D.C. HOUSING

In years past, students who have held summer internships in Washington, D.C. have found housing through a variety of ways: suggestions from their employer, connections through friends, student housing organizations, or websites such as craigslist.org. The type of housing you're looking for, your budget, and your connections in D.C. are all factors that should help determine where you begin your housing search. The earlier you begin looking, the more options you will have and the easier it will be to choose exactly where you want to live for the summer. In the end, it is best to find housing that is near your job location with easy access to public transportation. This should be a priority when looking for housing; it will make your commute to and from work much easier and it will save you a lot of time and money.

Here is a list of steps you should take when looking for housing:

1. Ask your employer about housing options. Your employer might provide you with housing, have suggestions for where to live, or give you the contact information of other interns who will be also on a housing search so that you can room together or get advice from each other.

2. Exhaust all your connections in the city. Most apartments will be expensive and you may end up spending a good amount of your summer income paying for rent. If you can find a friend or relative who is willing to put you up for the summer, economically, this could be your best option. One past D.C. intern noted, “I asked pretty much everyone that I know about their contacts in Washington and eventually found a wonderful, extremely affordable living situation.” Another intern said, “I asked people I knew who lived in D.C. if they or their friends wanted to sublet their apartments. And, I had friends and relatives contact anyone who they knew in D.C. to ask the same thing.”

Peer-to-Peer Advice

After surveying and interviewing previous summer interns, The Career Advancement staff combined a number of their suggestions, thoughts, and pieces of advice in order to make this D.C. Survival Guide a useful tool for you as you plan your summer adventure. Career Advancement hopes this guide will make your life a little less stressful when trying to find housing, figure out the transportation system, and begin your summer in the nation’s capital. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions of your own, contact the Career Advancement office.

Connect with Alumni

While you’re in the city, you will have the opportunity to connect with another great resource: University of Chicago alumni! Whether you’re interested in working in Washington after graduation, or you wish to find out more about certain career paths, networking with alumni might end up being one of the most beneficial things you can do during your summer. Before you go, research alumni who are currently working in Washington, D.C. through the online alumni directory on the Career Advancement website.
3. **Location is everything.** It is vital that your housing situation is near your work and/or near transportation that will get you to work quickly. Also, a past intern noted, “make sure you know how long it will take you to get to work on your first day.”

4. **Decide what is important to you.** Whether you love trying new restaurants, shopping, or visiting museums and other cultural institutions, try to find a place that will give you the most time to explore your favorite things.

**Student Housing Organizations**

Student Housing Organizations are corporations that own large residential buildings and rent out rooms to students in the summer. Sometimes the buildings are set up like dormitories with single rooms and collective bathrooms, and other times the rooms are more like studio or one-bedroom apartments. It is important to look and apply for housing as soon as possible. Many of the applications for the following housing options come out in January or February and housing fills up quickly. There are both pros and cons to living in Student Housing, just as there are positives and negatives to living in a dorm.

**Pros**

- Assurance in your living conditions: security, reliable maintenance, amenities
- Opportunity to meet other students living in the same building
- Often much more affordable than finding a private apartment: prices range from $1,500 - $2,800 for the entire summer

**Cons**

- There is a possibility you’ll be matched with a roommate
- There are rules and regulations in most of these places that you’ll have to abide by

**These institutions offer summer housing:**

**Catholic University of America:** [conferences.cua.edu/summer](http://conferences.cua.edu/summer)

The Catholic University of America (CUA) provides summer housing to individuals who are in Washington, D.C. for educational purposes, internships, co-ops, research, and educational study. Catholic University is located in Northeast Washington, D.C. on a tree-lined 193-acre campus, approximately three miles north of the U.S. Capitol.

Telephone: 202-319-5291; Email: cua-conferences@cua.edu

**George Washington University:** [http://www.summerhousing.gwu.edu/](http://www.summerhousing.gwu.edu/)

Located in the heart of the Foggy Bottom district of Washington, D.C., GWU is minutes away from DuPont Circle, Georgetown, and other downtown areas. You will find a “neighborhood life” like nowhere else! The mix of shopping, dancing, dining, entertainment, and nightlife within a mile radius adds to the experience of staying in the Foggy Bottom area. The residence halls are also within close walking distance of the Kennedy Center, the State Department, and the National Mall, all of which contribute to the GWU summer experience.

