

**American University Neighborhood Partnership**  
**Terms of Reference and Ground Rules**  
**(Updated: December 19, 2022)**

**ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The mission of the American University Neighborhood Partnership (also referenced as the AU Neighborhood Partnership or the Partnership) is to:

- a. Create a consensus-based framework to adopt a co-signed 2021 campus plan as well as to support the subsequent implementation and, as needed, modification of the 2021 campus plan by providing a format for discussion, information sharing and problem-solving and support the implementation of and modifications to the current 2011 campus plan through the same format.
- b. Improve the interactions and develop a cooperative and beneficial dialogue and shared analysis between the university and the community on issues related to university operations and to provide recommendations that improve university and community relationships regarding such areas as enrollment, student housing, student conduct, facilities planning, parking, and transportation.
- c. The Partnership is not intended to be a substitute for established University engagement mechanisms for dealing with campus impact issues. Rather, the Partnership is intended to complement and enhance such mechanisms

2. Structure of the Partnership is comprised of the following:

- a. Steering Committee
- b. Working Groups

3. The Partnership Steering Committee's Responsibility, Composition and Meetings.

- a. The Partnership Steering Committee is comprised of American University (AU) representatives and representatives of community organizations and ANCs who were signatories to the March 18, 2018 letter submitted to and recognized by the Zoning Commission expressing the intent and vision of the Partnership. These founding members are the Fort Gaines Citizens Association, Spring Valley Neighborhood Association, Ward 3 Vision, and Westover Place Homes Corporation, and Advisory Neighborhood Commissions 3A, 3D, and 3E.

Additionally, each Community Working Group Co-Chair is conferred a seat on the Steering Committee. In the case, that a Community Working Group Co Chair's organization already has a seat on the Steering Committee, that organization will determine who will represent them on the Steering Committee. AU will select its representatives on the Steering

Committee and the community organizations will select their representatives on the Steering Committee. On an annual basis, the Partnership will also consider extending Steering Committee membership to newly constituted neighborhood groups and other organizations that represent neighborhoods immediately adjacent to American University's main campus.

b. All members must agree in good faith to the Terms of Reference and Ground Rules of the Partnership.

c. The Partnership Steering Committee will have two Co-Chairs, one representing the community and one representing the university. The Co-Chair representing the community will be selected by the neighborhood members of the Steering Committee.

d. Convenes four times per year. Additionally, the Co-Chairs may convene an unscheduled Partnership Steering Committee meeting.

e. The Partnership Steering Committee membership is by the named member, chosen, respectively, by AU and the community organizations, without substitutions from meeting to meeting. Membership will be re-evaluated annually, and potentially may be modified.

f. The term of service on the Partnership Steering Committee is twelve months and runs from January through December.

g. The term of service on the Partnership Steering Committee may be renewed.

h. Additional representatives from the University and community may be invited to present or attend the Partnership Steering Committee meetings from time to time.

i. Working Groups will be created, as needed, at the direction of the Partnership Steering Committee.

j. The Partnership, while organized independently, may, through its Steering Committee Co-Chairs, periodically share updates on the Partnership's work with other community-wide organizations such as the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) and neighborhood ANCs.

#### 4. Working Groups' Responsibilities, Composition and Meetings

a. Each current Working Group convenes at least six times per year or otherwise as deemed appropriate by each Working Groups' Co-Chairs.

b. The five current standing Working Groups are:

i. Transportation and Parking

ii. Facilities Planning

iii. Student Life & Safety

iv. Engagement & Communications

v. Data & Metrics

c. The current mission of each Working Group:

i. Transportation and Parking: Addresses issues related to travel to, from and around the University's campus, and mitigating the impacts of University-related traffic on the community.

ii. Facilities Planning: Collaborates on plans and issues related to physical campus facilities including new and existing buildings and renovation projects to the extent that it impacts off-campus life.

