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**Innovation &
Research Lab**

Exploring Off-Campus Housing Options Available to Undergraduate Students at the University of California, Davis

Presented to:

ASUCD Housing Advising for Undergraduate Students (HAUS)

Presented by:

ASUCD Innovation and Research Lab (IRL)

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Housing Project Survey Team

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Introduction & Objectives

As of 2024, UC Davis guarantees housing for incoming fall-quarter freshmen and transfer students. However, undergraduate students who do not meet these criteria must seek off-campus housing options with little resources. To bridge this gap, the Innovation and Research Lab (IRL), alongside ASUCD Housing Advising for Undergraduate Students (HAUS) and ASUCD Student Advocate Office (SAO), was tasked with compiling updated housing information to improve housing transparency.

The primary objective of this project is to provide recommendations to HAUS by analyzing market trends in off-campus rent and evaluating student opinions, specifically focusing on amenities and quality of life.

Methodology

The data presented in this report comes from an anonymous survey conducted through Qualtrics among the undergraduate student body at UC Davis. Participants were recruited via social media posts, flyers, and in-person tabling by IRL members. As an incentive, 300 randomly selected respondents were awarded \$5.00 gift cards provided by the ASUCD Coffee House. The survey was available for responses from January 26th to February 9th, 2024, resulting in a total of 442 responses.

The survey consisted of four sections: general housing information, transportation, overall satisfaction ratings, ASUCD HAUS. Respondents who failed to meet the criteria of being an undergraduate student and living off-campus were directed to the end of the survey, with their responses excluded from the final dataset. Additionally, responses with less than a 10% progress rate were removed. Bus line data was transformed into a binary matrix, where 1 denoted bus line usage by the respondent and 0 indicated non-usage. Rating questions were conducted utilizing the 5-point Likert scale. The final dataset contains 308 observations and 80 columns.

The data was cleaned, analyzed, and visualized using Excel, R, and Tableau. The interactive Tableau dashboard can be accessed on Tableau Public, via this [link](#).

Key Findings

Finding #1: As the number of housemates a student has increases, their monthly rent decreases, on average.

Respondents were asked to report their monthly rent price along with the number of housemates they lived with. The following charts display data from 288 respondents who reported their monthly rent.

