

Securing Housing Off-Campus

Advice for International Students

Northwestern | OFF-CAMPUS LIFE

The Off-Campus Life Office

We serve as the first point of contact for students moving and living off-campus.



When to Start Searching & Where to Live

OVERVIEW OF HOUSING

On-Campus Housing

There are no University owned on-campus rental properties on the Chicago campus

[On-campus graduate student housing options](#) in Evanston fill very quickly, and is only available for full-time enrolled graduate students & post-doctoral candidates.

For more information regarding the application process, contact (847) 467-4663 or housing@northwestern.edu.

Off-Campus Housing Search

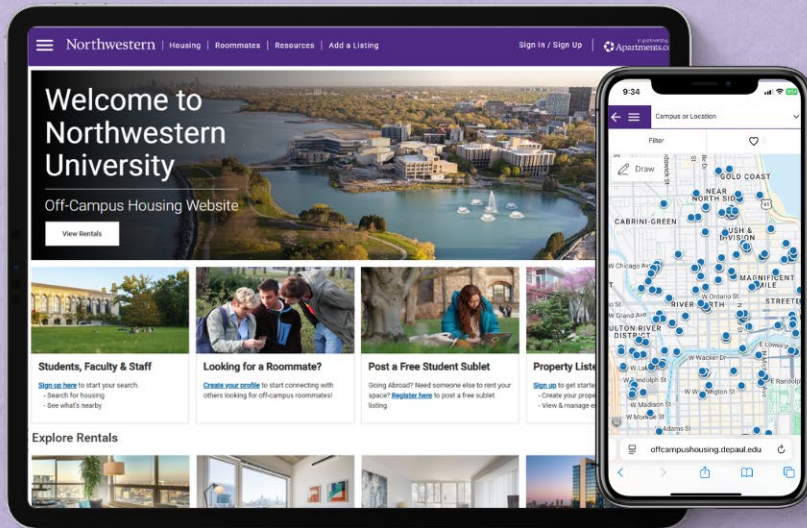
- As soon as you need a place, start looking!
- Most graduate students start looking for housing between March and June prior to their first quarter.
- Most leases are signed during and just after this period.
- When submitting an application, ask the landlord when you can expect to receive a decision

Authentic Information & Reliable Housing Options

FINDING HOUSING & ROOMMATES

Housing Listing Service

LOOKING FOR HOUSING?
Visit the Off-Campus Housing Website!



- Map-based housing search
- Roommate finder
- Sublet options
- Renter need-to-know resources

Northwestern | STUDENT AFFAIRS
Off-Campus Life

 offcampushousing.northwestern.edu 

 Apartments.com
OFF CAMPUS PARTNERS

Housing Listing Service

- Northwestern University works with Off-Campus Partners to provide an off-campus housing listing service:
<https://offcampushousing.northwestern.edu>.
- It's free to you!
 - Rental Property listings
 - Student Sublets
 - Roommate Finder
- If you need a shorter term, use the search checkboxes for “short-term” and “sublease.”

Finding Reliable Housing

(Even If You Aren't Currently in the Area)

- Before visiting, contact landlords by phone/email with any questions about properties you're considering.
- Recommendation: view housing options in-person!
 - Plan ahead to make appointments to visit potential properties as soon as you arrive.
 - If this is not possible, arrange a video call tour of the property (e.g., Zoom).
- **NEVER** send money before signing a lease.

Where to Live

Common Chicago neighborhoods for any student include Edgewater, Lakeview, and Rogers Park, but also the Loop and surrounding areas for Chicago campus students.

- Learn more about Chicago neighborhoods with this [interactive map](#)

