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### Coalitions, Students, and Affordable Housing in a College Town

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# COALITIONS, STUDENTS, AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN A COLLEGE TOWN

*Kate Thorne*

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How does the relationship between the university, the city, and key players in a mid-size Midwestern college town influence the experience of housing for residents in the area, especially low-income residents and students? The goal of my project is to establish a case study of such a college town. By examining the unique issues of one particular city, such as the influence of the university, the relationship with students, and its distribution of resources, I hope to shed light on issues of affordable housing in college towns as a whole. I conducted 15 in-depth interviews as well as collecting online resources and special collections data concerning housing. I discovered that the University in this town acts as an information silo when it comes to affordable housing, as it contains many groups and individuals working on affordable housing issues but also other groups that create pressure for the housing market. For instance, University students prioritize housing that is close to campus and view the private market as a realm of greater freedom even as they view the city as a “landlord’s town” that takes advantage of students and deploy various strategies for dealing with high rent. Community members are disadvantaged in this scenario since community resources are clustered downtown and monopolized by the University and its students. As a result, low-income community members are pushed to the edge of town with a limited transportation infrastructure to bring them back in. Although producers, landlords, the city, and the University interact in ways that render housing unaffordable, they can also work together to create change, and change is beginning to take place. For the time being, community members, especially those with low incomes, are disadvantaged in this political landscape.