

Public Comments on Housing Issues in the Flagstaff Region

These Public Responses to questions were collected at the Regional Plan 'Housing' Open Houses, which were held on:

- November 1, 2010 - Monday 3:30 to 6 p.m. at St. Pius Church and
- November 19, 2010 – Friday 7:30 to 10 a.m. at City Hall

Additional responses were collected through email and feedback to the Regional Plan 2012 blog. The following questions were asked:

- 1. Is there an adequate supply of housing from homeless shelters to housing for the workforce? If not, why and what may be one of the solutions?**
- 2. How can our community as a whole pro-actively provide housing for all residents?**
- 3. What do you feel are the largest obstacles to addressing housing affordability and availability in the Flagstaff Region?**
- 4. What is ONE strategy that would be most effective to addressing housing affordability and availability in the Flagstaff region?**

Is there an adequate supply of housing from homeless shelters to housing for the workforce? If not, why and what may be one of the solutions?

1. No, our lowest income households are cost burdened. One solution would be to increase supply of affordable rentals LIHTC Z& grant-funded developments.
2. Yes, we have adequate workforce housing. Is it the best? Maybe not, though if we had more incentives for companies to come in, then the market could run its course and work things out.
3. No. Focus on workforce housing. People need to be able to afford a house. Disparity between pay and housing prices. This creates absentee land lord. Not sure what the solution is...
4. No, create more “family friendly” supportive housing for the low income workforce people/families & provide outdoor gathering areas for children and families.
5. There might be enough units, but accessing is hard. Lack of money, difficulty using loans, etc.
6. “Boarding houses” (SRO) would help out transition time.
7. Ensure variety in housing – building only small, affordable units puts pressure on move up units.
8. Yes, but student housing dictates pricing.
9. Agree with all before. Supply may be adequate but may need maintenance or improvement. Prices forced up by student housing – need more subsidized housing with personal/emotional assistance, and transitional housing – public/private sectors working together – partnerships.
10. “Adequate”. I take to also be about quality. We need a Property Maintenance Ordinance. More/better/better variety of rentals.
11. And more demand that use within our community – takes up too much of our single family lots. This must be addressed as many want to live in Single Family Dwellings.
12. Homeless needs to have more life skills learning – more than just shelter. Part time day jobs, job training, reading, writing, etc.
13. We do not feel well-educated in this area, though we would suggest: Homeless shelters are important AND should be considered temporary lodging for those who use them. They are not “housing” in the most common sense of that word. We believe this is understood by those currently running shelters. What could the region do to encourage more organizations to undertake this important work?

We do not feel that providing homeless shelters is the job of governments, though something (*an organization*) like Flagstaff Cultural Partners could be developed—Plateau Home Partners, let’s say—to funnel government (*and foundation*) dollars to worthy organizations that provide food and housing to those who need it.
14. Which workforce and what kind of housing? In general, we suspect that this issue could be partially addressed by some of the thoughts above on rental housing. What NAU does to provide housing for its students might be looked at as a model if there are any companies who want to begin setting up housing for their own workforces (though that sounds a little like “company towns” to our weak understandings).

Public Comments on Housing Issues in the Flagstaff Region

How can our community as a whole pro-actively provide housing for all residents?

1. Use existing programs as models and increase participation.
2. Get the people who own numerous rentals to help solve this problem by selling properties to people who will live in homes they own. Increases home ownership and proportion of owner occupied homes in our neighborhoods.
3. "We" can't. More and better jobs so "they" can do it themselves.
4. Not possible.
5. Economy (jobs and wages) make it difficult if not impossible.
6. Let the market run its course.
7. People have to want to save and make sacrifices if they really want housing (Habitat for Humanity concept). Owners need to have involvement. If you give too much they will not feel invested and will walk away.
8. This may be a utopian goal until more US Americans drop some individualism and develop a stronger community ethic (and is not the responsibility of the City per se). Nevertheless, worth thinking about.
9. Master planned residential communities.
10. Get owners buy in. Pay does not match housing prices. Need to set standards for housing stock.
11. NAU may need to provide more housing for their students.
12. More coordination between City, NAU, business and nonprofits to collaborate on solutions to pressure points: annual student influx of future growth of employment at NAU, lack of pleasant homes for low income families and individuals, squandering of land for part time vacation houses. Agree with above.
13. City needs to review its resources. To contribute to smaller more affordable housing. Use gov't influence with sub-dividing that is in bankruptcy (presidio) to establish oppy's for affordable housing. This is important as City is best, largest, most powerful resource "as community as a whole".
14. Provide more organizational coaching and financial strategies to people in construction of the trades to facilitate small rehab projects and infill homes. Employment for locals to benefit locals.
15. Allowing a variety of ways that people can meet their housing needs is best (including the "El Pueblo" strategy for those forced to live day-to-day).
16. Rental housing needs to be valued as highly as home ownership.
17. Develop some guidelines and tax breaks for community living where people have some space of their own and share others (kitchens and bathrooms, for example, maybe office and internet?). Something like co-housing without the hype that can surround some of those visions. We're thinking just a bunch of unrelated people sharing a house, for example.
18. Landlords need to be able to make a profit on units after property taxes, and still keep rents within reason. How can this be structured?
19. A standard accountability contract could be required for all rentals, with landlords held responsible for timely repairs, and renters held responsible for wear-and-tear and damage in

Public Comments on Housing Issues in the Flagstaff Region

return for reasonable rents. Both parties need some legal recourse that doesn't tie up the courts.

