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New luxury apartments opening near campus amid UC’s housing issues

ROWAN HETZER | NEWS REPORTER

Two rental companies in the University of Cincinnati (UC) area dominate the off-campus housing scene: Gaslight Property and Uptown Rentals. However, there may be a promise of new, more luxurious and more expensive possibilities starting in the fall of 2024.

UC’s recent student housing crisis has put substantial pressure on off-campus housing to provide enough units to sustain its students. With over 80% of incoming freshmen seeking housing opportunities, upwards of 7,120 freshmen need housing either on or near the campus. The university’s current on-campus housing can only accommodate around 3,800 students, excluding UC’s contracted apartment complexes off-campus such as the Deacon and USquare. This also does not include the other 42,000 students potentially seeking housing.

Property companies such as Gaslight Property and Uptown Rentals provide thousands of units surrounding the campus area. Gaslight offers around 1,600 units in the Clifton area, while Uptown Rentals boasts roughly 4,000 residential units across Cincinnati. These companies offer apartments at a wide range of pricing, typically with studios charging at a minimum of $700 a month and two-bedroom apartments at a minimum of $1,000 a month.

However, these rental companies have variable reputations among college students in the area. Uptown Rentals has a 3.4-star rating on Google, with most positive reviews being about the leasing process and negative reviews about the quality of life in their units. Gaslight Property has similar positive reviews surrounding leasing agents, but when it comes to maintenance or cleanliness of apartments, most of the reviews rate the experience one star.

“Poor customer service and communication. We had pieces of our roof fall due to a water leak. I have contacted Gaslight Properties several times and they have not fixed the issue properly. There is even mold damage. The unit we moved into was just renovated before we got there,” Varun Narayanan said in a Google Review in June 2023.

New developments such as The Vanguard and The Hub are promoting high-quality living experiences before construction is finished.

The Vanguard, set to open in the fall of 2024, considers itself “deluxe off-campus housing.” Their website states that amenities available for the complex will include a swimming pool, a fitness studio, a yoga studio, study rooms and stronger security measures to keep residents safe. Each apartment also features a walk-in closet, queen bed and private bathroom for each tenant. Pricing for these apartments is determined per bedroom, with a 452-square-foot studio going for $1,299. This is slightly cheaper than a room in a 944-square-foot two-bedroom apartment, which sits at about $1,310.

The Hub complex is being constructed less than 500 feet from campus. Their pricing is also calculated per bedroom, with the cheapest option being $945 for a room in a 795-square-foot two-bedroom apartment. Their amenities include a rooftop pool, a computer lab, a lounge, a dog park in the complex and multiple high-efficiency sustainability features.

While the overall appeal of deluxe apartments, swimming pools and yoga studios is undeniable, these upgrades come with a price tag. These new apartments do not offer any units for a similar price to other dominant rental companies. For many college students, budget-friendliness is the leading factor in the housing search process. The pricing of these new developments, although competitive for the amenities offered, may not align with the typical student budget. Traditional rental companies, such as Gaslight Property and Uptown Rentals, continue to provide options with more budget-friendly offerings, but may not be as luxurious as the new developments.

In the end, the choice between a deluxe experience and a budget-friendly one is a decision that should be dependent on one’s priorities and financial situation. However, the most important thing is to find a living arrangement that suits your academic and personal needs.
COVID-19’s impact on campus dining

ISABELLA ZINCHINI | OPINION EDITOR

Dining halls have seen some of the biggest changes on college campuses since the COVID-19 pandemic. The University of Cincinnati (UC) was among these colleges when, in the summer of 2021, it implemented changes such as socially distant dining and expanded takeout options.

In the fall 2020 semester, UC utilized a COVID check app designed as a required daily health check to determine a student's health status in regards to campus facility access, such as the recreation center and dining halls.

Students’ entrance into dining halls depended on their status according to the app. Students began the semester with a “yellow status,” which permitted entry at locations designated as carryout only. From there, it was further determined whether the student would move to a “green” or “red” status based on their COVID-19 testing results.

Students with a “green” status were fully cleared to sit down in any and all dining centers. Students with a “red” status were permitted only to pick up carryout options from designated areas.

