

SPECIAL INTEREST HOUSING COMMUNITIES

Fraternity, Sorority and Theme Housing



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Executive Summary

The creation of special interest housing communities such as fraternity, sorority, and theme housing offers residential options that allow students' social lives to be part of the campus experience. Collaborative living environments are successful components of many university campuses and promote the development of leadership skills, thus aiding in the development of strong relationships between the university and student community. These communities combine interest-related activities with a residential environment to make it easier for students to connect with staff and faculty members, work together in groups, and integrate learning with co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences.

History of Fraternities and Sororities

Fraternities have been a part of the Clarkson community since 1903 and sororities since 1977. Students have embraced a rich tradition of scholarship, leadership, philanthropy, and friendship for over 100 years. It is through these achievements that Clarkson fraternities and sororities strive to create an inclusive environment where all students thrive. However, as we work towards creating additional history within this community, it is important to examine the changing needs of our student population. While the face of our campus has changed; (from a downtown and hill campus to primarily a hill campus) programs, offices, and activities have also relocated, thus moving the center of campus to the hill. A refocused student nucleus combined with an already strong residential campus climate provides the foundation to create on-campus fraternity and sorority housing.

Theme Housing Opportunities

While Clarkson University does not have theme housing components in our current residential model, it is a part of the University Outreach and Student Affairs Division Strategic Plan (PRIORITY: RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE: Learning Communities; Professional/Faculty in Residence Programs; Innovative Housing). Furthermore, students have expressed a strong desire for Clarkson to move towards the development of special interest housing similar to other universities. Although Residence Life and Housing currently works with students to place them in the same vicinity as other students with shared interests, current on-campus residences are not used for theme housing.

Benefits

The creation of fraternity, sorority, and theme housing benefits the campus and students in the following ways:

- Provides a living environment that promotes the collective sharing of responsibilities often associated with living in a house-like environment (i.e. sharing duties associated with the upkeep of a house);
- transfers the burden of ownership, cost of utilities, and basic maintenance to the university rather than individual students or fraternity and sorority chapters;
- offers students the choice of purchasing the university meal plan or providing their own meals;
- provides the convenience of living on-campus in a physical environment that feels like it is off-campus;
- allows fraternities and sororities to continue self-selecting members to live in the house (occupants

- must meet criteria set forth in the *Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities*);
- Allows students the chance to live in premium housing with other members of a student organization or university-recognized interest group.
- offers housing rates the same as those published each year for single and double rooms for a residence hall; and
- promotes closer community policing of fraternity and sorority chapters.

Policies and Regulations

Current housing policies outlined in *Section X: Residence Regulations* within the Clarkson Regulations apply to all students living in on-campus housing, including fraternity, sorority, and theme housing. These policies cover areas related to housing assignments, room keys and access, quiet hours, conduct, and building safety. Policies related to fraternity and sorority housing are included in the *Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities*: occupancy, disciplinary issues (i.e. loss of recognition of chapter), financial management, and room/house personalization.

The Future

The following serves as a guide as we move towards the construction of fraternity, sorority, and theme housing:

Structural Characteristics

Fraternity and Sorority Housing

- University owns the land and the structures
- 2 – 3 stories with external appearance consistent with the Campus Master Plan.
- Larger common areas on the first floor
- Kitchen able to support multiple occupants (industrial or other)
- Bedrooms and common areas wired for cable television
- Wireless internet

Theme Housing

- University owns the land and the structures
- 2 – 3 stories with external appearance consistent with the Campus Master Plan.
- Side by side duplex with separate entrances
- Common area
- Galley or smaller kitchen
- Common area wired for cable television
- Wireless internet

Financial Overview

A financial plan will be developed for each structure that is budget neutral to the university with respect to construction, debt retirement, operation and maintenance. A detailed financial analysis projected over a 15-year period was undertaken during development of this report, indicating that break-even occupancy will be in the range of 20 to 25 students in each facility.

Fraternity and Sorority Housing

- Students pay the current per-person room rate each semester through the university's housing billing system.

Theme Housing

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Occupancy Requirements

Fraternity and Sorority housing

- Minimum occupancy is determined by the chapter's annual allowable housing exemptions and financial analysis (break-even occupancy).
- Chapters not able to maintain the break-even occupancy will be expected to supplement housing charges.
- Students will complete similar room and common area condition reports per current housing policies.
- Occupancy is anticipated year round (fall, spring, and summer).

Theme housing

- Minimum occupancy is based on the financial analysis.
- Students are selected to live in the house through an application process and must meet the following criteria:
 - ▶ sophomore, junior or senior standing with a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA; and
 - ▶ good disciplinary standing at the university.
- Students will complete similar room and common area condition reports per current housing policies.
- Occupancy is based on the academic year (fall and spring).

Facility Management

- Maintenance, custodial and grounds issues are addressed in the same manner as with current on-campus residences.
- Regularly scheduled health and safety walkthroughs are conducted for all on-campus residences, per current housing policies.

Furnishings/Personalization

Fraternity and Sorority housing

- Chapter may opt to purchase additional common area house furnishings.
- With permission from Residence Life and the Office of Student Organizations, students are allowed to make aesthetic changes (i.e. painting, murals) that positively illustrate the chapter. Purchased items (such as furniture, electronics, etc.) and subsequent storage are the responsibility of the chapter.
- If the chapter loses recognition, students will coordinate with the university to remove aesthetic alterations.

Theme housing

- Personalization is not permitted since occupancy in theme housing changes each year.

Disciplinary Issues

Fraternity and Sorority housing

- Students must adhere to university regulations and policies.
- Loss of chapter recognition results in loss of on-campus house, per the *Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities*.
- If a chapter regains university recognition, they are eligible to petition for re-occupancy.

Theme housing

- Students must adhere to university regulations and policies.
- Students who do not maintain good disciplinary standing with the university may be removed from their housing assignment and placed back into other residential housing (i.e. residence halls).

Dining Services

- Board plans are optional for occupants of fraternity, sorority, and theme housing (currently an option afforded to residents of university apartments).

Education

- Students selected to live in a fraternity, sorority, or theme house are required to attend a housing orientation the semester commencing their assignment.