Downtown Housing for Graduate Students

Survey Report

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents .................................................................................................1
Introduction and Summary ....................................................................................2
Background ...........................................................................................................2
Creation, Methodology, and Distribution ..............................................................3
Questions and Aims ..............................................................................................4
Responses and Results .........................................................................................9
Findings and Recommendations ..........................................................................14
Introduction and Summary

According to the survey hereby discussed, University of Illinois Springfield graduate students desire housing in the downtown Springfield area. The survey itself attracted an outstanding 16% response rate (309 of 1,927) with a 14% completion rate (275 of 1,927). The survey results, in general, shows that the majority of these respondents: do not work in the downtown area; are currently renting an apartment; view the location of their housing in respect to their work and school as very important; and most importantly for the purposes of this report, would be interested in renting from the university if university owned single, shared, or family style apartments were offered in downtown Springfield. This survey thus supports the idea of having a University of Illinois campus in the City of Springfield.

Background

The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Office is considering proposing an expansion of the University of Illinois Springfield into the downtown Springfield area. One component of this expansion effort consists of offering university owned housing for graduate students working for the various governmental organizations, auxiliary organizations, other employers in the downtown area, or for the university itself. There are a substantial amount of UIS graduate students working for the legislature as part of the Graduate Public Service Intern (GPSI) and Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program (ILSIP) whom would benefit from university owned housing near their place of work. Similarly, university owned housing in the downtown area would also benefit admissions to the university as a recruitment tool for professionals working downtown. In order to field interest in such a project, under the direction of the Vice Chancellor for student affairs, the following survey was created.
Creation, Method, and Distribution

The survey creation, method, and distribution were completed by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Office. The Student Affairs Intern entered the material into the Survey Monkey survey engine on January 25, 2012. The survey was distributed via email to all registered graduate students; race, ethnicity, gender, and age were not controlled. The email addresses used in the distribution were the graduate students’ university email addresses with the ‘@uis.edu’ domain; courtesy of the Registrar. There were no incentives offered for the completion of the survey. The survey was distributed three times via email to all 1,927 participants; first on January 30, second on February 6, and third on February 13. The survey closed on February 17 and the data was extracted. The survey questions and the aims of each question are presented below.
Questions and Aims

The following information was entered information into the Survey Monkey survey engine:

UIS is considering the possibility of offering housing to UIS students who are working in the Springfield downtown area. In order to determine whether there is a need or interest we would ask that you complete the following survey.

This explanation appeared on page 1 of the survey so the participants of the survey understand its purpose. This explanation required no response and the participants were expected to click “next” to continue the survey.

The second page contained the following question:

1. Do you currently work in downtown Springfield?
   Yes
   No

This question aims to determine the number of UIS graduate students working in downtown Springfield. The participants were asked ‘yes’ or ‘no’: ‘yes’ meaning the participant does work downtown; ‘no’ meaning the participant does not work downtown. The purpose of this question was to field the necessity for downtown housing for UIS graduate students working in the area.

The third page consisted of the following questions:

2. Do you currently rent a home or apartment near downtown Springfield?
   Own a home
   Rent a home
   Rent an apartment

For those students living in the downtown area, this question provides an understanding of what type of housing the participants currently have if, indeed, they live near the downtown area. The options were as follows: whether they ‘own a home’, are currently ‘renting a home’ or house, or are currently ‘renting an apartment’. The
responses show the current living situation of the participants. The following question requests the amount per month the participants currently pay for rent.

3. If you currently rent, what is the approximate rent amount per month?
   - $350-$500
   - $500-$650
   - $650-$800
   - Over $800

   If the participants are indeed renting, the participants were requested to disclose an approximate amount they pay per month. The amounts listed are: ‘$350-$500’, ‘$500-$650’, ‘$650-$800’, or ‘over $800’ per month. The responses from the participants provide a range of possible renting prices for university owned housing.

   The fourth page consisted of the following questions:

4. How important was having housing near where you work in making a decision to attend a UIS graduate program?
   - Very important
   - Somewhat important
   - Not important

   This question asks the importance of both work and housing locations in the participants’ decision to attend a UIS graduate program. The options were: ‘very important’, ‘somewhat important’ and ‘not important’. Considering the various responses, this question aims to display the decision-making process of the participant while weighing such factors as where they work, where they live, and their decision to attend UIS for graduate school.

5. If there were an opportunity to live in university owned housing would you be interested in renting from the university?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Possibly

   This question thus asks if the opportunity presented itself, would the participants be interested in living in housing owned by the university and renting from the university. The responses to the questions aim to portray that: ‘yes’ the participant would be interested in living in university owned housing and renting from the university; ‘no’ the participant has no interest in living in university owned housing nor renting from the university; or the participant would ‘possibly’ be interested in living in university owned
housing and renting from the university. This question aims at testing graduate student reaction to the opportunity to live in downtown Springfield in housing owned by the University. It is understood that the housing downtown would be dealt with in a similar fashion, financially, as the housing on campus; the housing is rented on a semester basis by contract.

6. If you are interested in university housing are you interested in sharing an apartment with another graduate student or would you prefer to have a single or family unit?
   
   Single  Share the apartment with another UIS student  Family apartment

The above question tests the type of housing the participants would be interested in if, indeed, they were interested in living in housing owned by the university and renting from the university. The options are: living in a ‘single’ sized apartment with one’s self only; living in a ‘shared’ apartment ‘with another UIS student’; or living in a ‘family’ sized apartment where the student may live with his/her family. This question provides the necessary information concerning possible sizes and types of housing the university would provide for graduate students living downtown.