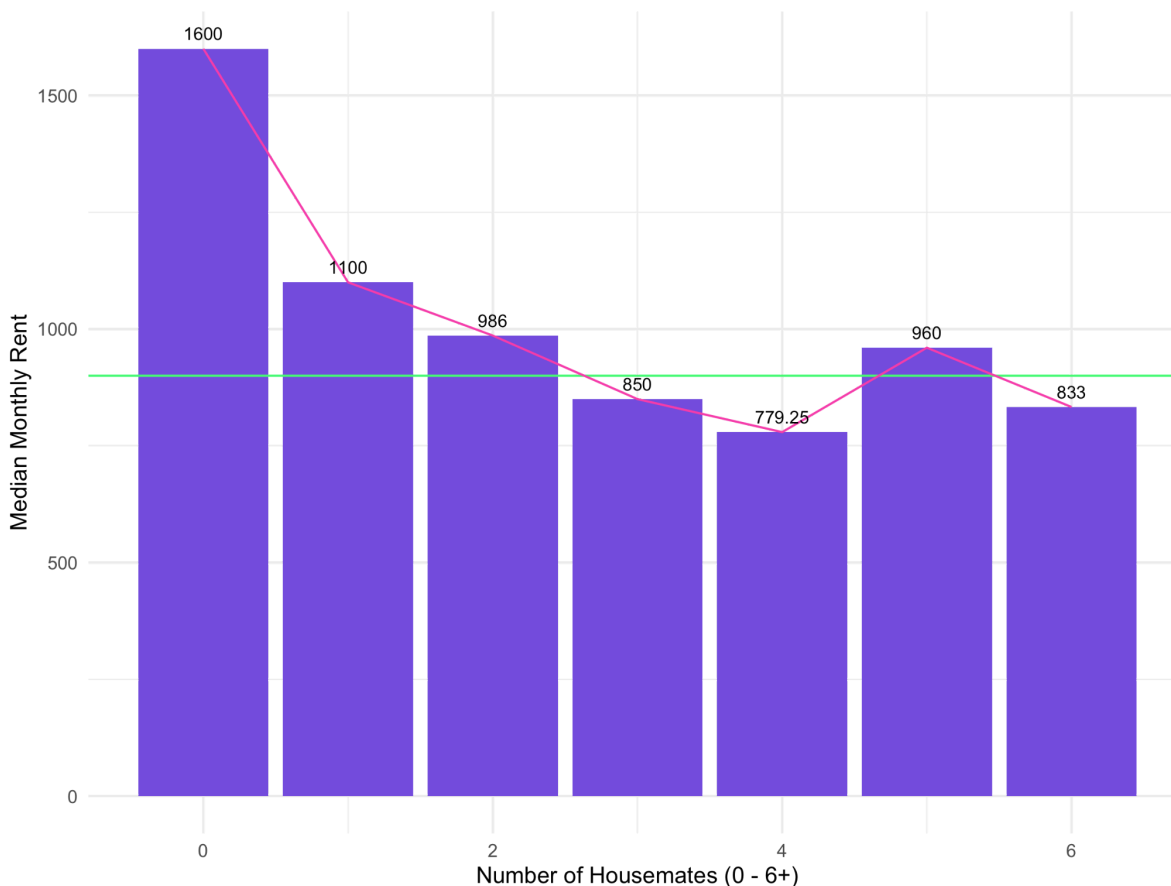


Figure 1.1: Number of housemates compared against median monthly rent.

The median monthly rent, across all factors, is \$900, as represented by the black horizontal line in Figure 2.1. Based on the number of housemates, the median rent decreases as the number of housemates increases with \$1600, \$1100, \$986, \$850, and \$779 rents for 0-4 housemates respectively. The most drastic price change occurs during the shift from zero to one housemates with a decrease of \$500. Then, for every additional housemate, until four, the price decreases by \$107 on average. However, as the number of housemates continues to increase, so does the median rent overall: \$960 for students with five housemates and \$833 for those with six. The overall average rent price decrease is \$127 for each

additional housemate. In accordance with the survey, without considering additional factors such as zone or room configuration, having three or four housemates optimizes rent price.

Respondents were also asked to report whether or not they felt, overall, that their housing was worth the cost.

