

RENTAL HOUSING WELCOME AND FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

February 2017

Hello from Rental Housing! In this document the rental housing office answers some of the most frequently asked questions by newcomers and others.

Will I be able to obtain rental housing from the University?

It is very likely. The University's priority for its rental housing is to accommodate new faculty, professional staff, and seminarians moving to the Sewanee from elsewhere. For earliest consideration, accept your offer of employment or enrollment and apply as soon as possible.

What types of rental units are available? How will I know what I may rent?

The rental pool consists of over 130 units, ranging from one-bedroom apartments to five-bedroom houses, all located within one mile of the center of campus. All units have central heat and air, a stove, and a refrigerator, and many have dishwashers as well. All houses, and all apartments of two or more bedrooms, are equipped with washer/dryer hookups. The rental housing office matches applicants with the unit coming vacant that is closest to the applicant's written preferences, on a rolling basis.

What is the rental agreement term?

Apartments and houses are normally leased for an initial ten-month period, usually Aug. 1 through May 31. Requests to take possession of a unit prior to Aug. 1 will be accommodated whenever possible, knowing that some units require maintenance and cannot be made available ahead of time. After the initial year, rental agreements may be extended and leased again through the next May 31. New tenants should anticipate being able to rent for a total of three years, assuming continued full-time employment or enrollment.

Is housing expensive?

A recent faculty study determined that the cost of living in Sewanee, on the Domain, was about average for the cost of living of the localities of national liberal arts colleges located in the southeast, and lower than the cost of living of the localities of national liberal arts in other regions. Compared to the average of the localities in the southeast, housing in Sewanee is somewhat more expensive, while taxes were somewhat less, since Tennessee has no state income tax. Housing nearby but outside Sewanee is less expensive.

Does the University acknowledge the need for faculty and staff at a variety of income levels to live in Sewanee?

Certainly. This has long been the case, both for the University rental pool and for the array of housing in Sewanee. The University rental pool, in particular, is quite diverse, with larger

and smaller units, priced accordingly. Establishing a priority for new faculty, staff, and seminarians moving to Sewanee does not change the diversity of faculty, staff, and seminarians who will benefit from the rental pool. Moreover, the University has no income restrictions on the reservation of building lots, or on the preference given to employees in purchasing leaseholds on the Domain. The range of housing prices on the Domain is quite varied.

Aren't there certain positions at the University that should be given priority for living in Sewanee?

Several faculty and staff have suggested so. The University believes that at this moment, the primary priority is to assist new faculty, staff, and seminarians moving to the Sewanee area from elsewhere. After that, a fair approach is to allow those who have rented for fewer years priority in renting any remaining units. Meeting these needs will not allow for prioritizing among faculty and staff.

What will the University do to provide more housing for faculty, staff, and seminarians?

For some time, the University has regularly set aside property on the Domain on which houses may be built by faculty or staff. Some of these lots remain. In addition, the University is also facilitating downtown development through the hiring of a town planner, the setting aside of additional property near the downtown for development, and the encouragement of individuals or firms to develop that property, through apartment and house rentals and sales.

When can faculty and staff apply for housing?

Formal application by new faculty and professional staff for University housing can be made immediately after accepting a position with the University.

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When does a unit need to be vacated if not renewing?

Tenants with non-renewing agreements are expected to vacate housing by May 31. This allows time to perform any necessary work in the unit to ready it for the next tenant. Requests to remain longer than May 31 must be approved by the rental housing office and permission will be granted on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the maintenance needs and the arrival date of the incoming tenant.

Is the University helping tenants find other housing?

The Office of Leases and Community Relations maintains a list of those private rentals in the Sewanee area of which the University is aware. That office has also sent a letter to all leaseholders, informing them of the interest of employees in renting or buying in Sewanee. The office has also held a workshop on financing and building a house in Sewanee and will continue to offer workshops as needed.

Didn't the University commit to let renters rent indefinitely? What about signing a multiyear rental agreement, so that a tenant could sublet while away for a semester or a year?

All University rental agreements have been annual, in order to maintain flexibility to meet recruitment needs, and we expect the agreements to remain that way. However, the University regularly indicates expectations for how often the agreement may be renewed. The University anticipates that new faculty, professional staff, and seminarians recruited from elsewhere should expect three years in rental housing, should they remain employed or enrolled, and wish to rent for that many years. Faculty and staff who have been in rental housing for at least three years, and who have been employed 15 or fewer years, should not expect to have a rental agreement past May 2016. However, if conditions change, and more housing is available in Sewanee and more people leave the rental pool than anticipated, the University may be able to increase that duration.

Is the University expanding its rental pool?

Yes. The University acquires houses by purchase or bequest from time to time, including in the past year, and these houses are usually added to the rental pool. The University does not, however, expect to purchase houses from the existing market often, because faculty and staff who wish to live here should have options for purchase.

This all sounds reasonable. Why have I heard that it is difficult to obtain rental housing from the University?

Before the University began the current growth period, some tenants were permitted to remain in the rental pool for many years. As a result, until recently, newcomers were able to obtain rental housing only when tenants chose to leave the rental pool, and at time, very few rentals were available to newcomers. The University responded in 2014-2015 by changing rental policy to make newcomers a priority. Now, newcomers should have the least difficulty obtaining rental housing.

What is the timeline for obtaining rental housing from the University?

April 15 First deadline for new rental housing applications; others are accommodated as needed on a rolling basis. Applications submitted by this date are provided offers by May 1, and those applicants accept or decline by May 15.

Ongoing As additional rental housing applications are received and criteria are met.

Aug. 1 Earliest date for new tenants move into units.