Guide to Living in D.C.
Living in Washington, D.C.

Relocating to a new city can be stressful. We’d like to help you make that transition as smooth as possible. This guide is a compilation of a variety of useful information about housing, transportation, helpful resources, and some of the exciting opportunities our nation’s capital has to offer. As always, please do not hesitate to contact us with questions.

Housing Tips:

- The nearby suburbs of Virginia and Maryland often offer more affordable housing than D.C.
- Neighborhoods on the northwest side of the city tend to be safer, cleaner and, consequently, more expensive. It is generally recommended that students avoid addresses in the southeast and, to a lesser degree, the northeast parts of town.
- Though properties closer to the metro tend to be more expensive, the cost is often offset by the decreased auto expenses, less commuting time, and increased convenience.

Benefits of Commuting

Commuting to campus gives you extra time to hit the books on the train and take advantage of the opportunity to study on campus between work and other demands. Spending more time on campus can help you develop a routine and manage your time effectively. Students who work full time while taking evening classes often find it beneficial to commute straight from work to campus. Additional time on campus also gives you the opportunity to access library resources or meet with faculty and study groups. There are many convenient dining options in the area where you can purchase coffee or dinner while accessing free Wi-Fi (http://www.wiffreespot.com/dc.html).

Weather

Along with the variety of dining, entertainment, and cultural enrichment, D.C. also has a variety of weather conditions. Be prepared to bundle up during the snowy winter months (temps can range from 15 degrees F to 50 degrees F) and break out the shorts for the hot summer months (temps can range from 85 degrees F to 100 degrees F). Fall and spring are typically the happy medium, with milder weather conditions.
DC Neighborhoods

Washington, D.C., boasts a variety of diverse neighborhoods—each with their own unique personality, characteristics, and experiences.

Dupont Circle (Zip codes: 20036, 20037)

The Chicago School’s D.C.’s Campus is located in the Dupont Circle neighborhood. Most of the residents tend to skew toward a younger age—students or young professionals. The neighborhood features many art galleries, restaurants, and bars. Group housing, apartments, and garden apartments are the norm. Rent ranges from mid-priced to expensive.

Adams Morgan (Zip codes: 20008, 20009)

Neighboring Dupont Circle is Adams Morgan, which is considered one of D.C.’s hippest, funkiest, most artistic neighborhoods. The intersection of 18th St. NW and Columbia Rd. marks its center. Adams Morgan boasts art galleries, buildings decorated with bright murals, and a plethora of culturally diverse stores and restaurants. By night, the neighborhood morphs into a hot spot for nightlife—featuring a variety of bars and nightclubs. Housing is in high demand, and prices are often high depending on the area. Most housing consists of apartments and group living arrangements. Adams Morgan is easily accessible by the Metro system.

Georgetown (Zip codes: 20007, 20057)

Georgetown follows the Potomac River from Georgetown University to Rock Creek Park, and is one of D.C’s oldest neighborhoods. Its epicenter is M St., a bustling street lined with boutiques and furniture stores, excellent restaurants, and busy bars. The Georgetown Waterfront is a lovely park, also peppered with restaurants and watering holes. Be sure to wander up and down the cobblestone side streets, taking in the beautiful old row homes and discovering hidden (and quieter) stores and restaurants. To offset the high rent in Georgetown, many college students choose to either rent a room in a shared house. Georgetown is not easily accessible by the Metro system; transportation options include busing, walking, or driving.

Capitol Hill (Zip codes: 20002, 20003)

An older neighborhood, filled with young professionals and Capitol Hill staff. Housing includes row houses, newer condominiums, and older apartments. If you are considering living in Capitol Hill, be sure to check out any potential addresses several times during both the day and the night for safety concerns. Nightlife in Capitol Hill is fairly limited, with younger residents typically heading to the livelier parts of town for a night out.

