



Finding Off Campus Housing

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Problem

Problem Statement:

With more and more students attending college, many find themselves wanting to live off campus rather than on campus; however, finding off-campus options becomes challenging as many factors, such as affordability, make it difficult for students.

How might we assist students to find affordable housing so that they can move forward towards independence?

Target User Group:

We are targeting upperclassmen students that are interested in living off-campus. These young adults must balance renting for the first time with their existing studies, which can be challenging depending on their preexisting knowledge and experience.

Secondary Research

For our secondary research, we reviewed complaints and discussions about the problem, as well as academic articles and current or proposed solutions that we found on the Internet.

Complaints/discussion:

- Many students need to balance work to pay rent and academics at the same time, which can be a mental challenge

- Median age for first-time buyers increased from late 20s (1980) to late 30s (2024) [1]

Academic articles:

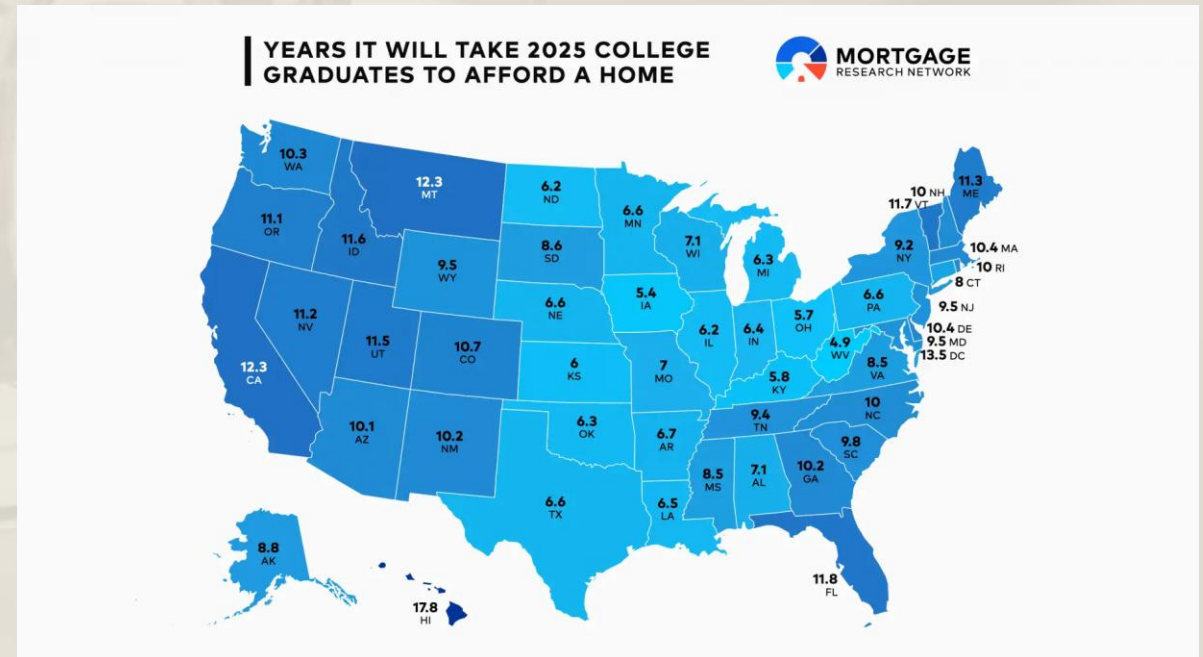
- Problems that students looking for off-campus housing face: lack of knowledge on rental rights, competition for available units, illegal/predatory practices by landlords, discriminating and tight rental market

- "45% of college students experience some form of housing insecurity" (e.g., housing unaffordability, instability, homelessness) [2]
- "there are more students requesting housing than space that's available" [3]

Secondary Research

Current/Proposed Solutions

- Document describing the basics of finding and renting an apartment
- Documents do not go in depth, but are a good starting point
- Checklist to fill out specific information about single apartment (e.g., property address, landlord contact)
- Malaysia: app for students to simplify the process of finding, renting and managing accommodation for students



[4]

Primary Research

For primary research, our group did three interviews so that we could get a better idea on the current obstacles and difficulties of finding off campus housing and the experience of living off campus.

Interviews: We interviewed students who currently live off campus. We asked questions regarding their roommates, search process, and decision making when choosing to live off campus.



