

Shaw AFB Housing Flight Welcomes Our Friends at Ft. McPherson

A Word from Shaw's Housing Manager, Norma Crosby:

"We're glad you're coming to Shaw AFB and the Sumter community! Sumter is a mid-sized town located in central South Carolina. No matter where you live, you won't have to travel much more than 10 miles to get to the base or to downtown shopping.

My housing staff is dedicated to provide you with the best customer service possible. They are trained to assist you and your family members, should you choose to reside on base, lease a rental property or purchase a home. We also maintain a 24/7 lobby with a large assortment of up-to-date literature and information available to help you as you search for new housing."

On Base Housing:

At present, Shaw's housing is in a state of transition to privatization. While we are awaiting privatization we are continually updating our existing inventory to maintain standards and provide quality housing to our members. We spent nearly \$3M on upgrades in the last year. All of our homes are either three-bedroom or four-bedroom units.

Privatization:

Perhaps one of the biggest changes to occur in 2011 for those currently living on base and those arriving, will be the conversion from military controlled units to housing privatization. Shaw is part of a grouping with three other AF bases to ensure the projects' financial success. The major benefits for housing at Shaw AFB include demolishing 732 units, constructing 627 units and renovating only three units; all within a 6-year period. Though there may be some temporary relocation as the demolition and construction occurs, the opportunity to be among the first to live in a new state-of-the-art unit should outweigh any inconvenience.

Rentals:

Everybody knows it's difficult to find good housing from across the nation or sometimes from across town. Presently, there are around 150 to 200 rentals units available in the local area, and monthly rental rates range from \$450 to \$2000.

The Shaw AFB Housing Office uses an internet-based housing referral system. It's AHRN.com (the Automated Housing Referral Network). At least 95% of all Sumter rentals can be found at the AHRN web site.

AHRN is a quantum leap forward from the process we used in the past. With AHRN, incoming military families are able to reach out from anywhere and get an updated list of available housing from a much larger pool of diverse properties which will be available upon their arrival.

The site offers up to five photographs of a rental property and lists direct links to the schools for the property.

Mrs. Crosby states, "The e-mail you receive establishes a direct line of communication for you with Shaw's Housing Office. All you'll have to do is send an e-mail to us with your questions/requests and you'll receive a quick and personal response from us."

Feel free to contact Terry Johns, Shaw's Housing Referral Specialist, at DSN 965-2422, extension 230 (commercial: (803) 895-2422, extension 230) or you can go directly to the website at www.ahrn.com to start your search today.

Buying a Home:

It's a great time to buy a home in the Sumter area. In spite of the difficult times many housing markets across the country have experienced, the value of Sumter area homes has continued to rise. Twenty-five new housing subdivisions have started within the past 5 years and they're within 10 miles of Shaw. The prices range from \$115,000 to \$620,000.

There are presently 759 homes for sale on Sumter's multiple listing services. The average time to sell a home is 176 days and the median price is \$139,900, which is up about 0.7%. In FY09, 1,681 properties have been sold to date.

If you choose to build a home, the cost per square foot varies, depending on your choices. Some homes are being constructed for as little as \$70 per square foot and high end homes are constructed for \$120 to \$130+ per square foot. On average, most homes are built at a price of \$80 to \$95 per square foot.

Sumter's property taxes are lower than most other areas. The tax rate is reduced from 6% to 4% for homeowners. To obtain the 4% rate, all new homeowners must file an application with the Sumter County Appraiser within 12 months of the purchase date and verify the home is their home of residency. The standard 6% tax rate is applied to all other homeowners.

If you choose to purchase a home in the area, we recommend you search for Sumter, SC on the internet, or go to The Sumter Board of REALTORS web page at www.usamls.net/sumter. All of the local realty companies will be listed as part of the search, and you should be able to shop for a REALTOR. Feel free to contact the Housing Flight if you cannot use the internet and we'll provide REALTOR phone numbers.

Utilities:

We recommend you budget \$200 monthly for water, electric and gas utilities. Of course that number can change dramatically based on the size of your home and your commitment to

energy conservation. The location of your home will determine which utility company you will use. Your REALTOR or your property manager will provide you with contact information.

Sumter Schools:

There are two school districts in Sumter County where education has always been a primary focus. The districts are District Two and District Seventeen.

District Two, with two high schools, four middle schools and eight elementary schools, serve more than 10,000 students living in the 676 square mile area of District Two. This district educates children living on Shaw AFB and other areas surrounding Sumter County.

District Seventeen, geographically the smallest district in the State, is located in the areas surrounding the City of Sumter. It serves approximately 9,400 students in one high school, three middle schools and seven elementary schools.

Registration for both districts is easy. Prior to moving, parents should sign a release form for their children's records at their present school. The new school will request these records after the child is registered. Parents should let the new school know if their children have been enrolled in gifted programs or special education classes. A physical exam is required. When registering new students in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten or first grade, you must present the following: A state issued birth certificate (District Seventeen requires this for all students, regardless of grade.); SC Certificate of Immunization or religious objector's statements; proof of residency; and a Social Security card.

Church-affiliated schools include St. Anne's School, which serves elementary students, St Francis Xavier, for high school students, and Sumter Christian School which offers grades pre-K through grade 12. In addition, there is a vibrant and active home school association, as well as Sumter Academy, which works with students who learn differently. Sumter is also home to Homeward Education Association. Homeward is an accountability association for homeschoolers throughout the State of South Carolina. For more information please visit www.homeward.com. In addition, there are two private schools in the area. One is Thomas Sumter Academy; the other is Wilson Hall. Both of these schools offer education K thru 12.

Other web sites which provide valuable educational information are: www.sumter2.org, <http://district.sumter17.k12.sc.us> and www.SchoolMatters.Com.