Foggy Bottom (Zip codes: 20052)

Nestled between downtown Washington D.C. and Georgetown lies Foggy Bottom, a mixed-use neighborhood comprised of residences, office buildings, restaurants, and hotels. This historic neighborhood is home to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and George Washington University, and features many beautiful row homes. As with most city neighborhoods, Foggy Bottom is a relatively safe area, but extra caution should be exercised when walking at night. Rent tends to run on the high side for Foggy Bottom. Street parking can be challenging; however, the neighborhood is easily accessible by Metro (and relatively close to the D.C. Campus).

Chinatown (Zip codes: 20005)

Chinatown is located east of downtown Washington, D.C. between H and I Streets and 5th and 8th Streets, NW. D.C.’s Chinatown is a small, historic neighborhood with many Chinese and Asian restaurants and a handful of other small businesses. The Friendship Arch, a traditional Chinese gate, prominently marks the neighborhood at H and 7th Streets. Chinatown is located near Penn Quarter, a revitalized arts and entertainment district with new restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, museums, theaters, and trendy stores. Much of the area was torn down in the 1990s to make way
for the MCI Center (now the Verizon Center). Chinatown is popular for its restaurants and the annual Chinese New Year parade.

**Virginia Neighborhoods**

Just a short drive or Metro ride across the Potomac River are the suburbs of Northern Virginia. The following neighborhoods are excellent alternatives to living in Washington, D.C.—rents are generally cheaper than in the city while still providing a vibrant, young atmosphere.

**Arlington**

**Clarendon/Courthouse**

A short ten minute drive from The Chicago School campus, Clarendon (located in Arlington County, VA) is a bustling neighborhood brimming with young professionals who desire more space for their money. Rentals consist of apartments and condominiums, with some shared houses for a cheaper price. Downtown Clarendon features some excellent restaurants, national retailers, and small boutiques. The area is generally safe, very walkable and easily accessible by Metro.

**Rosslyn**

Located directly across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.—the two of them are linked by several highway and railroad bridges, and at least one tunnel beneath the river. In 2005, Arlington was ranked first among walkable cities in the United States by the American Podiatric Medical Association. It is an urban community with high-rise office buildings that form a skyline just opposite the National Mall along the Potomac River. There are a variety of apartment buildings, hotels, restaurants, and shops.

**Ballston**

Ballston, the western anchor of the Rosslyn-Ballston Metro corridor, is Arlington’s hub of science and technology and contains the nation’s greatest concentration of scientific research agencies, anchored by the National Science Foundation. Their ability to collocate within a compact, urban environment creates tremendous synergy and drives limitless ingenuity and innovation. The Ballston blend of urban sophistication and neighborhood charm is unmatched in the region. Elegant high-rises, national and regional corporate and association headquarters, upscale hotels, shopping, restaurants and green spaces create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly mix of business and pleasure.

**Shirlington**

Shirlington Village is a new urban village in Arlington, Virginia with shopping, restaurants, theaters, and a pedestrian friendly promenade. With its established café culture, live theater, and pedestrian promenade, Shirlington has become the arts and entertainment capital of Arlington. Anchoring the Village at Shirlington is a multi-million dollar theater-library complex, home to Arlington’s nationally-known Signature Theatre, and the state-of-the-art Shirlington Library. Added to the mix are new condominiums, lively restaurants, and exciting shops, all with easy access to Washington and in close proximity to Interstate-395, the Pentagon, and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. The village is not on the metro line but there is a metro bus station.

**Crystal City**

Crystal City, Virginia is an urban community along the Potomac River with dramatic views of Washington DC. The downtown area is conveniently located within walking distance of National Airport and has many upscale hotels, retail stores, restaurants, high-rise apartment buildings and commercial offices. A unique network of underground shops and walkways attracts visitors to Crystal City from around the region.

