Fort Collins Housing Access and Affordability Questionnaire:

Dear Fort Collins City Council/Mayoral candidate, the Associated Students of Colorado State University (ASCSU) would like to cordially invite you to express your perspectives on the current state of the City’s housing market, and the issue of rental affordability through the following questionnaire:

Median rental costs in Fort Collins have increased by about 65% since 2005, a significantly larger increase than portrayed in similar cities (per recent occupancy study conducted by Corona Insights). This increase in rental prices has perpetuated housing-insecurity throughout our community, caused some CSU students to experience homelessness, drove workers to reside at neighboring towns, and prevented individuals of low-income background from joining our community.

1. Do you view housing affordability as an issue in Fort Collins? (y/n/open answer)
   Yes, a big issue.

2. Does the current state of housing affordability in Fort Collins contribute to college unaffordability in your opinion? (y/n/open answer)
   Interesting question; I usually think about it in the opposite direction: that the high cost of college, which leads to higher debt for the individual, makes the affordability of a house that much more burdensome. But by framing the question this way, I see how the two are more dynamically linked and that by itself if housing is unaffordable to a student, that is another burden on top of paying for college. So, long story short: yes.

3. Do you believe the occupancy ordinance, also known as U+2, is a significant contributor to the sharp rise in rental prices over the past fourteen years? Would you support a marginal increase in permitted occupants per dwelling unit such as Me+3 for example? (y/n/open answer)
   Definitely yes to both questions. To paraphrase what I was told by a current college

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student, “U+2 is not an occupancy problem, it is a bad neighbor problem.” Perhaps U+2 made some sense back when it was originally created but it has had all sorts of unintended consequences. We need to actually tackle what the real problem is – is it noise? Okay, we can deal with that. Is it too many cars on a lot? Yep, we can figure out a way to deal with that as well.

4. Over 50% of violators of U+2 are non-students. Do you agree that this issue, and the issue of neighborhood quality, are more than just a student concern? (y/n/open answer)
   Yes, I agree. In fact, the ordinance in itself can be viewed as discriminatory not only towards students, but towards those that are not well off.

5. The recent occupancy study concluded that U+2 had a negative impact on housing affordability. It also found that the local community believes the ordinance had a positive effect on neighborhood quality. Do you believe housing affordability and neighborhood quality are mutually exclusive? (y/n/open answer)
   No, I do not believe these are mutually exclusive. The issue that we face with the U+2 ordinance is a perception problem – many who lived here during a time when things were crazy around campus see this ordinance as the thing that fixed it. Again, this goes back to what is the real problem we need to fix as in the answer to #3.

6. What ideas do you have to address housing affordability and neighborhood quality in Fort Collins? (Open answer)
   Well, first of all, we need to figure the U+2, Me+3, “right sized housing” issue thoughtfully. I think that it needs to be proved that occupancy is the actual problem instead of other issues such as noise or too many cars.

   A small thing that I plan to have the city look in to after elected to office is also the effectiveness of the city’s down payment assistance program. I was fortunate to be able to take advantage of this program when I bought a townhome a decade ago and even though they have changed the limits on the cost of housing that can be purchased using

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the program, they have barely, if at all, changed the salary requirements to be eligible for it. That first hurdle of buying a home is often the hardest, and this program can be incredibly useful for those with a dream of homeownership.