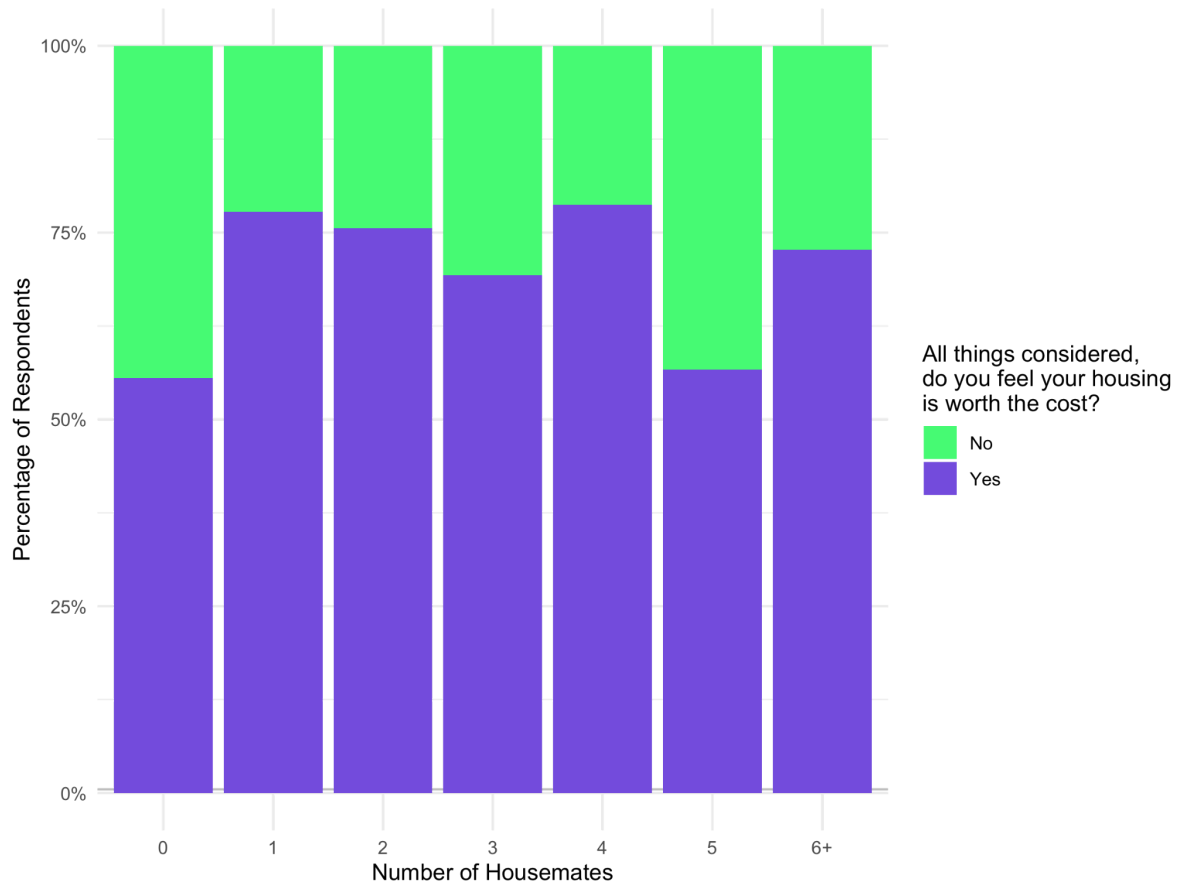


Figure 1.2: Proportions of worthiness compared against number of housemates.

There does not seem to be a trend regarding the number of housemates a student has and whether or not they feel as though their housing is worth its financial cost. However, the respondents with the highest percentage reporting that the housing is worth the cost (79%) are those with four housemates. This, interestingly, does correspond with the finding of respondents with four housemates having the lowest median rent price. Similarly, students with 0 housemates had the highest median rent and the lowest percentage of respondents (55%) reporting that the housing is worth the cost.

Finding #2: There is no significant difference between the monthly rent of double and triple room configurations.

Respondents were asked to report their monthly rent as well as their bedroom configuration.