**Pentagon City**

Most people in the Washington/Arlington area know Pentagon City for its Fashion Centre shopping mall. The area has a crisp feeling of shiny newness that surrounds the area—from brand new shopping centers, high-rise apartments and office buildings, and the beautifully landscaped green spaces that surround them, to the crowd of busy 20- and 30-somethings who live, work, and play there. Pentagon City apartment
dwellers take walking paths through expanses of finely-manicured lawns and landscaping to public transportation and a wide array of retail services. 24-hour grocery stores, hip bars, and nice restaurants make Pentagon City a vibrant, self-contained community.

Maryland Neighborhoods

Please note that the metro commute from the Maryland neighborhoods may be lengthier than from the Virginia Neighborhoods.

Bethesda

Just over the northwest district line is Bethesda, Maryland. Bethesda is quite popular—with young professionals and families, and features many restaurants and small boutiques. There are many single family homes in the area, some with garden apartment rentals or group housing. Other housing options include condominiums and high-rise apartments, with some townhomes. Rent is on the high side, yet it is easily accessible by Metro.

Takoma Park/Silver Spring

Just past Bethesda, but still within easy reach of downtown D.C., is Silver Spring. Similar to Bethesda, Silver Spring is popular with young professionals and families alike, who are attracted to the area by its lower housing prices. Downtown Silver Spring features restaurants, national chain retailers, and small boutiques. Rent is reasonable and the area is easily accessible by Metro.

The Apartment Search

Things to know before renting an apartment

Housing options include rental apartments, houses, and rooms; apartments are generally less expensive and easier to find than a house.

Lease

In almost every circumstance you will be required to sign a lease in order to rent an apartment. This is a legal document that serves as a contract between you and the landlord. You each have rights and responsibilities that are established by the city in which the apartment is located. At minimum, the lease should list the dates of occupancy (usually one year), who is to live there, what the tenant (you) is responsible for (such as heat, electricity and telephone), the amount of the rent and security deposit (an additional sum of money that covers any damage or cleaning expenses once you move out; if there is no damage, you will get it all back after you leave), and any restrictions, such as whether you can have a pet. Typically, the landlord is responsible for general maintenance of the common areas (hallways, entryways) and anything that breaks or stops working in your apartment (broken windows, stove stops working, clogged sink). You are responsible for cleaning the apartment and such things as light bulbs and batteries for the smoke detectors.

Be aware that if you break your lease (move out before the lease is up), you can be sued by the landlord for the remainder of the rent plus other fees. It is possible that you might be able to arrange with the landlord you moving out early, but the landlord is not obligated to accommodate you. Another option is to sublease your apartment (find someone else to move in under the terms of your lease), depending on your lease terms.
You are responsible for paying for your telephone and cable television, if you choose to have it. Most places will also require you to pay for your electricity. Sometimes heat is included in rent, sometimes it isn't. The landlord almost always pays for water, sewer and garbage pickup.

**General Housing Tips**

- Start your search for housing early.
- Know your rent limit and stick to it. Factor in your cost of living.
- Each city/suburb has its own laws regarding tenant/landlord relations.
- The Department of Public Works offers a free recycling program to single-family homes and small tenant buildings (up to 3 units). If you do not have a blue recycling cart at your residence, you may go to [www.dc.gov](http://www.dc.gov) and submit an online request. Apartment buildings that contain more than 4 units are required by law to provide a recycling program. Check with your landlord for more information.

**D.C. housing resources:**

- Craigslist: craigslist.org
- Home Database Search for VA, MD and D.C.: [www.homedatabase.com](http://www.homedatabase.com)
- Washington Post: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/rentals](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/rentals)
- Roomates.com: [www.roomates.com](http://www.roomates.com)
- Real estate agents can also assist you with your apartment search, often free of charge. A few of the many companies are listed at: [http://dc.about.com/od/rentalbrokers/Real_Estate_Brokers_Rentals_in_the_Washington_DC_Metropolitan_Area.htm](http://dc.about.com/od/rentalbrokers/Real_Estate_Brokers_Rentals_in_the_Washington_DC_Metropolitan_Area.htm)

**Types of Apartments**

**Studio/Efficiency Apartments:** These units, usually consisting of one large room plus a bathroom and kitchen facilities, are intended for one person. Sometimes the kitchen will be separate, or there might be an alcove for a bed. There is usually room for a futon (a Japanese-style mattress on a frame that folds from a couch to a bed), a small table or desk, and a dresser. Sizes vary widely depending upon the area and the building.

