

Call of the Keweenaw: Graduate Housing

Off-Campus Housing

Locating off-campus housing takes time and patience because it is not overly abundant; there is plenty to go around, but they are often occupied. Houghton and Hancock are small communities, so “good” housing moves quickly. The unique part about off-campus housing in the Keweenaw is the variety of locales available. If you enjoy skiing, you may want to live at the base of Mont Ripley (for downhill skiing) or near the Maasto Hiito trailhead (for cross-country skiing). If you prefer the water, there is plenty of waterfront rental property available at a fraction of the cost you would pay in larger cities. If you would rather just be in the middle of the woods without a neighbor in sight, you can find it with less than a ten-minute drive from downtown Houghton.

Rental Search Methods

This is an older area, and many of the places for rent show their age. Ideally your search would begin prior to your arrival. The probability of finding good housing after the term begins is very low. You may be fortunate enough to know someone who has a great place and is looking for a roommate, but do not count on this.

The best place to look for off-campus housing is the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) off-campus housing website, which allows you to input a variety of parameters to help you search for your ideal housing. It also provides contact information for the landlord and, in some cases, pictures. You may find the USG off-campus housing website here: <http://usg.mtu.edu/usg/housing/>. You may also find individuals looking for roommates and sub-lesers on Michigan Tech’s Barkboard website here: <https://barkboard.mtu.edu>.

Apartments

There are several apartment buildings in the Houghton area, most consisting of 12 apartment units or fewer. Some utilities, such as heat and water, may be included with your rent. The climate of the Keweenaw means that furnaces are typically on for at least nine months of the year; do not be surprised if the heat kicks on even in the “warm months.” Having heat included in your rent allows is a big money saver for apartment renters.

Flat

A flat is a complete floor or portion of a house. They generally have their own entrance and offer the most privacy of any shared housing situation. Most of the flats in this area are well suited for two people, which can reduce the rental cost. However, when renting

a flat or any housing where heat is not included, demand to see past utility bills. What may appear to be a bargain may be a utility scam resulting in you losing a lot of money (see the Home Heating section).

Renting a House

The most abundant source of off-campus housing available in the area is house rentals. The houses in the area date back to the turn of the century and most have a great deal of character. Potential options range from large houses with nine or more bedrooms down to cabins, which, if they were apartments, would be classified as “studios.” You can find a house to meet your every need. Pick your interest and check the listings on the USG Off-Campus Housing website. You will most likely find a match. Houses typically require at least two people, sometimes more, to cover the rent and bills. In the Keweenaw these can get pricey. A home comes several concerns that other renters may not have including trash and snow removal, and lawn care. Landlords typically expect tenants to take care of these tasks.

Buying a House

As housing prices in the area are low and they will often be here for some time, some students choose to purchase a home while they are at Michigan Tech. They find this an ideal solution if they have a family or are looking for a little more privacy and control over their living situation. Many students who purchase homes also rent out rooms to other students to help pay the mortgage and other bills. This is typically an option many PhD students employ, where they consider paying a mortgage rather than rent in order to build equity. Local property prices can be very low, and finding houses on sale is quite easy. A little walk around one of the neighborhoods will show you several for sale signs. Many students find the investment of a house useful during their time at Michigan Tech. It’s always best to check with local realtors when considering the purchase of a local home. Please keep in mind that, although homes are cheaper here, especially a little distance away from town, they can be harder to sell once students graduate and are ready to leave the area.

Home Heating

The most important question in regard to renting is, “is the heat included?” With the extended heating season in the Keweenaw, the potential for energy bills larger than your tuition bills is not an unreal danger. Home and apartment heating is serious money, so before signing a lease, demand to see past utility bills and inquire about how new the windows are. Newer windows tend to insulate homes better than older windows. You may also want to talk to past tenants to see what temperature setting generated those bills. It is not uncommon for students to keep their houses and apartments between 55°F (13°C) and 60°F (16°C) during the winter.



Remember, cheap rent does not necessarily mean cheap housing. Be sure to ask what kind of heat a property has. Oil is the most expensive and requires delivery of raw fuel several times during the winter. Natural gas is the most cost effective, while electric heat tends to be somewhere in the middle. You will also want to ask about the age of the furnace and the date of its last tune-up.

