Executive Summary

Nearly 75% of the student population at Indiana University Bloomington lives off-campus, lending the impact of off-campus living one of the most influential sustainability dimensions within the City. This internship has defined "sustainable living" as a lifestyle that considers the choices made by residents which balances the social, environmental and economic impacts of their actions amongst these three stages:

1. Choosing Housing
2. Sustainable Living
3. Move In/Move Out Process

In further detail, (1) “Choosing Housing” is the first component of sustainable living that can determine the ease of adopting sustainable habits and examines the capability of services or amenities provided at various properties to evoke these behavioral adjustments. These everyday behaviors are part of (2) “Sustainable Living” and include the thought processes and actions carried out in and out of residents’ homes. This includes consideration of energy usage, water usage, resource management, food choices, methods of transportation and more. Lastly, this internship addresses the (3) “Move In/Move Out Process” that occurs from start to end of a lease agreement to minimize potential waste created from this step and promote resourceful behaviors.

This internship has produced tools and resources to address all three stages through an approach focused on education, communication and movement. The educational portion relies on an online sustainable living guide that can be treated as a manual to aid a predominately student population acclimating to living on their own, without the oversight of parents or the provisions of campus residence halls. Communication is key to sharing information and ensuring the resources created from this internship are distributed to the decentralized audience. This is being achieved through the formation of two networks:

- **LSOC Network**: Comprised of campus organization, on-campus centers and departmental or school offices
- **Sustainable Housing Network**: Comprised of Bloomington property managers and owners

As for movement, a pledge system has been proposed to apply a monitoring tool that detects cultural shift and encourages lifestyle changes that reflect environmental impacts of everyday choices.
Presently, there is no off-campus housing office or other housing search tools that foster sustainable thought processes when selecting off-campus housing. The development of this internship establishes a workforce between IU’s Office of Sustainability and the City of Bloomington to reach out to the student body living off-campus and present them with proper resources and tools to achieve a more sustainable community. This paper walks through the approach applied this academic year in achieving this internship’s goals and introduces the tools used to address education, communication and movement regarding off-campus sustainability.

Education

**Indiana University Office of Sustainability (IUOS) Website**

IUOS’s website has been a large project confronted this academic year and is purposed to educate tenants on how to live sustainably once they have signed their lease. It is desirable to have individuals understand why they are making these behavioral changes apart from acting upon them. The previous intern performed a significant amount of research on four aspects of sustainable living: Food, Energy & Water, Transportation and Waste Management & Recycling. Two additional aspects were added to this list, Green Moving and DIY/Green Purchasing, totaling six topics of sustainable living that were translated into a web-friendly format. All topics are presented on their own pages within the IUOS website to form an “online sustainable living guide”. The idea of “sustainable living guides” were frequently used amongst other peer institutions for reaching out to students living off-campus. However, those were often seen as permanent manuals constricted to a PDF format. An “Indiana Sustainable Student” guide from 2008 is a similar version of the sustainable guides seen from other campuses such as Oregon State and Elon University. However, this guide targets an on-campus audience and does not speak specifically to the concerns of those living off-campus.

The flexibility for updates and revisions in a web format presents the information in a “living” manner that consistently shares resources in an up-to-date fashion. This allows successive interns the capability to improve the material as needed and maintains a consistent source of referral for the constant flux of students moving in and out of Bloomington. The web guide also allows for easy connections with Facebook and Twitter accounts that release short updates, tips and reminders. Students can utilize the website as a commonplace to find information relevant to them and does not require them to perform extensive research on their own to find ways to live sustainably.

The introduction of this website to the student body should encourage sustainable living thought processes and equip students with the necessary resources to do so. A hopeful possibility for this web guide is to create a forum where students can post questions, opinions, ideas and concerns on various topics. The intern can then interpret these comments into new material and educate the student body on the different aspects of sustainable living.

**Indiana Daily Student Housing Fair**

Indiana Daily Student (IDS) is the student newspaper on campus that holds a Fall and Spring Housing Fair every academic year. This fair brings together Bloomington property managers and allows them a day to appeal to the student population seeking off-campus housing. In previous years, it has been located in a large room in the Indiana Memorial Union (IMU) but has recently been forced to relocate to the, smaller, Frangipani room for construction reasons. The Spring Fair was still able to reach 850+ students and host 32+ property managers at the
new location. However, the new location was a dramatic reduction in table space and IUOS was pushed out of the fair. In order to maintain a presence at the fair, a “Green Renters Checklist” was made and distributed to property managers willing to hand out copies at their tables. This checklist listed items to consider including location, waste, water and energy perspectives for tenants. As students are walking around at the fair, this checklist acts as a reminder for questions to propose to property managers. As an example, a location-based question, “Can I walk to campus?” asks the tenant to determine transportation methods and expenses. This may prompt questions that would lead to considerations on car expenses, biking feasibility, or whether or not a housing option provides bus and shuttle access. This may be a typical question that most students think about, while others such as, “Are there ENERGY STAR appliances?”, are not as popular. But they are not any less important to address as these questions all funnel into the ultimate determination of costs.

