

NEIGHBORHOODS

TASK FORCE FINAL REPORT

OUR **VISION** FOR STANFORD'S
UNDERGRADUATE RESIDENCES

JANUARY 29, 2024

SUBMITTED BY THE NEIGHBORHOODS TASK FORCE



(This page intentionally left blank)

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary Page 2

II. Neighborhoods and the 2023 Task Force Page 4

III. Recommendations Page 6

Part I: Executive Summary

In early 2019, the university, through the ResX committee, established the guiding concept for the Stanford residential community as “neighborhoods.” In defining neighborhoods, the committee emphasized the importance of continuity in residential living for creating a sense of belonging and well-being: “Each neighborhood will foster continuity during students’ four years at Stanford, allowing them to experience deepening friendships over time, as well as offering the creative challenges and rich learning opportunities that come from citizenship in a diverse community.”

As the ResX recommendations were implemented in 2021, challenges arose regarding Stanford’s long-standing approach of fostering student choice against the backdrop of Stanford’s heterogeneous housing facilities. To address those challenges, the university charged the Neighborhoods Task Force, composed of students, faculty, and staff, with developing recommendations for changes to the next phase of neighborhood implementation. The top-level goal was to determine the optimal balance between student choice and community cohesion in order to realize the highest potential of the residential experience for Stanford’s diverse student body.

Based on research conducted with students and other key stakeholders, the task force formulated the following recommendations, which have been approved by the president and provost for implementation for fall 2024:

1. Neighborhoods remain a useful construct for community building, cohesion, and resource distribution, but the construct should not drive housing assignments for sophomores, juniors, or seniors.

- Campus housing will remain divided into eight neighborhoods, largely based on current configurations. Each neighborhood will continue to have a mix of students from multiple class years.
- Students will be able to live in any neighborhood after their frosh year with friends from any neighborhood.
- Students can choose a group of up to four individuals for an assignment together. Current processes for students with approved needs and concerns (e.g., accessibility, Title IX) will continue.
- Closer building proximity will improve the cohesiveness of each neighborhood. The task force reworked existing building configurations and made the Row its own neighborhood to achieve greater geographical contiguity. As theme houses with Resident Fellows (RFs), Muwekma and the Well House are geographically on the Row, but are part of the Olive neighborhood.

2. Robust community building and cohesion require more than the process of housing assignments.

- The university must continue to invest in academic and social programming, Resident Assistant and Ethnic Theme Associate leadership development, and additional flexible gathering spaces where students can study, socialize, and relax.
- Neighborhood staff and students should continue to work together to develop more signature events, weekly gatherings, and annual traditions, including building on successful programs such as neighborhood socials, first week BBQs, and all-campus events.

- Although the neighborhoods' naming process and community councils have been a good start, more student-driven, identity-building activities are needed so that neighborhoods can continue building community uniqueness, identity, and cohesion.

3. All-frosh housing remains a critical experience for incoming students.

- Frosh experiences, programs, and processes should continue. The assignment process will remain the same, and frosh will continue to be distributed across neighborhoods (instead of being grouped into a single all-frosh zone).
- Frosh can still join University Theme Houses: currently ethnic theme dorms, SLE, ITALIC, Explore Energy, and Public Service.
- RFs are critical to supporting the frosh transition to campus life, academically and socially, and the university should continue to advance frosh-specific RF development and support.

4. Seniors should continue to have priority for housing choices. Sophomores need more residential support than juniors and seniors, but should have flexibility to live with friends in any neighborhood.

- Priority for housing assignments will continue to be based primarily on academic class year (as determined by entering cohort). Sophomores will choose first from among a set of specified rooms (primarily one-room doubles; see below), followed by seniors and then juniors.
- To ensure seniors and juniors have access to the most desirable room types, sophomores will choose from a set of sophomore-priority rooms, which will largely be one-room doubles across the neighborhoods. Additionally, sophomores will remain eligible to apply for pre-assignment in University Theme Houses, fraternity/sorority houses, ethnic theme dorms, and co-ops.
- Sophomore-priority rooms will be in residences with Resident Fellows to ensure ongoing live-in faculty and professional staff support (except when sophomores opt to live in a theme house).