It is also advised that you make a call to UPPCO (the local electrical supply company) and share the address of the dwelling you want to rent. You can ask them how much the electricity bills typically were over the previous year. If the home or apartment is heated with natural gas, it is likely that this service is supplied by SEMCO, the local natural gas supply company. You may also contact SEMCO and inquire about home heating bills.

Leases

There is not a standard lease used by landlords in the Keweenaw. The best thing you can do to protect yourself is to know your renter's rights. Check out this website from the State of Michigan that describes the rights of landlords and tenants (i.e., renters): <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/tenantlandlord.pdf>.

It is very important for you to read your entire lease and to understand it. If you have questions, be sure to ask your landlord before signing the lease. The top 5 things that are often overlooked in a lease are:

- **Lease term:** The key point about leases is that most of them are for twelve months, starting and ending sometime during the spring or summer months. This seems to work well for most graduate students, since they stay in the Keweenaw to take courses and perform research during the summer.
- **Maximum occupancy:** The lease will tell you how many people are legally able to stay in the apartment or house. It is important for you to abide by this maximum occupancy because it can tell you how many people can safely and legally occupy the space. In some instances, excess occupants can be removed from the premises and not allowed to live there.
- **Parking:** It is important to know what your options are for parking, especially during the winter months when there is a parking ban on city streets. Some leases in the Houghton area require you to purchase a parking space from the City of Houghton. Other leases also specify certain locations where you are allowed to park in the summer versus the winter months. Some landlords provide snow removal as part of your rent, whereas others expect you to shovel. Paying attention to parking can save you a lot of trouble and possibly even tickets or damage to your vehicle.
- **Security Deposit:** It is important to know how much this is and what it covers. Some leases allow the security deposit to cover the last month's rent while

others do not. In some instances, the security deposit may cover routine cleaning at the end of the lease agreement. To help ensure that you get the maximum amount of your security deposit back at the end of the lease agreement, you should thoroughly document the living conditions when you first move in. This means taking pictures of everything, including any pre-existing damage, taking notes, and sharing this with your landlord for your records and theirs. This can help prevent you from being charged for damage caused by previous tenants.

- **Repair & Maintenance:** It is also important to know if you or the landlord is responsible for repairs and maintenance. If something breaks in your apartment (such as the heating or the water heater) you will want to know right away what to do, who to contact, and who has to pay for it.

Pets

If you have a pet or are thinking about getting one you will need to make this clear to your landlord before signing the lease. Many landlords are moving away from allowing renters to have pets. If they do allow it, most landlords will require you to pay a deposit for your animal and, in some cases, a higher monthly rent to cover any damage that your animal may cause. Check with your landlord and get the specifics in your lease before you sign it.

Students with Families

Students with families might find their initial best home in Daniell Heights. Daniell Heights offers a good start for student couples and student families. There is a strong sense of community in Daniell Heights, which is enhanced by community socials and picnics. The community layout includes playgrounds, patios, bus stop shelters, tenant and visitor parking, and is very close to campus.

Housing Locations

On the next page, there is a map that has the Houghton-Hancock area divided into regions. The following is a brief description of the regions included on the map. For reference, Michigan Tech is located in Region 6.

Region 1: West Hancock

West Hancock is at least a 45-minute brisk walk to campus. It is located approximately one mile from downtown Hancock. This area has its own beach, park and campground within walking distance. There are several churches, grocery stores, restaurants and bars in this region. There is also a food co-op. Rent is a little cheaper here due to its distance from campus, however it is not practical to live in this region without a car.



Region 2: Hancock Hilltop

Hancock hilltop offers astounding views of the Portage Canal and the Michigan Tech campus. It is home to the Pat’s Foods grocery store and one of the best scenic turnouts for fall color viewing. The area is about a 15-minute walk to downtown Hancock. The return trip is straight uphill, due to the hilly nature of the area. Campus is approximately an hour by foot, slightly longer on the return trip. The area is close to cross-country ski trails, a new elementary school, and the Portage Health hospital. The housing prices should be slightly cheaper because of their location, but it is not practical to live in this region without a car.

