



# OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING GUIDE

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## Contact:

If you have any questions about housing or using this guide, please email INTO Mason Student Services at [intoexp@gmu.edu](mailto:intoexp@gmu.edu)



## INTO Mason housing policy

You are required to live on campus if you are enrolled in one of the following study plans:

- International Year One
- Academic English + International Year One

However, if you are enrolled in these programs but wish to live off-campus, please email [intoexp@gmu.edu](mailto:intoexp@gmu.edu) to ask about filling out a housing waiver form.

You are not required to live on campus if you are enrolled in one of the following study plans:

- Academic English only
- Graduate Pathway
- Academic English + Graduate Pathway

However, if you are enrolled in these programs but wish to live on-campus, please ask about available space at the Mason Global Center.

The information in this guide is useful for all students to consider when choosing housing options as they complete their time in an INTO Mason program.

## Off-campus housing options

### Types of housing

There are many options for off-campus housing for rent close to George Mason University. Recommended types of housing for students include:

**House:** single building with multiple rooms. Usually shared with multiple roommates.



**Apartment/Flat:** room or suite of rooms that form one residence. Usually found in a large building containing many of these ("apartment complex").

**Townhouse:** tall, narrow, traditional row house. Usually contains two or three floors and a common wall connecting the neighboring unit.



**Duplex:** one house that has been divided into two separate living spaces. Contains a separate entrance for each unit.



### Local areas close to campus

INTO Mason recommends that students live near campus.

#### Average cost of housing in Fairfax, Virginia:

- Room in house or townhouse: \$700 - \$1,200
- 1 Bed / 1 Bath apartment: \$1,700 - \$2,200
- Shared 2 Bed / 1 Bath apartment: \$2,000 - \$2,500  
Per person: \$1,000 - \$1,250

#### Average cost of housing in Arlington, Virginia:

- Room in house or townhouse: \$800 - \$1,300
- 1 Bed / 1 Bath apartment: \$2,000 - \$2,500
- Shared 2 Bed / 1 Bath apartment: \$2,500 - \$3,000  
Per person: \$1,250 - \$1,500

### Cost of housing

The average cost of housing near campus depends on the type of housing, location, cost of utilities and whether or not you have roommates. Generally, the longer the lease, the cheaper the cost of rent per month.

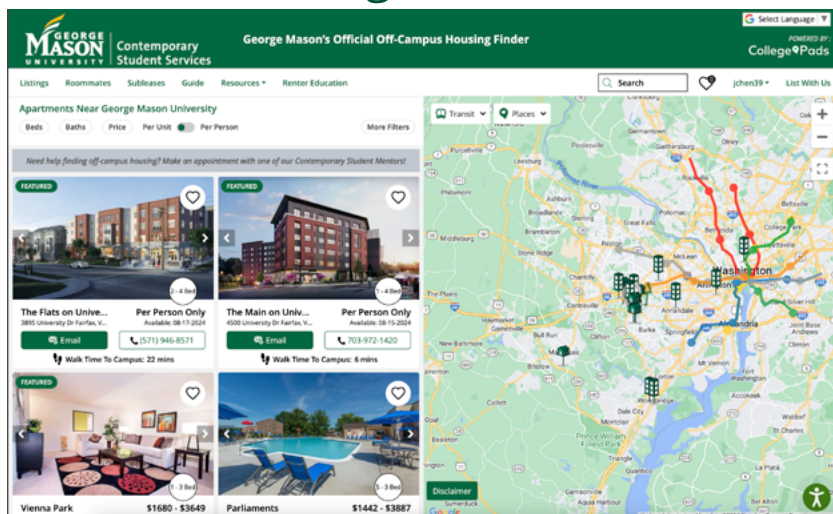
Note:

1. Classes for some Graduate Pathway programs are located at Mason Square (Arlington). If this applies to you, be sure to consider this in your search for off-campus housing.
2. The cost of housing above are estimates and subject to change.

## Finding available housing

George Mason University has an Off-Campus Student Services department, which provides resources for students searching for off-campus housing. Including the housing search website:

[och.gmu.edu](http://och.gmu.edu)



INTO Mason recommends that you use this website to find:

- Easy housing search
- Roommate listings
- Pictures and floor plans
- Buy/sell furniture
- Maps and directions
- Message board for international students

### What is a lease?

A written rental agreement between a tenant and a management company or landlord.