While many factors contribute to the success of undergraduate housing and Stanford's overall campus and student life, this report contains only the elements discussed, debated, and recommended by the Neighborhoods Task Force. Additional improvements to the model and its essential processes and staffing will need to be made in future years as feedback and lessons from this set of changes are collected and assessed.

* Many parts of this report have been sourced directly from the [ResX Task Force final report](#) that was issued on December 21, 2018.

Part II: Neighborhoods and the 2023 Task Force

Stanford residences make important and distinct contributions to the overall undergraduate educational experience. They present opportunities for engaging the whole student, for promoting health and well-being in support of the academic mission, and for enabling all students to reach their full potential. Among other goals, the original ResX model attempted to balance three outcomes:

- 1) The right amount of student choice (who to live with and where)
- 2) Community cohesion and belonging
- 3) Equitable distribution of housing and resources

The model places the neighborhoods at the center of students' experiences outside the classroom and promotes health and well-being, belonging and community, and intellectual and personal growth. In Fall 2021, students moved into neighborhoods for the first time and, over the next two years, established neighborhood names and an initial set of new traditions. Meaningful programming was also re-established after the disruptions of the pandemic and has continued to gain momentum over the past couple of years.

As the positives and negatives of the initial implementation became clearer, university leaders commissioned a new group, the 2023 Neighborhoods Task Force, to undertake a second phase of the work to examine and recommend a set of longer-term changes. The focus was on enhancements to the neighborhood model that would strike the optimal balance between student choice and community cohesion. The task force was charged with three primary considerations:

- 1) Examine housing assignment and neighborhood reassignment processes
- 2) Explore new configurations of buildings to address neighborhood geographical proximity
- 3) Determine how best to foster a sense of community and equitably deliver services and enrichment

Members of a new task force were named in early 2023 and included six students from the frosh and sophomore classes, two staff from Residential Education, three staff from Residential and Dining Enterprises, two Resident Fellows, and three faculty at large. The group was co-chaired by Professor Elaine Treharne, Senior Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and Susie Brubaker-Cole, Vice Provost for Student Affairs. Members were: Justin Akers, Patti Hanlon Baker, Cheryl Brown, Ivy Chen, Matthew Guck, Imogen Hinds, Tim Jad, Jose Angel Machin Kairuz, Ula Alexandra Lucas, Professor Yoshiko Matsumoto, Professor Grant Parker, Professor Priya Satia, Cole Shiflett, Avery Gannon Watkins, Mercer Weis, and Edith Wu. Professor Shima Salehi and graduate assistant Alessandra Napoli served as the project research team. Jeff Schmidt and Kathy Davies provided project management and process facilitation, respectively, and Bonnie Sheikh provided administrative support.

Research and the decision-making model

Gathering feedback and ideas from a wide range of stakeholders was an essential part of the Neighborhoods Task Force process. The team's research plan included students, Resident Fellows, professional staff, alumni, and faculty and involved:

- Fourteen focus groups conducted over the summer and early fall to inform questions to be included in a campus-wide student survey
- Multiple focus groups with neighborhood professional staff and Resident Fellows. Those unable to attend a focus group were offered one-on-one feedback discussions
- A comprehensive survey for undergraduate students
- A short survey to gather faculty and staff inputs over the summer
- A short survey to gather alumni feedback

Results from each research component were presented to task force members to inform their decision making as they started formulating recommendations.

As this research was being conducted, the task force followed an incremental education, discussion, and decision-making process to ensure each task force member would be equally informed and involved in generating the final recommendations. Additionally, a set of subject-matter experts presented key information about the current residential system, and discussion meetings were held throughout October, early in the process, so the task force members fully understood the complex components of the system under consideration.