Various dining halls on campus were designated as socially distant dine-in or carryout only. Contactless ordering systems were also put in place, such as touchless coffee systems and mobile ordering apps like Transact.

There are new dining options currently in place which arguably would not have been implemented as early if not for the pandemic’s effect on meal ordering. These options include takeout boxes, mobile ordering and kiosk ordering.

Previously, UC utilized compostable to-go boxes in dining halls. Such boxes were a part of UC’s sustainability initiative as students were encouraged to return them via campus dish-return stations to later be composted. In the pandemic, students were also encouraged to bring their own reusable bags to dining halls for carryout food.

In September, the university introduced OZZI boxes—an alternate eco-friendly takeout box. These reusable to-go boxes can be returned and exchanged for a clean box via machines located in UC dining halls.

UC students can now also mobile order from select restaurants in the Tangeman University Center (TUC), through the Grubhub app, some of which accept meal exchanges. This change allows students to skip lines and grab food in between classes more accessibly.

In addition, to Grubhub’s mobile ordering options, UC has also introduced food kiosks inside TUC. These kiosks offer an alternative to mobile ordering. Such options also help to accommodate the record-breaking number of students at UC.

A second year student uses the OZZI machine in Campus Green on Monday, Dec. 4, 2023. These machines allow students to return their OZZI boxes for them to be cleaned and reused. Skylinn Jenkins | Contributor
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Merriweather rebuilds program culture

AIDAN LEONARD | SPORTS EDITOR

For most sports coaches, working with family members is either not an option or a concept some do not strive to have. However, the new women’s basketball head coach Katrina Merriweather at the University of Cincinnati (UC) is doing just that.

Kabrina Merriweather, younger sister to Katrina, is in her first year at UC as the assistant coach to the Winnen’s basketball team.

“That is a dream come true for both of us,” said Katrina Merriweather, the 10th coach in program history. “The minute that she knew she wanted to coach at this level and then did all the work. Then I had the opportunity to hire her. I was excited about her being invested enough to have a resume that allowed me to do it.”

A decision she did not want to feel like a handout to her younger sister Kabrina.

“I would never hire her simply because she was my sister if I didn’t believe she would be great at the job.”

With the 14-year age gap, Katrina says she often feels like the second mother to her younger sister. “She is very like my daughter more than my sister. So, she’s fortunate enough to have two moms, which I do not know if she would count that as advantage. Sounds like two people telling her what to do.”

Returning to her alma mater, Katrina Merriweather was a four-year player from 1997-2001. The former Memphis Tigers head coach is looking to restore a program she helped build.

Formally announced as the new head coach on March 25, 2023, the Indianapolis native boasts a career 151-70 record in her two stops at Memphis and Wright State.

Trying to rebuild a culture that seems to have been lost, Merriweather’s close ties with her coaching staff and familiarity with the program could help turn things around.

“It’s the second time we’ve done it, and I think that the first thing you do is do everything you can to get the kids to believe that it’s a new season,” said Merriweather. “That there is not anything that matters, whether it was a winning season or losing season, about last year or the year before. We start fresh.”

Now entering a Power Five conference, Merriweather will look to replicate her turnaround with the Tigers after UC finished bottom of the table in the weaker American Athletic Conference (AAC).

Taking over a 4-15 team, Merriweather quickly flipped the script and lead Memphis to a 16-12 record before guiding the Tigers to the Super 16 of the National Invitation Tournament.

This is a feat she will hope to replicate with the Bearcats, who have finished 11th in the AAC in back-to-back seasons.

“The best thing I think we can do is give everyone a clean slate to build some trust and trust the process,” Merriweather said.

Opening the season with an exhibition against Ohio Dominican, a Division II program, Merriweather learned a lot from the Nov. 1 game.

“I learned how coachable they can be, because when we played on Saturday, I didn’t know what to expect walking into the game. We only had a couple of days to tweak some things defensively, to sharpen up some things offensively, and the team was able to take those changes and implement them into the game.”

After finishing her four-year degree, Merriweather stayed at UC as a graduate assistant the following year, becoming the first Bearcats women’s basketball player to advance to four consecutive postseason tournaments.