### Types of leases:

- **Standard:** One-year or six-month
- **Short-term/Flexible:** Three-month or month-to-month

**Hint:**  
Six-month leases are typically more expensive. Flexible leases with landlords are a popular option.

### Homestay:

A homestay is an off-campus housing option that allows a student to live with a family, typically in a fully furnished bedroom in a single family home. Living in an American home can be a rewarding opportunity for a student to experience American culture(s), improve English skills, and build friendships in the community.



## How to use the off-campus housing website

### 1. Set up a guest account and log in

- Visit <http://och.gmu.edu/>

### 2. Click on "Listing" at the top left

- Select filters of interest such as beds, price, date and more.

### 3. View housing options

- You can view the maps, amenities, and details of the property
- Click "Send Email" to ask the property about availability or other details
- Click "Property Website" for more information

## Be cautious

For safety reasons, INTO Mason does not recommend new students use [craigslist.org](http://craigslist.org) or other websites open to the public to find housing.



## Transportation options

An important question to consider when searching for off-campus housing is how you will get to your classes on campus.

- Will you have a car?
- Is your apartment on a bus route that takes you to campus?
- How long will it take to travel to campus?

If you do not plan to drive a car to campus, be sure to look for housing that is near a bus station, metro stop, shuttle stop or Bikeshare station. If you have class at a popular commute time, you need to allow extra time to get to the university.

## Parking on campus

A parking permit is required to park on campus. Please remember to display the decal on your car's rear-view mirror. You can purchase a parking permit at parking services in the Sandy Creek Shuttle Building on the Fairfax campus. For more information, visit: <http://parking.gmu.edu>.

See **page 20**  
for bus routes and a list of  
apartments near bus stops.

## Housing search checklist

Use this checklist to compare the properties that you are considering. This will also help you to compare pros and cons of each apartment.

### Location:

- How accessible is it to campus?
- Will you have convenient access to necessary conveniences like public transportation, grocery store, shops and parking?

### Layout:

- **Bathrooms**
  - How many? What size?
  - Is there a shower/tub/closet?
- **Bedrooms**
  - How many? What size?
- **Closets**
  - Where are they? What size?
- **Storage space**
  - Is there any? Where is it?
- **Laundry facilities**
  - Where are they?
  - What do they cost?
- **Parking**
  - Is there parking? Are spaces reserved? Is a permit required?
  - Is a city permit required to park on the street?
- **Kitchen appliances**
  - What is provided?
  - What will i need to buy (microwave, toaster, etc.)?

### Cost and lease information:

- How much is the monthly rent?
- Are there any utilities included in the rent? What is the average cost of utilities?
- What are the move-in/move-out fees and deposits that are required?
- Are sublets allowed? If so, is there a fee?
- When does the lease begin and end?
- What are the fees associated with terminating the lease early?
- When do i have to give notice to re-new or move out?

### Safety and security:

- Check windows and locks to make sure they work properly.
- Check the locks in the apartment. Are there locks on the bedroom doors?
- Do all smoke detectors work properly? Who is responsible for changing batteries in the detectors?
- Do all doors completely close and lock?

## Renting an apartment

### Required documents

After choosing an off-campus housing option that fits your needs and budget, you can apply for a lease. If you plan to live with a roommate, you typically must apply for the lease at the same time as your roommate in order to qualify for the apartment.

The lease application process is different everywhere, but you will usually need:

- An online application
- Supporting documentation, including a copy of your passport, I-20 and visa
- A small fee (in some cases, the fee is waived for students)

**Be prepared to pay the first month's rent and security deposit at the same time, which is often equal to one month's rent.**

If you do not have a Social Security Number or credit history, the security deposit may be slightly larger. You may also need to pay deposits for utilities, such as telephone and electricity.

### Contacting leasing offices

Do your research on what type of apartment is available online first and know what you want before contacting the leasing office. You can send an email or call directly during business hours.

#### Questions you could ask:

- What documents do you need from me in order to lease an apartment?
- Are any utilities included in the rent?
- Are there any other additional costs I should know about?
- What is the longest lease I can apply for?
- Can the application fee be waived because I am a George Mason university student?
- How long does it take to travel to George Mason university using public transportation?
- What other amenities are in walking distance? (grocery stores, banks, etc.)

See **Guide to rental market terms** on **page 14** and **Guide to rental listing abbreviations** on **page 16** for helpful information.

