



**COMMUNITY FORUM
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

April 30, 2015

1. **In your opinion, through the process of this expansion project, has Northeastern done its due diligence in notifying the community and soliciting community feedback? If so, what were the steps that were adequate, and if not where was the shortfall? (Dale Reed-NP resident)**

All of our work has been public, beginning with our Strategic Plan in 2008, which called for adding a residential life component that is consistent with the mission of the University. Over 600 people participated in the creation of this plan and included students, faculty, staff and members of the community. We identified a university officer (Chief Communications Officer Mike Dizon) to respond to the community on a variety of topics, and we hosted a community forum last January (in addition to this one in April) to present our plans to the community after having first presented to the University community. NEIU established the Northeastern Neighborhood Network, created the Northeastern Neighbors website, created a monthly newsletter and sent University representatives to the meetings of a number of community organizations.

2. **Did the NEIU administration conduct strategic planning with the inclusion of a representative sample of faculty and students in order to develop its student housing plans? If so, when did these planning meetings take place and where are the records of these meetings? (Marcos Feldman-NEIU professor)**

Strategic planning included input from faculty, students and others. The portion of that plan that calls for a residential life component was reviewed this spring with the University community with a resolution of support from the Faculty Senate and a detailed discussion with the Student Government Association. It was also addressed in meetings with the Administrative Team, University Planning and Budget Council, the Alumni Advisory Board, the Foundation board, and the Board of Trustees.

3. **How will NEIU compensate the small business tenants who will be displaced from their current places of business along Bryn Mawr if NEIU prevails against the property owners in court? (Marcos Feldman-NEIU professor)**

The University will pay relocation expenses as stipulated in the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance Act and in accordance with the State eminent domain statute. We have engaged a professional relocation specialist to assist tenants, and she has contacted each tenant of the affected properties and offered to share her considerable experience, expertise, and resources.

4. **What evidence or justification does NEIU President Hahs have for claiming that the small businesses along Bryn Mawr between Bernard and Kimball are decaying and in need of redevelopment? (Marcos Feldman-NEIU professor)**

To clarify, the President has always described the area as being between Bernard and Kedzie. If one walks those five blocks, he or she will see many vacant storefronts. Also, the City of Chicago has declared all of those blocks an economic redevelopment zone.

5. **Why is it not considered a conflict of interest that NEIU President Hahs receives a taxpayer-funded housing allowance for the home she owns four blocks away from the area that she will be using eminent domain to seize and redevelop, which will ultimately help boost her own property's value? (Marcos Feldman-NEIU professor)**

There is no conflict of interest here. It is a common practice and not an ethical violation for University presidents in the U.S. to receive a housing allowance. The President's allowance is in the normal range. The property value question requires more analysis. The State Official and Employees Ethics Act is the law that covers conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when the interests of a state employee are in conflict with the interests of the state. These conflicts need to be disclosed and adequately managed. If there is an ethics violation depends on whether the President's personal interests have driven her decision-making. In other words, has President Hahs moved ahead with the eminent domain process in order to benefit her personally – by potentially increasing the property value of her home, which is a few blocks away? So, the question is not “does she benefit indirectly?” Even if this were the question, the benefit is really speculative at this point. The first important point is that the President is acting on the authority of the Board of Trustees, which has requested, supported and passed motions to develop housing on Bryn Mawr. She has no authority to move forward with this plan on her own. Second, there is no evidence that the President's decision to use eminent domain was mainly motivated by her personal benefit that might potentially accrue in several years. So to answer the question, there are no conflicts of interest under the state's ethics law.

6. **With NEIU's enrollment having declined, why does the University want to build dormitories? What is the motivation for student housing and what evidence does the University have that student housing is needed? (Jewel Klein-NP resident)**

The initial desire to build residence halls stems from the work of Northeastern students, staff, administrators, and faculty who developed the University's strategic plan. There is significant evidence from colleges and universities across the country, suggesting that residence halls have a positive impact on the ability to both recruit and retain students. In fact, our partner, American Campus Communities, has great experience with other urban colleges and universities developing first-time student housing that has resulted in higher enrollment through gains in both recruiting students and retaining students. So, to respond directly to this question, our University's declining enrollment is a very strong motivator for the development of residence halls.

7. **Why is NEIU seeking to recruit relatively wealthier students who can afford to live in student housing, instead of investing more in retaining and recruiting our current, mostly nontraditional students? (Marcos Feldman-NEIU professor)**

There are no efforts to change the type of students we recruit to Northeastern. Our University maintains its strong commitment to excellence, access to opportunity and diversity. That will not change. Student housing provides a college or university tremendous potential to recruit and retain students, and so by developing student housing, we are investing in our students. When it comes to recruiting or retaining students, we should not take a bifurcated approach. Instead we should continue our work to retain all students. This requires many different strategies. Student housing is one of those strategies that has been proven to be successful in retaining students.

