**Housing**

*Introduction*

For any graduate or professional student who attends Cornell, housing is an important factor in life at the university. A number of decisions are involved in selecting housing: cost, location, transportation, children, and stipends. Ithaca and the surrounding communities provide challenges and opportunities for graduate and professional students finding housing. Various other issues are intertwined with housing including transportation, family services, and international status.

Cornell currently operates four on-campus housing venues: Hasbrouck Apartments, Maplewood Park Apartments, Hughes Hall, and Thurston Court. Hasbrouck is a complex of 338 units housing single students as well as families. Maplewood contains 394 furnished units, mostly rooms within 3- or 4-bedroom apartments. Hughes Hall is for first-year law students only, but will be closing soon, leaving around 50 residents to find another living arrangement. Thurston Court is a small complex for around 20 residents. Altogether, these housing options serve approximately 12% of graduate and professional students, a much lower percentage than some other Ivy League institutions.

In Maplewood and Hasbrouck, the primary focus of the on-campus housing part of this topic area, most units are leased to graduate or professional students, but a few non-traditional undergraduates and visiting scholars live in the complexes as well. Hasbrouck is known as an attractive place for families, particularly international student families, because of the sense of community and the availability of programming for graduate and professional students with children. Maplewood is known for hosting many international students given the ease of obtaining housing through Cornell from a foreign country. However, Maplewood residences are well past the buildings’ expected lifetimes and are slated to be shut down in the coming years, currently without a replacement plan. Hasbrouck has been improving year after year, but challenges remain.

A wealth of housing options exist for the 88% of graduate and professional students who do not live on campus. While most graduate and professional students live in the city of Ithaca, the village of Cayuga Heights, the town of Ithaca, and the town of Lansing, some do live further away in Tompkins County or the surrounding counties. The high cost of housing in Tompkins County presents challenges to graduate and professional students who live on either a fixed stipend or substantial loans. Many graduate and professional students also are looking to find a quieter living atmosphere apart from where most undergraduate students choose to live. The resources available to help graduate and professional students choose appropriate places to live are limited and those that are available are high quality, but underutilized. The Office of Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living has an Off-Campus Housing Office that works with all students, undergraduate, graduate and professional on living off campus. Departments, fields, or colleges sometimes also have housing resources.

**Objective 1: Provide an adequate supply of university housing that meets the needs of graduate and professional students.**

*Rationale*: University-run housing offers an option for graduate and professional students who might be looking for a community of similar individuals. Family-friendly housing also offers a chance for a reliable option for graduate and professional students who come to Cornell with a family or plan to have a family while at the university. For many international students who may not be familiar with renting in the United States, university-run housing provides a way to obtain housing without having to navigate the American rental housing market. However, a number of issues remain in university-run housing including affordability, parking, proximity to amenities, and other issues that graduate and professional students have identified. President Skorton, speaking at the Hasbrouck pre-semester open house, stated the importance of having quality housing for graduate students. The GPSA agrees and these actions will help make graduate and professional student housing better.

Actions:

1. The replacement of Maplewood should provide resources similar to current complex including quality service, competitive rent, and community events that celebrate the diversity of residents.
2. The replacement of Maplewood should be done in consultation with graduate and professional students who currently live or have previously lived in the complex.
3. Improvements and maintenance investments should continue to happen at Maplewood up until the complex is ready for replacement.
4. Continue to offer family-focused and family-friendly housing at Hasbrouck.
5. Continue regular facilities upgrades to better meet the needs of student families including additional unit space, more outdoor recreation equipment, and quality community space.
6. Ensure that all international students with families who apply are able to obtain housing in Hasbrouck.
7. Ensure that a higher percentage of domestic students with families who apply are able to obtain housing each year.
8. Work with Transportation Services to drastically reduce the cost of parking for residents at Hasbrouck and Maplewood and to provide free parking for visitors.
9. Work to attract a location from Ithaca CarShare at Hasbrouck.
10. Develop at least yearly input sessions from residents and work with the GPSA to continue to improve housing.

**Objective 2: Provide support to graduate and professional students who choose to live off-campus.**

*Rationale*: Currently graduate and professional students who live off campus can receive support from the Office of Fraternities, Sororities, and Independent Living. The office supports undergraduate students as well and is understaffed, with only two full-time staff members focused on off-campus housing. This office serves graduate and professional students in an advisory role that might include lease assistance, choosing an appropriate neighborhood, landlord relationships, and other aspects of renting housing in the region. Graduate and professional students find the office’s resources useful as they navigate the rental market in Ithaca.

Actions:

1. The Dean of Students Office should allocate additional resources to support the efforts of the Independent Living Office, including additional staff and outreach resources.
2. Off-campus housing resources should be better integrated into the acceptance letters and the new-student and orientation processes.
3. Ensure that departments, colleges, and the International Students and Scholars Office, the places where most graduate and professional students find advice on housing, are appropriately equipped with housing resources.
4. Consider setting up or supporting a student initiative to create a “rank-my-landlord” website to help students make better choices about picking an apartment or house.
5. Create or help departments create, when needed, a system whereby current students can visit rental properties for admitted students.

**Objective 3: Help create a better community for graduate and professional students living off campus.**

*Rationale*: Cornell has an obligation to provide quality on campus housing for students and the University houses around 12% of graduate and professional students every year (see Objective 1). The other 88% of graduate and professional students live in the the city of Ithaca or the surrounding towns and villages. Just because these students live off campus, that doesn’t mean Cornell should not try to improve the communities in which the majority of graduate and professional students live. The University’s Office of Government and Community Relations has a mission to “represent Cornell to the community, and just as importantly, the community to Cornell.” Thus, the community relations section of the Office deals with the intertwined nature of Cornell students and staff who work and study at the university and live in the community. Additionally, the GPSA has begun to work with community partners more to get the graduate and professional student perspective into the community.

Actions:

1. The Office of Community Relations should make improving housing in Tompkins County both in terms of affordability and quality a priority for interactions with the community.
2. Engage graduate and professional students in opportunities to become involved in community groups like the Rental Housing Advisory Commission, the Collegetown Neighborhood Council, Neighborhood Associations, and other community groups that address housing.
3. The GPSA should work with community groups separately and in collaboration with the Office of Community Relations on improving the affordability and quality of housing in the community.