Gentrification in Flagstaff

Date: Tuesday, April 23, 5:30 p.m.
Location: NAU Green Scene Café 3rd Floor, HLC

Facilitated by: Dr. Julie Piering, NAU Philosophy Department

5:30 p.m. Welcome and Introduction
Cynthia Haros, Philosophy in the Public Interest

5:45: Dr. Julie Piering, NAU Philosophy Department

- What are the benefits and costs of gentrification?
- What makes a neighborhood?
- Who should be able to determine who’s a part of the community and who’s not?

6:50: Recap of discussion
What is Gentrification?
Gentrification is a term that refers to the arrival of a higher-income group in an existing district, a related increase in rents and property values, a displacement of existing residents and tenants, and changes in the district’s character and culture.

What Causes Gentrification?
The onset of gentrification involves the complex interplay between economic cycles, regional dynamics, and neighborhood demographics. Precedent shows that the threat of gentrification is at its greatest with the presence of the following regional and local characteristics:

Local Characteristics
- Low Incomes: creating sensitivity to rapid increases in rents and home values, as well as the associated social factors (lower education levels, unskilled jobs, etc.).
- Renters: areas with a high proportion of low-income renters are more vulnerable to rising prices in a housing market with rising prices.
- Property Values: low housing values compared to regional norms, encourages investor speculation, especially in neighborhoods with an architecturally rich housing stock.
- Limited supply: areas with tight market conditions, including low vacancy rates and limited opportunities to construct new products, will have greater incidence of displacement due to rising rents when new populations begin to move into the market.

Gentrification in Flagstaff
Efforts to Develop a Culture/Neighborhood
Currently the city of Flagstaff’s mission and vision statements are, “to protect and enhance the quality of life of its citizens” and that, “The City of Flagstaff is a safe, diverse, vibrant, and innovative community with a unique character and high quality of life. The city fosters and supports a balance of economic, environmental, educational and cultural opportunities.” While this is a very broad and generic way of describing any city let alone flagstaff it can be seen that Flagstaff’s culture is one that tries to appeal to family-owned, local business with a focus on tight-knit communities, college students, and environmentally friendly practices.

In 2004, the Flagstaff population was estimated at 61,270. The U.S. Census Bureau last estimated the population in 2011, at 65,914. This recent estimate discredits projections made in 2004, of a 10.56% increase by 2009, which would have put the Flagstaff population at 68,850. This difference of roughly 3,000 indicates slower growth than some communities had anticipated.

Southside/Sunnyside
Weed & Seed is a community-based strategy, being sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), is an innovative, comprehensive multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and community revitalization. The Community Capacity Development Office of the U.S. Department of Justice oversees the Weed and Seed initiative. Weed and Seed is foremost a strategy rather than a grant program - that aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in designated high-crime neighborhoods across the country.

Consequences of Gentrification
The term is often used negatively, suggesting the displacement of poor communities by more privileged outsiders. However the effects of gentrification are complex and contradictory, and its real impact varies. Many aspects of the gentrification process are desirable. Unfortunately, the benefits of these changes are often enjoyed disproportionately by new arrivals, while established residents find themselves economically and socially marginalized.

Regional Characteristics
- Economy: an imbalance between housing demand and supply in the existing housing stock or new construction, created through rapid job growth or its residual effect: pent up demand.
- Housing Prices: high regional housing prices, where home ownership for middle-class households is only within reach in depressed or lower-income neighborhoods. This is becoming an increasingly important factor in Flagstaff where new housing is being produced at price levels above that which can be afforded by local residents.
- Location: within proximity to a growing metropolitan area with increasing congestion and convenient access to urban employment centers via highways and public transportation.

Southside
The SSCA (Southside Community Association) addresses the Southside as the oldest continuously occupied neighborhood in Flagstaff and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In March of this year, members of the Southside community, as well as Flagstaff Police Officers, volunteered to clean up the historic Tourist Home on San Francisco. This property and other sites that have likewise been abandoned or condemned are the subject of a community discussion—as to whether they be renovated or demolished to spruce up the neighborhood.

Downtown
Wrapping up in 2007, and implementing beautification concepts of the 2005 Southside Plan, plans were developed to install significant streetscape improvements in the southern portion of downtown and the construction of these improvements is expected to commence in the spring of 2010. This work includes improved pedestrian facilities – sidewalks and intersections, municipal landscaping, street lighting, and street furniture and will be funded entirely by BBB – Beautification funds and grant monies.

As with the northern downtown improvements, these are expected to provide a meaningful economic boost, but they will require the removal fifteen parking spaces. Based on stakeholder input and assuming the continued implementation of the 2005 Southside Plan, the beautification efforts of the City seem to be sufficient for economic vitality purposes and to meet the expectations of the community.
Recently, the Furniture Barn on Clay Avenue has been replaced by Natural Grocers and the Greyhound Bus Station on Malapais Lane is currently being demolished. Several months ago the community cleaned up the lot that sits on the South-west corner of Milton and Clay and replaced it with a Xeriscape Garden.