A **convertible** is a small apartment that usually has an alcove or other space that can be blocked off with a screen or other divider. It is usually larger than a studio and smaller than a one bedroom.

**One, two, or three bedroom** apartment units with more than three bedrooms are rare and more difficult to find.

A **garden apartment** is on the lower level, sometimes half below ground, but with windows. These tend to be cheaper, but sometimes present safety concerns. If you choose to live in one, make sure windows and entryways are well-lit and in good condition.

**Amenities, Security Deposits, and Other Considerations**

Most apartments are unfurnished but include window blinds and major appliances.

Amenities such as a pool, door attendant, and fitness room cost extra.
Most mid-high rise buildings will have a charge for moving in and out along with specific move times. Many apartment buildings do not have elevators, so be sure to check this out as well if stairs are difficult for you.

Most apartment buildings have **laundry** facilities in a basement or other room. Usually a wash costs up to $2 (in quarters) and a dry from $.25 to $2, so make sure there is a Laundromat nearby if your apartment does not include this service.

Some apartments will have a building manager who lives on site (in the building). The manager takes care of rent, maintenance, or complaints. Others are owner-occupied (the owner/landlord lives in the building). Still others have neither, and you will have to call the landlord or manager if you have a problem.

The landlord may want to do a credit check (a check of your credit, including where you lived before, to see if you have paid rent on time and in full previously) before offering you a lease. Credit checks cost around $25–$50 and you are generally responsible for the cost.

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS** - explain to the landlord that you are an international student and ask if s/he would be willing to forego the credit check. Be aware that some may not want to rent to you without a credit check.

Once you have been offered a lease, you will most likely have to give the landlord the **first month’s rent plus the security deposit**. The security deposit typically is equal to one month’s rent and may be up to two months and is usually due when you sign the lease.

Security deposit example: if the apartment rents for $700 a month, and the security deposit is $700, you will typically need to pay him/her $1,400 up front to secure the apartment. If your apartment is in good shape when you move out, you should get back the $700 security deposit. One way to guarantee the return of your security deposit is to take pictures of your apartment after you move your furniture out and do the cleaning as proof that you left it in good condition.

Pet security deposits are typically required in buildings that accept pets in addition to the regular deposit.

**Term Explanations:**

**Rehab**--short for rehabilitated. Usually an older building that has been remodeled.

**Vintage**--an older, usually very quaint building that has been rehabbed (but not necessarily). Often the rent is higher.

**Row home**--a building that is attached to another building on at least one side. Newer construction row homes are often called “townhouses.” Row homes are common in Washington, D.C.

**Walk-up**--an apartment building without an elevator.

Be aware that apartments may not actually be as described in the ad. For example, “cozy” often means small. Common abbreviations found in newspaper ads:

- 1BR/2BR/3BR = one, two or three bedrooms
- ww cpt = wall to wall carpet
- hdwd flrs = hardwood floors
- nr metro = near Metrorail
- nr trans = near transportation (usually means Metrorail)
- DR = dining room
- bath = bathroom
- ht = heat
- elec = electricity
This is an example of how a classified advertisement in the newspaper might look:
Georgetown 2BR, sep DR, hdwd flrs, nr metro, $850 + sec dep.
    Pkg avail. Avail immed. Call 555.5454.

Translation: Georgetown two bedroom apartment with a separate dining room and hardwood floors, near a Metrorail station. Parking space is available (for an additional fee). $850 a month plus a security deposit (most likely the same amount as the monthly rent, though you should ask).