A study was conducted by graduate students in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) on attitudes and priorities of local tenants, mainly the student population in Bloomington. This survey received 344 responses on evaluating a list of 20 priorities in choosing housing. The highest concern was price (monthly rent), followed closely by walking/biking distance, location and on-site laundry, all ranked on a scale of 1-4 (4 being highest priority). A representation of the data collected is seen in Figure 1.1.

*Figure 1.1 Order of Housing Priorities*

![Figure 1.1 Order of Housing Priorities](image)

Although price is ranked as the dominant determining factor, the price of utility bills is often unfamiliar to students that are transitioning from living in a dorm to living off-campus. For the majority of the student population, this will be the first time they have housing under their name and be in full responsibility of their contracts. Therefore, unfamiliar living costs become secondary thoughts that do not receive due reflection until move in and when these payments are being made. In order to better equip students, these items are listed on the checklist specifically to stress the influential factors they play in living costs of apartments and homes, while also being mindful of environmental effects. Along with the Housing Fair, IDS releases a complimentary IDS Housing & Living Guide that provides statistics and articles on off-campus life in Bloomington. In both spring and fall guides, articles were written on living “green” after information was presented to IDS’s Special Publications
Editor. There is potential to continue work with IDS to involve greater efforts between IUOS the student newspaper and the City. Being as this housing fair has the ability to reach a large undergraduate population shifting to off-campus housing, it is crucial to stay involved with IDS and relay the overall importance of sustainable living in cost considerations. This is relatable to the student population and helps them draw the connection of how certain habits are simultaneously beneficial to them and the environment.

**Communication**

*Establishment of Networks*

The success of the web guide is dependent on student use and the likelihood of students learning and altering their behaviors in lieu of processing the information. One attempt to address learning is the creation of two networks, the “Living Sustainably Off-Campus” (LSOC) network and “Sustainable Housing” network. The LSOC network consists of campus organizations that have completed a brief survey expressing their interests in learning about sustainable living. These network participants will receive monthly newsletters on various sustainable living topics (i.e. recycling, composting, water conservation, etc.) which they can pull pieces of highest interest to share with their audience/members. The content of the newsletter will present a topic of the month followed by tips corresponding with the monthly topic. These should provide readers with mini-projects or changes tenants can make in their homes or daily life. Web links of where information was extracted will be provided to give readers the option to learn more. This network specifically speaks to tenants, while the Sustainable Housing network targets property managers.

Participants in the Sustainable Housing network also completed a brief survey collecting data on their topics of interest and found a monthly newsletter would be most appropriate. The content of these newsletters will vary from the newsletters to tenants, as they may approach sustainable living topics from a different angle. Property managers will have a different capacity and budget from many of the student tenants targeted in the LSOC network. They will also be approaching this from the standpoint of providing services and amenities that persuade tenants to carry out sustainable habits. The two topics of highest interest resulting from the survey were energy efficiency and recycling. To cater to the most popular topics, the intern can provide comparisons of energy efficient appliances, present possible savings, rebate options and a manual on how to start recycling services. Heather VanNess from Abodes Inc. and Tyler Ferguson from Olympus Properties are two active property managers in Bloomington that have experience with establishing recycling programs at their properties. Therefore, they can serve as resources to collect information on past obstacles confronted, most successful recycling methods (i.e. hallway bins, outdoor collectors) and advertising techniques that can be translated onto the monthly newsletters. Independent research will also be necessary to present other incentives for property managers to adapt housing amenities and include background information as to how these changes will benefit them and their tenants.
Movement (Decision-Making and Action)

Green Rental Tool
A critical part of housing decisions start from online searches. Current online housing searches are a popular method of finding student housing, using websites such as ApartmentGuide.com, BloomingtonRentals.org, HeraldTimesRentals.com and IDS’s Online Housing Guide. These search tools are convenient for tenants to refine housing results with basic amenity selections but do not provide a complete resource that captures sustainability concerns. One or more of these websites may have provided information on recycling services, but the online content was not up to date or an accurate representation of the changes many Bloomington property managers have made to their properties. Beyond the capability of providing recycling services, tenants will not find information on historical energy trends that reflect the costs of living in a certain residence, or the energy efficient appliances that have been installed in various units within the search results.