## Making housing plans

### When should you start looking for an apartment?

You should start researching places to live as soon as possible! INTO Mason staff strongly encourage students to find housing before arriving in the us. Leasing offices typically know which units will be available for rent two months in advance.

### Short-term housing

Some students choose to arrive at least one week early and stay short-term in a Hotel so they can see places in person. If you choose to do this, please do your research first to know which places you want to visit before you arrive. You can book online to reserve a short-term hotel stay in the area.

Some hotel options are below. This is not a guarantee that the hotels will have rooms available. You can find other hotel options at: <https://Masonfamily.gmu.edu/where-to-stay/>

### Fairfax hotels

#### Comfort Inn University Center

11180 Fairfax Boulevard  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
3 miles from Fairfax Campus  
(CUE Bus service available)

#### SpringHill Suites Fairfax

11191 Waples Mill Road  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
3.6 miles from Fairfax Campus  
(CUE Bus service available)

#### Best Western Fairfax

3535 Chain Bridge Road  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
2.5 miles from Fairfax Campus  
(CUE Bus service available)

### Arlington hotels

#### The Westin – Arlington Gateway Virginia

801 North Glebe Road  
Arlington, VA 22203  
.9 mile from Arlington Campus  
(ART Bus service available)

#### Hilton Arlington Virginia Hotel

950 North Stafford Street  
Arlington, VA 22203  
.6 mile from Arlington Campus  
(ART Bus service available)

#### Residence Inn Arlington Hotel

1401 North Adams Street  
Arlington, VA 22201  
1.1 miles from Arlington Campus  
(ART Bus service available)

## Finding roommates

If you would like to live with a roommate or multiple roommates, you should get to know them first. Here are a few important questions you should consider before signing a lease with someone new.

## Questions to ask yourself:

- **Age** - Would you like to live with roommates who are the same age as you?
- **Number** - How many people do you want to share your home with?
- **Lifestyle** - What are your study habits and schedule during the day and night? What are your preferences about pets, smoking or parties?
- **Rent** - What are you willing to pay by yourself towards the cost of rent?
- **Length of time** - How long do you plan to live in this home?
- **Responsibility** - Are you willing to put your name on the utilities bill, lease and security deposit? Are you willing to have your roommate's name on these items?
- **Sharing** - Will you share food and supplies (toiletries, laundry detergent, etc.)?
- **Privacy** - Do you like your own space, and if so, how will you set boundaries for personal space and time?
- **Expectations** - Will there be rules for your living space, and how will you communicate these to each other?



## Questions to ask a potential roommate:

- What is your level of importance of household and personal security?
- Do you lock the doors while at home? Are you concerned if you have not heard from your roommate in over 48 hours?
- How important is a clean household? How frequently do you expect your roommate to participate in household cleaning?
- Are you OK with personal property being left in common areas?
- Do you plan to share any household items or keep everything separate?
- What type of relationship would you like with your new roommate? Are you looking for someone to hang out with or someone to help pay the bills?
- Are political or religious beliefs important to you?
- Do you smoke? Is smoking an issue? Are certain areas off limits or designated for smoking?

## Guide to rental market terms

**Amenities** - The conveniences offered by a landlord to a tenant.

**Bank check or money order** - A check that is purchased from a bank with cash.

**Credit check** - Most landlords will conduct a credit check to get a sense of your ability to pay the rent. You will be required to fill out forms to authorize a credit check. Any personal information will be kept confidential.

**Co-signer consignee** - A co-signer agrees to share responsibility for the lease.

A co-signer might be the person you're sharing the apartment with or a family member who agrees to co-sign to help your rental application win approval from a prospective landlord. If you have bad credit or no rental history, you may be required to have a co-signer or guarantor.

**Down payment** - A portion of the fees given to a realtor or landlord before signing a lease to secure an apartment.

**Efficiency or studio** - An efficiency or studio apartment has a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, but all in one room. The kitchen in an efficiency is usually smaller than the kitchen in a studio.

**Furnished/unfurnished** - The room or apartment contains some furniture. Unfurnished means that the apartment does not contain any furniture.

**Landlord** - The person who offers the apartment for rent. The landlord might be the owner of the building or someone hired by the property owner to manage apartment rentals.

**Lease** - A legal contract stating the dates, price, rules and other stipulations of the rental agreement between an individual and a management company or landlord. A lease must be in writing to be valid.

