

BETTING THE HOUSE

Colleges and universities are making an educated gamble as they focus on providing more housing facilities and on-campus living options.

By Joe Agron



SCOTT SOUTHERLAND/JAY THOMAS

The University of Georgia, Myers Hall, Athens; Architect: Duckett Design Group, Inc.

With college and university enrollment projected to skyrocket over the next decade, and a growing desire by many to keep students on campus, residence-hall construction has become a priority for higher-education institutions.

And according to *American School*

& University's 16th annual survey of residence-hall construction, housing facilities are being built larger and accommodating more students at a higher total cost. The median new residence hall completed in 2004 was 60,000 square feet (compared with 57,000 square feet the year before) and

held 210 residents at a total cost of \$10 million (compared with 198 residents and \$5.7 million in 2003).

Dissecting the data

The 16th annual Residence Hall Construction Report uses data com-

TABLE 1

Residence hall construction:

The statistical picture (2004)

Variable	Range			
	Low	High	Average	Median
Cost (\$ millions)	\$.363	\$60.4	\$13.1	\$10.0
Size (Sq. Ft.)	3,960	372,000	84,229	60,000
Residents	48	730	266	210
Cost/Sq. Ft.	\$53	\$503	\$143	\$114
Sq. Ft./Resident	100	1,597	457	338
Cost/Resident	\$5,672	\$146,581	\$54,137	\$43,269

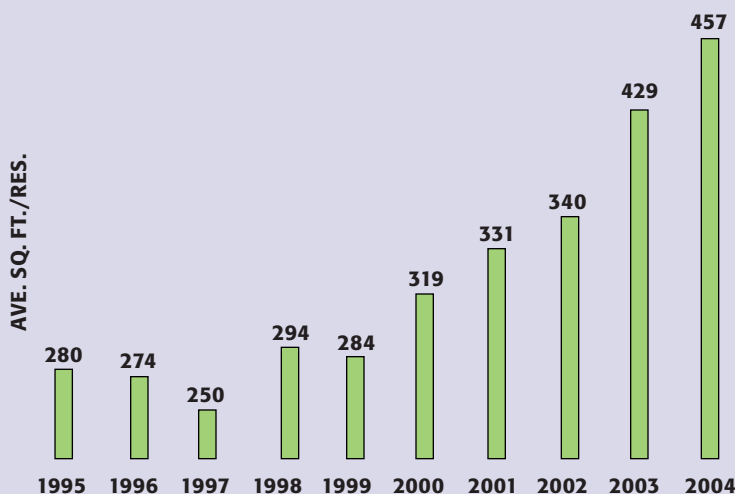
TABLE 2

Amenities in today's residence halls:

Air conditioning	76%
Carpeting	48%
Classrooms	6%
Computer access to library	39%
Dining hall	6%
Elevators	61%
Individual room/apartment lavatories	67%
Internet access	89%
Kitchen	61%
Laundry	89%
Security systems (electronic)	78%
Shared lavatories	50%
Television rooms/lounges	78%

More space

New residence halls continue to provide more space per student. The average amount of square feet per resident over the past 10 years:

**Snapshot**

Following is an overview of the median new residence hall constructed in 2004:

- Cost: \$10 million
- Size: 60,000 square feet
- Residents: 210
- Cost/Square Foot: \$114
- Square Feet/Resident: 338
- Cost/Resident: \$43,269

piled as part of *American School & University's* larger Official Education Construction Report (published in May). Chief business officials at the nation's colleges and universities involved in a new residence-hall construction project were asked to provide information about a variety of cost and amenity issues.

Construction and cost data for new residence hall projects are found in **Table 1** (above left), which includes breakouts from lowest to highest, and by averages and medians.

The total cost for new residence halls constructed in 2004 ranged from \$363,000 to \$60.4 million. The median project cost \$10 million (up from \$5.7 million in 2003); the average project cost \$13.1 million. The amount of square footage of new housing facilities ranged from 3,960 to 372,000; the median residence hall provided 60,000 square feet of space, and the average project totaled 84,229 square feet.

New housing projects accommodated as few as 48 residents and as many as 730; the median number was 210 and the average was 266. Median cost per resident increased to \$43,269 (from \$37,500 in 2003) and \$54,137 (from \$39,641) at the average new residence hall.