Those presentations and discussions included the design fundamentals of the neighborhoods model, the pre-assignments process, the assignments and reassignments processes, current neighborhood configurations, and current community building priorities, including staffing and funding. In a final retreat session, the task force members reviewed the research results, heard recommendations from the ASSU, and started designing initial recommendations.

In early November, each task force member shared their ideas for the full team to discuss. A variety of different options were debated and small groups worked together to converge and narrow the main concepts down into a smaller set of scenarios where the pros, cons, and tradeoffs could be considered. After feasibility testing with a group of R&DE and ResEd subject matter experts, the group voted on a set of recommendations to share with the Provost and President.

Part III: Recommendations

The neighborhood model remains a distinctly Stanford approach to undergraduate housing and education. The model utilizes the university's existing, varied housing stock and provides a basic organizational infrastructure to allocate resources and foster community, form lasting and diverse relationships, and offer fun, memorable experiences. It offers opportunities to learn and connect through student leadership roles and neighborhood councils, and it offers opportunities to build student-driven communities.

A. The neighborhoods model and recommended changes

At the core of the redesigned neighborhoods model is the need to strike the optimal balance between student choice and community cohesion. To shape the recommendations and find this balance, the task force examined three areas: 1) housing assignments and neighborhood reassignments (changing neighborhoods); 2) the configuration of buildings within each neighborhood; and 3) ways to foster a sense of community. The final recommendations presented to and approved by university leaders included a number of important changes in each of these areas.

1. Consistency in the neighborhoods model

- a. Campus housing will remain divided into eight neighborhoods, largely based on current configurations. Each neighborhood will continue to have a mix of students from multiple class years.
- b. Students will no longer be citizens of one neighborhood throughout their time at Stanford. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors will have the flexibility to live in any neighborhood.
- c. The majority of frosh housing will be all-frosh, with the option to select multi-class housing through University Theme Houses (currently ethnic theme dorms, SLE, ITALIC, Explore Energy, and Public Service). All frosh houses will continue to have a Resident Fellow and will be distributed across neighborhoods, rather than being grouped together in a single all-frosh area of campus.
- d. The goal remains that housing options and amenities should generally improve year-over-year throughout students' four years on campus.
- e. To improve the availability of more options and amenities and to improve geographical contiguity, the Row will become its own neighborhood, with non-theme Row houses reserved primarily for juniors and seniors. Muwekma and the Well House will not be part of the Row neighborhood.
- f. Neighborhoods will continue to include University Theme Houses (UTHs) that are campus-wide resources and available to any upper-class undergraduate student, with frosh able to pre-assign to particular UTHs. UTHs create intentional learning environments with an integration of experiences and backgrounds that students continue to value.
- g. Neighborhoods will also continue to include University Theme Houses - Academic (UTH-A). Upper-class students may be accepted for pre-assignment once during their undergraduate career to each of these theme houses (currently Explore Energy, Ng Humanities House, Outdoor House, Public Service, and Well House). For example, a student may be accepted for pre-assignment into Ng for their sophomore year and then accepted for pre-

assignment into Explore Energy their junior year. However, generally, they may not be accepted for pre-assignment into Ng or Explore Energy for more than one year. Students who have pre-assigned into an academic theme may still apply to staff in that theme during a subsequent year. In exceptional circumstances and at their discretion, a UTH-A Resident Fellow may permit a student to preassign into the house for a second year if there are extenuating reasons or a particular benefit to the student is noted.

- h. Recommending adjustments to UTHs was not part of the task force's charge, so the application, operations, funding, and governance processes of the UTHs will remain unchanged by the current set of recommendations. The Committee on Residential Learning (CoRL) will continue to address the quality and consistency for themed housing through their review cycle. This includes frosh themes, University Theme Houses (UTH-As), and independent-living houses (UTH-FSLs [Greek houses] and co-ops).

