Below is a basic rundown on the areas surrounding the university. There are several apartment complexes immediately surrounding campus, but there are also other areas not too far from campus that may be of interest to you. The majority of our graduate students commute, and I would say that the average commute time is around 20-30 minutes each way by car. If you’re interested in campus housing, there is one building dedicated to non-traditional and graduate students: Magnolia Apartments. There are also affiliated housing complexes very close to USF that are not owned or operated by USF but are largely occupied by USF students: http://www.housing.usf.edu/resources/affiliated/. Other apartment complexes immediately surrounding USF can be found at apartmentguide.com (you can enter the university’s zip code, 33620—or just USF, FL—and do a search from there)—you’ll probably find a lot of overlap between these results and USF’s affiliated housing complexes.

Outside of the immediate USF area, two of the closest areas that are largely populated with USF faculty and students are Temple Terrace and New Tampa. Temple Terrace is southeast of USF and it is largely suburban with many families and children living there. It is very close to the Hillsborough River, which is part of the larger Hillsborough River State Park that offers camping, canoeing, kayaking, nature trails, and more. New Tampa is north/northeast of USF and is (obviously) a newer area that is relatively close to USF and consists largely of new housing developments, apartment complexes, and condos. Bruce B. Downs Blvd. is a main road that runs through New Tampa, and it intersects at both Fletcher Ave. and Fowler Ave. right by USF (for this reason the road can be congested during high traffic times). From what I’ve heard, the rent is reasonable. If you’re interested in running and/or biking, Flatwoods Park is a park in New Tampa that has both a paved loop and nature trails that cut through it. Nearby Trout Creek Park is a wilderness park that connects to Flatwoods through the nature trails.

Carrollwood is west of USF and is a mostly suburban, family-inhabited area that is populated with a good amount of USF folks. It’s a bit farther from USF than the two areas above (probably a 30-minute commute each way, sometimes more depending on traffic hours), but it's considered a nice, safe area to live in. You would not be far from grocery stores (including natural and specialty food stores), chain (and some local) restaurants, salons, etc. Dale Mabry Highway is a major road that goes through Carrollwood and runs south through South Tampa.

Seminole Heights is a neighborhood not too far south of USF, but it is an older part of town and it has its run-down areas. While it does have higher crime statistics than some of the more suburban areas, there has been a lot of initiative to renovate that part of town, and in fact, it's now one of the trendier areas to live (it’s often referred to as a “hipster” community). Seminole Heights boasts several new award-winning local
restaurants, independent bars, farmer’s markets, and a new coffee shop. The rent is reasonable.

South Tampa is an urban, somewhat upscale area to live in, and it’s about a 30-40-minute commute to USF. Hyde Park and Palma Ceia—two main neighborhoods in South Tampa—are desirable areas to live in for a lot of people because of their proximity to the Howard Avenue night life and also to Bayshore Blvd.—one of the longest continuous sidewalks in the world, which runs along the Hillsborough Bay. These neighborhoods also are close to local restaurants, coffee shops, food stores, and specialty retailers. Bayshore Blvd. is a popular place for running, walking, inline skating, and casual biking. Hyde Park Village is a shopping/event plaza in the heart of Old Hyde Park that hosts a monthly outside market and other community events. There is a good mixture of apartment complexes, duplexes, houses, and condos. A lot of the communities in South Tampa are expensive to live in, but you can usually find a decent deal if you look hard enough (or if you cohabitate).

Davis Islands is a quaint and hip little area that is connected to downtown Tampa and Hyde Park by a short bridge off of Bayshore Blvd., but is otherwise a fairly self-sufficient town with its own little night life and community. It is small and largely walkable. The rent is generally on the higher end, but there are some reasonably priced complexes as well. The commute is about the same as it is from South Tampa.

An area you may want to avoid living in is Ybor City, because, even though there are new and renovated homes in the area, it is a higher-crime area. But many people still like to visit Ybor City for its very active and flavorful night life and its rich cultural history, largely Latin-influenced. It’s a cool place to visit!

Downtown Tampa and the Channel District are home to many of Tampa’s cultural spots and events (the Straz Performing Arts Center, the Tampa Bay Times Forum, the Tampa Museum of Art, the Tampa Theatre, the Florida Aquarium, Curtis Hixon Park), but they don’t really offer much affordable housing (for the typical grad student, that is). There are certainly beautiful places to live, but they are newer condos and high-rises, and they’re pricey. It’s also a wonderful place to visit.

Some students live in surrounding cities such as St. Petersburg and Clearwater, which are closer to the beaches, but the commute is significantly longer in these areas (45 minutes to an hour or more).

You can find rental listings on craigslist.com, apartmentguide.com, gasparproperties.com, and hydeparkapartments.net (specific to Hyde Park).