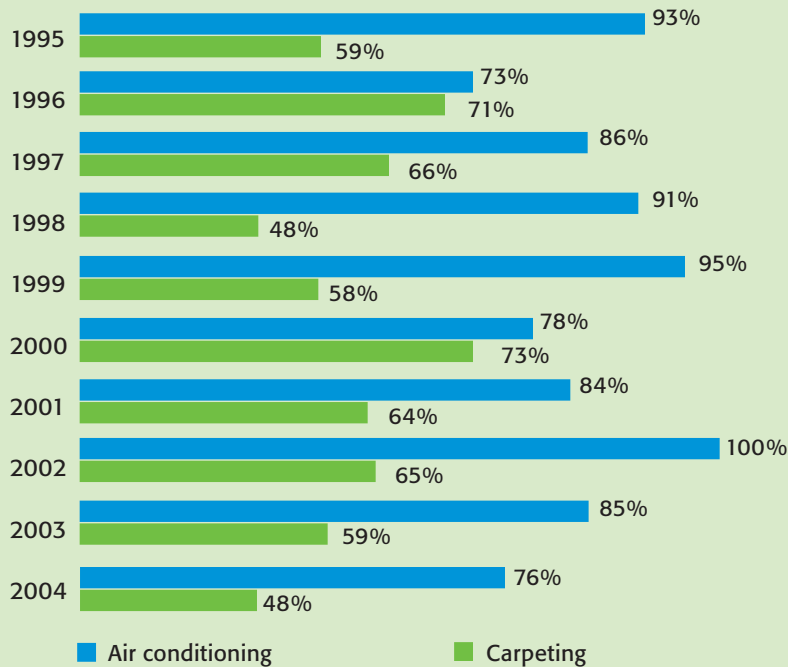
Also increasing in 2004 is the amount of square feet per resident at the median new residence hall, rising to a median of 338 and an average of 457 from 317 and 429, respectively, the year before. Square footage per resident ranged from 100 to 1,597.

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16TH ANNUAL RESIDENCE HALL CONSTRUCTION REPORT

Tracking air conditioning and carpeting

Air conditioning remains a popular amenity in new residence-hall construction projects, as it is included in more than three-quarters of new housing space completed in 2004. Less than half the new space, however, is carpeted. Results over the past 10 years (in percentage of new space):



Although other areas of residence-hall construction moved up, cost per square foot for median new housing facilities completed in 2004 went down. The median new project cost \$114 per square foot (compared with \$140 the year before); the average project came in at \$143 per square foot (compared with \$127 in 2003). Cost per square foot ranged from \$53 to \$503.

Looking at amenities

Higher-education institutions remain committed to including numerous and highly desired amenities in residence halls as a means of attracting students to campus living. **Table 2** (p. 43) details a number of amenities featured in new residence-hall projects.

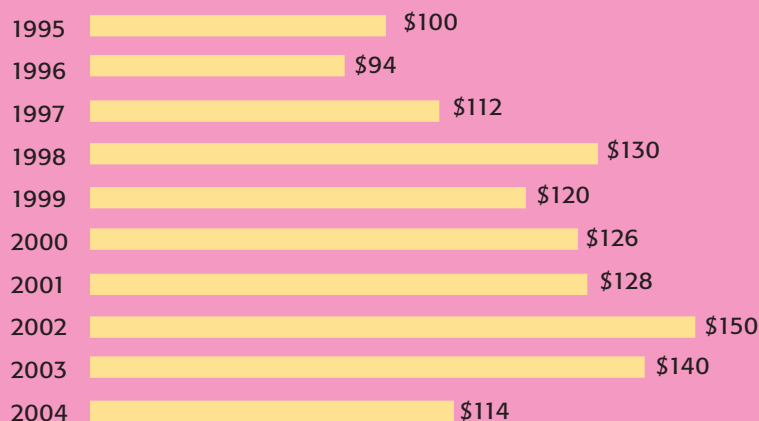
The most common amenities among projects completed in 2004 are laundry facilities and Internet access (both 89 percent), followed by electronic security systems (78 percent), television rooms/lounges (78 percent) and air conditioning (76 percent). Other commonly reported amenities: individual room/apartment lavatories (67 percent), elevators and kitchen facilities (both 61 percent).

Those amenities reported as among the least popular are classrooms and dining halls (both 6 percent).

As has been the case historically, co-educational facilities remain the predominant form of living arrangement at new residence halls; 89 percent of the new projects are designated as such. Those facilities for couples or families, as well as those built for men only or women only, make up the remaining projects. ■

Housing costs over the decade

The cost per square foot to construct a new residence hall in 2004 continued to drop from recent highs. The median cost per square foot for the past 10 years:



Agron, editor-in-chief, can be reached at jagron@primediabusiness.com. To view this year's Official Education Construction Report, please visit www.asumag.com and click on Industry Research.