

Amid housing crisis, Chino Valley schools will build tiny homes for teachers

Yana Kunichoff - Arizona Republic – April 5, 2023

Chino Valley Unified School District Superintendent John Scholl is grateful that his district was able to hire teachers from the Philippines to help fill the rural district's teacher shortage.

But now the district is dealing with another area of scarcity: housing.

Most of the international educators don't have a credit score, which means some landlords won't rent to them, or they don't have a driver's license, limiting how far they can live from their schools, Scholl said.

So the district decided to join a handful of other rural Arizona districts to build its own housing for school staff.

"They're doing a fantastic job for us — and we want to make it so that we're an attractive place for international teachers," Scholl said.

"Providing the housing in town would really help."

Chino Valley is currently designing 10 studio units that it will build near its Del Rio Elementary School. The tiny houses will each be about 400 square feet.

"Teacherages," school district-built houses for school staff, have taken off in rural and suburban districts across Arizona in recent years:

- Vail Unified School District, southeast of Tucson, has built several small houses for teachers.
- The Flagstaff Unified School District is working with Habitat for Humanity to develop land near its administration building for 12 starter homes specifically for faculty and staff.
- Bullhead City Elementary School District is planning to build rental housing for faculty and staff, as is the Sedona-Oak Creek School District.

A Chino Valley staff survey sent out in October 2022 helped prompt the district to build its own housing.

One question asked about the main factor causing economic stress for employees. About 8% of the responses mentioned housing as a financial concern, along with health care costs and the district's rate of pay, according to anonymous survey responses shared by the district with The Arizona Republic.

“Food and housing are extremely expensive and I used to be on SNAP (not that I want to be) but it is hard to afford food or anything else,” said one respondent.

The housing will be managed by the school district's maintenance department, Scholl said. The district will charge below-market rent, and teachers will be responsible for utility bills.

The district expects the housing to be available in about a year. In mid-March, the district received \$500,000 for construction from the Education Service Agencies for Yavapai and Coconino counties.

“The average house price in Chino Valley is over \$400,000. There's very few rentals, very few houses for sale,” Scholl said. “And it's just a tough place to bring teachers and other professionals when there's no place to live.”

Yana Kunichoff is a reporter on The Arizona Republic's K-12 education team. You can reach her at ykunichoff@arizonarepublic.com or follow her on Twitter [@yanazure](https://twitter.com/yanazure).

[Join the education conversation on The Republic's K-12 community Facebook page.](#)