

According to Craig

Started by San Francisco IT geek Craig Newmark, Craigslist has grown from a living-room hobby into a cyberspace shopping mall that today is in 450 cities around the world. Free classifieds draw Web traffic of 8 billion page views per month, with 45 million of them happening on the Charlotte site (charlotte.craigslist.org). We cruised the Charlotte site recently and did an unscientific comparison with three cities of similar size. —Laurie Prince



HOUSING: A DOWNTOWN CONDO

WHERE	Charlotte	Austin	Seattle	Washington, D.C.
PRICE	\$339K	\$449K	\$324K	\$350K
WHAT YOU GET	Fourth-floor 1,135 SF condo in Gateway Plaza facing Trade Street, 2BR, 2 BA, 2 garage spaces and private balcony, community rooftop terrace	1,269 SF loft in the Market District, 1 BR, 1 BA, 1 garage space, high ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows with downtown view	Eighteenth-floor 1 BR, 1 BA with balcony next to Pike Place Market, 24-hour concierge, fitness center, BBQ deck	Third-floor 825 SF condo in Georgetown, 1 BR, 1 BA, no parking, parquet floors, fitness center
WHAT YOU'LL NEED	A job next door at the Bank of America Operations Center to land a zero commute	Musician friends to jam in your industrial setting	A taste for fresh fish—the fish mongers toss off-the-boat salmon in front of crowds at Pike Place	Ear plugs—this 1941 building may not be sound proof

FREE: YOU PICK UP

WHAT	Charlotte	Austin	Seattle	Washington, D.C.
WHAT WE DISCOVERED	Twelve-foot aluminum boat with oars, "does not leak and is in fine condition. I just have no room to store it."	We found a free mobile home: "Single wide...You haul it away and it's yours."	Skidding past the "blown up Saturn motor," couches, chairs, fill dirt, water heaters, firewood and futons, we landed on an ad for "hermit crab cage (no crab in it)."	Victorian fireplace mantel (ad included a photo which showed a beautiful antique mantel).
WHAT WE DISCOVERED	This person didn't remove the ad after the boat was given away. Someone finally posted instructions: "If it has been picked up and you do not want any more e-mails, then remove your posting dum dum."	Austin's site is crammed with highway flea market trash, including used siding, baby bottles, egg cartons, and Styrofoam.	There are some funny writers in Seattle, including this mom of three who accidentally killed her son's first pet—a crab—due to neglect: "Please no emails telling me how terrible I was to forget."	You could start a business with Washington freebies: pool table, swing set, smoking pipes with humidior, mahogany coffee table and matching end tables, even a doll house. We're taking a truck up there after the next election.

THE WAY WE WERE

Oldie but Goodie

Man and his home mean a lot to Charlotte's history

The oldest dwelling in Mecklenburg County, the Hezekiah Alexander home, had fallen into serious disrepair by the end of World War II. Old photos show a shabby, sagging structure with its classic lines obscured by an ill-advised front porch and other "modern" improvements. Many feared that the

of eighteenth-century life. Hezekiah Alexander, an early settler who came to Mecklenburg as a blacksmith and made his fortune as a farmer and trader, built the two-story house in 1774. An impressive home for its day, the stone house reflects the influence of the German immigrants who came to the region from Pennsylvania in the 1700s.



The Hezekiah Alexander home, the oldest home in Charlotte, looks good for its age.



his brother, John McKnitt Alexander, were leaders in the backcountry resistance to the British during the Rev-

olutionary War. Hezekiah was a signer of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence and served as a delegate to the Fifth Provincial Congress.

The Hezekiah Alexander home is on the grounds of the Charlotte Museum of History. An ongoing exhibit at the museum, *Solving the Rock House Mysteries*, explores the history—as well as the myths and legends—of the 234-year-old home.

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—Joe Goodpasture

Charlotte skyline by Chris Edwards, other cities courtesy of their convention and visitors bureaus; Alexander home: courtesy of the Charlotte Museum of History