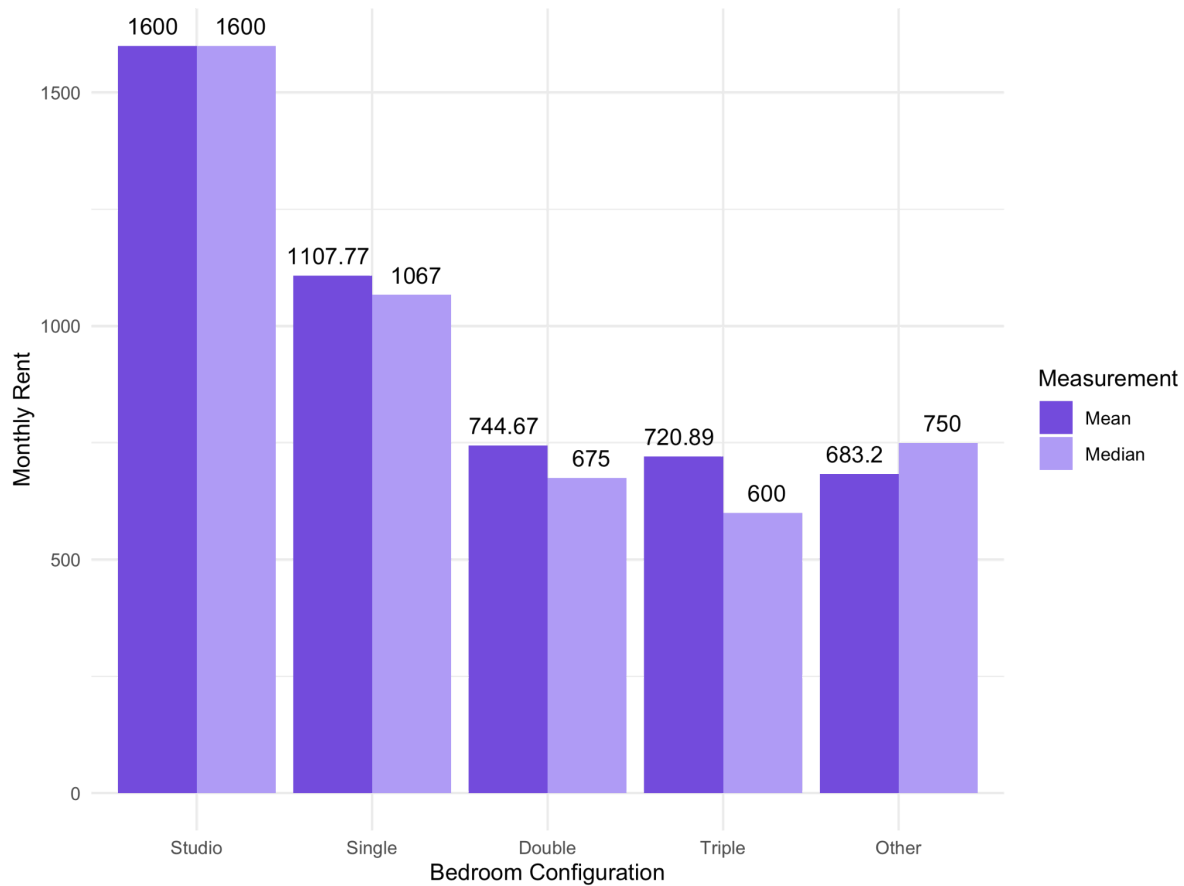


Figure 2.1: Mean and median of monthly rent compared against bedroom configuration.

Out of 288 respondents who provided both their bedroom configuration and monthly rent, one (0.35%) lives in a studio, 156 (54.27%) live in a single, 114 live in a double (39.58%), nine live in a triple (3.12%), and eight (2.78%) live in another type of configuration. All of the medians for each configuration are larger than the mean with the exception of the studio configuration, which is because only one respondent lives in a studio apartment. This indicates that relatively higher rent is concentrated across all configuration types, pointing to a right skewed distribution of rent. The bedroom configurations of studio, single, double, and triple have decreasing mean and median rents. However, the differences between both the means and medians of a double and triple occupancy are less than \$100. In comparison, the differences between the means and medians of a

single and double occupancy are \$352.12 and \$389.07, respectively. However, it should be noted that the sample size of students who live in triple bedrooms is considerably smaller.