**Bushmaster Park**

If one were to search “Bushmaster Park” into the Google search bar, the first three auto-complete searches list: shooting, stabbing, & watch in that order. The park frequently is home to violent crimes, causing many residents to feel unsafe. On January 30th of this year, almost 5 hours before a Bushmaster Park Neighborhood Meeting was scheduled to address crime in the park, Flagstaff Police began investigating a fight involving shots fired and multiple stabbings.

"It's a public park. We should all feel comfortable going to any public park in Flagstaff." -- Marguerite Hendrie, who runs the site Bushmaster Park Watch

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**Population and Demographics**

In 2004, the Flagstaff population was estimated at 61,270. The U.S. Census Bureau last estimated the population in 2011, at 65,914. Projections estimated a 10.56% increase that would put the population at 68,850 by 2010. This difference of 3,000 shows slower growth than some communities had expected, which has an effect on the success of plans for economic growth.

**Southside:**

The majority of the owner-occupied households in the Southside (124 households, or 21%) are occupied by families who represent the historically ethnic fabric of the community, and it is these longtime residents who are most vulnerable to the pressures of gentrification.

- White alone - 42,446 (64.4%)
- Hispanic - 12,094 (18.4%)
- American Indian alone - 7,237 (11.0%)
- Two or more races - 1,509 (2.3%)
- Black alone - 1,173 (1.8%)
- Asian alone - 1,191 (1.8%)
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone - 99 (0.2%)
- Other race alone - 121 (0.2%)

**Median Income vs. Median Home Price**

As defined by HUD (Department of Housing and Development) in 2009, the median household income for a 4-person household was $50,769 for Coconino County. For the City of Flagstaff and the Southside neighborhood, the median household income in 2009 was much lower, at about $49,000 (it was $37,146 in 2000) and $19,900, respectively. Coincidentally, the median household income number for Flagstaff corresponds almost exactly with the 80% AMI (Area Median Income) number for the County for a 4-person household ($41,400).

The housing price affordable to these local households would be approximately $165,000 for the County and $123,000 for Flagstaff. These affordable prices are estimated at 100% AMI with a 30-year mortgage, 6% interest, and a down-payment of 5%.

With the average 3-bedroom ranch house selling for upwards of $300,000, the above calculation further indicates how out-of-range housing prices currently are for the average resident of the City (median house/condo value was $149,000 in 2000).
Hot Topics Café Campus Committee

The “hot topics” in the Hot Topics Cafés are selected by NAU students that represent diverse constituencies and viewpoints. We thank our committee for their participation.

NAU Students on the Campus Committee

Zac Abrams, President- American-Israeli Alliance
Nolan Bade, Green Jacks
*Kyle Beloin, Philosophy in the Public Interest
Tara Butler, Associated Students for Women’s Issues/Teal Ribbon coordinator
Daniel Daw, The Lumberjack newspaper
Kaitlin Dodge, President- NAU Young Democrats
Alexis Edmonds, To Write Love on Her Arms
Glenn Garner, President of PRISM
*Zachary Gerber, Math major/physics major, Philosophy minor/Computer Science minor
Jared Gooshe, President- College Republicans

*Voted to select “hot topics” for the Spring of 2013

Faculty advisors

Andrea Houchard, Philosophy in the Public Interest
Heidi Wayment, Compassion Project, Psychology Department

*Cynthia Haros, Philosophy in the Public Interest
*Evelyn Jores, Secular Student Association
Sarah Kolb, NAU Today
Alexis Krueger, Student Health Advisory Committee
*Ryan Lee, Vice President for Student Affairs-ASNAU
Dashun Lewis, Ethnic Studies Ambassador
Ellie Lewis, Philosophy Club Officer
Gabriela Perez, Pre-Law Fraternity
*Nicole Ruiz, Philosophy in the Public Interest
*Miles Schneiderman, Secular Student Association
*Sol Serpas-Guardado, Philosophy Club
*Steven Shook, Philosophy Club Officer
Ethan Wash, National Student Speech Language Hearing Association
Brooke Weber, Associated Students for Women’s Issues, NAU Speakout

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Next Flagstaff Hot Topics Café

Visit nau.edu/ffi for Fall 2013 Schedule

Date: —
Location: —

You are also invited to attend Hot Topics Cafés on the NAU campus and in Sedona. Visit nau.edu/ffi for a schedule.

This informational handout was prepared by the Kyle Beloin, Coren Frankel and Colin Towne, NAU Hot Topics Café Student Research Directors. Both Kyle and Coren have double majors in philosophy and political science at Northern Arizona University, while Colin has a major in economics.