



## A SNAPSHOT



### First Place® AZ Vision & Mission

Backed by more than 20 years of research, support from the Urban Land Institute and more than 100 collaborators, [First Place AZ](#) is positioned for transformational impact on how society approaches housing and community development for individuals with autism and other neuro-diversities. It represents a new residential prototype—allowing for greater choice—based on individual needs, strengths and interests. Our vision: ensuring housing and community options are as bountiful for people with different abilities as they are for everyone else.

We are today with special populations where senior housing was 50 years ago. We have a burgeoning population in need of homes and services that must transcend outdated and limited models. We are focused on matching the diverse interests and needs of individuals with the right property location, design and amenities—rooted in communities everywhere. A new generation of dynamic housing models is only possible by collectively tapping business, government and charitable interests.

First Place AZ is reinforced by research led by the First Place Global Leadership Institute, our sister nonprofit the [Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center](#) (SARRC), ASU Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, ASU Stardust Center for Affordable Homes and the Family, the Urban Land Institute and other prominent real estate concerns across the U.S.

### Opening Doors to More Housing Options

First Place AZ is a charitable nonprofit positioned for transformational impact on how society approaches housing and community development for individuals with different abilities. After evaluating more than 100 residential programs across the U.S. and conducting focus groups

involving more than 100 individuals with special needs and their families, the first new property, First Place—Phoenix, broke ground in December 2016 and opened doors to residents in July 2018 with the support of a \$21.8 million comprehensive capital campaign comprised of public, private, philanthropic and nonprofit sources.

First Place—Phoenix, a \$15.4 million, 81,000-square-foot mixed-use development in the heart of the urban region, includes three primary components:

- 1) **First Place Apartments**—with 55 studio, one-, two- and four-bedroom units for 79 residents—provide access to various services and amenities with all the benefits of community-connected, independent living.
- 2) **First Place Transition Academy**, operated by SARRC, offers a two-year, 32-course life skills program—the Learn4Independence® Curriculum—to prepare residents for employment and to live more independently.
- 3) **First Place Global Leadership Institute** represents a faculty of experts from across the country focused on pressing concerns for accessibility to more housing and independent living options for individuals with special needs. It serves as an international education and training center for professionals, support staff and medical personnel, as well as a robust site for research and advancements in public policy. The Institute's five centers facilitate the critical work and impact of First Place and include: Maricopa County IDA Center for Education, Training & Employment; Center for Real Estate & Community Development; Colonel Harland Sanders Center for Applied Research; Mulzet Center for Expression/Communication; and Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation Center for Public Policy.

Since 2017, the Global Leadership Institute has been hosting two semi-annual symposia (spring and fall), attracting pioneers in the field from across the country and around the world who gather to share ideas with the First Place team as we continue moving forward with replicable, sustainable models for public, private, nonprofit and charitable collaboration.

### **More Independent, Healthier Living**

First Place—Phoenix is within walking distance of light rail and public transit near supportive, welcoming neighbors.

**Employment:** First Place Transition Academy participants experience internships, engage in volunteer activities and benefit from employment, exposing them to different types of jobs while helping them build their skills and resumes, and reinforcing the value of contributions by individuals with autism and other special abilities in the workplace.

First Place partners with The Precisionists, Inc., a Wilmington, Delaware-based company that helps create local jobs for individuals with a broad range of abilities. The goal of this unique partnership is to [provide more than 500 jobs](#) for local adults with autism and other neuro-diversities over the next three to five years.

**Transportation & Community Connections:** Engaging individuals with special needs with the broader community is a key part of the First Place AZ mix as they gain access through the Valley Metro Transit System—including light rail and bus service—connecting them to jobs, volunteer work, arts and culture, recreation and more.

**Health & Wellness:** The property is strategically located in proximity to Dignity Health St. Joseph's Hospital & Medical Center and Barrow Neurological Institute to promote healthy daily

living habits and regimens through a medical model empowered with subspecialty and patient-centered healthcare for adults with autism and other special populations.

**Education:** Focused on independent living and vocational and interpersonal skill development, the Learn4Independence Curriculum developed by First Place AZ and SARRC is currently offered to First Place Transition Academy participants at GateWay Community College in Phoenix. First Place is also licensing the curriculum to various local and national organizations of special learners.

**Housing Beta Site:** In 2015, First Place cultivated the Transition Academy independent life skills program at 29 Palms, our beta site in Phoenix for four years, before incorporating it into First Place–Phoenix in 2018. A development of the Foundation for Senior Living in collaboration with First Place AZ, SARRC, the Arizona Department of Housing and the Arizona Community Foundation, 29 Palms incubated the program where students lived among senior neighbors. Transition Academy graduates can now continue living on their own at 29 Palms—no longer as students among seniors, but as neighbors themselves. Currently, 30 Academy first- and second-year participants reside at First Place–Phoenix, practicing what they learn in their own apartments, also known as “independent living classrooms.”

The 29 Palms property has demonstrated the benefits of combining a special needs population with seniors in an environment that encompasses supportive physical design, assistive technology and activities promoting neighborly interactions. A second, similarly situated property is scheduled to open in late 2020 in collaboration with FSL.

## Recognition

- Arizona Department of Housing awarded the [2019 Housing Hero Award for Innovative Supportive Housing](#) to First Place AZ for its Phoenix property.
- ASU's 2019 Founders' Day Award for Alumni Achievement – Denise D. Resnik
- Sources for Design 2019 Design Icon – Denise D. Resnik
- The Arizona Cardinals honored First Place with its 2018 Community Quarterback Award.
- The Mayor's Commission on Disability Issues recognized First Place–Phoenix with the 2017 Architecture of the Year Award.
- Arizona Department of Housing awarded the 2014 Housing Hero Award for Outstanding Affordable Housing Initiative to First Place AZ and the Foundation for Senior Living.
- The 2016 international “[Hero X House to Home Prize](#),” sponsored by Autism Speaks, was awarded to First Place AZ for our breakthrough idea in housing.

## Media

### PBS NewsHour's “A Place in the World” Two-Part Series

- [Giving adults with autism the skills to build independent lives](#)
- [How Phoenix became the most autism-friendly city in the world](#)

## Videos

- [RSP Architects – Tribute to First Place](#)
- [There's a Place for That™](#)
- [First Place: Building Community](#)
- [First Place Transition Academy](#)
- [First Place Global Leadership Institute](#)
- [Dylan's Day](#)

## Articles

Check out our latest [news](#).