

# Project Proposal: University Housing Review Platform

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## Team Members

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## Introduction

Navigating the complexities of university life, especially for international students, underscores the critical importance of finding suitable housing. The challenge of securing a comfortable living space near the university is compounded by a lack of accessible and reliable information. Our initiative aims to address these issues by creating a specialized platform for reviewing apartments and houses around the university, designed with the unique needs of new international students in mind. This vital resource will provide in-depth insights and real-life experiences from peers, significantly easing the housing search process.

## Motivation

Adapting to university life in a new country brings myriad challenges, with housing being one of the most pressing. For international students, arranging accommodation from abroad, often sight unseen, can be particularly stressful. For Stevens, in particular, the campus is small, the school housing is inadequate, and students often live in the surrounding Hoboken and Jersey City. New students are unfamiliar with the new country and region and greatly benefit from the advice of experienced students. A platform dedicated to compiling housing reviews specific to the university area can greatly alleviate this stress, offering a means to discover housing through the shared experiences of fellow students. Such a resource not only fosters a sense of community and trust but also empowers students to make well-informed housing choices, thereby enriching their overall university experience and allowing them to concentrate on their academic pursuits without the added burden of housing concerns.

## How Search Works

Following the professor's feedback, the search functionality on our platform will be comprehensive and user-friendly, supporting various search options to accommodate diverse needs:

1. **Search by Zip or Location:** Users can initiate searches using specific zip codes or broader locations like "Hoboken, NJ" or "Jersey City, NJ".
2. **Filters:** To further refine search results, users can apply filters such as Price, Beds/Baths, Home Type (Apartments/Townhomes), Pet Policy, Garage, and Rating. These filters aim to help users narrow down options to find housing that best fits their preferences and requirements.

## Core Features

### 1. Landing Page

- Clearly articulates the project's goals and highlights its value to new international students.
- Incorporates a search function for quickly locating housing reviews or applying specific filters to narrow down options.

## 2. Housing Listings Page

- Presents search outcomes, linking to individual housing pages that include comprehensive details and an overall rating.
- Provides a user-friendly platform for exploring different housing opportunities.

## 3. Individual Housing Page

- Offers detailed information on housing features, including amenities, rental costs, and location relative to the university.
- Features student-written reviews, complete with ratings, commentary, and the option for photo uploads. Reviewers can update their reviews to reflect ongoing experiences or changes in opinion.

## 4. User Profile

- Enables profile creation upon user registration, enhancing the platform's community feel and reliability.
- Shows users' review histories, with functionalities for editing or deleting their contributions.

## 5. Review Append Feature

- Allows users to add updates to their reviews, accommodating changing views or additional experiences concerning the housing.

## 6. Comments Section

- Introduces a dedicated area for discussions under each review, open to all users. This feature is intended to stimulate community engagement, offering further insights and varying viewpoints.

## 7. Interactive Map with Mapbox

- Utilizes Mapbox to show housing options on a map, offering users a visual representation of each location's proximity to the university and other significant landmarks. Mapbox is preferred due to its free tier for up to 25,000 mobile users and 50,000 web loads, along with its ease of customization for maps.

## 8. Admin Account for Content Moderation

- Assigns platform oversight to administrators tasked with moderating content to maintain a respectful and constructive community atmosphere.

## Extra Features

### 1. Photo Inclusion in Reviews

- Permits the uploading of images with reviews, providing visual evidence and enhancing the authenticity of the housing descriptions.

## 2. "Helpful" Button Feature

- Incorporates a "helpful" button beneath each review, depicted as a greyed-out thumbs-up icon. Clicking this button signifies that the user found the review useful. The total count of "helpful" clicks and the usernames of those who found the review helpful will be displayed, fostering an interactive and supportive review environment.

## GitHub Repo

<https://github.com/YuqiStevens/University-Housing-Review-Platform>