

GAPSA Dinner & Discussion: Housing
October 22nd, 2008
Focus Group Summaries

Group 1	
Characteristics of positive/successful housing	Concerns about housing options at Penn
<p>Streamlined process (knew dates/times/places to go/etc.)</p> <p>Shared space</p> <p>More space (own bathroom, shared kitchen = okay if there is respect for public spaces)</p> <p>Friends/community</p> <p>Building/Floor Community (planned events)</p> <p>Access to groceries/services</p> <p>Safety (especially in areas where there is more foot traffic)</p>	<p>High price (costs 60% less to live off campus)</p> <p>Quality—bugs/roaches/rats at Sansom (← due to restaurants?)</p> <p>Lack of space on campus</p> <p>Lack of maintenance (Sansom: couches without cushions, pool cues without tips)</p> <p>Lack of recycling off campus</p> <p>Lack of information/not knowing where to go for information to find off campus apartment and/or roommate</p> <p>Website management (information that was submitted doesn't get put up; people who put up roommate requests have no way to take them down and therefore get calls months after they have found a roommate; search for apartments feature is difficult—no way to hide descriptions to scroll through quicker)</p> <p>Application process (On campus living staff seemed incompetent, had to call Sansom Place 4 times, was told the manager was on vacation, status of application was always “processing”)</p> <p>Students get charged for “breaking a lease” even if their room is filled within 3 days (normally other landlords refund the money they charge for breaking a lease if they get a tenant quickly)</p>
Group 2	
Characteristics of positive/successful housing	Concerns about housing options at Penn
<p>Safe</p> <p>Proximity to where I need/want to go</p> <p>Affordable</p>	<p>Expensive</p> <p>Poorly furnished</p> <p>Limited on-campus housing/poorly advertised (falsely advertised)</p>

<p>Knowledgeable tenants</p> <p>Great views</p> <p>Responsive maintenance</p> <p>Access</p>	<p>Poor facilities</p> <p>No access to laundry</p> <p>Poor sense of community</p> <p>Poor landlord interaction</p> <p>On-Campus housing doesn't meet graduate student needs, attractive options in Center City, Center City proximity, roommate finder, housing list</p>
Group 3	
Characteristics of positive/successful housing	Concerns about housing options at Penn
<p>Information sharing (guide – like Wharton has)</p> <p>Housing issue mediation (off campus housing)</p> <p>Employment within graduate housing (stipend rent)</p> <p>Furnished (Sansom)</p>	<p>Lack of housing information</p> <p>Cleanliness (pests) on/off room environment</p> <p>Recycling option</p> <p>Off campus housing website</p> <p>Affordability (Domus, Radian)</p> <p>Lack of responsiveness (facilities website)</p> <p>Married student/small family on campus options</p>
Group 4	
Characteristics of positive/successful housing	Concerns about housing options at Penn
<p>Access to public transportation</p> <p>Graduate student community!/programming options</p> <p>Shared living spaces/ co-ops like at (Smith College)</p> <p>Convenience/proximity</p> <p>Safety</p> <p>Affordable temporary housing</p>	<p>Need temporary housing for visiting parents (international students)</p> <p>Pest control</p> <p>Maintenance/ cleanliness</p> <p>Philadelphia Neighborhood information</p> <p>Communication of housing resources – included in acceptance packets</p> <p>Cost</p> <p>Close off campus student living resources to Penn students only – furniture exchange</p> <p>Summer housing for Gas</p>

	Quality Access to local/healthy food
Group 5	
Characteristics of positive/successful housing	Concerns about housing options at Penn
Affordable (West Philly) Location (close to campus) Transportation good for commuters Wharton students receive information about housing options in May Gardens, parks, coffee shops (west Philly) Penn transportation access Penn security zone Neighborhood, community feel in West Philly	Leasing options (would like to have option to have less than a one year lease) Quality (mice, run-down) Penn security needs to be broadened further into West Philly Families in temporary housing Center City break-ins in walk ups – need network of crime patterns Rent in University graduate housing Sansom – not clean, cancellation policy, expensive Limited University housing Lease agreements Campus apartments not nice University work with neighbor Universities (Drexel, USP) to have stronger lobby to deal with landlords Contrast and compare housing options/prices with other schools Sansom versus College Houses – improve Sansom to at least be comparable More options for families and students with partners
Group 6	
Characteristics of positive/successful housing	Concerns about housing options at Penn
Price Pest control	Poor cleanliness, lack of maintenance and cleaning Information poorly disseminated, thoughts of Penn students available, always comes in the acceptance