2. Programs for neighborhood community building

- a. The task force discussed various ways that community is built in the individual residences and neighborhoods. Members ranked the main elements of community building according to importance from their perspectives.
- b. The university must continue to invest in academic and social programming, Resident Assistant and Ethnic Theme Associate leadership development, and additional flexible gathering spaces where students can study, socialize, and relax.
- c. Student Affairs is also rebuilding campus and student social life through investments in student organizations, professional staff development, and both campus-wide and neighborhood programming. This work should continue in parallel with residential enhancements and high-level planning efforts should be coordinated across the two spheres.
- d. Frosh experiences, programs, and processes should continue. The assignment process will remain the same, and frosh will be distributed across neighborhoods (instead of being grouped into a single all-frosh zone).
- e. During discussions, members also recognized the critical contributions of staff, the need for new gathering spaces, the importance of identity and tradition building, and the ongoing funding needed to foster meaningful community. The group discussed how these elements shape the overall neighborhood experience.
- f. Neighborhood staff and students should continue to work together to develop more signature events, weekly gatherings, and annual traditions, including building on successful programs such as neighborhood socials, first week BBQs, and all-campus programming.
- g. Although the neighborhoods' naming process and neighborhood councils have been a good start, more student-driven, identity-building activities are needed so that neighborhoods can continue building community uniqueness, identity, and cohesion.
- h. Each neighborhood will continue to have a neighborhood council that meets regularly to coordinate community building efforts.
- i. Neighborhoods will continue to have different types of amenities, including lounges, libraries, kitchens, yoga/dance studios, meeting/seminar rooms, art spaces, computer clusters, music rooms, and TV/game rooms. Improvements to shared spaces, community commons, dining, and living spaces should continue to be made with funding dedicated for this purpose.

- j. The Resident Fellows and professional staff of a neighborhood play a critical role in community building and student support, and these roles should remain as stable as possible to allow students to develop and maintain continuous relationships.
- k. Each house and neighborhood will continue to require financial resources to support ongoing programming.

3. Neighborhoods re-configuration

- a. Closer building proximity will improve the cohesiveness of each neighborhood. The task force reworked some existing building configurations and made the Row its own neighborhood to achieve geographical contiguity.
- b. This creates greater overall cohesion in the neighborhoods and provides juniors and seniors with more independent, desirable housing options.
- c. Based on the recommendations of the task force, other buildings will also be slightly reconfigured to support the new model. The new groupings will be:

Wisteria - Gerhard Casper, Mirrielees, and EVGR-A, while it is an undergraduate residence

Sequoia/Hyperion - Wilbur

Ginkgo - Crothers, Branner, Toyon

Aspen - Stern

The Row - All Row buildings, except Muwekma and the Well House

Olive - FloMo (Well House and Muwekma will be included in this neighborhood)

Redwood - Lagunita and Roble

Magnolia - GovCo

- d. Because they are RF houses, Muwekma and the Well House will be part of Olive.
- e. Configuration for the Academic, Greek, Co-op, and University Theme Houses will remain under the purview of the Committee on Residential Learning.

4. EVGR-A

- a. As part of the current charge, EVGR-A will eventually return to graduate student housing.
- b. Previously, each neighborhood was allocated a set number of spaces in EVGR-A with undergraduates on the lower nine floors and graduate students on the 10th floor. Typically, about 1,000 students would change neighborhoods each year to participate in theme communities outside their home neighborhoods. Rooms in EVGR-A were moved between neighborhoods to ensure all students could live within their assigned neighborhoods.
- c. EVGR-A was also a flexible space for either graduate or undergraduate housing. For any unexpected decreases in undergrad enrollment, spaces in EVGR-A could be given to graduate students.
- d. Without EVGR-A rooms, the number of units where students from different neighborhoods could live together would be reduced. Finding a solution for the loss of EVGR-A units was an important outcome of the task force's work.
- e. To adapt to these changes, the assignment and reassignment processes needed extra flexibility so students could move neighborhoods more freely.