20. Absentee landlords should probably be discouraged.
21. Maybe the City could give an annual award to someone voted Best Landlord, with a one-year reduction in taxes?

What do you feel are the largest obstacles to addressing housing affordability and availability in the Flagstaff Region?

1. High land costs/ limited land supply.
2. Pricing pressures from 2nd buyers.
3. Availability of land, not enough and too expensive. Focus on 2nd homes is in direct competition with FT residences needs.
4. Financing construction & purchase financing.
5. Too many government hoops to jump through. Not at all user friendly.
6. City needs to provide more support with the initial paper work. Help walk them all the steps. There are organizations/churches/private individuals who house the passion but maybe not a history of affordable housing.
7. Failure of the City Council and staff to support higher paying wages in community. If we actually pursued; supported existing business, and partnered with outer business to raise wages, lower income housing would not be such a huge issue. We live in area with 1. Limited land; 2. Land that is costly and difficult to develop – thus raising housing prices; 3. Desirable to 2nd home people from PHX. These facts will not change. We need to recognize this and focus energies on supporting and keeping (SW wind energy) higher income business and stop this anti-revenue, anti-business climate.
8. Any law which makes it hard for people to divide large houses into smaller units, to add “casitas” out back, etc. (Many people in the U.S. have been seduced by “bigger is better,” but many others understand that 300-500 sq. ft. can be a comfortable dwelling.)
9. Lack of community cooperation in funding and support.
10. Land cost of availability.
11. Land ownership.
12. Need more financial support for public services when building.
13. Nimby, low income or no income, coordinate development of funding for creation of units and rent subsidy.
14. Over inflated and unrealistic home values.
15. Economy in Flagstaff (wages, jobs) are not in line with housing prices. Even with recent correction in market.
16. Right now big obstacle is the weak/wavering economy. People are not trusting the stability of their jobs and benefit packages.
17. There are many rentals but most are over-priced for their most common renters (students). Rentals closer to camps are high in price but low in value and services.

Public Comments on Housing Issues in the Flagstaff Region

18. Why does a spec loan have to affect personal credit?
19. Older housing stock or brand new stock – big difference in price, location, availability.
20. NAU relying on the community to provide student housing. This raises rent, lowers quality (lower expectations busy and non complaining) and removes housing from what is available for long term residents to purchase.
21. Challenges – Large amount of property owned by few. Some take care of their property some do not. NAU – need to compare to other universities of other size – what % of housing is provided on and by campus? How can we lead the way? Students are living in substandard housing which owners are making a lot of \$.
22. Small families living in huge houses.
23. Anything that discourages development of “pocket trailer parks” like those in Sunnyside.

What is ONE strategy that would be most effective to addressing housing affordability and availability in the Flagstaff region?

1. Concentrate on affordable rental units.
2. Define “affordable housing” as rental units, not “low-cost houses you can buy if you want to lock yourself in debt.”
3. More cooperative efforts among the gov’t organizations and providers of affordable housing.
4. Reduce lot size requirements.
5. Jobs that pay better.
6. The market dictates the house ownership is a privilege not a right. Though if we had better jobs, more people can afford don’t forget we only have so much sellable land and if demand is high, prices will stay high.
7. Work with businesses to raise wages, or bring and keep higher wage jobs into Flagstaff.
8. City can become more active in creation of housing through incentives for smaller houses (more affordable). Use of some city land for the small single family homes or trade land to create more opportunities.
9. Increase the quality of existing programs, service provision, strategies, and tactics. More is not always better.
10. Case management.
11. More help (serious help!) I’m helping long time homeowners (many older folks) maintain their homes – Like Christmas in April.
12. Subsidized rental housing.
13. Invest in affordable housing and redevelopment now before prices rebound. Invest for the future. (Properties for sale now in infill/ red areas buy and prepare for denser afford housing and mixed use if appropriate. Can be consortium of non profit.
14. Be proactive with developers who own large parcels of land and negotiate for affordable units.

Public Comments on Housing Issues in the Flagstaff Region

15. Contact property owners out of state and communicate desires. Sometimes absentee land lords take out of sig and out of mind mentality when dealing with their rentals.
16. NAU to provide more housing for students.
17. Allow more leniencies on Greek housing (Fraternities and Sororities). The Greek dorm isn't cutting it, because eventually NAU will have to move incoming freshmen into there
18. Increase appropriate density at right location (above Bookman's apartments).
19. Use our existing commercial centers. More usable and walk able while still protecting views!
20. Assistance to current homeowners to maintain homes and upkeep homes. Encourage NAU to provide more student housing.
21. Focus on in-fill areas for low income housing. It is too expensive to expect a developer to provide new infra-structure and low-income housing. The numbers do not add up.
22. Public/private partnership opportunities to increase housing options. More than just "We'll give you a long term lease and you do everything else."
23. What about foreclosures and vacant homes? Could these be used for affordable housing?