

## **1. Overview of Project**

### **1.1. Problem/Opportunity Statement:**

Most renters are not aware of the full costs of housing, including housing rent, energy and other utilities, and transportation. In many college towns, students dominate the rental population – most of whom have never lived on their own at the time they sign their first lease. While some resources exist to guide students when selecting a rental property, these resources rarely incorporate sustainability concerns such as energy use, water use, the availability of recycling services, or access to public transit or bike infrastructure.

This has two significant negative effects. First, it means that sustainability concerns are often not apparent until after the student has moved in, usually under a year lease. Second, it makes it difficult to communicate the value of sustainability to landlords because prospective tenants do not articulate it as a need.

We believe there is an opportunity to develop an online mobile-friendly tool that can serve multiple cities to share information on the full cost of housing and begin a stronger demand-side approach to energy efficiency and other investments that complement other policies implemented in each city.

## **2. Project Scope**

### **2.1. Objective:**

This project has two primary objectives. First, to develop a prototype of an online mobile-friendly tool that helps renters find and assess rental-housing options based on a variety of factors, including “green” characteristics, to use when making housing decisions. The tool should also help landlords grasp the value of sustainability investments as a marketable asset.

Second, the project will develop a strategy for creating a fully functional version of the tool, including legal, financial and technical considerations, among others.

### **2.2. Major Deliverables:**

- 1) Tool prototype
- 2) Technical report
- 3) Phase II Proposal
- 4) Monetization and funding proposal

### **2.3. Audience:**

- Primary – renters, with a focus on students, seeking rental housing information in target cities
- Secondary – landlords and property managers of residential rental properties in target cities

#### **2.4. Target Cities:**

The cities of Bloomington, Indiana and Ann Arbor, Michigan will act as the project leads, with other cities providing leadership advice and input, assisting with data gathering and otherwise engaging in the project as partners. There are 14 USDN Partner Cities who represent large, medium and small cities and include almost half a million students as potential customers. We believe that this active participation and interest from a diverse set of cities strengthens this application and demonstrates a likelihood of success.

<b>USDN Partner City</b>	<b>Total population</b>	<b>Student Population</b>
Albany, NY	97,856	29,000
Ann Arbor, MI	114,000	40,000
Austin, TX	820,000	50,000
Berkeley, CA	112,000	40,000
Bloomington, IN	80,000	42,000
Burlington, VT	42,000	14,689
Columbia, MO	108,500	33,000
Dearborn, MI	98,000	31,000
Evanston, IL	75,000	20,000
Fayetteville, AR	75,000	25,000
Iowa City, IA	70,000	32,000
Lawrence, KS	87,000	30,000
Madison, WI	236,000	38,000
Oklahoma City, OK*	591,967	39,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,607,323</b>	<b>463,689</b>

\*6/21/13: Oklahoma City will not be actively participating in Phase I of the project due to shifting priorities for 2H13.

### 3. Functionality

#### 3.1. Key Requirements:

- Mobile-friendly website
- Open source
- Cloud-hosted for easy scaling as needed
- Geo-location (site should automatically determine where user is located. If it is an active city, show that city; otherwise default to “select a city” on arrival)
- Web metrics available
- Filtering of properties based on desired characteristics
- Initial search functionality – search by address, zip code, radius?
- Ability to compare properties within a city
- Data management policy (copyright content, sharing criteria, etc.)
- Repeatable processes for adding/updating content and adding new cities
- User accounts available (property manager/owner, renter, city admin, website admin)
  - Website admin (maybe city admin): ability to download energy data for analysis

#### 3.2. Phase I – Functionality and Info Displayed:

- **Rental property information (residential)**
  - Display locations on a map
  - Address
  - Owner
  - Agent
  - Buildings, units
  - Square footage
  - Units, bedrooms, maximum occupant load
  - Links to property websites
  - Distance to local universities
  - Lease agreement periods
  - Inspection information
    - Complaints, code violations
    - Age of building, retro-fitting, remodeling?
  - HVAC info – central A/C or window unit, gas or electric furnace
  - Laundry info
  - Parking info
  - Pets allowed?
- **Energy information**
  - Average monthly energy/utility usage and cost – by unit
    - Electricity
    - Natural gas
    - Water?