Telephone: 202.994.6883; Email: sumhouse@gwu.edu

**International Student House of Washington, D.C.:** [www.ishdc.org](http://www.ishdc.org)

The International Student House is a residence and program center for graduate students, interns, trainees, or visiting scholars committed to promoting the mission of tolerance, respect and friendship among individuals from around the world.

Telephone: 202-232-4007; Email: info@ishdc.org

**Washington Intern Student Housing:** [www.internsdc.com](http://www.internsdc.com)

WISH provides fully furnished intern townhouses and apartments in the historic Capitol Hill neighborhood, near all the government buildings, museums, shops, restaurants, theaters, and easy Metro access. WISH hosts students from across the country and around the world, and claims to be “the community behind the internship.” You’ll stay with other interns who are studying and working in Washington, exploring the Nation’s Capital, and furthering their careers.

Applications are available online.

Telephone: 202-548-2720, or 1-800-461-9280 X 33; Email: interns@internsdc.com

**Private Housing - Apartments**

If you plan on using craigslist.org and would prefer a private apartment, past summer interns have suggested some specific neighborhoods that are safe and often have affordable housing options that are listed on page four. Before you start your apartment search, try to exhaust all networking opportunities and connections in Washington, D.C. You may find that a friend or relative will let you stay with them for a reduced price. Also, your employer may have a list of resources or a list of interns you can contact who will also be looking for housing. Note that some Management companies will ask that you fly out to visit the apartment before committing.
Applying for a Rental Unit
Most landlords will ask you to complete a rental application form, which is not the same as a rental agreement. The rental application is similar to an employment or credit application. The application will typically ask for the following information:

- Names, addresses, and telephone number
- Current and past landlords, current and past
- Social Security and driver's license numbers
- Bank account and credit card numbers and addresses
- Financial information regarding your ability to pay the rent (e.g., monthly income)
- Names of people who will be living in the unit

A landlord may ask about information that reflects on your ability to pay the rent; however, combined federal, state and local laws prevent landlords from discriminating against classes of people on arbitrary bases (e.g., race, gender, age, family status).

Other Places to Look:
Washington International Youth Hostel: http://www.hiwashingtondc.org/
City Paper: http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/class/classifieds.htm

D.C. Neighborhoods
Here is a list of neighborhoods that past interns have suggested for housing options:

**Alexandria, VA** is about six miles downriver from the city and is located on the Western bank of the Potomac River. The historic center is known as Old Town, it contains much of the city’s nightlife. Past summer interns lived in Old Town Alexandria and suggested that future interns look here for housing. Old Town is easily accessible off the Yellow and Blue Metrorail lines.

**Adams Morgan** is the center of D.C.’s liveliest nightlife. This multicultural neighborhood is at the intersection of 18th Street and Columbia Road and is packed with restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques and bookstores. Some interns noted that this area is known for its high crime rate, however other interns found it to be safe. There are a number of moderately priced apartments and group living situations. The demand for housing is very high and affordable locations are hard to find.

**Capitol Hill** houses the Capitol, Supreme Court, House, Senate and Congressional buildings. This historic residential neighborhood, which stretches from Eastern Market to Union Station, is popular with young professionals and Capitol Hill staff. It is also the densest with about 35,000 people living in just under two square miles. One past intern said, “I highly suggest living here but know that it will be expensive.” Area housing options include 18th and 19th row houses, modern condominiums, and older apartment buildings.

**DuPont Circle** is considered the most cosmopolitan neighborhood in D.C. and is in the northwest quadrant of the city. It is home to Johns Hopkins University, many think tanks, and the Church of Scientology. This neighborhood is an extremely popular area for young professionals and has many art galleries, restaurants, and bookshops. Housing options include group houses, basement apartments, and apartment buildings.

**Foggy Bottom** is located along the Potomac riverfront and is home to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, George Washington University, the State Department, the Department of the Interior, and the National Academy of Sciences. The neighborhood, located between the White House and Georgetown, is a mixture of residences, office buildings, restaurants, and hotels.

**Penn Quarter (Old Downtown)** is located south of Chinatown. The historic buildings and streetscapes have been revitalized and the neighborhood has become latest hot spot for arts, sports, and entertainment. There are new condo developments in the area which also means that the prices are not cheap.

**Silver Spring, MD** is located just north of D.C. It hosts several musical and ethnic festivals as well as American Film Institute’s Silver Theater and Cultural Center, which shows both classic and independent movies. Silver Spring is easily accessible by the Silver Spring and Forest Glen Metrorail stops on the Red line and by Metrobus.