Region 3: Downtown Hancock

Downtown Hancock is about a 30-minute walk to campus and features its own police department and specialty shops. Hancock has several local restaurants. Quite a few students live in Hancock, many without cars. You can survive here without a car, but the walk can be difficult when the winter wind is howling and the snow is blowing.

Region 4: Ripley, Dollar Bay

Ripley is home to the Michigan Tech Mont Ripley Ski Hill. All Michigan Tech students get “free” ski passes and discounted ski rentals through the Experience Tech Fee. This ski hill boasts a variety of challenging courses and a terrain park. Other than skiing, the town of Ripley offers little more than housing. Ripley is about an hour walk to campus and not practical for those without a car.

Dollar Bay is a small community situated on a “bay” off the Portage Canal. It is famous because most of the hardwood parquet flooring that the NBA uses, including the famed

Boston Garden Parquet, is built here. It is a quaint little community that has a grocery store and a couple restaurants and bars. This is great place to live if you want to get away from Houghton. It is a little too far to walk, but is an excellent bike ride (roughly 25 minutes) when the weather permits. Rent is lower here, but do not expect to find many apartments-Dollar Bay mostly consists of houses and trailers.

Region 5: Downtown Houghton

The City of Houghton rivals any small town in terms of charm. Houghton has the history and the beauty to intrigue anyone. A 10 to 20 minute walk separates campus and downtown. Snow typically is not a problem, as sidewalks and streets are cleared continually. Houghton offers many shops, restaurants and bars, a local library, museums, and Laundromats. There is even an ice arena (the Dee) and boat slips downtown. Everything is very close by so there is no need for a car. The biggest drawback to downtown Houghton is parking. Special permits are required for overnight parking, most of which are located under a parking deck, and they can be a little expensive. Rent downtown may be significantly higher than in most other regions, with the possible exception of housing within two blocks of campus and higher up on the hill.

Region 6: Near Campus

Michigan Tech's main campus is roughly the size of six city blocks. The surrounding area offers quite a bit of student housing, though it is home mostly to undergraduate students and fraternity/sorority members. It is an extremely convenient place to live. Very few walks, both to campus and to the amenities of downtown Houghton, are more than 10 minutes. There is also a very central grocery store, Jim's Foodmart, and several restaurants to serve this region. However, the convenience of this location has one major drawback-this can be one of the highest priced rent areas near Michigan Tech.

Region 7: West Houghton

Most retail shopping is provided near West Houghton. West Houghton is home to Shopko, Walmart, Econo Foods, Festival Foods, local and fast-food restaurants, and more. The walk from this side of town ranges from 30 to 45 minutes depending on how high up on the hill you are. Bus service to Walmart from campus is available. Housing in this area consists mostly of single-family older homes. Be sure to ask about heating and utility costs before selecting one of these older houses.

Region 8: Dodgeville/Hurontown

Dodgeville and Hurontown are two small neighborhoods situated directly to the south of campus and up one very large hill. This area has little to offer and really requires that you own a car. Expect a long hilly walk to campus if you do decide to get out of this area

by foot. Snowplowing and removal may not be as efficient at times in this part of town as in other parts.

Region 9: Chassell

Chassell is a small town about 7 miles from campus and provides a getaway from the stresses of school. Amenities are limited here to a post office, ski and snowmobile trails, a gas station, a bar and a beach. Nearly all the housing found in Chassell is in the form of home rentals, most of which are nice. Chassell offers a large number of lakefront homes for avid boaters. Rent on the lake is affordable, but the property moves quickly. Off the lake, rent should be significantly lower than in the City of Houghton.

Region 10: South Range/Atlantic Mine

South Range is a little town to the south of Houghton, about 6 miles from campus. South Range's charm comes from its small but friendly downtown, with a gas station, a grocery store, a few bars, and a funeral home. However, the town lacks some of the basics (e.g., a laundromat). This area is situated near Festival Foods and the Copper Country Mall, so a lot of what you need can be picked up without much travel.

