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Home vs. dorms

UA gives family a fair deal

JENNIFER TRAMM
Tucson Citizen

In making way for more student residence halls, William A. Kennedy and family will be leaving their home of 89 years.

This is sad, and I am sure it is difficult for them, but the University of Arizona is growing and needs more space to house its students.

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Each fall, the dorms fill. About 700 students had to be turned away last fall, said Jim Van Arsdel, director of the UA Residence Life Department.

UA stirred controversy in pushing to get the Kennedy property, but the struggle eventually would have ended in the university's favor.

A life estate agreement made in 1996 allowed the Kennedys to live in the house as long as they wanted, so long as ownership of the property went to UA.

But then UA decided it wanted the property sooner rather than later.

It acted a bit like a bully in getting the Kennedys out, offering only \$67,000 to buy out the life estate at the original homestead on the southwest corner of the campus.

Some people may think the university was mean in ousting the family.

But Kennedy's wife, Barbara, told the Tucson Citizen that the university was "very fair, very honest" in the discussions.

The Kennedys pushed for enough money to buy another house, and the university acquiesced, upping its offer to \$243,000.

That's not a bad amount.

The median price for homes in Tucson is \$199,000, and both median and average sales prices have generally fallen since July, according to the Tucson Association of Realtors.

In satellite images, the Kennedy house looks lonely in the middle of a Zone 1 parking lot. It is on that lot, and one next to it, that the university plans to erect halls that will house 350 students each.

A third hall on a different lot will house an additional 375 students.

This will help with the influx of new students as the university grows, but there still are just too many students and not enough spaces, Van Arsdel said.

"This is a really popular university," he said.

His department's funding comes entirely from dorm room fees, which range from \$4,189 per academic year for double or triple occupancy (for about eight months) to \$7,489 for single occupancy.

That amounts to monthly rent of \$524 to \$936.

PHOTOS & IMAGES

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Google Earth

The Kennedy family residence sits in a sea of parking places on the southwest corner of the University of Arizona campus.

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While an apartment can be rented for less, dorm residents get free utilities, high-speed Internet and a locked, secure environment at night, a feature that especially appeals to parents.

For UA, the bottom line is that students need places to live, and residence halls offer the best environment for them.

If the university does not build dormitory halls, it may end up losing some great students to other universities that do offer enough housing.

Although it was a struggle for the Kennedys to defend themselves against the mighty UA, and it will be difficult to move after decades in the same home, both parties ended up winners.

The Kennedys can afford to buy another house, and 1,075 more students soon will have a place to call home when they set out to get the great American college education.

Jennifer Tramm is a journalism major at the University of Arizona and a mother of two. Email: trammj@cox.net

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1. *Comment by Paul C. (Guborpolice) — March 16, 2008 @ 12:05PM*

I find it interesting that, though it is right across the street from the UofA, not one time has it gone into Sam hugh's neighborhood and flatten houses to build a building. But yet has chase thousands of people in surrounding neighborhoods out of their houses. This discrimination has to stop.

2. *Comment by Wilmer C. (rivers) — March 16, 2008 @ 2:46PM*

Fitting name, Gubor.

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