

University Commons and its relationships to governmental and other agencies.

Ann Arbor University Commons was created as a condominium community under a provision of the Michigan law, enabling such communities for persons 55 years of age and higher. Although University Commons is adjacent to the University of Michigan and was planned with the cooperation of the University, it is a separate entity. The vital land parcel was purchased from the University. Accordingly, property taxes are paid by the individual owners to the City of Ann Arbor. Relations with entities within the University, such as the School of Music, Theatre & Dance, are separately arranged, as is the culinary arts relationship with Washtenaw Community College. A professional management company employs the Community Director and an assistant, the maintenance staff and grounds crews. An elected Board of Directors and numerous committees plan and oversee the many programs and activities.



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The History Preservation Committee

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Over a half century ago a University of Michigan faculty group considered housing for senior faculty and staff. They wished to provide a home with a living style which was as intellectually satisfying as they had found in their academic lives. They wanted to concentrate on living and life-long learning, providing for senior access and mobility needs while avoiding the orientation of an elder-care facility. Several succeeding faculty groups kept the idea and preliminary planning active, and one group with enough dedication founded the Commons. The first residents came in 2000. They, and those who followed, molded the Commons and helped it evolve to the present community.

The condominium community is composed of a total of 92 apartments, townhomes and villas, located on a hill on the west side of Huron Parkway and surrounded by a maturing woodland. It is about a mile from the well-maintained Gallup Park on the Huron River, and about a block from a University of Michigan commuter lot with its bus service. City bus service is available at the entrance to the Commons.

In keeping with the goal of promoting an active life style, the designers included details such as a recital hall, library, seminar and class rooms, an exercise room, craft room and a wood-working shop. The Brass Rail Café on the 2nd level is a recreational space that serves, among other things, as a meeting place for the weekly “Common Time,” held on Friday afternoon. An adjacent outdoor terrace adds to the space during the warm months. All of these common areas are accessible via wide corridors with railings, wide doorways and elevators. The central services and common areas are accessible and tastefully decorated. For safety and convenience, during power outages, the apartments are served by a backup electrical generator.

Educational and cultural opportunities were stressed from the early planning and are striking components of the programs at the Commons. University faculty and staff, and residents themselves provide a pool of speakers for late afternoon events. Many recitals and musical programs are available as a part of the relationship between University Commons and the School of Music, Theatre & Dance and other parts of the University. A

large elegant room contains the lecture/recital area at one end and the dining area at the other. The dining area is supported by a fully equipped commercial kitchen. Optional four course dinners are served two evenings a week. The preparation and service are conducted by culinary arts students from Washtenaw Community College, as a part of the relationship between University Commons and another Ann Arbor institution.

The individual condominium units vary in size and are completely equipped for private living, including kitchen and laundry facilities. Assisted living is not offered at the Commons, but most units can accommodate live-in help, if it is desired and privately arranged.

The residents and their activities help define University Commons:

- Most have some relation to the University, were or are students, faculty, staff or relatives.
- One person from each unit must be at least 55 years of age.
- Many of the residents are retired, while some are fully employed at the University or in businesses and some are employed part-time or are volunteers. This diversity is a positive contribution to the character of the Commons.
- Past or present professional interests of the residents are wide ranging and include the therapeutic fields, such as medicine, nursing and social work as well as engineering, law and teaching; some might simply say “scholar.”
- Many residents travel and some of the residents maintain other residences in the United States or foreign countries.