Opinion | Men’s basketball top starting 5

TYLER EASTERDAY | SPORTS REPORTER

Cincinnati’s basketball program has a rich history of success. The Bearcats have won over 1800 games, spent 45 total weeks at No. 1 on the AP poll and appeared in the NCAA tournament 33 times.

With this consistent success over the years comes great players. Many have given their take on Cincinnati’s all-time starting lineup, so here are my thoughts on the five best players who have come through Clifton.

Point Guard Oscar Robertson (1957-1960)

The Big O is far and away the greatest point guard and player the Bearcats have ever seen. Despite playing long ago, he still ranks first in career points, points per game, career rebounds and free throws for the Bearcats. When he graduated, he was the NCAA’s all-time leading scorer. He was inducted into the College Basketball Hall of Fame in 2006 and the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1980 and 2010. His list of personal accomplishments goes on and on.

Shooting Guard Sean Kilpatrick (2010-2014)

Kilpatrick may not have had the same impact on basketball as Robertson, but very few others can say that they have. Kilpatrick is still the second-leading scorer in Bearcats history and the second of two players to ever score 2,000 points for the team. He was also named a first team all-conference selection by the AAC his senior season.

Small Forward Jack Twyman (1951-1955)

Twyman just barely missed out on what would have been one of college basketball’s most dynamic duos. The 1983 Basketball Hall of Famer averaged 17.8 points per game during his time with the Bearcats, along with a staggering 13.8 rebounds per game. Twyman’s life and legacy was documented in the 1973 film Maurie, named after longtime friend and teammate Maurice Stokes.

Power Forward Kenyon Martin (1997-2000)

The story of Bearcats basketball cannot be told without Kenyon Martin. The high-flyer from Saginaw, Michigan is still the program’s leader in blocked shots with 292. He had one of the greatest individual seasons in Cincinnati history in the 1999-2000 season, averaging 18.9 points and 9.7 rebounds per game. The team finished 29-4 en route to a defeat in the Round of 32 in the NCAA tournament that season. He would go on to be selected with the first overall pick in the 2000 draft by the New York Nets.

Center Danny Fortson (1994-1997)

As a true freshman, Danny Fortson was already something special. In his first season in the NCAA, he averaged 15.1 points per game and 7.6 rebounds. He never let up after that, averaging over 20 points and nine rebounds per game in his next two seasons.
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A new generation of “Beatlemania”

When four young men with mop tops stepped off the plane at JFK Airport almost 65 years ago, they were greeted with a barrage of fans screaming, shouting, and yes, twisting with excitement. Nearly half a decade later, the fans still exist; albeit more mellow about showing their passion for the most popular band of all time—The Beatles.

This is exactly what is happening at the University of Cincinnati (UC), where students are able to join together in a class specifically about the music of The Beatles.

UC College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) Dr. Om Srivastava, who teaches the course at both UC and Xavier University, defines The Beatles as, “The greatest example of human intersectionality... artistically, culturally, and even technologically.”

With a career spanning just eight years, the foursome quickly became the poster band for the 1960s. But it wasn’t just their signature “Beatle boots” or classic suits that cemented them in pop culture history forever. “The movie ‘A Hard Day’s Night’ completely shatters the mold of how a pop star could be depicted on film,” Srivastava said. “It’s just a foreshadowing of everything to come.”

Pioneered by songwriting duo John Lennon and Paul McCartney (dubbed “soulmates” by Srivastava), the band’s personable lyrics and introduction of the Indian sitar to the western world put the band’s music a world above the rest. Smithsonian Magazine writer William D. Moylan elaborates on the dramatic pause created with the closing of the track “I Want You (She’s So Heavy)” on “Abbey Road.” “These sounds gradually amass throughout the course of the song, the tension growing—until it suddenly stops; the point at which John Lennon decided the tape should be cut,” Moylan said. Other notable innovations include the modern music video, which was created by the band to “ease The Beatles ridiculously tight schedule.”

Besides musical innovation, there was another key to The Beatles’ overwhelming success—dropping the polished act for a more personable one.