- Other?
  - Who pays for utilities (renter, landlord)
- **Sustainability information**
  - Recycling – availability on-site, location to nearest recycling facility
  - Location to public transit
    - Walk Score
    - Bike Score
    - Bike storage, racks, etc.
  - Sustainable property features:
    - Double-paned windows
    - Energy-efficient appliances (Energy Star)
    - Solar panels
    - Community garden
    - Composting
- **City-specific information**
  - Local laws and ordinances
  - Local resources for renters
  - Utility provider contact info and resources
  - Locations and distance from properties to open green spaces
  - Local resources for landlords and property managers
- **General information:**
  - Renter tips
  - Sustainable living practices tips
  - Moving checklists

### **3.3. Phase II – Potential Requirements and Functionality:**

- Native app
- Sustainability score
- Trademark name?
- Ability to upload pictures to site
  - Properties/units: photos, floor plans, etc.
  - User photos
- Renter/user ratings
- Comment functionality
  - Renter reviews
  - Landlord/property manager accessibility (responsiveness, repair issues, etc.)
  - Landlord responses
  - Ability to poll users about issues and collect data
- Distance to restaurants, shops
- Lease agreement periods
- GHG calculator
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

#### 4. Milestones



#### 5. Constraints

[TBD]

#### 6. Risks

Concerned about data being used for unintended purposes – this could be the data (i.e. rental databases, energy data) that is shared with the project team or the data that is more broadly shared with the users of the website/tool.

**Mitigant:** TBD

#### 7. Assumptions

[TBD]

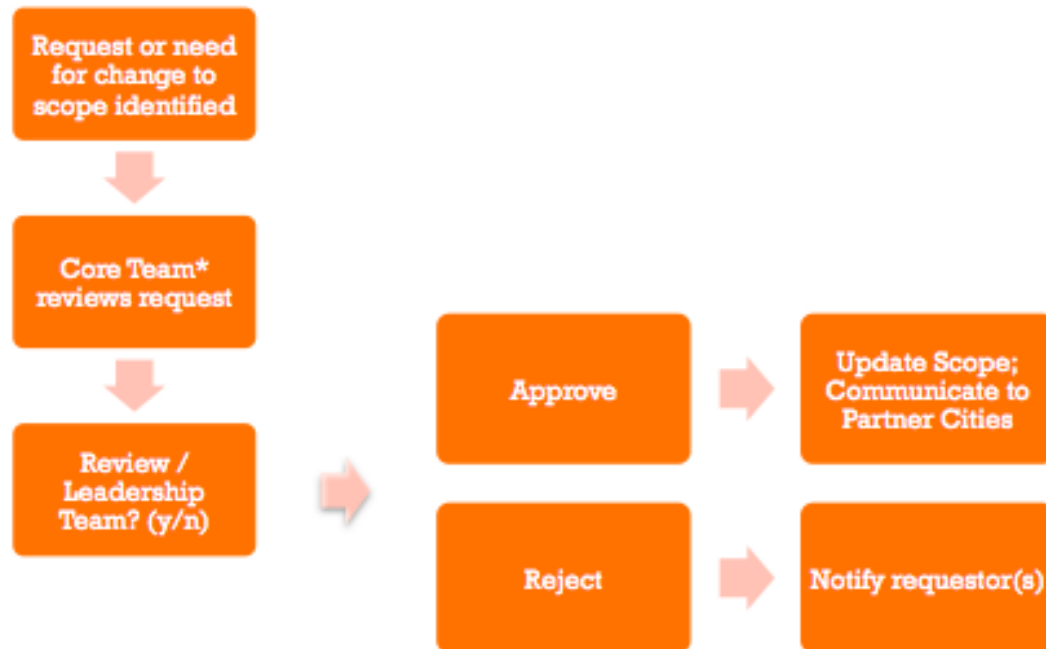
#### 8. Project Management Team

**Primary Contact: Project Leader**

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9.

## Change Management



Version	Date	Requestor	Description	Approved By
V2	6/21/13	T.O. Bowman	Oklahoma City will not be actively participating in Phase I due to shifting priorities for 2H13. Project Team will continue inclusion of OK in project updates and communications	J. Bauer (6/24/13 – email)