

# **City–UCD Student Liaison Commission Renter Issues Subcommittee Report Tuesday, October 6, 2009**

## **Background:**

A majority of the Davis citizens do not own their residence but rather elect to rent, either in an apartment, house, duplex or on campus. Davis has an unusually high ratio of renters (approx 55%) versus the national average of 33%. Coupled with a high number of renters and approximately a third of the Davis population enrolled as students at UC Davis, renter's issues are an issue the Commission has spent considerable amount of time on.

## **Renters Subcommittee**

The City-UCD Student Liaison Commission created the Renters Subcommittee on October 10, 2007 in response to important issues being considered at that time: displaying political signs, interest on security deposits, and rental inspection program. The Subcommittee was charged to review and define issues, education, and rights of renters in Davis. The subcommittee has been composed of three commissioners: rental property owner representative, Brenda Little; public-at-large, Steven Worker; and student representative (ASUCD), Steven Lee.

## **2008 Renter's Survey**

The subcommittee administered a 13-question hardcopy survey at the ASUCD Housing Day in February 2008 and received 715 responses. The highlights include concern over increasing rent prices, need for more affordable units, and feeling there is an adequate supply of rental housing in Davis. The primary challenge of this survey was in generalizing the results to all renters in Davis as 2/3rds of the responses were from students who had never lived off campus.

## **2009 Renter's Survey**

The subcommittee expanded the survey to 27-questions and administered electronically from January 19 to February 28 and received 767 responses.

The survey was publicized through:

- City of Davis homepage
- ASUCD Housing Day on January 22, 2009
- Daviswiki calendar event and renters page
- Newspaper ads in the *California Aggie* and *The Davis Enterprise*
- Routed through various e-mail lists
- Other in-person advertising coordinated by ASUCD (e.g. on the Quad, at Aggie Pack events)

## **Respondents**

- 249 were from 1<sup>st</sup> year renters, 486 were for 2-10 year renters
- 415 were renters from apartments and 96 were renters from houses.
- Approximately 60% of respondents were female.

## **Key Overall Findings:**

- Nearly 60% of the respondents were Very Satisfied or Satisfied and about 25% were neutral with - "Renting overall in Davis".
- The vast majority of respondents feel safe in their rental housing.
- More than half of respondents want more information regarding renter's rights.
- Most common services to find roommates: Daviswiki, Craigslist, and friends are all top choices

- Of survey respondents currently renting homes:
  - 66.7% think there are enough smoke-free units in Davis.
  - 53.2% are either satisfied or very satisfied with speediness of management/maintenance response.
- Of survey respondents currently renting apartments:
  - 51.4% think there are enough smoke-free units in Davis.
  - 74.1% are either satisfied or very satisfied with speediness of management/maintenance response.

**Key Findings split by common demographics**

- **Unit Type: Apartment vs House**
  - Those in a housing unit (66%) are much more likely to have hosted a party than those in an apartment rental (41%)
  - Those in an apartment prefer to contact landlord in-person, while those in a house prefer a combination of all three (email, phone, in person).
- **Years Renting: 1st Year vs. 2-10 Years**
  - Did not find any obvious differences
- **University Status: Undergraduate vs. Graduate vs. Non-Student**
  - Non-Student renters are much more concerned about a rental being pet friendly.
  - Non-student renters not nearly as concerned about location/proximity to campus.