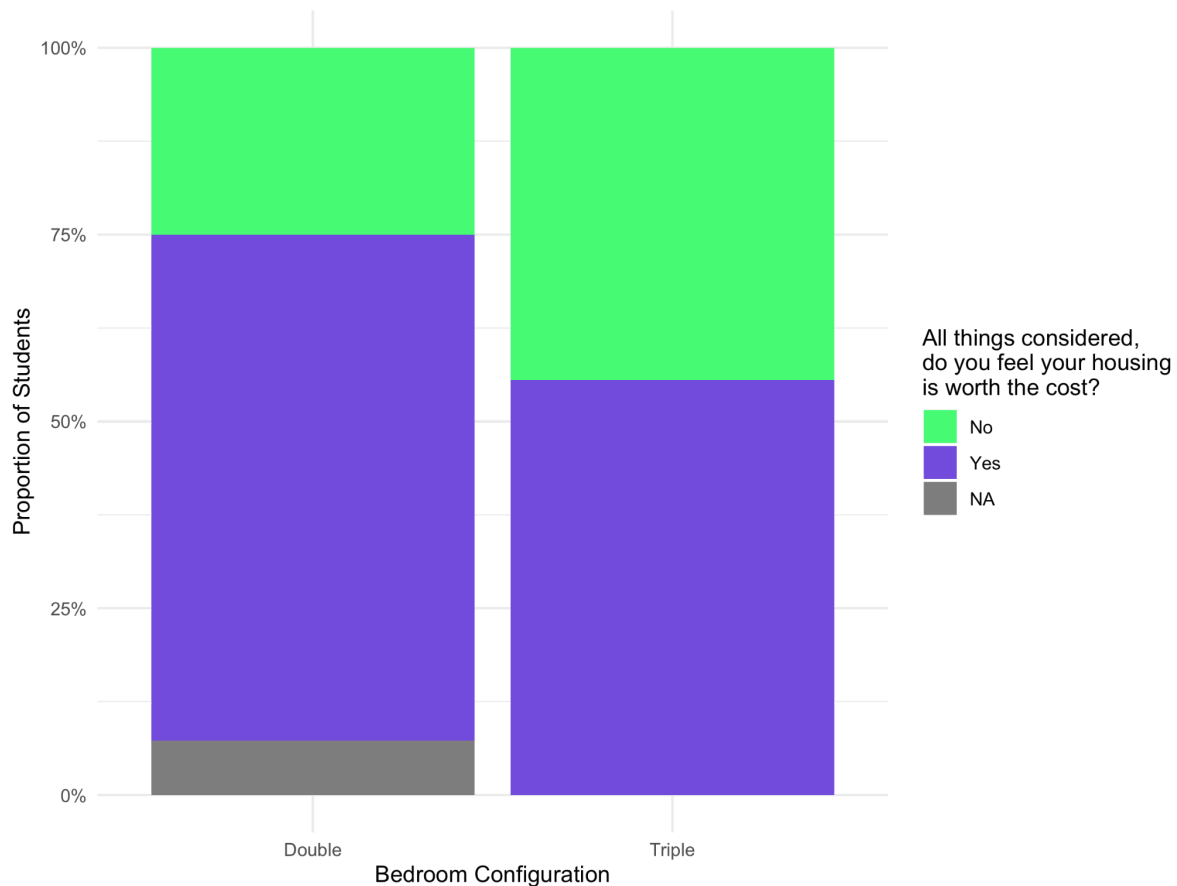


Figure 2.2: Double and triple bedroom configurations compared against student opinions regarding financial worth.

Notably, a higher percentage of students living in double bedroom configurations report that they feel their housing is worth the cost, compared to students living in triple bedroom configurations. Of the 115 respondents who live in double bedroom configurations, 84 (73.04%) report their housing is worth the cost. Of the nine respondents who live in triple bedroom configurations, five (55.56%) report that their housing is worth the cost. Thus, the small difference between average rent (\$24-\$75) and the 17.48% difference in cost satisfaction between doubles and triples indicates that living in a double occupancy bedroom is the “better” option. However, it is important to note that the survey sample size of students living in triple occupancy bedrooms is much smaller.

Finding #3: Biking and taking the bus are the most common modes of transportation in every zone except for housing outside of Davis.

Respondents were asked to rank four different modes of transportation (bike, bus, drive, walk) from most used to least used.

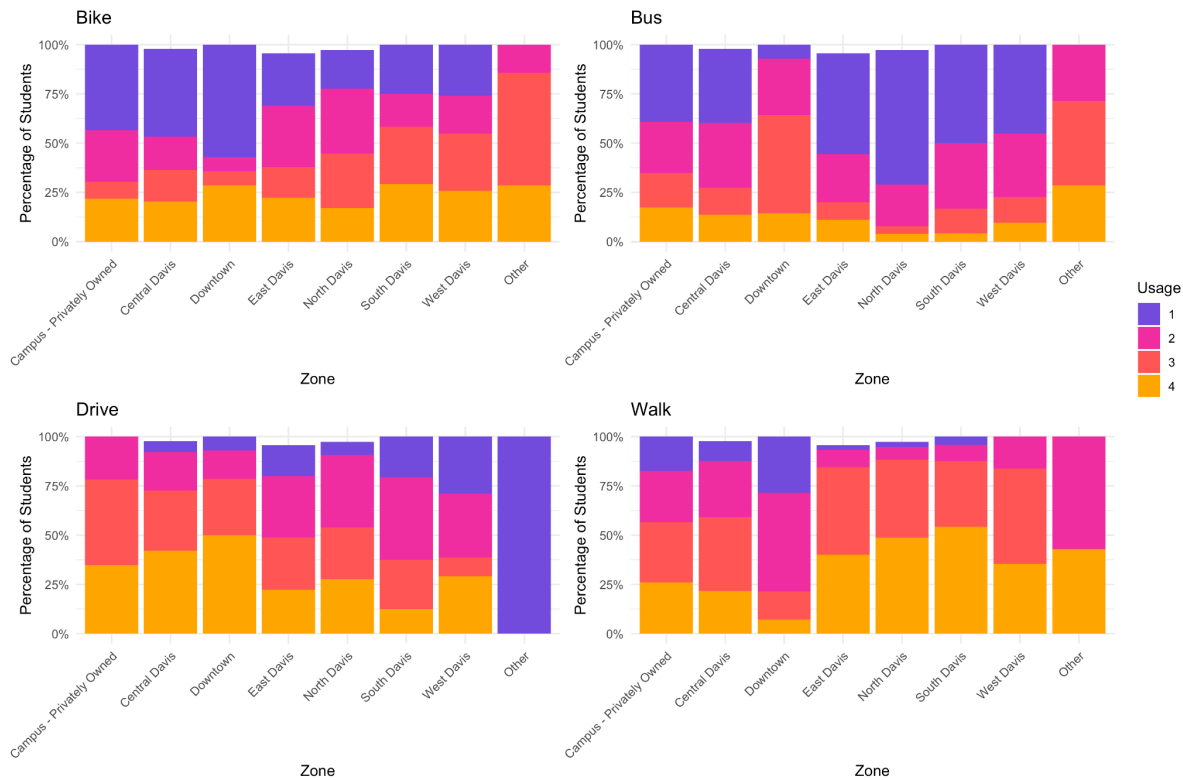
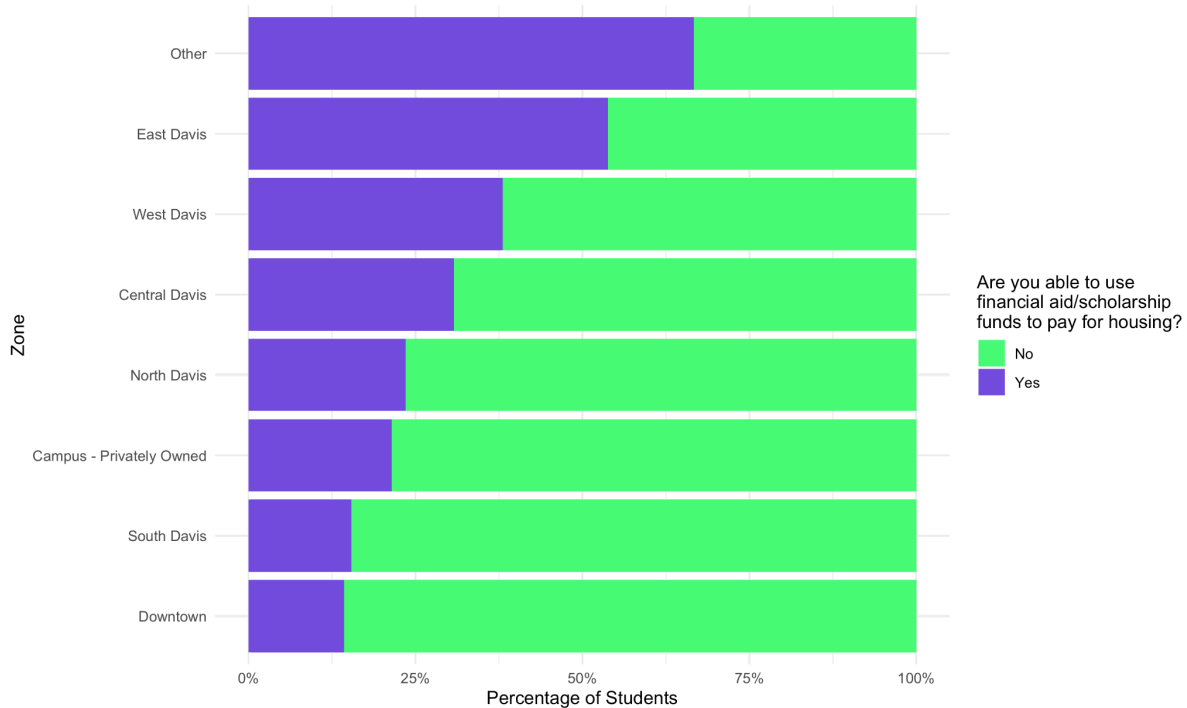