Helpful Numbers

Washington Gas (gas/heat) .............................................................(800) 752-7520
Pepco (electric) .................................................................(202) 833-7500
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) ......................(202) 637-7000
Department of Motor Vehicles......................................................
DC Department of Public Works
(trash & recycling collection/street cleaning/parking enforcement) ...................(202) 673-6833
Poison Center .................................................................(202) 625-3333
DC Emergency Management Agency ............................................(202) 727-6161
DC Water & Sewer Authority.......................................................(202) 787-2000
DC Housing Regulation Administration............................................(202) 727-7395

Transportation Information

Commuter Page http://www.commuterpage.com/
The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is responsible for all bus and rail services to Washington, D.C. and the surrounding Virginia and Maryland suburbs.

WMATA is made up of the Metrorail and Metrobus. Both Metrorail and the Metrobus system service Washington, D.C., and some of Virginia and Maryland.

The Metrorail consists of five color-coded railways: Red, Orange, Green, Blue and Yellow. All stations close at midnight Sunday – Thursday, and 3am Friday – Saturday the last trains usually depart a few minutes prior to midnight.

Metrorail fares are calculated according to the distance and what time of the day you travel. For detailed information on fares between particular stations, go to www.wmata.com/fares. The following is a guide to fares:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fare type</th>
<th>Time of travel</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular fare</td>
<td>Opening – 9:30am</td>
<td>$1.95</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:00pm – 7:00pm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weekends between 2am &amp; closing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced fare</td>
<td>All other times</td>
<td>$1.60</td>
<td>$2.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Metrobus fares are as follows:

- $1.50 If using SmarTrip
- $1.70 If using cash (drivers don't keep money, so use exact change)
- $3.65 Express routes using SmarTrip
- $3.85 Express routes using cash

A SmarTrip card is an easy alternative to purchasing individual farecards each time you ride the rail or bus. SmarTrip cards can be purchased online or at select metrorail stations. The cards cost a one time fee of $5.00 and can be recharged with up to $300 by adding value at SmarTrip vending machines inside stations. Using the SmarTrip card is easy, and may even give you a discount.

**Getting to The Chicago School using WMATA**

Please go to www.wmata.com to plan your trip on the metrorail and/or buses by entering starting address, destination, and time of day. Our D.C. Campus is one block from 14th street exit of the McPherson Square metro stop, and three blocks from both Farragut North and Farragut West metro stations.

**Biking and Walking Links for Arlington and the Washington D.C., Area**

The District Department of Transportation has a well-established and very successful bicycle program, which is committed to providing safe and convenient bicycle access throughout the city.

District Department of Transportation Bicycle Map page

Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) Maps page

BikeWashington.org Washington, D.C. Multi-Use Trails page
Owning a Car in Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. has a robust public transportation system, and a car is not critical to get around the city. If a rental property has a parking option, it will most likely result in an additional monthly charge. Street parking can be difficult to find, especially during the week when those who drive to the city for work need to find parking.

In addition to the limited number of parking spaces, those who look for street parking have to be mindful of residential parking areas. If your street/block is zoned for Residential Permit Parking (RPP), you must have a permit if you want to park for more than two hours.

There are two ways to get a residential parking permit: a) have your car registered in Washington, D.C., and have a valid D.C. driver’s license (permit fee is $15/year), or b) obtain a reciprocity parking permit by proving that you are a full-time student studying in D.C. (permit fee is $338/year). Be advised that if you choose to live in Georgetown, you MUST have both a valid D.C. license and have your car registered in D.C. to obtain a residential parking permit. More information on residential parking permits, including a link to parking restrictions by block, can be found at http://dmv.dc.gov.

Driving to The Chicago School

There is metered street parking in the surrounding area. The parking garage, managed by an independent company on campus, charges a $16 flat rate regardless of length of stay. To find the best parking options for the length and time of your visit, please visit http://washingtondc.bestparking.com/index.php#

Our address is 901 15th Street NW, Washington D.C. 20005.
Things to do in Washington, D.C.