**Key Findings General Comments:**

***How do you normally resolve roommate conflict?***

- An overwhelming majority said they handle it by talking it out
- A smaller majority said they would have apartment meetings
- A small minority of respondents said they would ignore the problem or be quiet about it
- A small majority of respondents said they would write messages on the whiteboard or leave post-it notes

***Comments about your experience renting in Davis:***

- A few comments about not getting back their full deposit
- Thought rent was expensive
- More than a few mentioned it was noisy – one mentioned that they felt the managers did little to address the issue.
- A few comments that it was hard finding apartments away from students and that the September 1 move in date was difficult for non-students
- A comment about the turnover of managers
- Not enough pet friendly apartments
- Overall, most dealt with affordability/deposit, but most seem to have had a positive experience

***How do you determine whether the renter's information is credible?***

- Gather information from multiple sources
- Ask friends/past renters
- Gut feeling/intuition






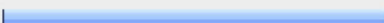

**Three Selected Questions**

4. Please answer yes or no to the following ...				
	Yes	No	I don't know	Response Count
Do you have renters insurance?	18.8% (144)	62.4% (478)	18.8% (144)	766
Do you participate in a neighborhood watch?	5.9% (45)	87.2% (668)	6.9% (53)	766
Have you participated in the Davis Neighbors Night Out event?	8.6% (66)	88.9% (679)	2.5% (19)	764
Have you hosted a party at your rental?	41.2% (315)	56.6% (433)	2.2% (17)	765
Have you ever visited the Safe Party Website ( <a href="http://safeparty.ucdavis.edu/">http://safeparty.ucdavis.edu/</a> )?	17.3% (132)	80.3% (614)	2.5% (19)	765
Are there enough smoke free units available in Davis?	53.9% (412)	11.8% (90)	34.4% (263)	765
Are you aware of the Davis Model Lease?	41.9% (319)	50.3% (383)	7.9% (60)	762
Would renters in Davis benefit from a Renters Bill of Rights?	59.9% (458)	6.9% (53)	33.2% (254)	765
			<i>answered question</i>	767
			<i>skipped question</i>	0

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7. When searching for information about renting and rental policies, which of these sources do you use? (check all that apply)		
	Response Percent	Response Count
ASUCD Housing Day	29.8%	219
CA Apartment Association	2.6%	19
CA Dept of Consumer Affairs	3.4%	25
davishousing.com	29.0%	213
Daviswiki	71.8%	528
Friends	64.6%	475
Newspapers – Enterprise, Aggie, etc.	21.2%	156
Other commercial renting website	14.1%	104
UCD Community Housing Listing	29.9%	220
Craigslist	39.9%	293
Student Housing	16.6%	122
Parents	6.1%	45
	<i>answered question</i>	735
	<i>skipped question</i>	32

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9. On which topics would you be interested in additional information? (check all that apply)		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Security deposits 	58.5%	370
Safety 	38.9%	246
Finding roommates 	17.4%	110
Renters Insurance 	40.6%	257
Parking 	36.0%	228
Landlord rights and responsibilities 	58.6%	371
Tenants rights and responsibilities 	71.7%	454
	<i>answered question</i>	633
	<i>skipped question</i>	134

**The Renter Issues Subcommittee recommends the Commission take the following action:**

1. Develop a renter education information guide. The guide would not duplicate the resources offered by the Dept of Consumer Affairs “California Tenants” or CA Apartment Association “Renting: A User Manual” but contain information specific to the City of Davis. The guide would be printed in a PDF format and posted on various websites (e.g. City of Davis, Daviswiki, etc.)

The guide could contain information requested in the 2009 Renters Survey and items including:

- Security deposits and tips on how to get a full refund of security deposit
- Choosing roommates and resolving roommate conflict (e.g. Mediation Services)
- Davis Model Lease/Lease Agreement in general
- Subleasing/Lease Assignment
- Renter rights and responsibilities
- Davis specific ordinances and procedures (e.g. noise ordinance and safe party efforts)

The Commission can partner with Rental Housing Association of Sacramento and also California Apartment Association for guide content and further expertise.

2. Post 2009 survey results on city website (e.g. <http://cityofdavis.org/renters/>) which would be accessible to Rental Property Owners and Management as well as the general public.
3. Continue to monitor renter issues on an annual basis proving an annual benchmark of renter satisfaction. We suggest this take place in winter as the ASUCD Housing Day provides a logical place to help institutionalize the process and also receive hundreds of responses.