iii. Student Life & Safety: Addresses neighborhood quality of life issues, off campus conduct, noise and trash management, student safety in the community, and on-campus student life to the extent that it impacts off campus life.

iv. Engagement & Communications: Works to ensure that surrounding neighbors are aware of and have the ability to participate in campus events and activities, as well as promote opportunities for engagement and the benefits to the community of having the university as a neighbor.

v. Data & Metrics: Develops and reviews metrics for campus plan compliance such as data for enrollment, housing, group houses, transportation, and off-campus incidents.

d. The Partnership Steering Committee may add or retire Working Groups from time to time, modify the missions of Working Groups and create informal arrangements across Working Groups to work on particular issues.

e. The Working Group Co-Chairs will report on their progress at the Partnership Steering Committee meetings.

f. Each Working Group is led by two Co-Chairs. The AU Co-Chairs of the Working Groups are chosen by the university. The initial community Co-Chairs of the Working Groups are selected by community members of the Steering Committee. Subsequent community Co-Chairs are selected by the community Working Group members with consultation as appropriate by the Steering Committee community members.

g. Working Group Co-Chairs and members should actively connect with their constituents to hear their concerns and ideas on topics to be addressed by the Working Group. In cases where a topic is complex and spans the realm of several Working Groups, the appropriate Working Group Co-Chairs should confer on best fit for discussions including as needed, convening joint meetings.

h. Membership: The Working Groups will consist of American University staff and community members who are representatives of community organizations outlined in Section 3.a, as well as recognized community leaders in neighborhoods whose residents are impacted by the university and its operations. All members of the Working Groups, regardless of origin or affiliation, agree to be bound by the Partnership Terms of Reference and Ground Rules. Upon review of the Steering Committee, Working Group membership can be terminated for not adhering to the Partnership Terms of Reference and Ground Rules.

i. Individual residents from the AU neighborhood may bring their concerns to the Partnership by contacting the neighborhood Co-Chair of the relevant Working Group. After reaching consensus with their AU Co-Chair counterpart, the neighborhood Co-Chair of the relevant Working Group may invite the individual to attend a particular Working Group session to present his/her concerns.

j. The term of service on each Working Group is twelve months and runs from January through December.

k. The term of service on the Partnership Working Group may be renewed.

l. Group Size: The group size for the Working Groups should be kept small enough to allow for effective discussion but large enough for diverse perspectives and expertise. Representatives from each Steering Committee community organization or ANC may select someone annually to serve on each Working Group. Adding a Working Group member prior to the annual start will be considered on a case-by-case basis by request to the Steering Committee for their final determination. Specifics on final size should be determined by each Working Groups' Co-Chairs.

m. Commitment: Because some university and community issues may be complex, members of the Working Groups are asked to agree to serve on the Working Groups for at least a year and do the preparation necessary to participate actively in all meetings.

n. Confidentiality: Members are expected to keep proprietary information confidential, if the group has been asked to do so by AU or if there is a consensus among Working Group members to do so.

o. Outside Communications: As a general rule, members are expected to refrain from quoting, characterizing, or judging the statements/views of their fellow Working Group members or appearing to speak for the Working Group when discussing the Working Group's activities outside of the Working Group. Working Group members are free to discuss what they personally have said in the Working Group with the exception of all information that is deemed confidential.

p. Decisions by Consensus: To the maximum extent possible, Working Groups will be expected to reach conclusions through consensus as defined by the Partnership Ground

rules. The Working Groups will be facilitated in order to promote discussion and decision-making. Members of the Working Group may from time-to-time wish to reach out to their constituents to garner reactions and understandings of impact prior to weighing in on final recommendations. Members are encouraged to share options, respecting any proprietary information that is confidential. Gathering input should be done with intentionality and focus to ensure aspects are considered on a recommendation without unduly delaying the discussions of the Working Group.

