Housing Info

Types of buildings

A lot of rentable housing in Madison outside of downtown is in double- or triple-deckers or single-family homes (some later divided into apartments), built in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. It can be hard to find one-bedroom apartments in areas where this type of housing predominates. Downtown Madison has plenty of apartment buildings, and there are several newer apartment buildings along Washington Ave and Monroe Street, and near Hilldale on University Ave. Most buildings built in the past few years will be out of budget for most graduate students.

Lease Duration

The vast majority of leases in Madison, and especially near campus, go from August to August.

University Housing

Most students live in private housing, but the university also offers convenient housing at Eagle Heights and the Harvey Street Apartments.

Finding Housing

You can look on Craigslist, Zillow, Apartments.com, or Madison Campus and Downtown Apartments. Or you can look up individual buildings you are interested in.

If you’re interested in boarding with other La Follette students, consider posting in the La Follette Facebook Group.

Tenant Resources

Your landlord is required to provide a safe, healthy home with working heat and plumbing. Your apartment should also have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. It should be free from pests. Do not hesitate to seek help if these requirements are not met.

Tenant Resource Center – Provides a variety of services to renters, awareness of tenant rights, conflict mediation and attorney references.

The city’s website also offers resources for tenants.
Also, you should Google your prospective landlord before signing a lease. Bad reviews are to be expected, but watch out for anything alarming.

**Madison Neighborhoods**

**Undergraduate Neighborhoods**

Many graduate students wish to avoid living near undergraduates. The following map shows roughly where the highest concentration of undergraduates live, shaded in pink.

**Mifflin/State/Langdon**

Lots of undergraduate housing, but very close to campus. Close to many bars, and restaurants.

**University Ave/Hilldale/Near West**
Extends fairly far west of campus, but connected by main thoroughfare of University Ave. Older rental housing, with several apartment buildings, is abundant along Old University; Hilldale has some new high-rises. This area is near the Hilldale Shopping Center, Target, and Whole Foods. There are fewer bars and restaurants in this area. The university-owned single graduate-student Harvey Street apartments are just off of University Ave.

**Eagle Heights**

The largest area of university-owned graduate housing. This is a quite area with no bars, restaurants, or retail nearby. It is adjacent to the Lakeshore Nature Preserve, which has beautiful trails for walks and runs.

**Greenbush**

This neighborhood is just south of campus and consists of many old houses with a few apartment buildings. The proportion of undergraduates decreases as you go further south. It is a short walk to campus. This area is also close to Vilas park and the UW Arboretum.

**Capitol Square/First Settlement/Bassett**

Downtown area with lots of high-rises. Close to many bars, restaurants, coffee shops, law firms, and banks.

**Mansion Hill**

Old neighborhood with some very nice houses and several old apartment buildings. This is where the undergraduate-heavy Langdon neighborhood transitions to the more professional isthmus area. This area is very close to the capitol.

**James Madison Park / Old Market Place**

This area is, of course, near the beautiful James Madison Park. East Johnson Street has several bars and restaurants. Festival Foods is nearby and has a mezzanine bar, so you can have a drink and watch people shop for groceries.

**Williamson Street/Atwood Avenue**

A relatively long walk from campus, this area has a lot of old Victorians and a handful of apartment buildings. Willy Street has a lot of bars, restaurants, and retail and is home to the Willy Street Coop.

**Vilas / Monroe**
There are many houses and a fewer apartment buildings. Monroe street is home to Trader Joe’s, a great record store, two oriental rug stores and several coffee shops, restaurants, and more relaxed bars. This area is also close to Vilas Park and the UW Arboretum.

**Transportation**

Check Google maps to see how long it would take to bus/bike/walk/drive from a neighborhood or prospective apartment to campus or other important locations (bars, grocery stores, coffee shops, jobs).

**Car Ownership**

Many La Follette students do not own cars, and many do. Car ownership is definitely not necessary to enjoy living in Madison.

**Parking**

Parking can be expensive downtown. If your landlord does not offer parking, you can find a spot from city garages, private garages, or on Craigslist. On-street parking can be a cheaper option if you are not downtown; this requires an affordable permit.

**Buses**

Every UW–Madison student, including La Follette Students, are provided with a free bus pass that allows for unlimited rides. This pass is provided by Associated Students of Madison (ASM) and paid for by segregated fees paid by each student with their tuition.

Madison has a decent bus system. University Avenue, Monroe Street, Regent Street, Park Street, and all of downtown and the isthmus are well served by bus routes.

**Bicycling**

**Buying a Bike**
Cheap used bicycles can be bought from the nonprofit Dream Bikes or the city-owned Madison Bicycle Center. You can also build a bike for free (donation suggested) with Freewheel Bikes. These places also offer cheap service for bikes.

New and more expensive bikes can be bought from REI, Erik’s, Trek, or many local bike shops. These businesses also service bikes.

**Renting a Bike**
Many bike shops also offer seasonal rentals of bikes.

**Public Bike Sharing**
The city has contracted with BCycle (a Trek subsidiary) to offer electric bike sharing. There are many BCycle stations throughout Madison where you can check out a bike, typically for no more than an hour. UW students can get discounted memberships for BCycle. If you have a membership, there is no additional charge to check out a bike if the bike is returned within an hour.

All BCycle bikes are electric, but still require pedaling. They are a speedy way to get to campus or shopping locations. You likely will not break a sweat going up a hill.

Because BCycle bikes can be checked out at one station and checked in at another, they can be very convenient for one-way trips, or trips where you want to bike to a location and walk or bus home, or vice versa.

**Bike paths**

Madison has many good bike paths that can get you through the city while spending less time on streets. Many streets also have bike lanes. Some are very nice (like University Ave eastbound), and others will make you fear for your life as buses and cars pass you on either side (like University Ave westbound).

The city bike paths also connect to state bike trails that can take you out of the city and into the countryside (probably for fun not transport). The Capital City Trail is a nice loop along the city’s southern edge, the Badger State Trail will take you as far south as Illinois, the Military Ridge trail will take you west as far as Dodgeville, the US Highway 12 Path will take you northwest along Highway 12. The Glacial Drumlin trail, which starts in Cottage Grove and does not connect to Madison, will take you east as far as Waukesha.

**Other**

Uber and Lyft both operate in Madison.

You can get cheap short-term car rentals from Zipcar, which offers steep discounts to UW students.

You can also get a ride from a friend.

Or you can walk.

**Banking**

If you’re looking for a Madison bank, UW Credit Union has the best branch service, with several locations near campus. Use LSSA’s referral code (7B65B37C33) when setting up your account and you and LSSA will both get $50.