- f. The decisions around EVGR-A were also shaped by a larger-than-average class size for 2025 that has often been referred to as “the bulge” and the group of students completing a fifth year at Stanford that are often referred to as “super seniors.” As these students graduate, housing availability and neighborhoods will continue to change across campus.

B. Housing assignments

The 2022-2023 housing assignment system supported both student choice and continuity in neighborhoods. Based on feedback from students and other stakeholders, the current assignment system is being refined to allow for more student choice and greater flexibility to live with friends from any part of campus. This relieves some frustrations with the current system and helps students better form their own “found” communities within the neighborhood model, while still taking advantage of the unique cross-residence programming, activities, spaces, and services that neighborhoods provide.

1. The housing assignment system will be optimized to increase student choice

- a. Students will be able to live in any neighborhood after their frosh year with friends from any neighborhood.
- b. Priority for housing assignments will continue to be based primarily on academic class (as determined by entering cohort). Sophomores will choose first from among specified rooms (primarily one-room doubles), followed by seniors, and then juniors.
- c. Students’ housing arrangements should improve in their quality and increased independence for residents over the four years on campus.
- d. Students living in a neighborhood one year will not automatically have priority to live in the same neighborhood the following year. Students participating in House and Room Selection will see available spaces in all neighborhoods.

2. Frosh housing assignments

- a. Frosh will continue to be housed together in all-frosh housing. This helps the university continue to meet demand for this type of housing and enables students to share their common experiences of transition and discovery while offering an increased network of support.
- b. Unless they choose themed housing, incoming frosh will be assigned to all-frosh dorms by default, with no option to choose specific dorms. These dorms will be embedded in neighborhoods.
- c. A small number of themed housing options will remain available in four-class dorms.
- d. Frosh can still join University Theme Houses: currently ethnic theme dorms, SLE, ITALIC, Explore Energy, and Public Service. These require a separate application and approval. Existing processes and protocols for UTH’s were beyond the scope of the task force charge, and will remain the same unless changed by their governing bodies.
- e. The process for frosh roommate assignment will also remain the same.

3. Sophomore housing assignments

- a. One large change to the existing neighborhoods model will be how sophomore housing is allocated to balance student choice, community cohesion, and resource distribution across each academic class year.
- b. In the new model, sophomores will choose from a set of sophomore-priority rooms. These will largely be one-room doubles across the neighborhoods.
- c. Sophomore-priority rooms will be in residences with Resident Fellows to ensure ongoing live-in faculty and professional staff support (except when sophomores choose to live in a theme house).
- d. Sophomores will be clustered together whenever possible to create class-year connections and ensure community continuity.
- e. Sophomores will remain eligible to apply for pre-assignment in Academic, Co-op, Ethnic and Greek University Theme Houses and will follow the existing processes required to secure this type of housing.

4. Upper-class student housing assignments, processes, and priorities

- a. Academic, Co-op, Ethnic and Greek University Theme Houses will continue to serve as campus-wide resources and students from all neighborhoods will remain on equal footing in accessing the opportunities to live in a University Theme House.
- b. The assignment process for students applying to live in University Theme Houses will remain separate from the standard House and Room Selection assignment process.
- c. After completing their stay in a University Theme House, students will participate in the House and Room Selection assignment process to choose a new residence in a neighborhood for the following year.
- d. Decisions around housed and unhoused Greek organizations were not part of the task force's charge and were not discussed or included in the recommendations.
- e. Students returning to campus from a leave of absence or a Bing Overseas Studies Program (or other away-from-Stanford program) will use the normal assignment process to secure a new residence in a neighborhood of their choice, subject to availability.
- f. As has occurred in past years, a small number of juniors applying for autumn quarter housing will be unassigned after the first round of House and Room Selection, which takes place during spring quarter. These students will be assigned to vacancies that open up as housing cancellations come in over the summer months. All students with housing guarantee quarters remaining who apply by the initial housing deadline will receive an autumn quarter housing assignment.

5. General housing assignment process and priorities

- a. Housing assignments will be allocated based on academic class (entering cohort year).