Gainesville, Florida is a city that provides more transparent information to their tenants. They have created an online web page, Tools for Tenants, that influences housing choices using historical energy consumption. Tenants can select the type of floor plans they are looking for and narrow their results through a housing comparison table showing average energy costs for different locations. A visual of this tool is given in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Example of Tools for Tenants Comparison Chart
The development of an all comprehensive online housing search tool including basic amenity information and sustainable living concerns will allow tenants to find housing options that are closer to their individual demands, while growing a culture of sustainable thought processes in selecting housing. Jacqui Bauer, City of Bloomington Sustainability Coordinator, is the lead for the development of this website and future phone app. A grant was successfully passed and will fund the position of a project manager to begin collecting information amongst the total of fourteen participating cities supporting this website. The website will model qualities seen in “Tools for Tenants” but provide more options to narrow search results offering one website for tenants to find the most suitable housing option for them. This has the potential to shift tenant thought processes and show the link between energy usage and living costs in a clearer manner. Not only could there be a cultural shift in tenant behavior but property managers as well. The open access to average energy costs will draw more tenants to properties with more sustainable features. A change such as this may persuade property managers to adopt such features to their properties to better serve their tenants and also understand the importance of different maintenance projects that are critical to address.

The LSOC intern should support the project by advertising utility data collection through IUOS’s website and the networks. In the process of talking with students and property managers, it is also beneficial to document their concerns and conveniences to be shared with Jacqui and the project manager while this tool is being built. Thus far, a webpage has been designed for utility data upload consisting of data download and upload instructions. The survey questions and upload process have been sculpted to allow an easy and efficient method in collecting information.

Pledges
In attempt to promote action and behavioral changes is the idea of “Green Tenant” and “Green Housing” pledges. The newsletters sent out through the two networks are the educational basis for adjusting behavior, while the pledges are an accountability instrument to monitor and encourage sustainable living habits. Both pledges will offer a list of sustainable living commitments either tenants or property managers can pledge during a leasing period. The list of commitments will differ in both pledges as there will be habits more suitable for tenants and others more suitable for property managers.

The Green Tenant pledges can be an online form under the Living Sustainably web content. Tenants can electronically sign their own pledge and these results can be documented for further study by the LSOC intern on behavior changes over time, popular commitments and analyze choice of properties with pledge counts. If Green Tenant Pledges expands to a decent sample size, a competition can be constructed to instigate further pledge engagement with rewards to winning property managers and tenants. Rewards could range from funding a sustainable project on the property to a party catered by local growers or a local sustainably-minded food provider. Green Housing pledges will also be displayed on the IUOS website and allow tenants to view the commitments property managers have made at specific locations. This can also serve as a monitoring system and a search refinement tool for tenants looking for sustainable housing. Examples of the possible commitments for the two kinds of pledges are given in Figures 1.3 and 1.4.
Recommendations

**Improve Current Housing Search Tools**

The Green Rental Tool will require a fair bit of time until it is available for public use. In the meantime, it is encouraged to contact current housing search sites and suggest that they provide other search features that would consider specific sustainable amenities and services. Information on recycling facilities, available composting, garden plots, or ENERGY STAR appliances are rarely provided by these websites. These services could also be transformed into options that can be checked to narrow housing results. IDS’s Online Housing guide currently offers a “Recycling Services” checkbox that will help individuals narrow results, but it consists of a small sample size of Bloomington property managers and may not be the most updated search tool available. Although recycling services are the most common sustainable feature that tenants recognize, it will become more important to add others such as “available methods of transportation” and “low flow water fixtures” to familiarize them with other aspects of sustainable living.

**Involvement with IDS**

The housing fair is a great opportunity to reach out to students and provide information to them. With the continued construction project in IMU, it will be necessary to remain in constant contact with IDS to find a way to present materials and interact with the audience. The Green Renters Checklist could be disseminated to all participating property managers and they will have the option of checking what is available at their various properties for display at their individual tables. It is likely that certain property managers will choose not to display the checklist, especially if they do not provide any of the services listed. But for those that are actively making sustainable improvements, this will present an outlet where property managers can advertise their efforts in a consistent format. Students can walk by these tables and be faced with these questions as part of their initial thought process in selecting housing. As for the students that have a low interest in sustainability or environmental concerns, a
poster portraying the various sustainable habits through other beneficial perspectives (i.e. save money, stay healthy) of living can be utilized for this population. A poster was developed during this internship for the housing fair until notice of space limitations. If a plan can be strategized with IDS, this could become an overall message that is carried out within the housing fair.

