



Off Campus Living Guide

STUDENT RENTER HANDBOOK



MONTANA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Bobcat
Parent & Family
Program





Who to Call at the City of Bozeman

Emergency.....	911
Bozeman City Hall, 121 N. Rouse Ave.....	406-582-2303
Bozeman Fire Department.....	406-582-2350
Station 1, 34 N. Rouse Ave.	
Station 2, 410 S. 19th Ave.	
Station 3, 1705 Vaquero Pkwy.	
Bozeman Police Department.....	406-582-2000
Main Office, 615 S. 16th Ave.	
Downtown Office, 30 N. Rouse Ave.	
Bozeman Public Library, 626 E. Main St.....	406-582-2400
City Services (pet licensing, residential parking permit, setting up utilities).....	406-582-2303
Garbage and Recycling Services.....	406-582-2332
Municipal Court, 615 S. 16th Ave., Room 123.....	406-582-2040
Neighborhoods Program, 121 N. Rouse Ave., Suite 200.....	406-582-2274
Parks and Recreation Department, Story Mill Community Center (Main Office), 600 Bridger Dr.....	406-582-2290
Parking Services Division.....	406-582-2903
Bogert Pool, 325 S. Church Ave.....	406-582-0806
Swim Center, 1211 W. Main St.....	406-582-2294
Planning Department (Business Licensing).....	406-582-2260
Report a Pot Hole.....	406-582-3208
Republic Services.....	406-586-0606
Solid Waste Convenience Site.....	406-587-7890
Water and Sewer Services.....	406-582-2328

MSU PHOTO CREDITS: KELLY GORHAM AND ADRIAN SANCHEZ GONZALEZ

The Bobcat Parent & Family Program and
The Good Neighbor Committee Present:

The MSU Off Campus Living Guide

The purpose of the Good Neighbor Committee (GNC) is to improve the quality of life for all MSU students and Bozeman neighbors.

The Committee is comprised of members from the City Manager's Office, City Police, Fire & Code Compliance, MSU Dean of Students, Office of Student Engagement, Residence Life, University Police, Fraternity & Sorority Life, Bozeman businesses, community members and Peak Property Management.

The Good Neighbor Committee is a partnership between MSU and the City of Bozeman Neighborhoods Program.





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1. First steps

ON-CAMPUS VS. OFF-CAMPUS

Is moving off campus right for me?

Moving off-campus is absolutely a personal choice. It takes a lot of thought about what your college experience will look like. How much extra you will be paying? Who you would be able to live with? Have you also considered how much time it will take to maintain your off-campus residence? Mowing the lawn, cleaning bathrooms and commuting all adds up.

When should I start looking?

The general advice is to look often and early, especially in Bozeman's tight rental market. Many rentals are "handed down" to friends of friends by word of mouth. Some property management companies offer new listings in the spring for summer rentals. Looking early and taking a tour of potential rental options can give you a better idea of what you would like to see in a rental.

Is living off campus cheaper?

It can be. The residence halls have a lot of great amenities that can translate into extra costs when compared to living off-campus. However, buying groceries and paying for utilities can add up quickly when comparing costs, but living with roommates can help make renting much cheaper.

2. Shopping for a rental

BEST PRACTICES

Never rent a property sight unseen

It is important to get in contact with the rental property manager/owner to see the property before signing a lease.

Be aware of safety issues

Make note of smoke alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, egress windows, exposed wires, and evidence of water damage. Ask questions to the potential landlord about who is responsible for fixing these safety issues. Make sure all batteries for alarms have been updated before moving in and ensure there is a fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

APPLICATIONS

What does an application include?

A rental application may be required to verify credit, income, background information and rental history. If an applicant is deficient in one or more of those areas, a co-signer may be required. The co-signer will need to apply and undergo a credit check, as well. There will likely be an application fee for each application you submit.

Property management firms will have different policies concerning the specifics in their applications.

Make sure to ask how long an application is good for.



3. Rental agreements

THINGS TO KNOW:

“Jointly and Severally”

Remember that this legal term combines you with all of your other roommates. If one roommate does not pay rent, it will be on all of you. Choose wisely when thinking about your future.

Lease types

- Month to Month
- Annual (Most common)
- Ask about shorter term leases, some are given in special circumstances.

Tips for leases

- ASMSU Legal Services will check over your lease with you to ensure you understand the clauses. For \$10, you can meet with an attorney who can answer all of your questions, inform you of your rights and responsibilities, and review your lease BEFORE you sign it. [Make an appointment at ASMSUlegalservices.org](https://asmsulegalservices.org).
- All leases should have clear definitions regarding rent amount, length of lease, security deposit, etc.
- Please be aware that in addition to a security deposit to rent a specific property you may also be required to provide a pet deposit, and first and last months rent.
- Keep a copy of your lease.
- For more information on Montana Landlord/Tenant laws, please see: <https://dojmt.gov/consumer/tenants-and-landlords>

4. Security deposit

Important Information

- Security Deposits are held in a trust account as required by state law.
- Security Deposits remain with the property until the lease is terminated. This means switching roommates will not result in a Security Deposit return.
- Security Deposits are held for the protection of the property, but belong to tenant(s) until lease terminates and unpaid rent(s) are due.