7. If you are interested in staying in university owned housing, what amenities are non-negotiable? Some amenities might be:

   Parking,
   laundry,
   full kitchen,
   others (please list)

   2 bathrooms,
   kitchenette facilities
   security

The aforementioned question gauges the types of amenities the participants view as non-negotiable. A list of possible amenities was provided along with a comment section where the participants may list other amenities they view as non-negotiable. The provided list of amenities consists of: ‘parking’ where students may be able to house their vehicles or other modes of transportation; ‘laundry’ facilities that students can use; a ‘full kitchen’ which students can utilize in substitution for university food service; an amount
of full ‘bathrooms’ or restroom facilities for students; a ‘kitchenette’ or small/compact
desktop kitchen in substitution for a full kitchen or university food service; providing university
‘security’ for the housing complex. The ‘others (please list)’ section gives the participants
the opportunity to list other non-negotiable amenities not listed in the options.

8. What would you be willing to pay in rent per month for downtown university housing that provides your desired amenities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>$500-$650</th>
<th>$650-$800</th>
<th>$800-$1000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared</td>
<td>$500-$650</td>
<td>$650-$800</td>
<td>$800-$1000 (per person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>$650-$800</td>
<td>$800-$1000</td>
<td>$1000-$1200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking the types of housing and amenities provided, the participants were asked what amount, per month, they would be willing to pay for housing provided by the university. The options were organized by type of housing—i.e. single, shared, or family—along with a list of three possible amount ranges respective of each type of housing. For the ‘single’ housing, the participants were asked to choose between the following amount ranges per month: $500-$650, $650-$800, or $800-$1,000 per month. For ‘shared’ housing, the participants were asked to choose between the following amount ranges per month, per person: $500-$650, $650-$800, or $800-$1,000. For the ‘family’ style housing, the participants were asked to choose between the following amount ranges per month: $650-$800, $800-$1,000, or $1,000-$1,200. The amounts listed are estimates and by no means binding, and are in respect to each style of housing—taking into consideration the amenities that would be provided as well.

The fifth, and final, page of this survey contained the following question:

9. Please indicate whether you are employed through any of the following UIS programs
   - On campus as UIS grad hourly employee
   - Graduate Public Service Intern (GPSI)
   - Graduate Assistant (GA, TA, RA, PGA)
None of the above

This question finalizes the survey and asks whether or not the participant is employed by the university in some affect. The options provided where: ‘on campus as UIS grad hourly employee’; graduate public service intern (GPSI); graduate assistant (Ga, TA, RA, PGA); or ‘none of the above’. The ‘none of the above’ question takes into consideration any other possible affiliation with the university as an employee and/or graduate student instead of merely ‘not employed’ or affiliated with the university. This question concluded the survey and the results were sent to Survey Monkey to be compiled for collection and analysis. The survey responses and results are given below.
Responses and Results

Question 1. Do you currently work in downtown Springfield?

- Yes: 35.6% (199)
- No: 64.4% (199)

308 (16%) answered the question. 1 participant skipped the question.

Question 2. Do you currently rent a home or apartment near downtown Springfield?

- Own a home: 17.2% (30)
- Rent a home: 18.2% (35)
- Rent an apartment: 54.6% (124)

192 (10%) answered the question. 117 (6%) skipped the question.
171 (9%) answered the question. 138 (7%) skipped the question.

272 (14%) answered the question. 37 (2%) skipped the question.
275 (14%) answered the question. 34 (2%) skipped the question.

234 (12%) answered the question. 75 (4%) skipped the question.
231 (12%) answered the question. 78 (4%) skipped the question.

Others (Please List) responses:

Pets- 3.8% (9)

Utilities included such as: Water, Electricity, High-Speed Internet, Dishwasher, and Garbage Disposal- 3% (7)

Recreational/Gym Facilities- 0.004% (1)

Non-Smoking- 3% (7)
232 (12%) answered the question. 77 (4%) skipped the question.

269 (14%) answered the question. 40 (2%) skipped the question.
Findings and Recommendations

The University of Illinois Springfield should expand into the downtown Springfield area. The first step of this expansion, as this survey report suggests and the survey data shows, should begin with the development of housing for UIS graduate students. Of the 275 participants who answered the direct question of university owned housing downtown, 78% expressed interest. The participants expressed interested in all forms of housing, especially in single apartments, will all the amenities such as, but no limited to, internet, cable, security, parking, and a kitchen. This graduate student interest in downtown housing, regardless of whether they are employed by the university through any of the graduate/internship programs or have other sources of income is the first step in proving the desire for expansion into the downtown area.

Therefore, to meet this desire, the University of Illinois Springfield should begin expanding into the downtown area. The expansion would have to occur naturally and over time, but should begin with housing. Having UIS housing in the downtown area would benefit the university by increasing UIS presence in the city of Springfield generally, increasing the marketability of the various Graduate and Undergraduate programs to individuals already working downtown, and stimulating the downtown Springfield economy by adding a more diverse population living in the area. It is time for UIS to extend its reach beyond the geographic confinement and landscape of the campus itself by offering university owned housing in the downtown Springfield area. This expansion would truly give the University of Illinois its City of Springfield campus.