The gate-time process will continue to be used for House and Room Selection. Examples of how the housing assignment priorities will work include:

- Sophomores pick before seniors, who pick before juniors.

- Sophomores pick from sophomore-priority rooms. Because sophomores select first and can only select from sophomore-priority rooms, they cannot form groups with juniors or seniors. Juniors and seniors who wish to live with sophomores can attempt to select a non-sophomore priority space near their sophomore friend during their gate time.
 - Mixed-class groups will be assigned a gate-time commensurate with the lowest class year. For example, a group with three seniors and one junior would receive a junior gate-time.
- b. By using the above assignment criteria, a priority order for House and Room Selection will be created.
- Gate-times are randomly assigned within each class year. Every member of a group will receive the same gate time.
 - Students can't select a house and room until their gate-time.
 - When a student's gate-time begins, they may choose a house and room through the existing online platform. Students will see all available rooms in all neighborhoods, according to their priority.
 - Once a student has selected their housing assignment, no one else can select that space. However, students may return to the House and Room Selection portal and change their assignment up until House and Room Selection closes.
 - Some students are not assigned gate-times, including residential student leaders, students assigned to Greek houses, and students assigned through the medical or religious accommodation processes.
 - Students assigned to academic themes, ethnic theme dorms, and co-ops receive gate-times but can only select a room within their theme community. Some co-ops may bypass House and Room Selection and elect to use a consensus model to make room assignments.
 - For students participating in House and Room Selection, assignment groups will be capped at four students.
- c. Students with special housing needs due to a disability or documented medical condition or a need for a religious accommodation related to housing will continue to work through OAE and ORSL. Students with other approved special housing assignment needs, such as Title IX, will also have different access to House and Room Selection processes.

C. Professional staff and student leaders

The success of any undergraduate residential housing model relies on a well-trained and highly motivated group of people to support the neighborhoods and houses. They provide a sense of well-being and belonging, integrate activities across the community, serve as role models, and provide learning opportunities for students. All live-in faculty and professional staff roles should remain as consistent as possible from year to year, serve the neighborhoods and students effectively, and continuously improve processes and practices. All student leadership roles are designed to provide community belonging, rewarding experiences, and learning opportunities that endure beyond a student's time on campus. Many of these topics were not discussed in depth by the task force since they were outside the time frame of the charge. They should, however, form ongoing topics of assessment and review by the Undergraduate Residences Governing Council with relevant unit leaders upon conclusion of the task force's recommendations.

1. Core principles

From the early days of the ResX work, a set of core principles was created to guide all decisions when planning for how to support the neighborhoods. Those principles remain valuable today:

- a. All staff and student leaders involved with undergraduate residences should be trained and dedicated to support the well-being, sense of belonging, community integration, and learning and development of students.
- b. Neighborhoods are the organizing principle for undergraduate housing, and all staff and student leader roles should be arranged to serve neighborhoods effectively. Professional staff should maintain a robust peer network and common sets of practice.
- c. With the many different staff roles needed to operate and support the residential experience for students, there must be clarity in the definition and scope of each role, and clarity about how each role fits and works with the others. Particular attention must be paid to ensure that all of the tasks of running a neighborhood are captured to avoid gaps and unmet needs.
- d. Best-practice staff and student leader ratios are critical for supporting students and residential teams. These ratios must be applied proportionately across all houses.

The neighborhood model creates a residential experience that will both take advantage of the diversity of the University's existing housing stock and provide a blueprint for the future. This vision should guide new construction and growth, enhance existing housing, connect residences in broader communities, and provide shared facilities for learning, arts, recreation, and dining. Neighborhoods should also consider outdoor spaces as essential to what it means to create community, well-being, and fun at Stanford.

While the Neighborhoods Task Force has recommended substantial improvements in the areas of assignments, reassignments, building configuration, and community building, there are other areas of work to be done in the future that will contribute to the long-term success of the neighborhoods model.



Stanford