to address the issue of student housing in Flagstaff considering both the needs of students and the importance of maintaining the character of all neighborhoods that make Flagstaff unique;
- To promote understanding of the student housing development and neighborhood issues with the intention of unifying the community;
- To educate ourselves on “best practices” and models used by other communities similar to Flagstaff and Northern Arizona University; and
- To educate the community on legal rights of developers as well as the limitations of City government associated with student housing.

## Symposium Highlights:

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 120 community members gathered at the Coconino Center for the Arts to learn about student housing from the City of Flagstaff, Northern Arizona University, local residents and experts from other university communities. Participants included many local elected officials, neighborhood activists, business leaders, housing developers and community organizers and members. Presentations were made by the following:

*City of Flagstaff* provided background on local community development processes and policies, Arizona State laws, and law enforcement issues related to student-housing developments. The recently adopted Regional Plan identifies areas targeted for higher density infill, but the category of student housing is not a specific class within the planning policies. Arizona's Proposition 207 limits the City's ability to regulate development. Law enforcement dedicates significant resources responding to incidents at student housing developments, particularly at the Grove, a 600+ student housing facility.

*Northern Arizona University* provided current planning constructs for the University including student enrollment trends and projections, campus land use plans, as well as, the University's policies and procedures related to student behavior and on-campus housing options. NAU is known as a residential campus, currently housing 46 percent (46%) of its 19,950 Flagstaff Mountain Campus students on campus. Public-private partnerships recently facilitated expansion of on-campus student housing. Northern Arizona University does not have authority or influence over student-housing development off campus. Student enrollment is expected to increase at a much slower rate than the last several years with a maximum of 29,754 students across all campuses by 2019. Student behavior standards can be enforced on campus, but off campus the University is not currently involved in addressing student-behavior issues.

*Three neighborhoods* adjacent to or in close proximity to NAU presented their visions, plans and concerns about the impact of student housing and new development in their neighborhoods. Traffic, safety and quality of life issues were common to all three. Each neighborhood hopes to encourage a thriving neighborhood, which reflects the historic character and welcomes students, elders, families, and homeowners.

*Bob Segar, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Campus Planning and Community Resources from University of California Davis*, discussed two projects UC Davis developed on campus and one that is in the planning stages. UC Davis has 25,000 students and is located in Davis, California, population 60,000. The three student housing developments are each a distinctly different model; uniquely designed to respond to the need for student, faculty and staff housing, to complement the neighborhood within which they are situated, and to meet the Campus goal to be carbon neutral.

West Village was developed through a private-public partnership and includes rental student housing, for-sale faculty and staff housing, a Community College facility, and facilities for research institutes, classrooms and offices accessible to businesses. Central to the development is a village square cultivating a vibrant public space.

Aggie Park, also developed by the university through a partnership with a private developer, is located on campus-owned land adjacent to downtown Davis; it provides a transition between campus and the town. Aggie Village is designed to provide affordable housing for faculty, staff and graduate students with single-family homes, townhomes and rental cottages. The development is accessible to campus through bike paths and bus routes. A third project, Orchard Park, is currently on hold while affordable housing options for students with families are developed.

*Beth Sowder, Neighborhood Services Manager for the City of Fort Collins*, described the journey that led Fort Collins to create a Student Housing Action Plan as part of their City Plan. Colorado State University has approximately 27,000 students and Fort Collins has a population of 151,000. Fort Collins faced many of the same issues Flagstaff is currently facing with student housing: rapid growth of the student population attracting development companies from outside the community who build large developments creating negative impacts on neighborhoods, including promoting a “party” culture leading to excessive drinking and disruptive behavior.

The Student Housing Action Plan was created to “develop community driven strategies that encourage and provide quality student housing while maintaining neighborhood quality and compatibility.” As a result of the plan, the City adopted policies and targeted resources that help proactively manage existing student-housing complexes and development of future student housing projects. Two staff positions were created by Fort Collins and Colorado State University to help the community manage the issues: a neighborhood/development liaison and a campus/city liaison. The Campus/Community Liaison is jointly funded by the University and City and the staff proactively forms relationships and communicates with management at new student-housing developments, operates education programs, and programs to build community within neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Development Liaison is a dedicated City resource for residents. This position assists by providing information and assisting residents at meetings related to development in their neighborhood. The City created an online hub with links to all information related to new developments.

\*See the Resources section below for presentation materials.

## **Participant Engagement**

Following the presentations, participants gathered in small groups for an opportunity to debrief what they heard during the panel presentations, and to collectively articulate key issues, opinions, and recommended actions.