The world had only seen the pristine characters of Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly just years before, but these Britons were not cut from the same cloth. The Beatles were joking around with the press, with each other, and on stage. Not to mention their outspoken political views. “In terms of actually going out in front of the press and taking a stance against the Vietnam War, The Beatles were the first artists to do that at the time,” Srivastava said.

The course, which is held at numerous universities across the country, often surprises the students that take it. “Most students cannot believe that the same band who made ‘Love Me Do’ also made ‘Helter Skelter,’” Srivastava said.

As of the spring semester of 2023, a new club entitled “Bearcats for The Beatles” has appeared on CampusLink, focusing exclusively on carrying on the legacy of The Beatles. The club, started by Emily Zuber, provides a space for Beatles lovers all over campus to join together in a place where their records never stop spinning.

However, in a recent email conversation with Prof. Roger Klug, who was assigned the role of academic advisor for the club, these records have begun to skip—he said the club “appears to be inactive.”

A short-lived club for the long-term impact of a band so beloved by students around the world, Srivastava knows that the legacy of The Beatles will always see the sun. “Every artist has been touched by The Beatles, whether they know it or not...it’s a huge question of what could have been,” Srivastava said.

Does leaving for college lead to tattoos?

College is a time for young adults to branch out and fly the nest. This manifests in many ways, but one that stands out is the trend to get tattoos after turning 18. It is common for students to want to change something about themselves when forming their new identity, often in a new city after living at home.

At the University of Cincinnati (UC), there are many students who get tattoos for many different reasons. Overall, these students are all just expressing themselves in their own authentic ways. Some tattoos have meaning, while others are ones they have been planning for some time.

“I got most of mine [tattoos] my freshman year of college,” explained Anna Carlson, a fourth-year journalism student. “Unlike some people, I really started getting them because of the aesthetic they give off. A lot of mine do not have meaning, they’re just art to me. I got some impulsively and do regret some, but I think that is just the nature of tattooing. When you have so many there’s bound to be one or two you feel like you could live without, but I like to think of them as little pieces of me. There was a time and a place where that was what I wanted, and I have that part of me to hold onto for the rest of my life.”

Carlson reflects on the ways her tattoos have evolved throughout her college career as well. “I recently got a cover up done because there was one tattoo in particular that I just couldn’t stand. The cover up cost a lot of money, but in the end was really worth it. I love tattoos because they’re a form of expression, and of course they look super cool too.”

Abra Riley, a third-year communication design student, always knew she wanted many tattoos. At first she wanted them to have meaning, but her idea of tattoos expanded over time.

“My first tattoo is a large tattoo on my right tricep,” Riley said. “It is a bee surrounded by raspberries. While I’m not too much of a believer in tattoos having to have meaning, I didn’t want the stereotypical narrative of regretting your first tattoo, so this was the tattoo that I wanted to have special meaning. My great-grandfather, Ralph, was a beekeeper when he came back from WWII. He and my grandpa, Dan, both had raspberry bushes, and whenever I was with either of them, we would pick raspberries.”

“T’ve wanted tattoos for as long as I can remember,” Riley said. “I’ve watched all the tattoo shows, like Ink Master and Miami Ink, since I was little, and I think that’s what kind of kickstarted my love and interest in tattooing. It’s really never been a question of if I would get tattoos, it was more a matter of when. I got my first tattoo a little over a month after my 18th birthday. My mom had given me all the talks about tattoos, but considering I had been wanting tattoos since I was 10, it was kind of a no brainer for me. I saved for years for my first tattoo, which ended up costing me $700 and it was worth every cent. I myself am an artist, so I appreciate the value of paying artists what their art and time is worth.”

Caitlyn Ryan, a fifth-year speech pathology student, expressed the importance of her first tattoo. “I got a tattoo on my right ribcage area for my brother. It is a green ribbon representing cerebral palsy. I got it because he holds so much strength and I admire that.”

Overall, there are many reasons for students to get tattoos when they head to college. The reasons behind each of their varying stories are fascinating and notable.
Spring break staycation ideas

WILLLOW DOWNS | OPINION REPORTER

Spring break is the highlight of the second semester. With six days off classes, lectures and homework, it’s the break college students need and deserve. Many students will be packing their bags and traveling to various destinations. However, those staying in Cincinnati for the break can still make the most out of it.