Montana law

All security deposits should be processed in accordance with Montana Law. The money is accounted for in unpaid rent, repairs or returns and a copy of the register is sent to past tenant(s). Security deposits are returned within 30 days if cleaning or repairs are necessary, and within 10 days if nothing needs to be done and all rent and utilities are paid. A notification letter will be sent regarding the status of the security deposit if the repairs take longer than 30 days.

The *property move-in report* is the key to maximizing your deposit return. A property inspection report helps mitigate who caused what damage and when, so you are not held responsible if it wasn't your fault.

5. Roommates

Things to consider

- A bad roommate can affect your credit, finances and future housing opportunities.
- Beware of roommates you don't know, and ones you do. High school friends might not be the best roommates.
- Roommate switches are common, but require proper documentation, i.e. application, departure form, etc.
- Roommates should be treated like business partners and a written agreement between roommates is an effective tool.

Think about who would help you clean and maintain a property.

Before you move in together, it's important to discuss common expectations about living together. Questions should have answers, and it's not a bad idea to write the common expectations out so that everyone is clear.

Answer these questions:

- When and who will clean common areas such as bathrooms and kitchens?
- Are meals shared, or is everyone responsible for themselves?
- Who's name will be on the utilities and how will the cost of these monthly expenses be covered?
- Who will pay the internet, garbage, electric and water bills? What happens if a payment is missed?
- How often can roommates have guests over?
- What about alcohol and throwing parties? How do we maintain safety?

Pets:

- License your pet. It's the law. Go to City Hall, Finance Office.
- All dogs must be on leash, unless in your fenced yard or in a designated dog park.
- Pick up after your dog – keep Bozeman beautiful.
- Three or more dogs living in one home require a kennel license.

6. Moving in

Prior to move in

Upon signing a rental agreement and prior to moving in, you should receive a COP (condition of premises), a property inspection report. The COP is for you to complete and is an evaluation of the condition of the property at the time you move in.

- Be thorough. Take pictures, take videos, be specific.
- When you move out, the COP will be examined and any damage not noted on the COP will be your responsibility, along with the co-signer.
- Make note of walls, floors, doors, stains, dings, dents, dirty windows, missing screens. Test the function of the garbage disposal, ceiling fans.

and moving out

- Give proper notice that you plan to move. Get a cleaning checklist from your landlord. Complete all the cleaning on the checklist provided. Take pictures when you're done cleaning. Do a walk through with your landlord.
- If you move out prior to lease ending, you may be assessed administrative fees and be responsible for rent, utilities and ad fees until the property is re-rented.

7. Transportation

Options

Depending on how close your rental is to campus, you need to consider how you will get to campus.

- The Streamline Bus service is a great way to save money and reduce the impact on the planet. It has many convenient stops around Bozeman for students.
- A bike is another easy way to save money and still get to campus.
- Some rentals will offer street parking passes but if they don't, you might need to look into getting an MSU parking pass for your vehicle.

Sustainability and MSU

Montana State offers a multitude of bike racks all around campus. The Streamline Bus service offers bike lockers as well. Consider your impact.



8. Being a good neighbor

Good neighbor tips

- Introduce yourself to your neighbors.
- Let neighbors know if you are having a party.
- Keep your yard neat – pick up after your pet. Mow your lawn. Rake your leaves.
- Pets must be leashed or within a fence.
- Be courteous when parking. Don't block driveways, sidewalks, hydrants, mailboxes, etc.

City code obligations

- Shovel your walks within 24 hours of snowfall.
- Take out your garbage and recycling. Dumping large items like old furniture is against the law.
- The Bozeman City Code requires all cars to be moved at least every 72 hours if they are street parked.
- Be mindful of noise.

9. Health and safety

Basic rental safety

- The address should be clearly posted to facilitate emergency response from the fire and police departments.
- There should be safe fire or emergency exits leading to a street or other safe location.
- Carbon Monoxide detectors on each floor when gas-fired heating is present.
- Smoke detectors located inside and outside of each sleeping area.
- For each sleeping area, emergency exits including an emergency exit path that leads directly to the exterior of the building (egress window or exterior door) must be provided.
- Ensure there is a fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

Best practices

- Locate the water shut off valve, electrical panel and gas shut off valve.
- Know how to reach your landlord in case of plumbing, heating or electrical problems.
- Know where emergency exits are for each sleeping area.