**Updated Language Introduced on October 20th, 2022 and Confirmed by the Steering Committee on November 29th, 2022.**

In the spirit of collaboration and consensus building within the American University Neighborhood Partnership (“AUNP”), leadership at AU agrees to establish procedures for resolving an impasse between the neighbor co-chair and the university co-chair of the AUNP. AU intends for these procedures to be a last resort and only implemented when other measures toward resolution of an issue are unsuccessful.

In the event of an AUNP issue or disagreement between the co-chairs that remains unresolved after multiple discussions, AU agrees to putting in writing the specific reasons for the university’s position or perspective in the hopes of identifying compromises or alternatives and reaching a resolution. AU expects that the neighborhood co-chair would in turn do the same.

AU agrees that each of the parties will meet with their respective constituencies to discuss the issue and obtain suggestions or guidance to a possible solution or whether the matter should be dropped. If necessary, Justice & Sustainability Associates (“JSA”), will serve as mediator and convene a special meeting of the co-chairs to seek resolution. AU believes this would resolve all or nearly all disagreements. If there are matters that are still not resolved, JSA will convene a meeting of the full Steering Committee and structure a discussion to seek to reach a resolution. If agreement cannot be reached by this process, the matter would then be brought to AU’s Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of People and External Affairs. It is AU’s hope that these procedures will not be necessary. However, AU believes they can be a useful tool that will facilitate transparency and collegiality that will lead to the continued success of the AUNP.

JSA has served as an impartial facilitator and secretariat in addition to providing scheduling and other administrative support to the AUNP. As long as JSA continues to serve in this role, it is expected that they will deliver the necessary services to support the successful operation of the AUNP. As much as reasonably possible, public communications originating from AU about the AUNP will be shared with both AUNP co-chairs for review. Regarding the AU 2021 Campus Plan and any associated Further Processing Applications, AU will consult with, and review any proposed plans with the Facilities Planning Working Group, in addition to the AUNP Steering Committee

## **GROUND RULES**

1. The Partnership members (defined as Steering Committee members and Working Group members) will engage in facilitated discussion, which allows for the voicing of different opinions and holds everyone in the room responsible for a successful collaborative process to the maximum extent possible.
2. The Partnership members participate as representatives of their organization or neighborhood. Members will take care to delineate their personal views from organizational interests in The Partnership deliberations.
3. When speaking with others outside the Partnership (such as the media), Partnership members should indicate that they are not speaking on behalf of the Partnership and present only the views of their organizations or their personal views, as the case may be. Members will conscientiously refrain from expressing, characterizing, quoting or judging the views of others. The Partnership Steering Committee Co-Chairs, by agreement between them, may speak from time to time on behalf of the Partnership.
4. Each member of the Partnership takes responsibility for attending regularly-scheduled meetings, reading distributed materials, honoring confidentiality of sensitive materials and promoting the overall success of the Partnership.
5. Each member of the Partnership agrees to reach decisions by consensus\* to the maximum extent possible with the guidance of the Co-Chairs and impartial facilitation.
6. The Partnership members will be aware of the limited time in the meetings and will therefore express themselves succinctly to allow time for others to share their thoughts and opinions.
7. The Partnership members agree to accept impartial facilitation by Justice & Sustainability Associates, LLC to promote consensus-based decisions and to accept staff support from American University.
8. The Partnership members will attend an orientation organized by the Partnership Steering Committee with support by facilitators.

\*Consensus-based decision: "Consensus decision-making is a group decision making process that seeks the consent of all participants. Consensus may be defined professionally as an acceptable resolution, one that can be supported, even if not the "favorite" of each individual. Consensus is defined by Merriam-Webster as, first, general agreement, and second, group solidarity of belief or sentiment. It has its origin in the Latin word *cōnsēnsus* (agreement), which is from *cōnsentiō* meaning literally feel together. It is used to describe both the decision and the process of reaching a decision. Consensus decision-making is thus concerned with the process of deliberating and finalizing a decision, and the social and political effects of using this process.