<p>Location choices</p> <p>GA program</p> <p>Convenience – access to campus and transportation</p> <p>Pricing options as well</p> <p>Good access to information (website)</p> <p>Access to counseling</p> <p>Quality of life – living with students, need website to look for roommates</p> <p>Like safety – 898-WALK/RIDE</p>	<p>packet flood of information</p> <p>Price – forced not to live on campus, on campus is far more expensive than off campus, cheaper off campus even when transportation costs are factored</p> <p>Security – broking into, connection between Penn and Center City police</p> <p>Quality of landlords, off campus forum?</p> <p>Square footage of livable space</p> <p>Cleanliness considering Penn brand</p> <p>Pain of international students, no contact with existing students</p>
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Action Items to Improve Housing Options at Penn	
Group 1	<p>Improve websites (← GAPSA)</p> <p>--update the landlord survey (and advertise it more so people use it)</p> <p>--include a more standard rating system on landlord survey (e.g., stars like at amazon.com, or happy/unhappy faces like at studentdoctor.net)</p> <p>--supply a map of city neighborhoods</p> <p>--improve roommate finder</p> <p>An email to all accepted students directing them to resources (←GAPSA or University)</p> <p>Renovate existing graduate student housing (← University, private landlords)</p> <p>Building new facilities (← University)</p>
Group 2	<p>Housing Guide – listing pros and cons of housing options</p> <p>Roommate finder for all students</p> <p>Tenant survey</p>
Group 3	<p>Guide distributive information to incoming</p>

	<p>students from GAPSA</p> <p>Effective/user friendly website</p> <p>Forum for highlighting issues/recommendations (i.e. something like Craig’s List for Penn)</p> <p>Pest control facilities/ staff increases</p> <p>Sansom – make it part of college house</p> <p>Consistent lease prices</p> <p>Homebuyer program offered through GSC</p>
<p>Group 4</p>	<p>Co-ops, not necessarily owned by UPenn, could be used as temporary, summer graduate housing</p>
<p>Group 5</p>	<p>Office of Off-Campus Student Living website needs to be more visible because it is helpful</p> <p>Wharton housing information needs to be available for all students (but needs to be expanded to include information on University City, West Philly, etc.)</p> <p>User generated database and awareness upon acceptance to Penn</p> <p>Landlord Survey</p> <p>University control management customer relations on lease renewals</p>
<p>Group 6</p>	<p>Convenience/accessibility: like transit, walkability/ For some: accessibility at start and end of day, ability to run daily errands</p> <p>Accessibility to campus and from home</p> <p>Pricing: variability and options in pricing, not just low prices</p> <p>Connected to stipends, access to loans</p> <p>Connected to space and amenities</p> <p>Impacting students interest in coming to Penn</p> <p>Programming of housing (GA)</p>



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Plenary Closing Session Summary**

Positives

Accessibility
Community (in housing, in neighborhood)
Proximity/convenience
Relatively affordable (in comparison to other east coast cities)
Free options available (i.e. GA positions on campus)

Negatives

Lack of responsiveness from landlords
Lack of responsiveness from on campus housing people
Unclear what our rights are as tenants
No forum for individual expression of satisfaction/dissatisfaction
No place to advertise items for sale/sublets directly to other grad students
No places with < 1 year (short term) leases
Lack of family housing
Lack of pet-friendly housing

Ideas for Improvement/Potential Actions

Co-op Housing
Transitional Space (especially for international students or students from far away)
Centralized location for housing resources (e.g., website)
Connect incoming students with existing students to ask questions/share suggestions
Share existing resources from schools with all schools (e.g. Wharton)
Get word out to students before they arrive (e.g., school administrators who make offers)
Make existing information more user friendly (ease of access)
Shift some academic programs to over the summer while cheap housing is available
Subsidized housing
Renovate existing on campus and off campus structures
Campus grocery store (e.g. at Tufts)