



Northeastern Illinois University
Frequently Asked Questions about Student Housing
January 2015

OVERVIEW and WHY EMINENT DOMAIN

I understand that Northeastern Illinois University is building residence halls. Where and when?

- Our planned residence halls (to house roughly 10 percent of our student body) will be developed in at least two phases. One phase will take place on our current 67 acres of campus and the other phase along the 3400 block of West Bryn Mawr.
- A third phase potentially could take place after the first two have been completed. If/when we pursue a third phase, which will be determined after Phases 1 and 2 are underway, it will not be done until after 2018, and we will do our best to keep the community informed of all planning stages. A possible Phase 3 would not require the University to acquire additional land.

You have gone 50 years without student housing. Why do you need it now?

- We are the last public, four-year university in Illinois to add student housing.
- Research and feasibility studies indicate that NEIU would be well served by student housing.
 - It is important that we provide an affordable and supportive living/learning environment for our students that is close to academic programs and student services.
 - Our prospective students report that lack of housing is a leading reason why they choose a different university.
 - Many of our current students commute 50 minutes each way, some more than an hour, and have urged us to consider on-campus housing.
- Many students are the first in their families to complete a degree—and they seek a traditional college experience that includes living on campus.
- The University's 2008 Strategic Plan calls for a residential life component. More than 600 people, which included many in the community, helped to shape that plan.
- According to a feasibility study and additional research from American Campus Communities (ACC) -- which will develop, finance, and manage this project -- we believe these residence halls will help:
 - Enrich the educational and co-curricular experience
 - Improve student retention and graduation rates
 - Increase university enrollment
 - Provide options for the growing international student population, and
 - Bolster economic development to the nearby neighborhoods.

Are you forcing out neighborhood businesses?

- Our goal has been and continues to be to find a solution that works for everyone.
- We are glad to say one property owner has already sold to us. We had been working with the remaining six property owners on the Bryn Mawr block to find win-win solutions.

I'm not convinced you have exhausted all the options available. Why are you using eminent domain?

- We've reached out with official offers to start this construction and community-growth building opportunity. Eminent domain that became the option available to us, and we began proceedings in August 2014 when negotiations with property owners stopped being productive.
- At the end of this legal process, a final market value will be determined by the courts – taking into consideration a University-commissioned appraisal and an owner-commissioned appraisal as anchor points.

Housing won't magically boost enrollment. Why don't you focus on curriculum instead?

- We always have a clear focus on our students' success, and we are proud that our academic program is robust and respected.
 - As our neighbors, you'll be pleased to know that we were ranked by *US News and World Report* and by *Newsweek* magazine as the sixth best university investment in the U.S. and #1 in Illinois.
- Our strategic plan includes several key goals to ensure our continued success and growth. As an acclaimed university, academic excellence and innovation are fundamental, as is ensuring continued student success. That same strategic plan also calls for a residential life component.

THE BUILDINGS AND SITE RATIONALE

How many buildings will there be? What will they include? What's going where and how many students will be living here?

- We aim to accommodate up to 1,200 students (approximately 10 percent of our student population) with student housing on campus — 400 students on our existing 67 acres of campus and another 400 on Bryn Mawr. The remaining 400 will be part of a possible Phase 3 of this project, which will be considered after the first two residence halls have reached capacity. No additional land will be required for a possible Phase 3.
 - Based on community input, the University has revised its original plan and has reduced the planned number of students housed on Bryn Mawr from 500 to 400.
- The first residence hall is slated to open Fall 2016 with the next residence hall opening two years later.
- Neighborhood residents may be pleased to know that the development on Bryn Mawr will include retail space at street level. Potential businesses must complete an application that will be rigorously evaluated and approved to ensure that businesses best meet the community's needs.
- The buildings will be designed by a local architect. What's more, he lives in our neighborhood and understands our community's unique needs and style.
- The architectural design of the buildings just began in November 2014. We will communicate and address all aspects of this building (including aesthetics and suitability to the neighborhood, layout, environmental sustainability, traffic impact, food service for students, etc.) when appropriate.

Why can't you just build on the existing campus? Why must you build on Bryn Mawr?

- We are planning to build a residence hall on the existing campus, but we also need to build on Bryn Mawr.
- Some of the space currently available on the Main Campus has already been reserved for

future facilities projects as identified in the president's [Decade of Dreams](#) master plan.