8. **Why did NEIU change their mind to now build their first dormitory on the existing campus prior to the dormitories at the contentious off-campus Bryn Mawr location, and why has this**

new on-campus location departed from the master plan and changed its location to a parking lot on the west edge of the campus, rather than the on-campus location along Foster Ave? As in the original master plan? Are the Foster Avenue dorms still in the plan? And if both on-campus dorm locations are now planned, resulting in more on-campus dorm rooms over the original plan, why does NEIU not spare our community and drop its expensive and extremely hostile eminent domain actions it has taken against its Bryn Mawr neighbors? (Brian Sweney-NP resident)

The reason why phase one will be constructed on the current 67 acres is because we wish to provide student housing by fall 2016, and the property acquisition on the 3400 block of Bryn Mawr is underway but not yet complete. The University changed the original location of the residence hall from Foster Avenue to south of the Parking Facility because, after consulting with American Campus Communities, it was decided that it was a better location. We will not be building on the Foster Avenue; much of the green space there is to support our physical education majors, which require a certain number of playing fields.

9. **Instead of continuing the pursuit for off-campus land via eminent domain, why didn't NEIU add a few more levels onto the L-shaped residence hall they are about to build? (Viki Peer-NEIU student and community member)**

The cost per square foot of construction increases substantially with building height after decreasing for the first three to five floors. This is due to the increased structural cost to support upper floor weight and to resist wind stress, and also the increased cost of actual construction due to greater materials transport height from the ground requiring larger cranes and transport mechanisms. Our developer, American Campus Communities, recommended 440 beds in a six-story configuration as the most cost-effective first phase of residence hall development. Northeastern's long range plan is to provide residence for about 10% of its student population, or about 1,000 to 1,200 beds.

10. **Is there any existing documentation from anyone at American Campus Communities and its representatives that indicates that ACC would be unwilling to proceed with their residential development partnership with NEIU in its present form if NEIU were to abandon its quest to acquire the Bryn Mawr properties and instead choose to locate both phases of residential development within NEIU's current footprint? (Regnad)**

We are not aware of any documentation to this effect. The existing partnership that Northeastern has with ACC is for the design, development and management of our first phase of student housing—which will be located on the existing campus. To date, our efforts with ACC have been devoted to planning for the first phase of student housing only.

11. **Bryn Mawr is already very congested in the morning and afternoon. If the NEIU road between Foster and Bryn Mawr will be closed during construction, it's likely there may be additional traffic along Bryn Mawr. Is a traffic study being commissioned and will it be finished before construction begins? How will residents be notified of the results? (Jane Friedman-NP resident)**

The Access Road along the west edge of the campus between Bryn Mawr and Foster Avenues will remain open during the construction process. Northeastern will be conducting a traffic study prior to the construction of phase two residence halls, and residents will be notified of the results via University media communications, community meetings, and a community forum event.

12. **What are NEIU's plans for expansion of the day care center, 5 years out? How does the University plan on alleviating the traffic congestion it creates? (Jewel Klein-NP Resident)**
Plans to double NEIU's daycare capacity to 200 children are based on the demand from students, faculty, staff and community. Traffic congestion will need to be address in our traffic study. The preliminary concept we have is a pull-off. This will require grant funds in order to be built. This does not have funding identified at this point.
13. **With no new parking options and 400+ student dorm rooms (not including the new dorms being proposed on Bryn Mawr), where are the 400+ new cars going to park? What about parking for existing commuter students with existing parking lots being torn down to build the dorm? As a 25+ year resident on St. Louis Ave, I should not have to pay for permit parking to be able to park on the street in front of my house! (LBauler-NP resident)**
There are 2,748 parking spaces at the main campus. During peak parking periods, less than 75% of these spaces are occupied. Many of the residence hall occupants are expected to be international and out-of-state students who will not have vehicles. About 253 spaces will be lost for the phase one residence hall, and we have engaged a parking consultant to review possible locations for replacement parking.
14. **There is much debate on whether or not the current parking lots and garage are well utilized, let alone full. Can you, with a diagram, tell us the capacity, current volumes and current fees/cost for each parking lot? (Judie Simpson-NP resident)**
Parking lots and the parking garage together have a vacancy rate of more than 25% during peak parking periods. Much of that capacity has been in Lot L at the southwest corner of the campus. However, the location of the new Education Building planned for completion in January, 2018, will make parking there more attractive and perhaps free some capacity closer to Bryn Mawr Avenue. There is a parking map handout (also available on our web site), and the handout has an attached list of surface parking lot and parking facility level capacities and rates.
15. **I've heard there are state laws that dictate parking fees at NEIU – what are they, can they be changed if unreasonably restricting? How could you make parking on campus more attractive so more students would opt to park on NEIU property than on the street? (Judie Simpson-NP resident)**
Northeastern is required by State statutes to cover all costs of parking via parking fees charged to faculty, staff, students, and visitors. This includes the costs of construction, maintenance, snowplowing, and all operations. We are not allowed to use State appropriations or tuition revenues to cover parking expenses. The bond financing used for construction of the parking facility also requires recovery of adequate revenues to pay the costs of that debt for construction costs. The mandatory parking rate for students will decrease this fall semester by \$1 per credit hour, or 8%.
16. **I hear NEIU snow-plows streets adjacent to campus, i.e., St. Louis and Bryn Mawr where there is FREE street parking and no resident permit parking. Will NEIU commit to clear snow also along the west side of Central Park where NEIU students and faculty also park? If NEIU plowed at night more cars could park during the day – alleviating some of the congestion issues. (Judie Simpson-NP resident)**
Northeastern plows the Access Road along the west edge of the campus because that road is owned and maintained by Northeastern. We do not plow other streets adjacent to the campus