There is no shortage of things to see and do in the nation's capital, many of which are free! Below is just a taste of the vast selection of museums, theaters, restaurants, community events, music, nightlife, sports teams, and fun activities the city has to offer.

Museums

Smithsonian Institutions

- African Art Museum -- 950 Independence Avenue, SW
- Air and Space Museum -- Independence Ave at 6th Street, SW
- American Art Museum -- 8th and F St, N.W
- American History Museum -- 1400 Constitution Ave. NW
- American Indian Museum -- 4th St. & Independence Ave. S.W
- Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery -- Jefferson Drive at 12th St. SW & 1050 Independence Ave. SW (connected by underground exhibition space)
- Natural History Museum -- 10th St. & Constitution Ave. NW

NOTE: Admission to all Smithsonian Institutions is free! Go to www.si.edu for more information.

Others

- Newseum -- 555 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
- International Spy Museum -- 800 F St. NW
- Holocaust Memorial Museum -- 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW

Theatres

- Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts -- 2700 F Street, NW
- National Theatre -- 1321 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
- Ford’s Theatre -- 511 Tenth St, NW
- Shakespeare Theatre Company – Lansburg Theatre and Sidney Harman Hall
- Washington Improv Theatre (WIT) -- 1835 14th St NW
- DC Improv -- 1140 Connecticut Ave NW

Festivals

- International Food & Wine Festival – www.foodandwinedc.com
- National Cherry Blossom Festival – www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org (March)
- Labor Day Concert at the U.S. Capitol
- DC Jazz Festival (formerly the Duke Ellington Festival)
- Capital Jazz Fest – www.capitaljazz.com (June)

Sports

- Washington Capitals -- NHL Hockey
- Washington Nationals -- MLB Baseball
- Washington Wizards -- NBA Basketball
- Washington Redskins -- NFL Football
- D.C. United -- MLS Soccer

Verizon Center (601 F Street NW)
Nationals Park (1500 S Capitol St SE)
Verizon Center (601 F Street NW)
FedEx Field (Landover, Maryland)
RFK Stadium (2400 East Capitol St SE)

Music/Nightlife

Blues/Jazz
Blues Alley - 1069 Wisconsin Ave NW
Madam's Organ - 2461 18th St NW
Columbia Station - 2325 18th St., NW

**Dance Clubs**
18th Street Lounge - 1212 18th St
Fur Nightclub - 33 Patterson St. NE
Love - 1350 Okie St. NE
Muse - 717 6th St. NW
K Street Lounge - 1301 K St. NW
Josephines – 1008 Vermont Avenue NW
Ultrabar - 911 F St. NW

**Gay/Lesbian Clubs & Bars**
Freddies Beach Bar - 555 23rd St. S, Arlington, VA
Mova (males) - 1435 P St. NW
Apex (males) - 1415 22nd Street, NW
Lace (females) - 2214 Rhode Island Avenue N.E
Delta (mixed, mostly male) - 3734 10th St., NE
Nellie’s Sports Bar (males) - 900 U St. NW

**Live Music Venues**
9:30 Club - 815 V St, NW
Birchmere - 3701 Mt. Vernon Ave., Alexandria, VA
State Theatre - 220 N. Washington St., Falls Church, VA
Black Cat - 1811 14th St. NW
Jammin’ Java - 227 Maple Avenue East, Vienna, VA

**Hang-out Bars**
Rocket Bar - 714 7th Street NW
RFD - 810 7th St NW
The Big Hunt - 1345 Connecticut Ave NW
McFadden’s – 2401 Pennsylvania Ave
Tony & Joe’s - 3000 K St. NW

**Restaurants**
Ben’s Chilli Bowl – 1213 U St. NW  restaurant finder http://www.washingtonian.com/RestaurantFinder.html
Five Guys Burgers & Fries – multiple locations
Old Ebbitt Grill – 675 15th St. NW
Sequoia - 3000 K Street NW
J. Paul’s - 3218 M Street NW
www.opentable.com