

USA Fall Forum Summary

November 1, 2022

Panel Members: Jenn Reed, Valerie Green, Blake Billings, Natalie Cottle, John Ellis, Annie Pond

- **Welcome**
 - Thanks to residents for participation in the Block Party and youth soccer program (about 100 youth participants)
- **New Graduate Housing**
 - Based on surveys done over 20 years, results show that rental rates and community space are important to residents.
 - New Sunnyside buildings will have:
 - 280 graduate beds rented by bed
 - 285 family units
 - Bid was taken by Jacobson Construction and VCBO Architects, who then designed the buildings. UofU not very involved in the specific design because it was a Design/Build project delivery method.
 - Very important to administration to not close the current housing without some sort of construction started on new housing. Better for phased closures of current housing than to kick out students all at once.
 - Have learned from other universities who have done the “all-at-once” method that it was not a good decision.
 - Within the last 2 months, decision was made that Phase 2 of construction may move forward. Phase 2 is only possible with the demolition of the 100, 200, and 700 courts.
 - The current units are so old that...
 - Some apartments are impossible to repair when issues arise (repair parts are no longer made, etc.). Due to this impossibility, these units had to be closed.
 - No major refurbishment is possible due to the seismic qualities and outdated infrastructure.
 - Some basements may need to be vacated due to necessary repairs (that effect multiple apartments). These repairs cost around \$15,000-\$20,000 to tear up the concrete flooring and provide new sections of plumbing infrastructure. Though the cost is so high, Administration continues to do these repairs in order to keep the other units and student families in their apartments as long as possible.
 - Unless a building fails, there is the possibility of no other Cedar apartments closing for the next few years. The closure schedule for the remaining courts has not been finalized.
 - Residents that are being displaced will receive priority for the new Sunnyside building housing.
 - There will be no mixed-use space, or “retail” space in the Phase 1 of the Sunnyside buildings.
 - There should be enough housing in the new Sunnyside buildings for students who are displaced due to the current closures (based on the foreseen demand).
 - Parking

- Sunnyside buildings will have large Surface parking lots, and surface parking adjacent to the buildings for deliveries, move-in, drop-off, etc.
 - Rental Rates
 - The University has \$126 million loan for the Sunnyside Buildings construction.
 - Administration has kept the current rental rates low (extremely low based on SLC private market rates) as a benefit to the students and to not overcharge for the very old current units.
 - There is no debt on the Cedar or Aspen apartments, but all of the current rental payments pay for utilities and repairs of the current units.
 - These remaining apartments built in the 1960's and 70's require considerable annual funding for operation and maintenance. The biggest concerns about these older buildings are utility infrastructure and that they do not meet seismic code. Currently in emergency mode, trying to make the apartments last until the new housing to available.
 - Now with the new buildings, USA, as part of the university, has a lot debt. Cannot keep the rental rate low at the Sunnyside Buildings because as an auxiliary business unit, the debt payment will be part of the operating expenses of the new buildings.
 - Cedar Court rent will not increase to the same rate as the Sunnyside Buildings. A draft rental rate schedule for the 23-24 academic year is on the website now for the Cedar Courts. The rental increase is currently planned to be 5% on July 1, 2023.
 - Many students in the community now receive community help to pay a portion of their rent, and its working for them. Administration can refer residents to some programs, but understand this is not an option for everyone.
- **1200 Court Charging Station for Vehicles**
 - Haven't upgraded the EV stations because it is not possible with the electrical infrastructure of the current units/area.
 - Thanks to student requests, funding has been secured for additional and faster EV chargers to be added in the East Village.
 - Supply chain issues have caused delay in having the stations. Orders have been made months in advance, and still have not received the transformer required to install the new stations.
 - **Projects from students requested of administration have considerable weight when compared with projects coming from administration.**
- **Security issue of stolen catalytic converters**
 - Live cameras not possible due to the outdated utility infrastructure. There is currently no fiber to run live cameras. Tape cameras are not as useful to police (due to time delay with tapes).