because those streets are owned and maintained by the City of Chicago.

17. **First, I appreciate the NEIU security force. They patrol the neighborhood, listen to all CPD calls and are usually the first responders to problems in the North Park neighborhood. But I've heard they are NOT allowed to issue tickets for parking. What would need to change to make that happen, can the CPD delegate this responsibility to NEIU Police? Would it need a city law change? (Judie Simpson-NP resident)**

University Police are sworn law enforcement officers of the state, so it enforces state laws. University Police officers are not authorized to enforce city laws or city ordinances. In order for them to do that, the city comptroller would need to appoint them as agents of the city.

18. **We know that sexual assault is a major problem at colleges and universities nationwide. We also know that dorms and residential facilities are notoriously dangerous for young women college students. What specific measures does the University plan to take to ensure student safety? (Viki Peer-NEIU student and community member)**

Student safety is paramount for the University and for University Police. Our crime statistics are open and public. We recommend you take a look at the University's Clery Report on the University Police webpage. As our Clery Report shows, we have no sex assaults reported on this campus or any of our locations. However, residence halls are often the one place on campus where students are at most risk. We are tremendously committed to preventing sex assaults by educating students so they understand what sexual misconduct is – what consent really means, by having strong policies and of course well thought out safety measures. Various offices and people at the University who work together on preventing sex assault, a few of the main ones – my office, University Police, Student Affairs, our various resource centers, and Orientation Leaders. NEIU is doing a number of things to ensure student safety from sex assaults in general and with respect to the residence halls:

- All new students are required to do a program on sex assault prevention and awareness. Includes a focus on bystander intervention, protecting each other.
- Programming and events for students throughout the year on sexual violence, including domestic violence.
- Self Defense Awareness and Familiarization Exchange (S.A.F.E.) Training (partnership with University Police)
- We have a strong sexual assault policy which helps students know their rights.
- When the residence halls are in place, all staff involved in these halls will participate in sexual harassment/sexual assault prevention and awareness training.
- Students in the halls will be required to get this training, too.

19. **One of the reasons I moved close to NEIU was to take advantage of the arts and educational opportunities within walking distance. Can you develop a community resource (perhaps on the NEIU Neighborhood Network page) that lists free or discounted opportunities for North Park residents? I've heard there are the following se benefits – are there more? (Judie Simpson-NP resident)**

Most of the events that are hosted at the University are free and open to the public. Others that might have a more student focus are not, usually because of limited space. We encourage all members of the community to attend those events that are open to the public. You can find opportunities to engage in NEIU activities on neiu.edu/about/news.

a) Are there community discounts for plays and concerts?

For many performances at NEIU, there is one general fee for attendees, and occasionally there are discounts offered to students. This is done on a case-by-case basis. Still, you'll find that these events are very reasonably priced compared to similar events elsewhere in the city. Our neighbors can also sign up for NEIU's Blue-and-Gold membership for \$30 a year, which gives them discounts of 10% to 20% on most events as well as a number of other benefits. Go to the Alumni & Giving tab of our website or our Alumni Relations Office for more information.

b) Are the NEIU Chorus and Orchestra open to community member participation?

The Chorus and Orchestra are primarily geared toward students and faculty. However, the NEIU Opera production has in the past been open to members of the community to participate. We understand that it will continue to be open to community participation.

c) The Community Listeners program seems to be languishing; it is unclear which classes can be audited. Can you expand and better publicize this neighborhood benefit?

Our "Community Listeners" has evolved into a new program that we relaunched earlier this year in the form of our CAPE program (Community and Professional Education). It will come at a modest cost, however. More information is available at neiu.edu/cape.

d) Do I have library access? Can I use computers there?

Our neighbors are welcome to enjoy the library and use the computers there. In order to check out books, non-students must purchase a \$30 Blue-and-Gold annual membership from the Alumni Affairs Office or online.

e) Do I have to be a member to take a class or swim in the pool, use a racquetball court at the NEIU recreation facility?

Yes, many of our neighbors take advantage of the amenities available to them in the Physical Education Building. Day Passes are only \$10 at the front desk. Longer-term memberships are also available, and Blue-and-Gold members receive a special rate on an annual membership.