Cincinnati has many hidden getaways which you can rent out for the night. One search on Airbnb shows a plethora of different homes available around the city. From rooftop condos in Mt. Adams to lofted apartments in Over the Rhine, there are options all over.

If you’re feeling a bit classier, you could check out the many hotel options around the city. The Renaissance Cincinnati Hotel located downtown or the 21c Museum Hotel right next to the Contemporary Arts Center are both great options for a getaway.

Even if you don’t want to leave the comfort of your own home, there are many other options to create the perfect staycation.

There are over 20 museums throughout the city begging to be explored. If you enjoy art, check out the Contemporary Arts Center or the Cincinnati Art Museum. More of a history person? Look into visiting the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education or the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. With free entry and discounted tickets for students at some of the museums, they are worth investigating.

If you’re not a fan of museums, don’t fret. Another great option to explore is the Cincinnati Zoo. Not only is the zoo home to hundreds of animals, but it has also been voted the number one zoo by USA Today. Whether you prefer watching the giraffes roam around or the manatees slowly swimming, there’s an animal for everyone.

There are also many free parks open to the public in Cincinnati. Mt. Lookout is home to one of the most beautiful parks in the city, Alms Park. Alms Park includes an overlook and many hiking trails. If you’re looking for a more playful park, check out Sawyer Point. With multiple playgrounds throughout the park, you’ll never get bored.

After a long day of exploring the city, you’re going to be starving—and Cincinnati won’t disappoint, offering some incredible cuisine. With award-winning restaurants such as Mita’s, Nolia Kitchen and more, Cincinnati is a place where you can treat yourself to the best. More budget friendly restaurants include Eli’s BBQ, Pho Lang Thang and The Eagle just to name a few.

If you feel like exploring Cincinnati but don’t feel like doing all the work, taking a tour is a great option. There are many great touring options to help you discover the city even more. Take the Ultimate Queen City Underground Tour to explore the underground tunnel system right below our feet. If you’re feeling a bit spookier, take one of the many ghost tours Cincinnati offers. Over the age of 21? Check out the Hidden Brewery Caverns Tour. Explore the city through a guide’s lens—some tours offer student discounts as well.

Staying in Cincinnati for spring break is what you can make of it. Grab a few friends and make this staycation the best one yet. Cincinnati has much to offer, you just need to look in the right places.

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center is a museum in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. It opened in 2004, the center also pays tribute to all efforts to secure freedom for all enslaved people. Captured on Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2023. Noah Garel | Chief Photographer

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Nearly every college student could benefit from a little extra income here and there, and sometimes saving and having a full-time job just don’t do the job. Coming up with a new and fresh side hustle can be hard to come by, but students at the University of Cincinnati (UC) have it down to a tee.

From clothing upcycling and acrylic paintings to DJing campus events and becoming nail technicians, UC students are colliding their creativity with business savviness to create the ultimate side-hustles.

**Nail Technician**

One of the newest and most up-and-coming ways of making extra money lies within the world of beauty—more specifically, manicures and nail-art—and the demand on a college campus is high. Going to a salon for nail work can cost anywhere from $50 to $100, and college students know their clientele. Lillia Lanzotti, a second-year criminal justice student, channeled her love for painting into a flourishing nail art business—right from the comfort of her own home.

“I always loved doing my nails, and I paint frequently,” Lanzotti said, who additionally paints and sells commissioned acrylic paintings on Instagram. “I combined the two, and after lots and lots of practice, I felt confident in my skills to start an Instagram and take clients.”

Lanzotti started marketing her nail services just a few months ago in September, and already has a stream of steady clients coming in. She offers her services anywhere between $30 to $40—a significant discount for college students looking for high quality nails. “I know how expensive it is to go to a salon, and as a college student who wants to get a regular manicure, I made sure to make my prices affordable.”