- Valerie working with Chief Safety Officer to facilitate some meetings with residents. Possibility of residents to voice their concerns and possible solutions with Chief officer.
- **200 Court limited hot water for a few days**
 - In the current units, plumbing systems are at the end of their useful lives. Very sorry for this issue, but working hard to fix and minimize this occurrence.
 - If you ever have issues with water temperatures, never hesitate to call maintenance.
- **Transportation to and from new housing**
 - Commuter Services is one division that works directly for Jenn in her new role as AVP of Auxiliary Services.
 - Commuter Services and Jenn have been figuring out details for routes to accommodate students (including medical students) at the various hours students need transportation to and from the west village and health sciences campus. Details to come.
- **Questions**
 - Many international students don't have access to community programs. How are students going to afford the new rental rates, especially international students.
 - This impacts our international students the most. We are proud of our international community.
 - On-campus housing may not accommodate every student at the Sunnyside buildings. Some students will not be able to afford living on-campus and will have to turn to the private market.
 - USA does not currently house all of the international students. Approximately 7,000 students are currently paying market rate.
 - There is the option to not live with USA, but if a student wants to live near the University, it is likely that they will not find rental rates lower than the USA rates (including the new Sunnyside building rates).
 - Assumption that community rental assistance is referring to Section 8. Section 8 has been closed for over a year. Waitlist is 8-24 months out from helping people.
 - Administration refers students to UCA and recently have been helped much quicker than 8 months.
 - Closure notification email gave two options of going to private market or going to Sunnyside buildings. It would be helpful for Medical Tower residents to transfer to Cedar apartments. Or possibly not furnish the Sunnyside apartments to lower the rental rates.
 - USA has significant demand for furnished housing. Students are passing furniture down (there has been bed-bug issues because of this). Many students move here with a suitcase and backpack. Better for single students to have furnished homes. Years' worth of data collection (from previous graduate students) supports this, but we understand it is an inconvenience for the many graduate students that already have their own furnishings at the Towers

- Do not have enough Cedar apartments to house the family students who are being displaced. Housing students with families remains the primary mission of the Cedar apartments- they are built around playgrounds for young children, and for programming opportunities for families.
- Why can't we have an opt-in system for furnished apartments and paid programming (most paid programs are for families, not single students).
 - Residents rent pays for a very small amount of programming. Rent goes to pay the utility bills and plumber salaries. Most program funding comes from ASUU. The annual program budget is a very small percentage of the overall USA operating budget.
 - Current students will be in these apartments 3-8 years, whereas buildings will be here for hopefully 50 years. This construction is a long-term project.
 - The opt-in option for furnishing is worth a conversation with administration for students who are already in the Medical Towers.
 - Most single grads prefer to have furnished apartments based on years of data collection.
- Can USA honor current rental rates at the Sunnyside buildings? Is there a possibility of grandfathering rental rates for the current students whose apartments are being demolished?
 - The University understands that the SLC housing market is a limiting factor for students that want to attend.
 - Residents living in the buildings being demolished (with Phase 2 of construction) have been given the most advance notice out of any students. The purpose of this amount of advance notice is to help students find alternative housing options.
- Is it a recruitment issue, to not have housing in SLC available for students?
 - Yes.
- University received loans for this project, has the University done any fundraising events for donating.
 - A lot of construction is happening on campus and not a lot of donations.
 - University has been continuously working to receive donations.
 - Based on the feedback we are receiving today, it is possible that the stipend needs to be higher for grad students.
- There is no way to justify rental rates with the graduate stipend. Is there any possibility to decrease the rental rates.
 - Rental rates were based on data over a long analysis process. Now that the rates have been released and student feedback is coming, there is the ability for more discussions with the University. Not a guarantee that it will change, not sure they will, but there is the possibility.
- Will displaced families have priority for Cedar apartments and Sunnyside Apartments in the family buildings?
 - Yes, you must fill out the transfer application though.
- Grad students will be homeless due to the large rental rate increase.