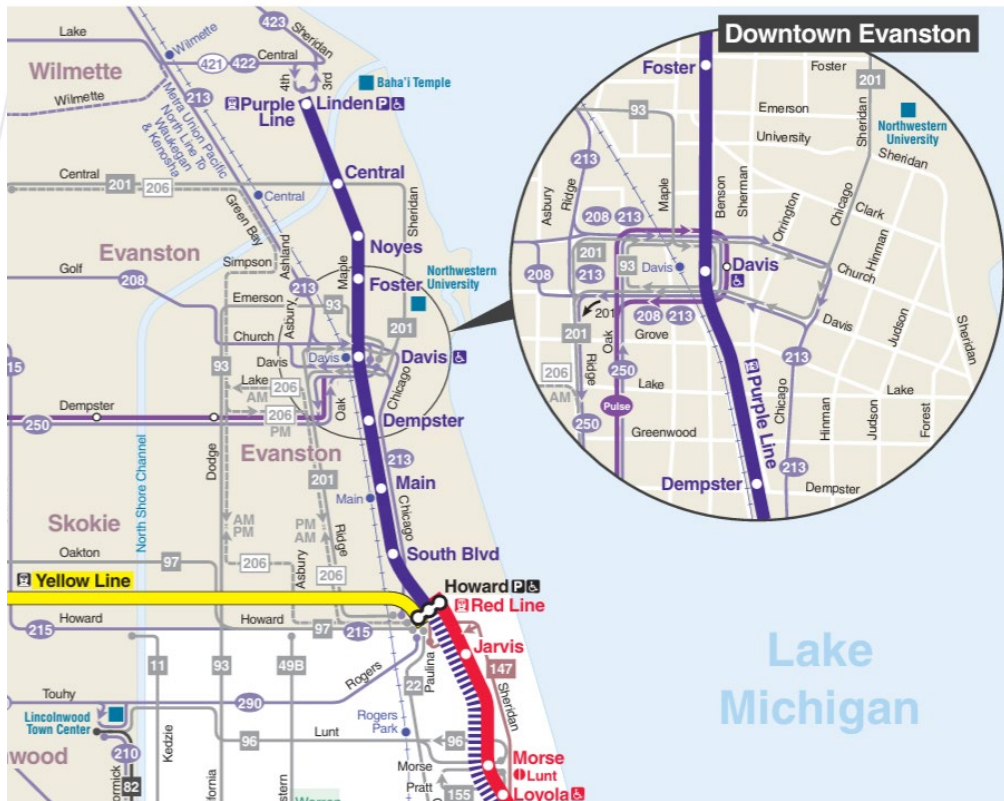
Popular Evanston neighborhoods for Northwestern students are west and south of campus

- Students often live within a few blocks of the CTA or Metra train lines

Location & Transportation

- It is important to think about location before committing to a lease
 - Things to consider: distance to classes, nearby public transportation, & proximity to grocery stores/laundromat.
 - Wondering about safety? [Learn more here.](#)
- Transportation Options
 - Bicycles, Walking, [University Shuttles](#), [CTA trains and buses](#), [Metra trains](#), & Cars (may require [on-campus parking pass](#))
- Some students choose to live at or near a transportation option, including...

CTA Trains: Purple Line

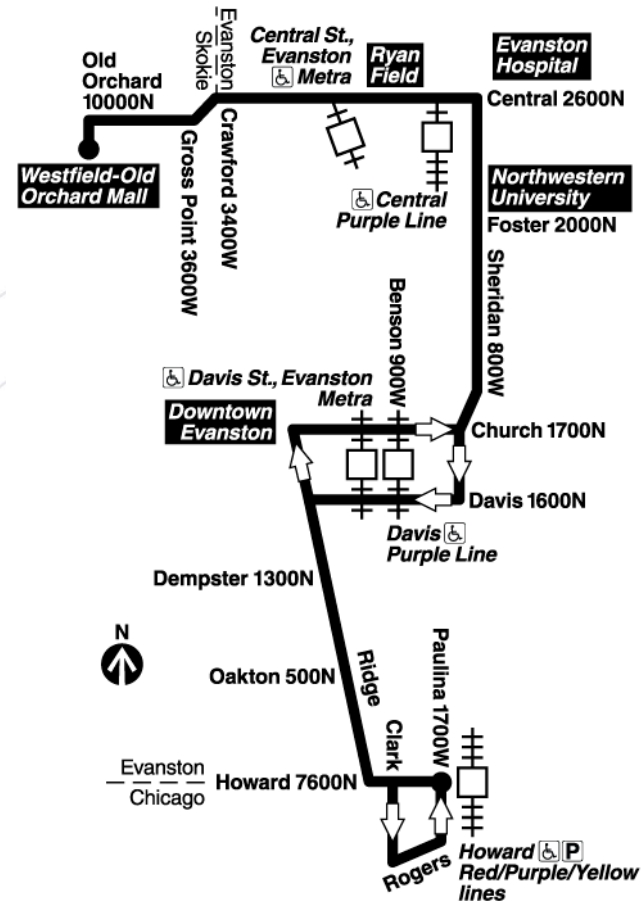


- The Purple Line is Evanston's connection to the rest of the CTA system throughout Chicago
- Many students choose to live near its route, or along the Red Line further south.
- Stops at Davis, Foster, and Noyes are all within 2-3 blocks of campus.
- Many busses stop at the Davis Street station, so even living along one of those routes will give you easy access.