Figure 3: Distribution of usage frequency among biking, taking the bus, driving, and walking across all residential zones.

The majority of students ranked Bike and Bus as their first or second choice. About 68.4% of respondents in North Davis indicated that taking the bus is their most common method to get to campus. 88.1% of respondents in North Davis, 76% in South Davis, 71% in West Davis, 77.8% in East Davis, 82.6% in privately owned campus housing, and 81.8% in Central Davis bike or use the bus the most often. About 53.8% of respondents living Downtown bike to campus, and 30.8% walk as their first choice, the largest percentage among all zones. Every individual living outside of Davis drives to campus the most as opposed to other methods of transportation.

Finding #4: The majority of students are unable to use financial aid to pay for their housing in most areas in Davis, with the exception of East Davis and areas outside of Davis.

Respondents were asked whether they were able to use financial aid to pay for their housing.



66.67% of students living outside of Davis who responded to the survey said that they are able to use financial aid to cover their housing costs, which is larger than any region in Davis. All of the regions in Davis show that less than 50% of students are able to use their financial aid for off campus housing, with the exception of East Davis, which had 53.85% of students using scholarships or financial aid to pay for their housing.

The low percentages of financial aid usage may be explained by human error. Although “NA” was a selection option for this survey question, some students who do not qualify for financial aid may have responded “No”, which may have skewed the results.

Finding #5: A majority of UC Davis students agree that additional information on off-campus housing should be provided, regardless of whether they would use that information.

Respondents were asked whether or not they agree that UC Davis should provide more housing information to students. They were also asked whether or not they would use a Housing Booklet, if provided by ASUCD free of charge.