FIRE

Emergency: 911
Non-Emergency
582-2350



POLICE

Emergency: 911
Non-Emergency
582-2000



WATER SERVICE

582-3200, Ext. 4



ANIMAL CONTROL

582-2000

10. Rental reality

Renting is a privilege

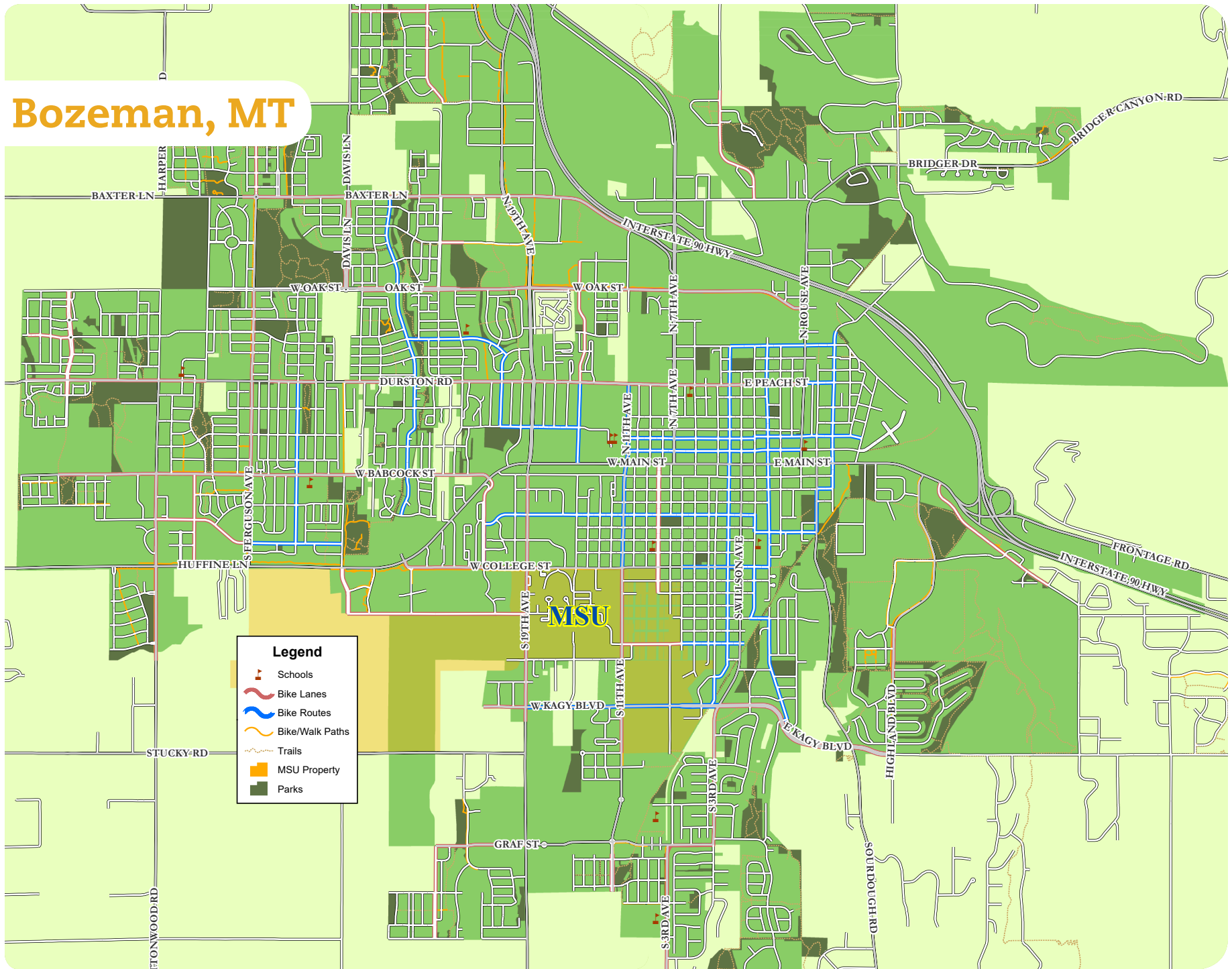
The landlord is there to protect property values, while preserving “quiet enjoyment” for tenants and neighbors. There will always be more renters but good rentals are hard to come by. Respect the process and people involved.

Setting up utilities such as internet, power and city services are a chore. It is also important to remember to notify these services when you plan to move out and to remove your name from the property.

Stay away from these common trouble spots to keep a positive relationship with your landlord:

- Having an unauthorized pet
- Having an unauthorized tenant
- Noise complaints, parties
- Not paying rent
- Not maintaining property
- Breaking city code: not shoveling, mowing, or taking out garbage/recycling

Bozeman, MT



Legend

- Schools
- Bike Lanes
- Bike Routes
- Bike/Walk Paths
- Trails
- MSU Property
- Parks



Thank you to the MSU Bobcat Parent & Family Program, the Good Neighbor Committee and the City of Bozeman Neighborhoods Program for the content and information in this book.

Are you interested in a topic that was not listed in this handbook? Check out montana.edu/parents/offcampuslivingwebresources or contact Tanya Andreasen, City of Bozeman Neighborhoods Program Coordinator, at tandreasen@bozeman.net or Matt Caires, Dean of Students, at mcaires@montana.edu.



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