Full Map of the CTA Train System: <https://www.transitchicago.com/maps/system/>

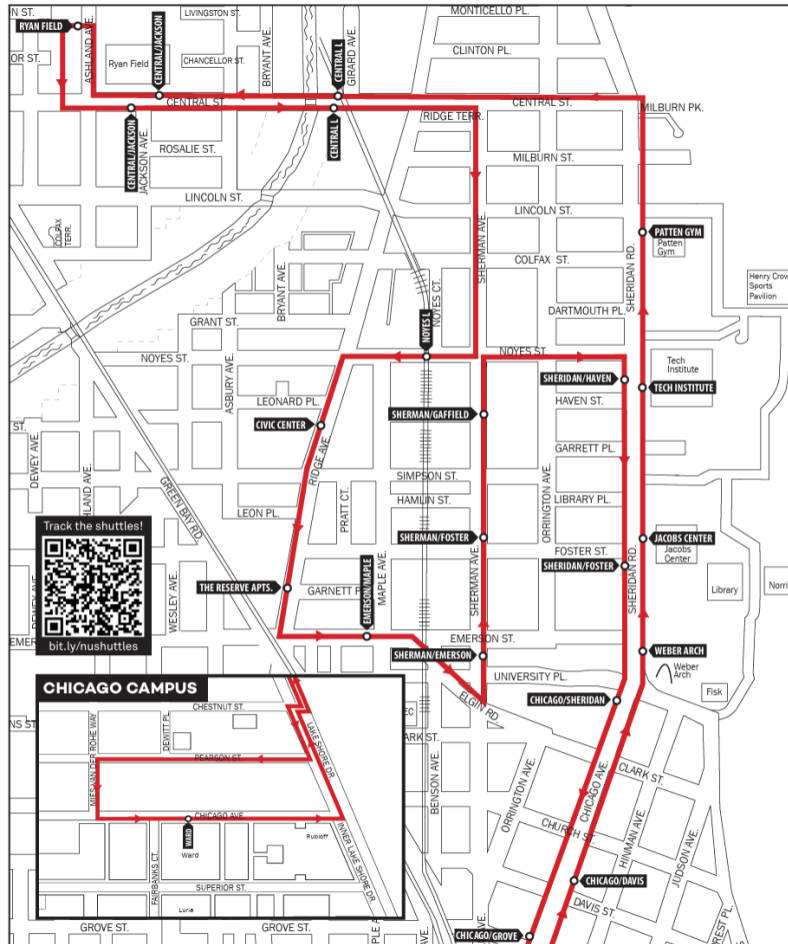
CTA Bus 201

- One of those busses is the CTA 201 bus.
- The 201 Bus serves Evanston and Chicago, and provides access to many key sites:
 - The Old Orchard mall
 - Evanston Hospital
 - Northwestern
 - Downtown and South Evanston
 - Multiple CTA train line stops
- Through these stops, the 201 bus can connect students to many useful resources.



Information on all bus routes: <https://www.transitchicago.com/schedules/>

Campus Shuttles: Intercampus



- The Intercampus Shuttle runs between the Evanston and Chicago campuses.
- Free for students!
- It's many stops in Evanston and the Northern neighborhoods of Chicago can be used to travel between home and campus.

Information on all Campus Shuttles: <https://www.northwestern.edu/transportation-parking/shuttles/routes/>

Think About Your Budget

- Consider the following expenses:
 - Rent and deposit amount
 - Monthly utilities
 - Furnishing your apartment (more information below!)
 - Food expenses
 - Do you have pets? Pet fees/deposits
 - Renters insurance (more information below!)
- Utilize our [monthly budget spreadsheet!](#)
- Financial Aid:
 - Talk with your financial aid advisor!