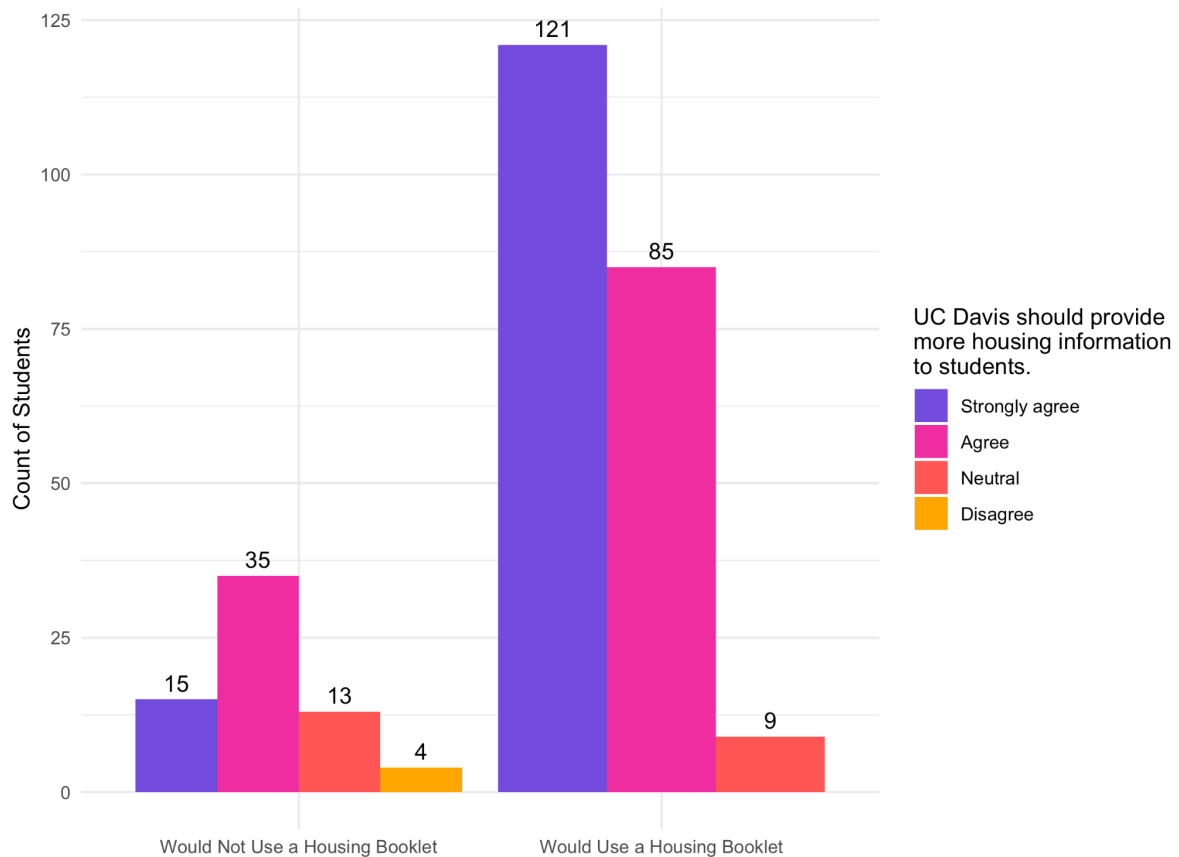


Figure 1: Distribution of responses to the survey questions regarding whether UC Davis should provide more housing information to students and if the respondent would use a housing booklet if provided.

Out of 282 respondents, 215 (76.24%) would use a UC Davis provided housing booklet and 67 (23.76%) would not. Among the 215 respondents who would use a housing booklet, 206 (95.81%) of them agree or strongly agree that UC Davis should provide more housing information. Among the 67 respondents who would not use a housing booklet, 50 (74.63%) still agree or strongly agree that UC Davis should provide more housing information. This indicates that even the majority of students who would not use a housing booklet still agree that UC Davis should provide more housing information.

