

Survey reveals Lister discontent

This housing survey report was released in January 1980 by the office of Institutional Research and Planning. We have included a condensed version of the data. The information is particularly interesting in light of the proposed university housing rent increases.

The university's Housing and Food Services faced a dilemma in the spring of 1979. Housing and Food Services is expected to operate on a "break-even" basis, which has not been realized during the past two years because of the vacancy rate in the Lister Hall complex. To economize on services could generate complaints; to raise the rent significantly would probably create more vacancies.

University officials were puzzled because they did not know whether the vacancy rate could be attributed to the amenities of the rental units, the rent rates, the service, the need for more privacy, the attitude of the university as landlord, the change in tenant lifestyle, or some combination of the above.

To obtain information from the university's tenants, an ad hoc committee of students and staff was formed by the university's Associate VP (Finance and Administration). With the aid of outside consultants and this committee, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning developed and

distributed a questionnaire. This was sent to most tenants living in university housing during March of 1979 and to a randomly selected sample of non-resident full-time students enrolled in the second term.

In all, 6,044 questionnaires were sent to students: 3,000 to students in university housing and 3,044 to non-resident students.

Fifty-four per cent of the students living in university residences responded, as did 48% of the non-resident students, giving an overall response rate of 51%. Seventy-five per cent of the respondents were 23 years old or younger, slightly more than half (52%) were males, and 37% were originally from Edmonton and environs. Every faculty and every year in all programs were represented.

This article has been written to provide information about the questionnaire responses to the student body. Interpretation of these responses has been deliberately omitted.



It isn't the Four Seasons, but Lister Hall's rates are becoming comparable.

TABLE 1
"I'd live in this same place again next year."

	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	N
Lister Hall	16	21	63	607
Pembina Hall	46	32	22	82
St. Jean	37	13	50	38
HUB	65	16	19	364
Michener Park	88	6	6	335
North Garneau	82	9	9	160
Total	51	16	33	1586

A. Satisfaction

Fifty-eight per cent of the responding students living in university residences reported that they were satisfied with their accommodation. The highest percentages of satisfaction occurred with students living in Michener Park (87%) and students living in North Garneau (90%). More than half of the responding residents living in Pembina Hall, Faculte St. Jean and HUB were satisfied. However, only a third of the responding Lister Hall residents stated that they were satisfied with their accommodation.

Would you do it again?

All students in the survey were asked this question: "Considering your personal circumstances, (financial, social, etc.) and if you could make the choice all over again, where would you prefer to live?" Overall, fifty-seven per cent of the responding students said they would prefer to live where they were currently living.

The highest proportion of responding students who indicated they would prefer to live where they were currently living was in Michener Park (82%), North Garneau (72%/non-University rental (70%), and 'Other' accommodations (79%).

About a quarter (28%) of the students living in Lister Hall and 42% of those in St. Jean said they would prefer to return to their present residences. Approximately half of the responding students living with their parents (55%), in HUB (49%), and Pembina Hall (48%) said they preferred to continue in their current residences.

Twenty-five per cent of the responding students declared that they would seek new accommodations and that they planned to move into a rental unit next year (i.e., room, apartment or house). The two accommodations with the highest proportion of the responding residents who preferred a rental unit were Lister Hall (54%) and St. Jean (53%).

About a third of the tenants in Pembina Hall (34%), HUB (33%) and students living with their parents (33%) would prefer renting from a non-university landlord.

Will you return?

Fifty-one per cent of university residents stated that they would return to the same university housing unit again next year (Table 1). Michener Park (88%) and North Garneau (82%) were the most popular accommodations in this regard. Lister Hall (16%) and St. Jean (37%) were the least desired units.

Cost

Fifty-four per cent of the respondents who were *not* living with relatives or parents agreed with the statement that they were paying about as much as they could afford for their current accommodations. Students living with their parents were excluded from this table because rent is not usually charged for such accommodations.

Most of the students living in Michener Park and HUB felt that they were paying as much as they could afford for their accommodations. (60% and 58% respectively). The students with the largest percentages of disagreement with this statement were residents of Pembina Hall (34%) and North Garneau (35%). In all, between 20% and 35% of the students living in University residences indicated that they could afford to pay more for their accommodations.

Getting your money's worth

Affordability is an important measure when renting accommodations to students. Another is the perceived value received per dollar of rent expended. Most of the residents in North Garneau (86%) and Michener Park (84%) felt that they were getting a good deal for their money. Students living in HUB were less in agreement (45% 'Agree' to 25% 'Disagree'), while the

residents of Pembina Hall and St. Jean were approximately equally divided on whether they were or were not getting a good deal. The largest group disagreeing resided in Lister Hall, where only 14% agreed that they were getting a good deal for their money as compared to 59% who disagreed.

Personal independence and privacy

One concern of university administrators was the possible lack of privacy which might be felt by students living in university housing, especially in dormitory units. There has also been a change in lifestyle in recent years, a change to the situation where most people seem to desire the freedom to arrange their environment to please themselves.

Students who neither lived with their parents nor lived in university housing were the most satisfied with the amount of personal independence their accommodations provided. Students living in Michener Park (60%), St. Jean (55%) and North Garneau (58%) also expressed satisfaction with the personal independence their housing provided.

Those feeling the least degree of freedom were students living in Lister Hall (26%), Pembina Hall (34%) or with their parents (30%).

"I think we're alone now..."

Overall, sixty-seven per cent of the respondents indicated that they either agreed (30%) or strongly agreed (37%) with the statement that they had adequate personal privacy and quiet. Students renting non-university units

had the most personal privacy and quiet. Students living in North Garneau, Michener Park and HUB indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the amount of personal privacy and quiet their accommodations provided.

More university housing

Taken overall, less than half (44%) of the responding students agreed that the university should have more student housing, and an additional 35% were "neutral" on this matter. Students living in HUB and Michener Park had the highest percentage of "strongly agree" responses to this statement. Those students who disagreed most with this statement were students living in Lister Hall, and Faculty St. Jean, North Garneau and rental accommodations.

Respondents had an opportunity to indicate the type of university housing they might wish to see in the written comments section of the questionnaire. Only one hundred and thirty-one students out of the 3,107 who responded wrote that the university should have more student housing. Of these 131 responses, the largest number of comments were in favor of separate dwellings such as the houses in North Garneau. Low-rent housing and an apartment complex like HUB were the next two most desired types of residences that the students felt the university should provide.

More housing for specific kinds of students (e.g., married and mature) was mentioned next. More housing for single students, in a dormitory structure, was suggested by only three per cent of the students.

TABLE 2
"I'm getting a good deal for my money."

Residence	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	N
Lister Hall	14	27	59	608
Pembina Hall	39	25	36	81
St. Jean	35	24	41	37
HUB	45	30	25	372
Michener Park	84	10	6	331
North Garneau	86	7	7	164
Rent	54	24	22	615
Other	68	10	22	63
Total	48	22	30	2271