



A SNAPSHOT



First Place® AZ Vision & Mission

We have an unprecedented opportunity to pioneer innovative housing and community development for special populations across North America. Together, we can build a new market that transcends outdated ways of thinking and *ensures housing options for people with autism and other special abilities are as bountiful as they are for everyone else.*

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 new residential prototypes—allowing for greater choice—based on individual needs, strengths and interests.

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 We have a burgeoning population in need of homes and services that must transcend outdated and limited models.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 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 represents a new residential, prototype for adults with autism and other special abilities, backed by research led by the First Place Global Leadership Institute, our sister nonprofit the [Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center](#) (SARRC), ASU's Stardust Center for Affordable Homes, the Urban Land Institute and other respected real estate concerns in 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 residential programs across the U.S. and conducting focus groups involving 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.

Place—Phoenix, a \$15.4 million mixed-use development in the heart of the urban region, comprises three primary components:

- 1) **First Place Apartments**—with 55 studio, one-, two- and four-bedroom units for approximately 80 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 help residents find employment and 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 public-policy advancements. The Institute's five centers facilitate the critical work and impact of First Place and include: Maricopa 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 Center for Public Policy.

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 paid internships and engage in volunteer activities, exposing them to different types of jobs while building their skills and resumes, reinforcing the value of individuals with autism and other special abilities in the workplace. The design of First Place also promotes entrepreneurial pursuits and the property's location connects residents and students to competitive employment opportunities throughout the region.

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 1.4-acre site was strategically selected with 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.

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 our 29 Palms beta site in Phoenix 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 is being transformed into a housing beta site for Academy graduates who can continue living on their own after they leave First Place–Phoenix. Currently, Academy participants (16) reside in four four-bedroom suites on-site at First Place–Phoenix, practicing what they learn in their own apartments. In year two, program participants transfer to two-bedroom suites on-site.

The 29 Palms property has demonstrated the benefits of combining a special needs population with seniors who do not have autism 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 early 2020 in collaboration with FSL.

Recognition

- ASU's 2019 Founders' Day Award for Alumni Achievement – Denise D. Resnik
- Sources for Design 2019 Design Icon – Denise D. Resnik
- The AZ 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.
- The Arizona Department of Housing honored First Place AZ and FSL with its 2016 Most Innovative Property of the Year Award for our 29 Palms beta-site property.
- The 2016 international "[Hero X House to Home Prize](#)," sponsored by Autism Speaks, for our breakthrough idea in housing

Media

PBS NewsHour Segments

- [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

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