Amenities and Utilities

- **Amenities & Utilities** will vary with each lease contract, depending on the landlord/apartment building.
- **Amenities** that may be included: in-unit or in-building laundry, kitchen appliances, parking, Internet, cable TV, etc.
- **Utilities** that may be included: water, electricity, heat, garbage pick-up, gas

Amenities and Utilities

- Furnishings
 - Furnished apartments provide furniture and appliances
 - Unfurnished apartments will not, but will usually provide a refrigerator, oven, and stove.
- Heat
 - Heat may be radiator, gas, or electric
 - Electric heat tends to be more expensive
 - Radiator heat is frequently included in rent costs
 - Heat may be included in rent costs, but this can mean that the heat is not individually controlled.

Lease Options, Review Resources, & Fees

HOUSING & LEASE DETAILS

****READ YOUR LEASE!****

Understanding Your Lease

What is the *single most important thing* you can do before signing your lease?



Read It

Your Lease: How to Read It

- Leases can be challenging even for native English readers!
- Make it easier:
 - Review the [Chicago](#) or [Evanston](#) landlord-tenant ordinance summaries so you know your rights, and what to watch for.
 - Compare your lease to a model lease (like [this one](#) for Evanston).

Your Lease: Key Questions

- There are lots of questions to consider!
- You can use [OCCL's lease review document](#).
 - It won't tell you if the lease is good or bad, but it will help you find the key information.
 - Some sample questions:
 - What's the term?
 - Is it a joint or individual lease?
 - Can one end the lease early? Are there penalties to do so?
 - How and when do you pay rent?
 - How do you request repairs, or pest control?
 - Whether and how can you sublet?
 - What rules govern my use of the property?

Application & Lease Fees

- You may have other costs upon lease signing to be aware of:
 - Application fees
 - Move-in fees
 - Security deposit and first month's rent
- Key Notes:
 - A security deposit can be no larger than one and a half times your rent payment
 - Any fee you are charged *must* be related to the actual cost of the expense it covers.
 - You may request documentation of what fees cover!

Social Security Number, Credit, Co-Signers, & Conflicts

ADDITIONAL LEASE ISSUES

Social Security Number (SSN) for International Students

- Your application may be turned down without an SSN or ITIN
- You will be able to obtain an SSN eventually if you have an on-campus job.
- Some landlords will accept a valid passport, Form I-20, or Form DS-2019 as proof of being an international student studying at Northwestern

Credit History Review

- Landlords may ask for a Social Security number to conduct a credit check as part of the application.
- Poor credit history?
 - Find someone (often a family member) willing to co-sign your lease, or be a guarantor on it.
- What if you don't have an SSN?
 - If you have an on-campus internship/assistantship, obtain a letter from your academic department with the terms of your position and its pay
 - Obtain a letter of sponsorship or other proof of income (e.g., bank statements) to demonstrate your ability to pay.
 - Show your I-20, which verifies that you have the financial commitments needed to complete your studies.

Renter's Insurance

- Renter's insurance covers one's personal property in the case of theft, fire, floods and other events.
- **Benefits:**
 - Inexpensive – often less than \$20 per month
 - Restorative – will repair or replace damaged personal property
 - Protective – will often provide a term of emergency hotel coverage if the apartment is so damaged that you can no longer live there.
- **How to find a policy:**
 - Search online; there are many good policies available
 - Consider using an insurance broker
- **Beware!** Your housing provider may require you to have renter's insurance, but do not rely on them to purchase it for you: it will only cover their interests, not yours!

When Things Go Wrong

- Apartment living doesn't always go *exactly* perfect.
- Have an issue with your neighborhood/neighbors?
 - Try 3-1-1 Services to find local options and resources
 - Evanston: <https://www.cityofevanston.org/how-to/311>
 - Chicago: https://311.chicago.gov/s/?language=en_US
- Have a landlord conflict?
 - [Metropolitan Tenants Organization](#)
 - [Law Center for Better Housing](#)
- Have a roommate conflict?
 - [University Ombudsperson](#)

Connect With OCL

- Visit us in the lower level of Scott Hall!
- Visit [our website!](#)
- Contact us to schedule a meeting!
 - Email: offcampuslife@northwestern.edu
 - Phone: 847-491-8430
- Use our LinkTree to connect with us! →



Questions?