But having the skills isn’t all it takes to start a successful side-hustle. It takes equal parts talent and ability to market yourself, and taking advantage of the many different aspects of social media platforms is crucial. “I primarily promote on Instagram through the uses of hashtags, but I also post on the UC student Snapchat story, and of course word of mouth is also very helpful, and when clients love their nails, I ask them to either post a picture on their stories or tell their friends,” Lanzotti said.

“I love showing my creativeness, but my favorite part is all of the amazing people I’ve met through this,” Lanzotti said. “It’s a great way to make friends as you both sit there together for an hour or so.”

Lanzotti can be found on Instagram @lilliasnails.

**Clothing Design and Upcycling**

While many UC students prefer side hustles outside of their day-to-day, many others hone in on their natural talents and skills to create a market for themselves.

Lucas Bonilha-Van’t Hof, or Louie Unruly through his clothing-design brand, is a second-year fashion design student at UC, pulling from his natural skills and classwork to create intricate and in-style pieces for the UC and Clifton communities.

Louie Unruly started his side-hustle after taking notice of the number of pieces he created but was not wearing. “I was starting to feel comfortable enough in the clothes I made, so I figured I might as well try building my brand or getting products out there,” Bonilha said.

Bonilha and friends started out by going to house shows or local bars when they were hosting events with the clothes he made—whether through ‘cut and sew,’ screen printing, upcycling, painting or knitting. “We just wanted to have a good time and try to make a couple sales,” Bonilha said.

After getting his name and brand out there, Bonilha started making money from his side-hustle relatively quickly. “Most of the stuff I make uses recycled fabric or old clothing I’m given, so profit is just determined on what price I set, and my first pop-up I think I made around $300 in sales,” he said.

While Bonilha got his footing in the fashion-design game relatively quickly, he still relies heavily on his marketing skills to make sales. “My marketing strategy is having people wear my stuff, which is usually sort of niche, so it’s more about getting it on someone and out into the world,” Bonilha said.

The Louie Unruly website features a variety of different handmade products, ranging in prices from $15 to $40—incredibly affordable prices for handmade products.

“It makes me so happy seeing people rock my stuff, not just because it’s my stuff but also because a lot of the time it’s people expanding their style,” Bonilha said. “A great example I bring up is when I sell skirts, it’s only been guys that buy them, and that is so cool to see, especially in Cincinnati.”

Louie Unruly can be found on Instagram @louieunruly.dsgn and online at louieunruly.com.

**Djing and Making Music**

One of the most rewarding aspects of a side hustle is being able to do what you love and get paid for it. Being a DJ as a side hustle is the perfect example of getting the best of both worlds.

Rory Walsh, a second-year DAAP student, is a master of many side ventures such as graphic design and fashion design—but his forefront hustle is DJing.

Walsh found his first outlet for DJing through his job as a visual arts and graffiti art teacher at Elementz in OTR. “They were running a DJing class at the same time and had some small mixers they were using to teach the kids; I borrowed one and started to learn on my own,” Walsh said.

After sitting down with Virtual DJ for a few months, a common DJing platform for those just starting out, Walsh found himself becoming more and more acclimated to the hardware and programming, and after starting classes in DAAP, felt connected with people who were already in the DJ scene.

“I think being in that environment gave me the push I needed to actually start,” Walsh said.

After much hard work, Walsh felt confident enough to start marketing himself through friends’ birthday parties and smaller hangouts. “I didn’t start making money off of it for a while,” Walsh said. “And I’m glad I didn’t jump into things too soon.”

Now, Walsh can be found spending his weekends playing at different raves, parties and bars in the Greater Cincinnati area, most specifically through his involvement with the Crystal Cove—a student-run and organized collective which supports DJs, EDM artists and small businesses—as well as Hi-Fi Cincy in Mt. Adams.

“Things really took off for me when a friend asked me to play at a rave/house show his friend was going to run, sure why not?” Walsh said.

Walsh began marketing himself through social media after already having a following for his graphic design and upcycling, and he began his brand RoryCorr as a way of marketing himself and his services to bars, venues and events in the area.

“The main thing for me is the connections it’s led me to,” Walsh said. “I’ve met so many wonderful people and been to so many new places, and everyone in the community looks out for each other—that’s my favorite part.”

Walsh can be found on Instagram @rorycorporation.
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