## Guide to rental market terms

**Normal wear and tear** - This refers to the reasonable degree of damage that is expected during the course of a lease, such as minor carpet wear, faded paint, or a leaky faucet. A security deposit cannot be withheld to cover repairs and improvements for normal wear and tear.

**Security deposit** - A security deposit, often equal to one month's rent, is money paid to the landlord before you move in. It covers any damages that might occur while you are renting the apartment. When your lease ends, the security deposit should be returned to you, minus any amount needed to cover damages beyond normal wear and tear.

**Studio or efficiency apartment** - A one-room apartment with a bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen all in one space. The kitchen in an efficiency apartment is usually smaller than the kitchen in a studio.

**Sublease or sublet** - Sometimes renters find, for whatever reason, that they can not stay in the apartment for the full term of the lease. They often try to sublet the apartment to another qualified tenant for the remainder of the lease term. Landlords are required to cooperate by approving a qualified tenant to sublet when the original tenant needs to vacate the apartment before the end of the lease, if a qualified replacement tenant is available.

**Tenancy-at-will or month-to-month** - This agreement, which might be formalized with a written agreement, continues from month to month for an indefinite period until either the landlord or tenant gives proper notice to end it.

**Tenant** - A person who rents an apartment from a landlord.

**Utilities** - A general term that refers to basic services as water, heat and electricity.



## Guide to rental listing abbreviations

Here are a few abbreviations you might find in apartment listings during your off-campus housing search. These abbreviations may vary, but the ones listed here are the most common.

½ bath	toilet and sink only	<b>g-rng</b>	gas range or stove
¾ bath	toilet, sink, shower OR	<b>hb</b>	half bath (toilet, sink,
bath		shower)	
<b>a/c</b>	air conditioning	<b>hdwd</b>	hardwood (usually floors)
<b>apt</b>	apartment	<b>hw</b>	hot water
<b>ba</b>	bath	<b>lrg</b>	large
<b>balc</b>	balcony	<b>lft</b>	loft
<b>bb</b>	baseboard heat (electric)	<b>lr</b>	living room
<b>bd/br</b>	bedroom	<b>mbr</b>	master bedroom
<b>bkyd</b>	backyard	<b>mo</b>	month
<b>bsmt</b>	basement or cellar	<b>mwv</b>	microwave
<b>cac</b>	central air conditioning	<b>ngs</b>	natural gas
<b>cbl</b>	cable hookup	<b>ofc</b>	office or study
<b>cpt</b>	carpet	<b>pqt</b>	parquet (a type of wood
<b>cent h/a</b>	central heat/air	floor)	
conditioning		<b>prkg</b>	parking
<b>dk</b>	deck	<b>prv</b>	private
<b>dbl</b>	double	<b>rdr</b>	radiator (a heating unit)
<b>dr</b>	dining room	<b>ref</b>	refrigerator
<b>eik</b>	eat-in kitchen	<b>scrnd prch</b>	screened porch
<b>ele</b>	electric	<b>sq ft</b>	square feet
<b>elv</b>	elevator	<b>str</b>	street parking
<b>d/w</b>	dishwasher	<b>w/d</b>	clothes washer and dryer
<b>fa or fha</b>	forced air heat	<b>wkg</b>	working
<b>fp or fpl</b>	fireplace	<b>wsh</b>	clothes washer
<b>full bath</b>	toilet, sink, shower,	<b>wtr</b>	water
bathtub		<b>w/w crpt</b>	wall-to-wall carpeting
<b>gmt kit</b>	gourmet kitchen		

## Sample housing budget



### What is your budget?

Before you start searching for off-campus housing, you need to evaluate how much you can afford to spend on housing and related expenses. A great first step is filling out a budget worksheet. Keep in mind which items are fixed costs (must have you cannot change) and which costs are discretionary (you can change if and how much you spend on these categories).

