

Proposed food stamp reforms that would eventually eliminate nearly one million people from the national Food Stamp Program may not have a drastic effect on University students. At least not yet.

The proposed regulation changes, which won't go into effect until later this year, may have an effect on students, says Bill Gardner of the State Adult and Family Services Salem office. No one knows for sure what the changes will do as yet.

With the present law governing food stamps, Gardner says students who are dependents of ineligible families or those who don't work or register for work aren't eligible for the program. Under the proposed changes, those students with dependents who are working at low-paying jobs or are willing to register for work may be eligible for the stamps.

Until final approval of the changes is made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, regulations will stay as they have for the past several years, Gardner says.

Food stamp users may feel effects of possible reforms

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

U.S. Department of Agriculture is considering whether students get larger allocations or smaller ones

"We're just going to have to wait to see how the final regulations turn out," he says. "It all depends on what the Department of Agriculture does. Students are one of the things they're looking at."

The new regulations would do away with the required payment by food stamp participants before they can receive the coupons. Under the changes, a family paying \$95 a month for \$174 worth of stamps would not pay for the stamps and would receive the balance of the benefits at no charge.

"We expect the changes to be particularly beneficial to the elderly who have problems making the required cash payment," Gardner says. "If these new regulations go into effect as written, the elderly will be able to participate and improve their nutrition."

Students, he says, will be a different story. The Adult and Family Services Food Stamp Division is heading a study on what effect the changes will have on students throughout the state, Gardner says.

Housing

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shortage of available housing — has been blamed on many factors. Some people say it's the result of large numbers of immigrants coming to Eugene; others attribute it to the increasing number of people who live alone, either because of divorce or because they prefer it that way.

But one of the main culprits of the housing shortage, not only in Eugene but elsewhere, is the high cost.

According to Niven, construction costs are rising at a rate of about 1.5 percent a month. Not only higher construction costs, but increasing land prices add to the cost of housing. The high cost of housing in turn usually results in less construction and thus a lower vacancy rate — and the housing cost-shortage cycle keeps going around.

But something else is happening in Eugene. Despite the increasing expense of construction, people are building more houses than ever before, Niven says.

"People still prefer having their own homes over living in apartments or other multiple-family housing," she explains.

Building and maintaining individual homes is more expensive, but people evidently find it worth the money. Last year, the city of Eugene issued 1,369 single-dwelling permits, or about 59 percent of all city building permits issued. This April alone, 158 such permits were issued, establishing a new city record.

Houses weren't always so popular here. Land was cheaper in the 1960s, and apartment construction boomed before it suffered a decline about five years ago.

Niven says apartment construction is picking up again, but not as fast as it should. The reason: the current trend toward single-family construction will eventually decline as costs rise, and multiple

family housing will be in much greater demand.

If that happens, the housing shortage may become more severe because, as Niven says, "there won't be enough multiple-family housing available if people keep building single-family houses."

Niven's arguments are supported by housing studies done by Economic Consultants Oregon, Ltd. (ECO). The studies show that by 1985, if the present trend continues, Eugene will have a single-family dwelling surplus of more than 10,000 units, while the shortage of multiple-housing units will exceed 14,000 units.

Why do single-family homes continue to be so popular if they are so expensive? Julie Friedman, who helped prepared the ECO studies for the city of Eugene, agrees it's a "dramatic" finding, especially when family incomes are considered. According to the reports, local housing costs have increased 100 percent since 1972, but the average Eugene income rose only about 25 per-

cent.

But families can still afford to buy housing if both spouses work, Friedman says, and working wives are especially common among young families.

"Eugene in particular has always had a high proportion of young adults," she explains, due in part to the University student population. ECO figures about 40 percent of Eugene's population fell between ages 15 and 34 in 1970.

These young families constitute the largest percentage of the house-buying market, Friedman says.

"And generally speaking, the higher the income, the more likely the household will live in a single-family home."

Niven lists additional reasons for the surge in the single-family housing supply. One of them is what she calls the "California phenomenon" — newcomers from more expensive areas of the country are used to high housing prices, so they can afford higher prices here.

This "phenomenon" is also present among Eugene's long-time residents, Niven says. A family will buy a relatively inexpensive house, sell it at a profit some years later and invest in a more expensive home.

Average sale prices of Eugene homes have increased as much as 100 percent or more in the past six years, according to ECO figures.

Many people are also "panic buying," Niven says. She explains some parents are afraid their children won't be able to have a house of their own when they are adults, so the parents mortgage their own homes to buy one for their children.

Others buy houses for the sole purpose of renting them, Niven

says.

"This is not a good investment," she comments. "The buyers do not make as much money from renting their property as they would if they sold it, and they know it. But they eventually plan on selling and figure the future profits will more than make up for any previous losses."

Niven adds the opposite is true with many houses built in South Eugene about 15 years ago. These homes were so cheaply built that the investors gain more from renting than from selling them if they could sell them.

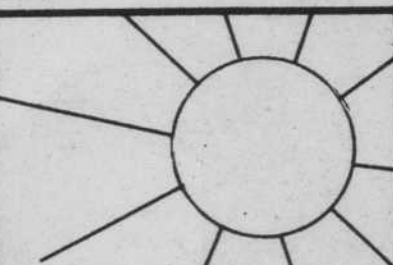
But selling any house might be harder if prices continue to escalate. If the new trend is toward multiple housing — something much of the rest of the nation has already experienced — houses may become somewhat of a luxury.

"Economics will dictate the shift" in what kind of housing is in demand, Niven says. But in Eugene, a lot also depends on how easy it will be to build multiple-family housing.

"It's up to the local jurisdictions that no unnecessary barriers are in the way of developers who want to build apartments," Niven says. She believes over-regulation of apartment construction could be a problem and that the city should reconsider its zoning restrictions.

Currently, multiple-housing developers must go through a series of public hearings and often face neighborhood groups that are hostile to the idea of someone building an "instant slum" and adding to traffic congestion, Niven says.

"It isn't fair to call (such developments) slums," Niven believes. "People ask, 'Why can't the American free enterprise system develop less expensive housing?' Well, we have, but we don't like it."



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