

Living **Green** Off-Campus

Finding a **green** apartment

As we work our way through the spring semester many students are trying to figure out where they plan to live next fall. Some are thinking about staying on-campus, while a number are thinking about renting an off-campus apartment for 2009/2010. If you're in the second group, have you and your roommates thought about how to live a greener life when you get an apartment next year?

Here are a few things to consider and/or ask the landlord as you embark on your search for off-campus housing.

Could you walk or ride a bike to campus? Reducing your carbon footprint can start by using those built in locomotors called your legs.

Does the apartment have a programmable thermostat? Saving energy can be a really simple thing to do with this kind of thermostat. As Ronco President Ron Popeil says "set it and forget it."



How much heat did the rental use last year? Heating bills tend to be the 2nd biggest expense tenants will pay every month. If the rental is poorly insulated or the furnace hasn't been maintained you could wind up paying larger than necessary heating bills. You can contact the utility company (gas or electric) to find out what it cost to heat the unit during the previous winter. If the unit is heated with oil talk to the landlord or the previous tenants (if possible) to see how much oil they had to purchase during the winter.

What kind of water conservation devices are in the unit? Are there low flow toilets and energy efficient shower heads in the apartment? Simple things like limiting the length of your shower by 5 minutes will save 20 to 30 gallons of water for every shower.

What has the landlord done to make the apartment greener? Old and new apartments alike can benefit from a variety of green initiatives. While it may not be possible to install solar panels or wind turbines, the owner can make sure that the basement and attic (if applicable) are insulated. Additionally, all light switches and wall outlets on the exterior facing walls can have insulating pads installed. Windows can be checked for air leakage and insulated as needed. When was the last time the water heater, furnace or A/C unit was serviced? When these units aren't running a peak efficiency, you're wasting money and energy.



Once you move off-campus, you can play an important role as well.

- Make sure that trash and recycling is properly disposed of every week. Don't mix it together.
- Limit the amount of water you use: including toilet use, showers, running water unnecessarily.
- Make sure you program the thermostat to run the furnace or A/C only when necessary.
- When the weather is warm, open the windows to allow fresh air in to limit A/C use.
- When the weather is cool/cold, keep windows and doors closed, put on a sweatshirt and turn the furnace down a degree or two. Remember it all makes a difference.
- Try walking, biking or carpooling to campus a few days a week.