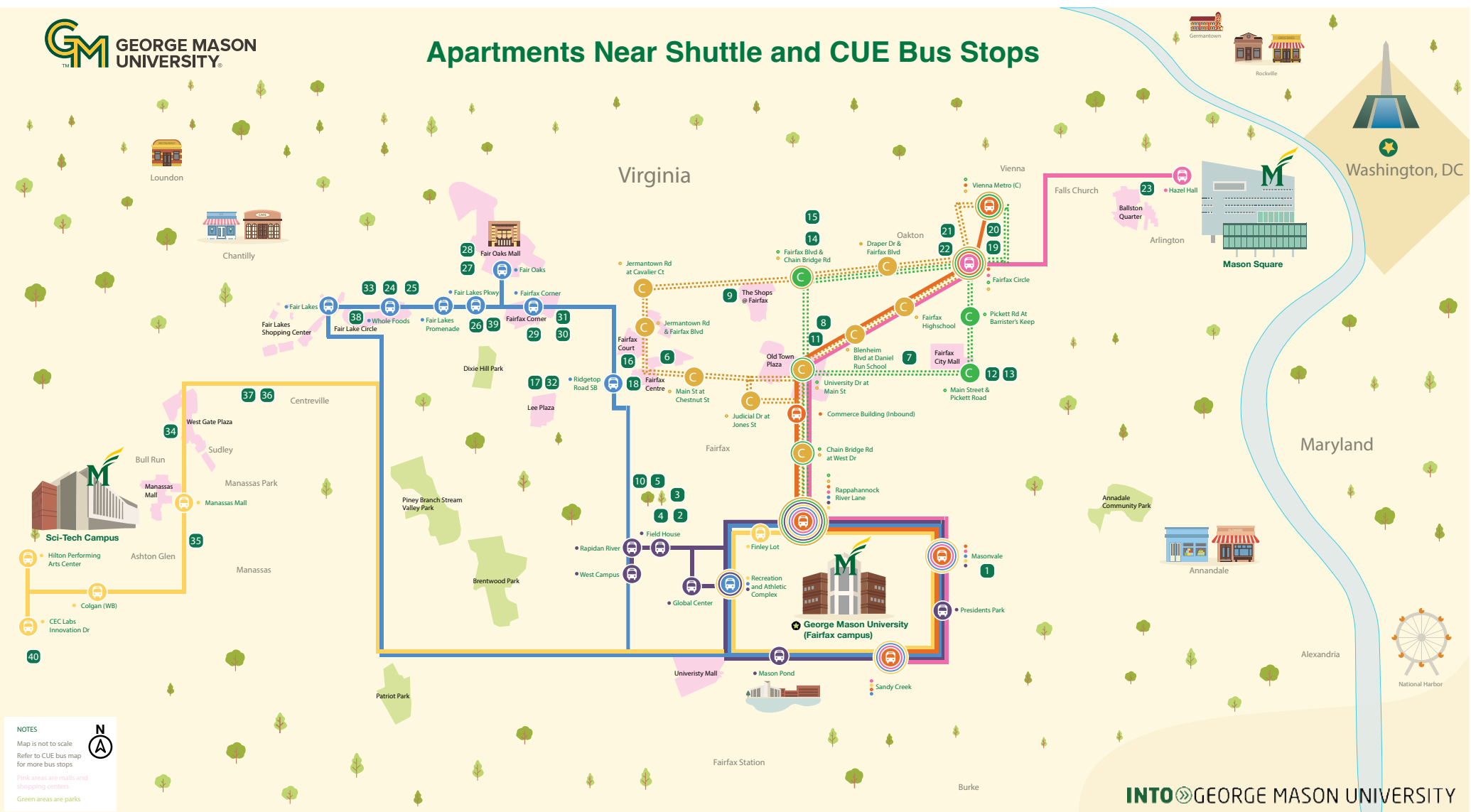
INCOME		
One-Time	Monthly	Total
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scholarships \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Grants \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Monetary Gifts \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Personal Savings \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Loans \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Other \$ _____</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Paycheck \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Allowance (parents/others) \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Stipend \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Other \$ _____</li> </ul>	
<b>Subtotal: One-Time Income</b> \$ _____	<b>+ Subtotal: Monthly Income</b> \$ _____	<b>=Total Income:</b> \$ _____
EXPENSES		
One-Time	Monthly	Total
<b>School-Related:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tuition \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Fees \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Books &amp; Supplies \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Meal Plan (optional) \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Univ. Parking Permit \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Other \$ _____</li> </ul>	<b>Housing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rent \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Electric/Gas \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Telephone \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Cable \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Water/Sewer/Trash \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Yard Maintenance \$ _____</li> <li>▪ High Speed Internet \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Other \$ _____</li> </ul>	
<b>Housing-Related: (See descriptions on Page X)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Security Deposit \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Move-In Fees \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Utility Deposits/Installation                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electric \$ _____</li> <li>Water/Sewer \$ _____</li> <li>Gas \$ _____</li> <li>Cable/Satellite \$ _____</li> <li>Telephone \$ _____</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Renter's Insurance \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Furnishings (buy/rent)* \$ _____</li> </ul>	<b>Insurance:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health Insurance \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Vehicle Insurance \$ _____</li> </ul>	
	<b>Transportation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gasoline \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Vehicle Maintenance \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Parking \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Public Transportation \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Other \$ _____</li> </ul>	
	<b>Household:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Food* \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Toiletries \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Laundry/Dry Cleaning* \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Other \$ _____</li> </ul>	
	<b>Recreation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eating Out* \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Entertainment* \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Trips* \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Other* \$ _____</li> </ul>	
	<b>Clothing:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clothes, Shoes, etc.* \$ _____</li> </ul>	
	<b>Financial Commitments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Credit Card Payments \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Car Payment \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Loan Payment \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Membership Dues \$ _____</li> <li>▪ Gifts (birthdays, etc.)* \$ _____</li> </ul>	
	<b>Savings</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monthly Savings \$ _____</li> </ul>	
<b>Subtotal: One-Time Expenses</b> \$ _____	<b>+ Subtotal: Monthly Expenses</b> \$ _____	<b>=Total Expenses</b> \$ _____
<b>TOTAL Income – Expenses</b>		
(Don't forget, expenses can't be more than your income, so cut back on discretionary items as needed to balance your budget.)		\$ _____