Interviewees



Participant A:

College Student
male
21 y/o

- Lives off-campus with one roommate
- First time living with roommate
- Found housing online



Participant B:

College student
male
22 y/o

- Lives off-campus with two roommates
- First time living with roommates
- Found housing through friends



Participant C:

College Student
male
22 y/o

- Lives off-campus with one roommate
- Had roommates before
- Found housing through school's website

Interview Findings

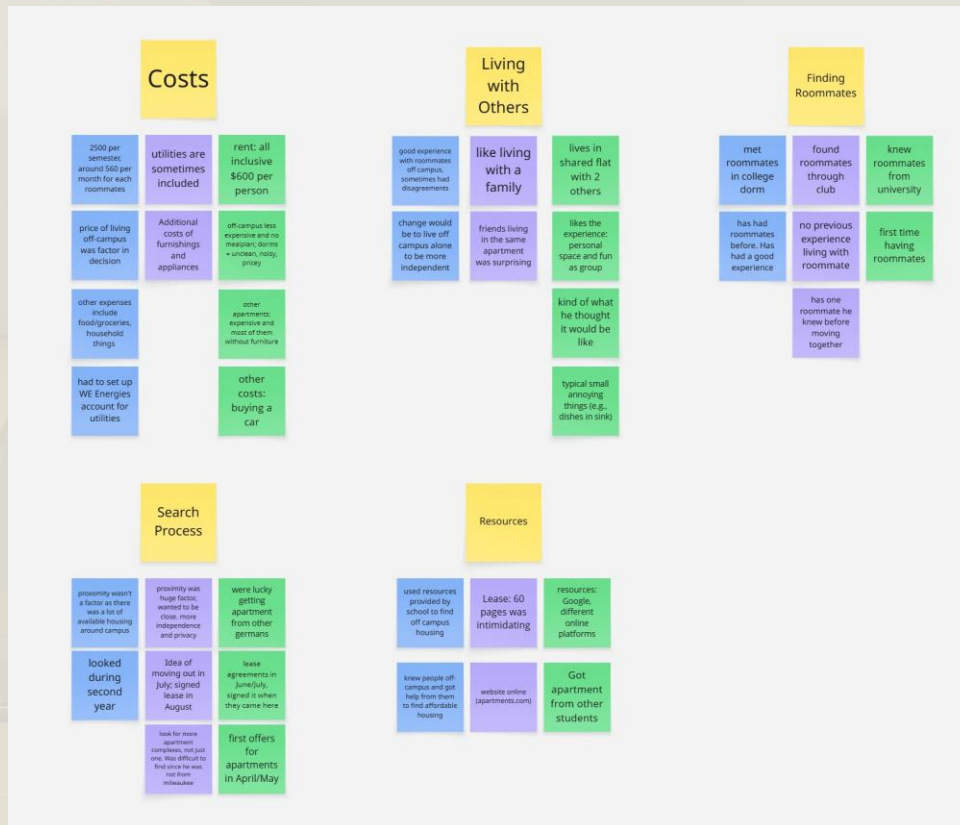
Similarities:

- Other expenses beyond rent (furnishings, food, household items)
- Good experience with roommates
- Found roommates through shared interests
- Used online resources and word of mouth

Differences:

- Some had to pay utilities in addition to rent
- Some had roommates in past
- Some had never lived on-campus
- Proximity to campus mattered more to some than others

Research Analysis



Themes:

Costs

- Unexpected costs beyond rent
- Utilities

Living with Others

- Roommates work well
- More privacy

Finding Roommates

- Different levels of past experience

Search Process

- Looking in spring/summer
- Proximity to campus considered

Resources

- Word of mouth
- Online searches

Complete Affinity Diagram - Miro

Constructing the Analysis

Helpful Tools:

- One color of sticky note per interviewee to notice trends
- Used Miro to reduce paper usage and increase collaboration
- Broke large categories apart after further discussion
- Examined relevance of lone sticky notes



Photo by Brands&People on Unsplash

Citations

[1]: Pandy, Jordan. “Recent College Grads Might Not Be Homeowners Anytime Soon.” *Business Insider*, July 2025, businessinsider.com/recent-college-grads-might-not-be-homeowners-anytime-soon-2025-7. Accessed 30 Sept. 2025.

[2]: Broton, Katharine M. “A Review of Estimates of Housing Insecurity and Homelessness among Students in U.S. Higher Education.” *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, vol. 29, no. 1, Oct. 2019, pp. 25–38, doi.org/10.1080/10530789.2020.1677009.

[3]: Lindstroem, Alva. “Studentification and Off-Campus Housing: A Case Study of Grand Forks Near-Campus Neighborhoods - ProQuest.” *Proquest.com*, 2025, www.proquest.com/docview/3216242200?%20Theses&fromopenview=true&pq-origsite=gscholar&sourcetype=Dissertations%20. Accessed 30 Sept. 2025.

[4]: Lucas, Tim. “This Year’s College Grads Won’t Be Able to Buy a Home until April 2034.” *Mortgage Research Network*, 8 May 2025, www.mortgageresearch.com/articles/college-graduates-homebuying-timeline/.

Image Citations

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Appendices

- Appendix A: Works Cited
- Appendix B: Interview Notes and Transcripts