- As a university, it is important to us to maintain comfortable “flow” for foot traffic as well as residence halls that will be aesthetically pleasing to our students and neighbors. We want to create buildings that will accommodate students, cause little to no congestion, and be beautiful for the community to view. With that in mind, we simply do not have enough appropriate space to build solely on our immediate campus.
- Our feasibility studies indicate that at least two buildings are necessary to accommodate the 10 percent of student population seeking on-campus housing.
- The proposed sites for the residence halls were thoughtfully and carefully selected to optimize benefits to the students and impact the community the least.
- The 3400 block of Bryn Mawr is the closest block to campus that does not involve residential properties. The University has no interest in purchasing residential properties either near its Main Campus or elsewhere.

What is American Campus Communities (ACC)? What is NEIU’s arrangement with them?

- ACC is the nation’s most prominent developer, owner, and manager of high-quality student housing communities. It brings exceptional service to universities and students, and extensive experience and dedication to the communities in which the universities reside.
- ACC will oversee construction of the buildings and initially will manage the buildings. NEIU expects to fully-own these residence halls approximately 10 years after construction.
- ACC is our partner in this build – that means together we agree on rules, regulations, and who lives in our residence halls. These residence halls are not intended for members of the public – or anyone outside of the university community.
- If you would like to learn more about ACC, visit its website [here](#).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

How are you involving the community in your decision making?

- The Northeastern Neighborhood Network (NNN) is comprised of a group of community leaders that meets three times a year to discuss all the ways Northeastern and the community can work together. Meetings are typically held in March, July and November. A list of member organizations is listed on the Northeastern Neighbors website.
- The Hollywood North Park Community Association is a long-standing community group that serves our neighborhood, and we encourage at least one representative of this organization to attend NNN meetings.
- Please visit our website at www.neiu.edu/neighbors. It is specifically designed and maintained to serve the needs of the University’s neighbors. From this page, visitors can also subscribe to the University’s e-newsletter and provide feedback / submit questions.

Why are you building residence halls with no community support?

- Actually, there is a lot of support for residence halls, and it is growing. After numerous conversations with hundreds of community members, we found that generally people are enthusiastic and support the idea of new residence halls and university growth. However, some oppose eminent domain as a means to secure the land. We acknowledge that. After exhausting every possible resource and trying for years to find amenable solutions with the six impacted businesses, eminent domain was the only avenue available to us.

You've already taken the steps to acquire the 3400 block of Bryn Mawr. Will you go after my house next?

- We have no further plans for additional expansion beyond what is indicated in our 2008 strategic plan.
- In developing our plan for residence halls, we had the option to build on lots currently occupied by neighboring residents, but we opted not to.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT MY QUALITY OF LIFE?

I'm concerned about noise, litter, and crime increasing. What will you do to prevent problems like these?

- When the 3400 block of Bryn Mawr becomes a part of the Main Campus, it will receive the same security and maintenance that the rest of campus enjoys. We have a very strong interest in reducing noise, litter and crime on our campus.
- Did you know that we are one of the safest universities in Chicago? See our [Annual Safety and Security Report](#).
- We are working with neighbors and community partners to gather input about traffic, parking, noise, litter, and building design.
- We are conducting traffic studies to determine and upgrade any negative impact the residence halls may have on traffic in our neighborhood. We expect the studies to be complete in 2015 and will make appropriate plans based upon the findings.
- Our NEIU police force already monitors not only our campus but also our neighboring streets to ensure community safety, and we commit to increasing patrols as we grow.
- We will train university residence hall directors and advisors with protocols to ensure a safe, clean and peaceful neighborhood.

If you don't meet resident quotas will Illinois taxpayers will be responsible for paying the difference? Would you ever open the residence halls to Section 8 housing?

- Only NEIU students will reside in these buildings. And, during the summer months, visiting faculty along with participants in unique international programs might live in the residence halls as well.
- Our feasibility study and research led us to strongly expect a healthy demand for student housing. However, under no circumstances would taxpayer dollars be used to close funding gaps — even in the very unlikely event of an occupancy shortage.

I hear that the owners of all the vacant storefronts on Bryn Mawr east of Kimball are refusing to sell or rent their spaces and are merely holding them in the hopes that NEIU will want to acquire additional properties. How is NEIU going to facilitate development of that strip?

- We are pleased that these business owners see the potential for growth and community development based upon our residence hall plans, but development of additional land or property is beyond the scope of our residence hall plan.
- We believe that any community economic improvement is a happy outcome of our plan to build student residences, but it is not our role to lead development of that area east of Kimball.