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Manzanita undergoes major changes

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With Manzanita Hall under construction ASU students are excited to see improvements to the North Neighborhood. (Photo by Shawn Raymundo)

function properly and efficiently," Coakley said. "(Manzanita) will be much more like our newer facilities in terms of room size and amenities."

He said the quality of university housing can bring in new students and impact students' academic performance.

Housing one of ASU's older residential hall communities, the North Neighborhood is made up of dormitories such as Manzanita Hall and Palo Verde East, West and Main. While these dorms have become cultural landmarks in ASU history, many of the buildings are aged and in need of renovations.

University Housing has taken steps in the past couple of years to revamp Manzanita, the largest residential hall at ASU. The dorm is undergoing \$55 million in renovations on student rooms, lounges, the lobby and the lower level with completion planned for fall 2013.

University Housing Executive Director Michael Coakley said the rooms in the 50-year-old residence hall will be expanded, housing 800 students compared to its original 1,000.

He said the dorm will also be updated to include a fitness area, business center, recreation room and multipurpose rooms as well as an outdoor basketball court.

"This renovation will ensure all systems

"Students who live on campus are more engaged, have higher persistence rates to graduation and have higher grades," Coakley said.

ASU alumnus Michael Hall, who graduated in Spring 2009, said he enjoyed his experience living at Palo Verde West and was very involved in student life.

In comparison to his living space at Palo Verde West, Hall said Manzanita was not the cleanest dorm.

"(Manzanita) wasn't a place where you would go to a friend's room," he said. "It wasn't the place to be compared to Palo Verde West and Palo Verde East."

Hall said ASU's incoming freshman class should have the same residential opportunities as he did when he was a freshman.

"The North Neighborhood ... needs to be maintained and preserved," Hall said. "Students need to feel like this is their campus. No matter where they live on campus, they should have the best living conditions."

Hall's sister, alumna Meagan Hall, graduated in Spring 2011 and said renovating Manzanita was step one in updating the North Neighborhood.

She said her experience living in PV West her freshman and senior years and her experience living in the South Neighborhood's Hassayampa Academic Village her sophomore and junior years showed the difference in quality between the North and South Neighborhoods.

"South campus is much prettier (and) all the buildings are newer," Meagan said. "In Palo Verde West, all of the furniture was old."

She said Palo Verde West was slightly redone while she was living in Hassayampa.

ASU alumna Kristin Borino, who lived in Manzanita her freshman year, said she was unaware of Manzanita's condition prior to living there.

"I was an out-of-state student, so no one warned me about (Manzanita)," Borino said. "I wish they would have told me on student tour to steer clear."

She said some of the conditions she faced in the dorm were small living quarters, poor plumbing and "weird" smells.

"A little bit of fresh air would have gone a long way," Borino said. "I would always wear socks in my room. Who knows what was on the carpet from years before."

She said remodeling and maintaining student dorms will allow students to have a more positive college experience.

"Maintaining the conditions of the dorms will allow students to focus on more important aspects of the college experience, instead of waiting around for the repair man to show up," Borino said.

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