## NOTES

Please use these pages to write down any important notes or facts during your housing search.

## NOTES

# Apartments Near Shuttle and CUE Bus Stops



**NOTES**  
 Map is not to scale  
 Refer to CUE bus map for more bus stops  
 Pink areas are malls and shopping centers  
 Green areas are parks

- Fairfax/SciTech Route
- Sandy Creek/Vienna Metro
- Gunston Mason
- Fairfax/Arlington Route
- West Campus
- CUE Bus: Green Route
- CUE Bus: Gold Route

## Apartments

- |                                       |                                    |                                      |  |   |  |  |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Masonvale Apartments         | <b>6</b> The Moxley Apartments     | <b>11</b> The Flats on University    | <b>16</b> The Reserve at Fairfax Corner Apartments | <b>21</b> Fairfax Circle Villa Apartments | <b>26</b> The Jefferson at Fair Oaks       | <b>31</b> Camden Fairfax Corner Apartments | <b>36</b> Woodway at Trinity Centre   |
| <b>2</b> The Main on University       | <b>7</b> Fairfax Square Apartments | <b>12</b> Margate Manor              | <b>17</b> Ellipse at Fairfax Corner                | <b>22</b> Scout on the Circle Apartments  | <b>27</b> Camden Monument Place Apartments | <b>32</b> Finley at Fairfax Corner         | <b>37</b> The Emerson                 |
| <b>3</b> Eaves Fairfax City           | <b>8</b> Layton Hall               | <b>13</b> Pinewood Plaza Apartments  | <b>18</b> The Ridgewood by Windsor Apartments      | <b>23</b> Mason Square Towers             | <b>28</b> Gables Centerpointe              | <b>33</b> The Julian at Fair Lakes         | <b>38</b> The Julian at Fair Lakes    |
| <b>4</b> Belmont at One University    | <b>9</b> Cardinal Court Apartments | <b>14</b> Fairfax Village Apartments | <b>19</b> Regent's Park Apartments                 | <b>24</b> Windsor Oak Creek Apartments    | <b>29</b> Vista Fairfax Corner             | <b>34</b> Barrington Apartments            | <b>39</b> The Courts at Fair Oaks     |
| <b>5</b> Suburbia Fairfax Development | <b>10</b> Briarcliff Townhomes     | <b>15</b> Oakton Parks Apartment     | <b>20</b> Dwell Vienna Metro Apartments            | <b>25</b> Halstead Fair Oaks              | <b>30</b> Residences at Government Center  | <b>35</b> Masons Keep                      | <b>40</b> The Regency Apartment Homes |

### Want to find out more?

If you would like to find out more about any of our programs or services, please visit our website. You can also contact us via email or phone, or visit one of our education counselors in your home country.

### Inquiries and applications

**INTO George Mason University**  
4400 University Drive, MS 6D11  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
USA

T: +1 703 993 4501

F: +1 703 993 4502

E: [INTOadmissions@gmu.edu](mailto:INTOadmissions@gmu.edu)

W: [admissions.gmu.edu](http://admissions.gmu.edu)

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