



It's **not**
their parents'
residence hall



By Dennis Walikainen '92 '09

Hillside Place, Michigan Tech's new apartment building, is so nice that tourists might try to check in.

It opened this fall and gives students a housing hybrid: the social benefits of a residence hall with independent, apartment-style living.

Hillside Place was designed and built in consultation with students to satisfy growing demand for a different kind of university housing. "Nationwide, students are preferring to live on campus," said Les Cook, vice president for student affairs. "They want a quality, safe living experience, and this certainly accomplishes both."

The lobby features vaulted ceiling, massive fireplace, full kitchen, big screen TV, lots of lounging area, and adjacent workout area and sauna. The textures—wood, granite, Wisconsin fieldstone, and corrugated metal—were chosen to reflect the campus and the Keweenaw that inspired its design.

The room has a northwoods lodge feel, with three wall lights decked out as illuminated moose heads and supporting posts disguised to look like tree trunks.

The \$16.5 million structure is funded not by taxpayers but by rental fees paid by the residents. It has room for 192 students, and their living quarters are something new for Tech. The forty-eight four-person suites each feature a common kitchen with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances and a living area with floor-to-ceiling windows. On both sides are two private bedrooms and a bath. Heat radiates through the floors, and, for the first time in the history of student housing at Tech, the rooms are cooled via central air conditioning.

"I love it," says Katie Valenzuela, a third-year environmental engineering student from Fort Collins, Colorado. "I'm on the fourth floor, and I've got a great view of Portage Lake and the hillsides across the way. I love the convenience, too. And the AC was wonderful in August when it was so hot."

The hallways are bright, illuminated by windows at both ends; study rooms at the west end of each hall provide panoramic views of campus and the Keweenaw Waterway. There are other rooms for studying and presentations, along with the usual laundry facilities and whiteboards flanking each doorway.

Andrew Whiteside, a fourth-year premed student, was happy, too. Living on the ground floor, his only problem was an occasional Frisbee hitting his window. "I was the first person to move in," he says. "It was a little creepy, all alone, kind of like *The Shining*."

He's not isolated anymore. "We are at 85 percent capacity," says Heather Simpson, assistant director of housing and residential life, a couple of weeks into fall semester. The problems have been few. "Burning popcorn in the rooms has set off a few smoke detectors," she says.

Overall, however, the atmosphere in Hillside Place is peaceful, almost serene, a far cry from popular perceptions of college life. Mike Rinke, a third-year mechanical engineering major from Shelby Township, relaxes in his living room, where windows open onto a woody green that catches the evening light. "I love the quiet," he says. ■



THE SUITE LIFE AT HILLSIDE PLACE

Four-person apartments

Semiprivate baths

Fifty meals a semester

Air conditioning

And more . . .

mtu.edu/housing/apartments/hillside-place

See a three-minute time-lapse video of Hillside Place's construction at www.techtube.mtu.edu/hillside-timelapse.

Photos above and left by Ryan Schumacher; upper left photo by Mariusz Nowak