### **Highlights from Small Group Recommendations**

- Form a Task Force on Student Housing to initiate a planning process; include students, Northern Arizona University, City of Flagstaff and neighborhoods in the planning process
- Enhance partnership and engagement between Northern Arizona University, City of Flagstaff and Community. Partnership opportunities include: Law Enforcement collaboration and alignment, parking, increased collaboration, communication and shared commitment
- Build respect between neighborhoods and students

- Bring residents into zoning, development and re-development processes earlier
- Initiate programs, models and policies similar to Fort Collins and Davis, including:
  - Mix student, affordable faculty and staff housing
  - City/Campus Liaison Position and education/outreach programs
  - Neighborhood Development Liaison Position and engagement with neighborhoods earlier in development process
  - Energy efficiency
  - Green space/community common space
- Regulate student housing providers with policies to address student behavior
  - Hold property owners/landlords accountable
  - Require management plan for student housing complexes
  - Institute a process at NAU for influencing student off-campus behavior
- Create a parking plan that considers changes to current codes and issues such as residential parking permits, impact of NAU parking policies on neighborhoods, park and ride systems, bike routes and buses
- Work proactively with developers to attract/create quality projects
- Modify the Regional plan with emphasis on increasing density so it is more balanced with maintaining neighborhood character.

## Looking Forward

Student Housing Possible Action Items, City of Flagstaff Discussion Items  
December 3, 2014

This list is intended to identify ideas from the Student Housing Symposium held in October 2014 that are known to be within the legal and financial realm of possibility for the City of Flagstaff and Northern Arizona University. It is unlikely these all could be completed within a single fiscal year, but it might serve as a work program for the foreseeable future.

- Present to the City Council and the appropriate NAU authority, the list for buy-off. Council could adopt this work plan in the form of a Resolution.
- Designate internal and external City –NAU work groups to possibly accomplish the following.
  - Internal NAU-City Work Group (WG)
    - City to Include: Police Department, Community Development (Planning, Engineering, Code Enforcement), Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Office, and the City Manager’s Office; NAIPTA.
    - NAU to Include: Student Life, Student Transportation, President’s

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- Office, NAU PD.
    - Possible Work Items in addition to those below
      - Applying NAU Code of Conduct to off campus behavior
      - Student Housing Action Plan (SHAP)
  - External NAU-City and Stakeholders Group
    - Possibly Use the Good Neighbor Coalition
    - Possibly use Town-Gown Steering Committee (open to anyone)
    - Possible Work Items in addition to those below
      - SHAP
        - Review Regional Plan for Possible Amendment
      - Neighborhood component for freshman orientation or sophomore move-out.
        - Work with private sector on an off-campus housing guide
- City/NAU Police Department
  - Review Party Ordinance with an eye on holding landlords & hosts more accountable extending warning period from 90 to 180 days, initiating a police response fee upon first offense, Security Plans
  - Develop a Security Ordinance focused upon Crime Free Multi-Housing
  - Determine Standard Security Conditions for Development Agreements (D.A.) and Zoning ordinances
  - Invite City/NAU PD to Community Development's (CD's) Inter-Divisional Staff meeting for developments involving more than XX residential units.
  - Work with CD & Legal to determine Post Construction Consequences for noncompliance
- Look at a Neighborhood/University Liaison position in FY16 Budget Cycle. (Internal WG)
  - Get job descriptions from Ft. Collins for their 2 positions.
  - Understand budget to include outreach dollars.
  - Determine if outreach dollars go to Southside officers in meantime
  - Develop a work plan for position
- Map our review process with goal of understanding when and how neighbors are informed. Compare this to the City of Fort Collins process. (City CD)
- Re-examine a Parking Permit System in the Southside. Determine who should pay for the system. (External WG)
- Review definition of "Family" in City Zoning code with the City Attorney's Office to explore the legal risk, if any, and the practical concerns, with reducing the number of unrelated people living in a single dwelling unit. (City CD/ Attorney's Office)

- Student Housing Proposals on Land with appropriate Entitlements (a.k.a. Use-by-Right) (City CD)
  - Explore requiring a public meeting for Use-by-Right developments over Certain Units.
  - Understand what is informative vs. Discretionary.
  - Discuss what do you do when people don't like it, but there is no discretion.
- Traffic Impact Analysis (Internal WG)
  - City/FMPO consider funding a consultant to develop trip generation models for the Student Housing Category.
  - Re-examine the adopted Milton Avenue Corridor Plan in a City/NAU Work Session.
    - Use Internal Work Group plus ADOT and FMPO to continue to explore the Lone Tree alternative to Milton.
    - Re-examine Pedestrian access corridors across Milton with an eye towards combining improvement
  - Multi-Modal Traffic Impact Analysis – develop a tool to measure bike, ped, and bus transportation impacts of a development. (FMPO)

## Resources

Full presentations, materials and a video of the Symposium can be found if you go to [www.coconino.az.gov/FlagstaffConversationonStudentHousing](http://www.coconino.az.gov/FlagstaffConversationonStudentHousing)

## Acknowledgments

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### Funders:

Coconino County  
 City of Flagstaff  
 Northern Arizona University  
 United Way of Northern Arizona

### Steering Committee Members:

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Kevin Burke, City Manager

La Plaza Vieja Neighborhood Association

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Flagstaff Forty

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Friends of Flagstaff Future

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*Flagstaff Neighborhoods*

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Deborah Harris, Chair, Southside Neighborhood Association Board of Directors  
Duffie Westheimer, Member, Townsite Neighborhood

*University of California, Davis*

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*City of Fort Collins, Colorado*

Beth Sowder, Neighborhood Services Manager, City of Fort Collins

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