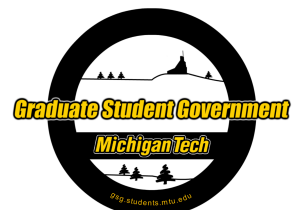
The housing in this area consists mainly of rental homes. Most of these homes were built around 1900 and will have high heating bills if you are not careful. As with any rental, make sure you check the heating bills before you sign a lease.

Region 11: Calumet/Laurium

Calumet has been included as part of The Keweenaw National Historic Park. It has a long history as a mining town, and for a while it was a metropolis with the largest population in Michigan, (approaching 100,000). Quite a bit has changed since those days. Ninety-five percent of its heyday population has disappeared and the town as suffered a predictable amount of decay. Many recent efforts to preserve the history and beauty of this small town have helped to revitalize the area.

Calumet and Laurium are sister towns. They offer both rental housing and some apartments, but is more than 10 miles from campus, making it low on the list of prime Michigan Tech student housing. They offer all the amenities and have plenty of charm. Calumet is home to the Calumet Theatre, where many of the cultural events of the Keweenaw take place. There are several restaurants, grocery stores, and laundromats.

Lake Linden is another small town that has unique qualities. The town is situated on the edge of Torch Lake. There is limited rental property here, and the area is not practical unless you have a vehicle. Traveling back and forth to Michigan Tech can be very dangerous in the snow.



On-Campus Housing

Residence Halls

There are three traditional residence halls on Michigan Tech's campus: Wadsworth Hall, McNair Hall, and Douglas Houghton Hall. These residence halls can house more than 4,000 students, almost all of which are undergraduate students. Graduate students are allowed to live in the residence halls in rare cases, including emergencies. This should not be considered a long-term housing option for graduate students.

Daniell Heights

If you are looking for on-campus housing, Michigan Tech does have apartments for graduate students and families. The Daniell Heights apartments are located within a short walking distance from campus. One, two, and three bedroom apartments are available. Rent ranges from \$645 per month to \$925 per month depending on the number of rooms in the apartment. These rates include heat, water, and electricity.

To be assigned an apartment in Daniell Heights, students are required to apply for a position on the waiting list. Newly admitted students may be on the waiting list for a semester or two before getting an apartment, as the waiting list is usually long. However, it is possible to share an apartment with a housemate who has been assigned an apartment, and many residents of Daniell Heights share housing. Many students apply for the waiting list to get an apartment assigned to them, and live in the Heights with a housemate before they are assigned their own apartment. After agreeing to be the housemate of a Daniell Heights tenant, students should remember to identify themselves officially as a housemate with the Housing Office by filling in the required forms.

The Daniell Heights apartments are convenient in that your total housing costs are the same every month (regardless of the weather), you are located close to campus, and Facilities staff performs all routine maintenance. There is also a bus service that will take you back and forth to campus. Students from many cultures and backgrounds enrich the community in Daniell Heights, which includes playgrounds, basketball hoops, patios, lawn maintenance, a community room, and a preschool. Daniell Heights is undergoing renovations beginning this summer to improve the wear and tear from decades of student tenants. You may find more information about Daniell Heights at: <http://www.mtu.edu/housing/options/graduate/daniell-heights/>.

Hillside Place

Hillside Place is the newest housing option on campus for both graduate and undergraduate students. These apartments are semi-private: you have a personal bedroom with a lockable door, in a living space with three other people. This facility has

great views of the Portage Canal, but is one of the most expensive places to live on campus.

Potentially Useful & Interesting Websites:

USG Off-Campus Housing Website: <http://usg.mtu.edu/usg/housing/>

Housing at Michigan Tech: <http://www.mtu.edu/housing/>

Barkboard, the Michigan Tech website where you can buy and sell your stuff, look for co-tenants, find a ride, and more: <https://barkboard.mtu.edu>
(You will need to sign-in with your Michigan Tech ISO information)

Searching for “Hillside Place” and “Daniell Heights” on YouTube will also give you some video tours.

Renter’s and landlord rights in the State of Michigan:

<http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/publications/tenantlandlord.pdf>



5th edition
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Graduate Student Government

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Authors & Editors

Sasha Teymorian