**Grow Networks**
The state of these networks is crucial for the success of this internship. They provide a pathway to sharing information and expanding the knowledge base of the IUOS website. The more involved the network participants are within the newsletter and future meetings is a measure of how much information is being shared to their members and the value of the online sustainable living guide. Important groups to target will be active student organizations that have high membership attendance and high levels of involvement in community events. Ideally, this information is available to all students and should be beneficial for everyone living off-campus, but these will be the most important groups to acquire in the beginning of stabilizing a solid network. International student groups, cultural centers, Panhellenic Council and Student Sustainability Council (SSC) are a few examples to start with. Granted, these student organizations will prioritize their own goals and it will be necessary to provide them resources in a way that is accessible and will not impinge upon their own activities. This is strongly dependent on the response to monthly newsletters and the suggestions presented by the network members. As for the property managers, the ultimate goal is to have as many Bloomington property managers interested in furthering sustainable housing in the network. Future meetings can bring them together to discuss similar issues with establishing sustainable services (i.e. recycling) and produce more efficient solutions to help these projects run smoother. It is desirable to include the opinions of property managers that do not prioritize sustainability concerns. Including them in recent developments can stimulate interest and involvement in future changes.

**Develop Pledges**
The development of this pledge project may require a test trial within the Greek system and could be promulgated through the Sustainability Chairs within the Greek houses or housing populated by Greek life without houses. A possible issue with offering a reward or prize of some sort may come from lack of funding. If this is not possible, a competitive edge could still be maintained in the form of different pledge “levels”. Commitments can be ranged from the easiest to the most difficult to adopt. This can be determined from a survey and from a test trial of the Green Tenant pledges, the easiest commitments can be extracted from the most popular commitments. There will likely be other influencing factors of why certain tenants have chosen their specific commitments, but a rough range can be deduced in distinguishing bronze, silver and gold level pledges. Essentially, the distinguished levels of pledges should create an incentive to achieve higher standard pledges. If tenants or property managers were to reach gold level, another system may need to be developed to further living improvements or habits. But the idea is that interns can change the format and listed commitments offered during a leasing period, so there is flexibility from year to year. With the ability to make these changes, it will be important to note that comparisons between properties or tenants may only be comparable within a single leasing period. This is where the Green Rental Tool would have the resources to allow comparison between property managers while incorporating a time component to track changes.
The formulation of a trial pledge period may be necessary before the actual pledges are implemented for the general tenant and property manager population. A trial period will offer feedback from tenants and property managers as to how realistic the commitments are. If a trial period requires too much time or does not have a large enough sample, the pledges can be sent through the networks for a comment period. This will rely on the open rates of newsletters and dedication of participants to respond. If valuable input is received from the comment period, this could eliminate a need for a trial period that may not be necessary. The trial period may not be needed because there will be no upfront costs to implementing this project. Results of the pledge system can be taken from using the first leasing period as a “trial”. There should be a response from its initiation to decide whether or not the pledges should be continually carried out.

Incorporate other intern work
Other internships within IUOS are working towards aspects of sustainable living that are generally focused towards on-campus life. But these aspects can be relatable to off-campus living and other interns can provide valuable input and contribute to monthly newsletters, web content and future workshops. These future workshops can take place at the E-house and invite lecturers to speak on various topics relatable to the two networks. Workshop targeting the Living Sustainably Off-Campus Network should provide project ideas or “how-to’s” that tenants can accomplish on their own and explain the influences these changes have. Professors or other guest lecturers can be invited to speak on topics such as indoor air pollution or water conservation, which tenants would find useful. The Sustainable Housing Network would be more interested in how to establish recycling programs, how to communicate with tenants effectively and energy saving rebate programs. Experts in these areas can be designated within the Bloomington community and offer their knowledge and advice in these fields. Interns can provide input on other projects they are initiating that could contribute to sustainable living and gain student body engagement through these workshops. Time near the end of the workshops can be used to share opinions of proposed initiatives within IUOS and allow attendees an opportunity to voice their ideas or viewpoints.

Conclusion

‘Living Sustainably Off-Campus’ is an internship that relies on educating the student body in what “living sustainably” means and why it matters to produce behavioral changes. The creation of an online sustainable living guide through the IUOS website is the beginning stage of establishing a common resource to base reasoning and provide a how-to guide on how to make living choices that consider resource efficiency and environmental impacts. Through the creation of networks and connection of social media tools, these valuable resources can be directed to the target audience and allow different organizations to select the information that best addresses the concerns of their members. In the future, the creation of the Green Rental Tool will be particularly useful in providing tenants with an all inclusive website that helps them make housing decisions that are most suitable and sustainable. These tools and resources are to be accessible, reliable and relevant to the large student population in Bloomington. It is desired that these resources will provide motivation for lifestyle changes and increase awareness for the connections within living sustainably, from choosing housing to behavior within and outside of home life, to the day tenants move out.