Conclusion & Discussion

The findings of this project reveal an unmet need of the UC Davis undergraduate student body—an easy to use, precompiled list of housing information and resources. The collected data also show most students lack the knowledge of relevant ASUCD services, such as HAUS, which represents a potential barrier to accessing assistance in the housing search process. Undergraduate students live in a variety of places across town, which affects price, transportation method, number of roommates, and overall satisfaction with living arrangements. The data collected for this report, summarized in the [public Tableau dashboard](#), reveals a potential difference in the density of students per each zone, which could be analyzed in conjunction with Unitrans data to measure the potential student use of each bus line. Students self-rated satisfaction of the amenities available at their apartments revealed that ‘essential’ services, like laundry or maintenance, were on average adequate, though many apartment complexes lacked amenities that are not essential but improve quality of life (like study rooms). This project also highlighted a gap in most renters' ability to use financial aid or scholarship to help pay for housing, which is often seen as one of the most expensive costs of and most prohibitive barriers to attending college.

Overall, this project successfully gathered student opinions regarding their living arrangements, organizing these opinions in an easily navigable Tableau dashboard, which has been made available to the student body at large. In the future, the ASUCD Innovation and Research Lab (IRL) would like to explore a continuation of this project, using new student data to build upon the current dashboard, creating a resource for housing information that covers more time, more student opinions, and more apartment complexes. This resource, over a multi-year period of investment, could become an invaluable tool for those seeking housing to see other students' opinions and information about different apartment complexes, which presents a broader opportunity to simplify the housing search process.

Based on the data collected from this survey, IRL recommends that HAUS and ASUCD use this data for future advising, as it represents recent student opinions of a wide variety of apartments. The Tableau dashboard creates an intuitive format for exploring Davis housing information, which can be used by advisors to help students explore housing options across town. Additionally, IRL would recommend that the partnership between IRL, HAUS, and SAO continues into the future to update this tool and make it, along with related ASUCD services, more known and more valuable.

Appendix

Appendix A: Survey Prerequisites

1. Are you an undergraduate student AND do you live in privately-owned housing? Note: University-owned housing, such as The Green and Orchard Park, is not considered privately-owned housing.
 - Yes
 - No

Appendix B: Survey Questions

1. What year did you start at UC Davis?
 - Before 2019
 - 2019
 - 2020
 - 2021
 - 2022
 - 2023
2. Which Davis zone do you live in? Refer to the image for specifications.
 - Central Davis
 - North Davis
 - East Davis
 - South Davis
 - West Davis
 - Downtown
 - Campus (privately owned housing)
 - Other: [Text entry]
3. What type of housing do you live in?
 - Apartment complex
 - House (single family home)
 - Social housing (Greek life, co-ops, sports)
 - Other: [Text entry]
4. [If 3a. is selected] What is the name of your apartment complex?
 - [Text entry]
5. How much do you pay in monthly rent as an individual?
 - [Text entry]
6. What is your bedroom configuration?
 - Single
 - Double
 - Triple

- Studio
 - Other: [Text entry]
- 7. How many housemates do you live with?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5
 - 6+
- 8. Rank the following methods of transportation to campus from most used to least used:
 - Bike
 - Bus
 - Drive
 - Walk
- 9. [If 8b. is selected] Which line(s) do you use most frequently?
 - A checklist of all Unitrans supported bus lines as well as Yolobus lines 42A, 42B.
- 10. On average, how long does it take for you to get to campus?
 - 0 - 10 minutes
 - 10 - 20 minutes
 - 20 - 30 minutes
 - 30 - 40 minutes
 - 40 - 60 minutes
 - 1hr +
- 11. Do you own a car in Davis?
 - Yes
 - No
- 12. Rate the amenities provided by your housing.
 - Air-conditioning
 - Bike storage
 - Fitness center
 - Heating
 - Laundry
 - Mail & package room
 - Parking garage/lot
 - Study lounges
- 13. Rate the following regarding quality of life at your housing.
 - Accessibility to nearest grocery store
 - Accessibility to nearest bus stop
 - Accessibility to entertainment

- Maintenance
 - Management communication
 - Personal affordability
 - Quietness
 - Safety
 - Spaciousness
14. Are you able to use financial aid/scholarship funds to pay for housing?
- Yes
 - No
 - N/A
15. All things considered, do you feel your housing is worth the cost?
- Yes
 - No
16. How aware are you of the following resources?
- ASUCD HAUS (Housing Advising for Undergraduate Students)
 - CHL (Community Housing Listing)
 - Housing Day
17. UC Davis should provide more housing information to students.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
18. If ASUCD provided free housing booklets, would you use them?
- Yes
 - No
19. Feel free to leave questions, concerns, or comments here.
- [Text input]

Appendix C: Survey Figures

1. A map of Davis housing zones provided in Survey Question #2.

