

New Member Welcome Packet: Finding Housing in Oregon

Housing on a VISTA Budget

While it is not unheard of for VISTA members to find affordable options for solitary living, many opt to live in shared housing (i.e. with roommates). In college towns, luckily, there are plenty of opportunities to find shared housing, either with college students, graduate students, fellows (the academic kind), etc. Additionally, short-term dwellers seem to flock to the Portland metropolitan area, creating an abundance of room-renting opportunities throughout that city.

Some things to think about as you're planning and negotiating your next move:

- **Do you want to sign a lease or rent month-to-month?**
If you choose to rent month-to-month (many prefer the flexibility of this option), ask to sign a renter's agreement that lays out parameters for a security deposit (the amount should be noted, as should confirmation that it was collected – get a signature.), rent collection (by whom?), and moving out (when and with how much notice?). Keep a copy for your records.
- **Utilities – are they included in the rent or in addition to the rent? How are they split?**
- **What about a security deposit? Under what conditions will it *not* come back to you?**
You might want to make a record of the state of your space when you move in. Take pictures, make a checklist of scrapes and stains, and add them to your renter's agreement.

Communicate with Your Supervisor & Campus Compact of Oregon

If you're struggling to find housing, please reach out to your supervisor and the Campus Compact VISTA Leader. That's what we're here for! We have information about the neighborhoods you might want to live in, what's close to your site, and best options to get on public transportation. Sometimes we get lucky and a current VISTA may be able to transfer their room or apartment to you. We'll also connect you with the VISTA team via Facebook, feel free to reach out to them.

Using Craigslist to Find Your Next Home

Craigslist (www.craigslist.com) continues to be one of the most popular resources out there for finding shared housing. It allows you to search daily listings by region and, because the site has become so popular, new listings just never stop coming.

Another really great website, Housing Maps.com (www.housingmaps.com), combines the power of Craigslist with the magic of Google Maps to create a tool that lets you pinpoint home listings really strategically – perfect if you're trying to find a house close to, say, Portland Community College's Sylvania Campus.

Housing Connections has some great resources for those on the hunt for affordable and reasonable accommodations. They also have a handy calculator for budgeting and resources on fair housing regulations. <http://www.housingconnections.org/>

Also worth checking out are these two Facebook groups for housing in Portland:

Friends living with friends!!!!: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/169828903191950/>

Find Collective Living in PDX: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/182331551827320/>

Once you've found a listing that looks like a great fit for your personal needs and your pocketbook, how do you learn about the neighborhood and local amenities? Talking to a local is always the best way to get the inside scoop – if you have a local informant you can turn to, ask if you can pick their brain. Otherwise, here's a cool tool: Walk Score.com (www.walkscore.com) lets you search for an

address, and, based on access to things like grocery stores, schools, libraries, restaurants, public transit, etc., it spits back a walkability rating.

Staying Safe with Craigslist

Once you've opened communication with a potential landlord or roommate, 'cc or 'bcc someone you trust on your email correspondence with them. Make sure the person you trust also knows where you're going if you make a plan to move into a new home. Set up a check-in time to call them and let them know everything is okay.

Talk to your future landlord and roommates on the phone. Find out what you can about personalities, lifestyles, pets, etc. to see if it's an environment you would like to live in. Also ask for photos of the living space so that you know what to expect. Do not give anyone any money or sign a renter's agreement until you are physically in your new space.