- We are going to try and work with every student that will be impacted to ensure that they find alternative housing if the Sunnyside Apartments does not work for them because of price, or furnishings, etc.

- **Resident recommendations**
 - Showing the construction timeline that is subject to change, rather than not showing any kind of schedule.
 - Base rental rates on student income and stipends.
 - Grandfathering rental rates to current residents whose buildings are scheduled to be demolished.
 - Don't think the money from the rent payments of the current students displaced by building demolition will have a big impact on the 50-year budget.
 - Another forum requested before medical towers are demolished.
 - A petition going around amongst residents to be presented to administration, includes different resident concerns and stories.

- **Questions and comments submitted via Zoom**
 - Grant Russum: So why did the U prepare so poorly for the "eviction" of the students in the medical plazas and the areas that are being closed? They are essentially making us pay 180% of our current amount with the VERY limited amount reasonably priced housing available in SLC. I do like how much time they have given us, but do they have funds available for the medical students who are paying \$64,000.00 per year.
 - Grant Russum: Also, how can I be sure that I'll get an email about the Sunnyside apartments application?
 - Ludovica Farese: Will the recording be sent to us? To our emails? Thanks so much! I have to head out
 - Cherelle Vaidya: Why were students placed in 100D AFTER you stopped accepting Aspen applications and knew the 100 court would be torn down soon?
 - Anonymous attendee: When can we accept the application portals open ? in the poll we were sent we were told we will get an email telling us when the portal will open so any idea when that would happen?
 - Grant Russum: Will there be any garages near the new apartments? I'd like to have my car covered
 - Hoa Nguyen: As a graduate student, my monthly stipend is ~\$2200. If I rent a 2BR Sunnyside apt, then the only amount left for my living is \$400, which is impossible to be survive! I think this situation would be the same for many students, especially international students. How the UoU solve this problem?
 - Anonymous attendee: A LOT of people won't be able to afford to live on campus
 - Hoa Nguyen: Will the rent of the existing Cedar apartments keep the 3% increasing per year as they do now?
 - Spencer Roberts: will there be hookups for laundry in the new 3 bedroom apts?

- Ayse Mubine Turkmen: Can current med plaza students be grandfathered in? Can we have a lower rent? We will graduate soon.
- Husile Bai: WOW ~ did not expect to hear that but I want to say that the housing for single student does matters, and I feel like admins don't care about singles, especially international individuals. So right now it seems like it makes sense to not getting any donations. The wording in the closure email is very arragent and both me and my roommate are both frustrated.
- Husile Bai: We all have furnitures in our apartment now and who needs furnitures at this point?
- ROSIE OJEDA: I agree with the frustration being expressed in this meeting. Could they consider offering lower rent or more options for graduate students who are going into their final year the next academic year? Are decisions final or our comments being used in decision-making?
- Husile Bai: We are seeking an option like move to the cider with roommate.
- Grant Russum: Can you keep some of the rooms in Sunnyside apartments Unfurnished?
- Anonymous attendee: I am wondering (a) when did they realized the economics of lower than market rates are disastrous? (b) why can't they implement higher density housing?
- Spencer Roberts: I have a concern about transportation to the student Life center. With the new construction that is happening nearby, there is no parking available close to the gym. Additionally, there is no direct transportation from the villages to the student life center, which makes it very had to use. Are there plans to make a bus route directly to the gym? If not, how do we make that a priority?
- Anonymous attendee: Will there be a situation where inspite of being given priority we might not get housing in the new student housing. The reason I ask is because if there is no 100% guarantee then should we have a plan B?
- Husile Bai: Where's the survey from? from current residents or just the random data from the past decades? We've been here for more than 2 years and never took any survey for the new apartment.