**Tenleytown** is a residential area located near American University’s main campus. Apartment buildings and mixed-use developments along Wisconsin Avenue house numerous eateries, and big box retailers.

**Cleveland Park/Woodley Park** is a quiet area just east of American University. There are many single-family homes that rent basement apartments to students. Some homes are rented to groups and there are also many large apartment buildings along Connecticut Avenue. The National Zoo and National Cathedral are nearby, and the neighborhood is convenient to shopping.
Cost
Finally, how much should you expect to pay? All interns we talked to said they paid between $1000-1500/month.

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<td>House/Townhouse</td>
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DC TRANSPORTATION
The city offers many different modes of transportation because about 70% of the people who work in the city commute from the suburbs. The Washington area is served by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (www.wmata.com). You’ll most likely be using the Metro to get to and from work each day, and past interns have only had positive things to say about the Metro. Interns have found the WMATA to be “cheap, clean, reliable, and fairly quick.” If you live really close to work, walking might be your best option, but if you live farther away, you shouldn’t have a problem due to the frequency of the rails and buses that run during rush hour. WMATA has bus, subway and rail systems that serve the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and the Maryland D.C. suburbs, and it is the second largest rail system and the fifth largest bus network in the U.S.

Metrorail
The rail system has 86 stations, 47 of which are below ground. There are five lines that operate 5:00am-12:00am on weekdays and 7:00am-3:00am on weekends. There are digital signs in the stations that list arrival times, system status, and the time of day. Fares depend on how far you travel but there is a $1.75 minimum and a $4.60 maximum.

Metrobus
There are 12,301 bus stops and 171 lines and they operate from 5:30am-12am on weeknights and 5:30am-3am on weekends. Fares include $1.25/ride and $3 for express routes when using SmarTrip, which is a card much like the ChicagoCard for the CTA. Past interns have highly suggested getting a SmarTrip card. Prices are a little more expensive when using cash. Transfers between buses are free within a three-hour period. Transfers to Metrorail are $0.50 off your bus fare.

Maryland Rail Commuter Service
The MARC is the regional rail system and is administrated by the Maryland Transit Administration. Fares depend on how far you travel but College students are eligible for reduced fares, so check out their website before you travel.

Virginia Railway Express
These commuter trains provide service from Union Station to Fredericksburg and Manassas, VA, and the trains also stop at several Metro stations. Fares depend on how far you travel.

DC SAFETY
After living in the city of Chicago, you should be well-versed in safety precautions for urban environments. However, here are some basic tips you should be reminded of before your internship in D.C. One past intern noted that North East D.C. is less safe than North West so be aware of what quadrant you’re traveling to for work, entertainment, or shopping. Another intern said, “D.C. is an extremely dangerous city, but just use common sense and you should be fine.” Using common sense is good advice and you should also read the following tips for a quick refresher since you’ll be moving to an unknown environment.

When Walking:

- Always remember that there is safety in numbers. Walk with friends, or take populated routes when going places. Be especially careful when walking at night.
- Plan your route in advance, walk with a purpose, and be alert at all times, especially when talking on a cell phone or using headphones.
- Avoid deserted areas such as parks, alleys, and vacant lots.
- If you think you’re being followed, cross the street, change direction, or go to a public place.
- If you need to use a public restroom, try a Barnes & Noble or a Starbucks’s Coffee.
- Never display large amounts of cash or flaunt jewelry or cameras in public. If you need to organize your wallet, duck into a store.
- Don’t keep your wallet in the back pocket of your pants or backpack, and be aware of your wallet or purse in commotions. Pickpockets often use helpers to create disturbances nearby.
- Use caution when using ATMs and don’t carry too much cash around with you. Most places accept credit cards and there are ATMs everywhere. Just make sure you choose one that is in a busy, well-lighted area.
When Using Public Transportation:
On the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority’s website there are customer safety instructions with a variety of safety information for the Metro. They discuss precautions to take while riding the MTA and various emergency and evacuations instructions. Visit www.wmata.com/getting_around/safety_security to find out more.

Here are some general safety tips from safety websites and your peers:
• Avoid empty subway cars. Ride with many people or in the conductor’s car (usually the middle car of the train).
• In crowded subways, keep your wallet in your front pocket, and keep your purse closed and held in front of you or tightly to the side.