

Off-Campus Housing Search for International Students

Younghun Lee

I am interested in handling inconveniences in searching off-campus housing in Ann Arbor for the University of Michigan international students. As an international student, I also had hard times in searching off-campus housing because of the lack of information, and I want to solve this problem by re-designing current systems.

A number of international students cannot visit Ann Arbor before their semester begins. Therefore, they have to rely only on the web search. In this point of view, international students may use off-campus house searching services for University of Michigan students such as University of Michigan Off Campus Housing Search(<https://offcampushousing.umich.edu>), Cribspot(<https://www.cribspot.com>), Craigslist(<https://www.craigslist.org>), etc. However, these websites are not providing sufficient information for international students.

First of all, information about public transportations is one of the most important things to know for international students. However, Cribspot and Craigslist don't have features to get information about bus stations or routes. University of Michigan Off Campus Housing Search website provides a piece of relevant information by displaying Google map in each page of the house. But it is also limited because it only shows the location of the bus stations and routes, not navigates users to their destination. Therefore, users have to do additional search in order to know about the transportations.

Reviews of other residents are also important since landlord's advertising websites don't let users know the reality, but only show the positive aspects of the houses. But all three websites described above don't have such feature. Instead, there are other websites where users can leave reviews about their house such as Yelp (<http://www.yelp.com>) and ApartmentRatings (<http://www.apartmentratings.com>), but these websites don't have other information about the house like rent, utilities, availabilities. Also, most of reviews are not structured and not consistent. Most importantly, there are only few reviews because people don't get any benefits by leaving reviews even though they are very disappointed at their house.

Overall, I think adding public transportation features and user reviews to the University of Michigan Off Campus Housing Search website will be helpful for international students to search their own house. Since this website is run by University of Michigan, it would be much easier to give proper benefits to the users who leave reviews.