

Panel predicts rising rents, tighter market

By RICHARD WAGONER
Of the Emerald

Renters can expect an increasingly tighter housing market and rising rental costs, and that outlook won't change for the next few years unless interest rates begin to fall soon.

That's the forecast offered Monday night by a majority of local housing experts participating in a workshop focusing on renter and landlord problems in the 1980s.

A dwindling supply of affordable rental housing caused by a dearth of rental construction and a poor economy forcing many people out of home ownership is the crux of the housing problem, panel members said.

Available rental housing probably won't grow in the next two years because of high financing costs, inability of renters to pay for high-priced apartments to cover those financing costs and escalating land prices within Eugene, according to

real estate consultant Bob Linz.

"It's now not profitable for entrepreneurs to produce profitable housing units — that's the bad news," Linz said. "The good news is that in most of your lifetimes that situation should change."

And Linz said only a recession — or possibly a depression — that would bring interest rates down to between 7 and 10 percent will spur private rental housing development.

Mike Hibbard, a University community service and public affairs professor, painted an even more dismal housing picture.

"My very strong belief is that if something doesn't happen (to make interest rates fall) in the next 12 months, we will see things in the banking industry that will make the Chrysler collapse look like a cakewalk," Hibbard said.

Hibbard rejected subsidized low income housing programs as solutions to the growing na-

tionwide housing crunch. The subsidies only increase the demand for affordable rental housing and thus push housing prices even higher.

"We need to expand ways for people to own (their homes) rather than make it easier to stay renters," he said.

But at least one panel member said the ease of owning a home has created the current housing shortfall.

Existing tax laws and the ease of borrowing money have

created an excessive demand for home ownership, according to Mark Lindberg, a Eugene City Council member and University CSPA professor.

This ownership demand has resulted in the conversion of many apartments to condominiums and revamping of older homes that once provided low-income rental units, Lindberg said.

Renters should work to promote housing preservation laws that would protect current

rental housing, secure guarantees from landlords that a renter's existing housing will continue to be available at a reasonable price and develop new housing opportunities for low and middle-income people, he said.

"But unless renters begin to organize — pull together as a class with similar problems and concerns — the possibility of achieving any of these policy goals is very, very slim," Lindberg said.

Classical music benefit slated for Sunday night

World-renowned classical pianist Adam Kapuscinski will give a concert in the Alumni Lounge in Gerlinger Hall at 8 p.m. Sunday.

The concert will be a benefit for OXFAM-AMERICA, which was established in 1970 to respond to the famine in Bangladesh and now has programs in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Tickets for the concert will be sold for \$3 at the door.

A native of Poland, Kapuscinski has performed in many European concert halls and on European radio and television.

He came to the United States in 1960 and now lives in New York City.

A refugee from the Nazi occupation of Poland during World War II, Kapuscinski previously has given benefit concerts for the World Refugee Year and the International Year of the Child, both of which were organized by the United Nations.

OXFAM-AMERICA is an independent associate of the British Oxford Committee for Famine Relief.

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