

Vacancies vex landlords

By Joan Nyland
Of the Emerald

While Eugene's landlords struggle to make ends meet, students and other renters are having a field day.

"Two years ago the market was tight. Now there is a glut. Students should be choosy," says David Lesser, director of Off Campus Housing.

Lesser predicts students will have an easier time with landlords. "Landlords would like to have units filled," he says.

He suggests students are in a stronger position to bargain for lower deposits, negotiable leases and lower rent. "Tenants have power in this community. The best place to look is at the West University Refinement Plan for an example."

The recession's toll on the housing market in the last two years has resulted in a steady increase in Eugene's vacancy rate. Depending on who you talk to the vacancy rate is between 6 percent and 20 percent and as much as 30 percent in Springfield. Renters comprise more than 50 percent of Eugene's population compared to 35 percent nationwide.

"Eight percent in a growing area is no problem. Eight percent in a farm community is a problem. Eugene is a unique circumstance," says Tom Johnson, an economist for the Portland-area department of Housing and Urban Development. "Personally, I see a great change in Eugene from a few years ago. Single family units are now being rented that would have been sold."

"Most people in business hesitate to give out vacancy rates. They never know who is calling, the competition or what," says John Bennett, of the Lane County Home Builders Association.

Greg Byrne of the Eugene department of Housing and Community Conservation calls this period of high vacancy a "very unusual time in Eugene."

In the late 1970s, Byrnes says, vacancy rates were at 1 percent to 2 percent, and apartments had waiting lists.

Donna Turring, of the Rental Owners Association of Lane County, estimates vacancy rates at 15 percent or greater in Eugene and as much as 55 percent in some apartment houses in Springfield. The Rental Owners Association, a group of 150 small (less than five units) rental investors who, along with a handful of property management companies, manage most of the University-area rentals, conducted a survey in January that revealed 63 of 612 units were vacant.

"Property managers are paid whether they are rented on or not," and two companies — Income Property Management and Associated Management — have the "lion's share" of the University housing management, says Jean Tate, of Jean Tate Real Estate.

"We don't have any investment problems at all," says Lloyd Billingsley, broker for AM.

Turring predicts rental prices will reach an all-time low this summer or rental owners will improve properties to keep rents up.

Tate and Billingsley agree that rents probably will stay the same through next year.

"Some complexes are giving incentives if we think someone is going to be there for awhile," Billingsley says.

He suggests one incentive might be to spread out deposit payments. Tate and Bennett don't like the lowering-of-deposit incentive because it sometimes results in poor maintenance. Other incentives are free cable, free first month rent and gifts.

RHGC sets rules

After months of debate and meetings, the Residence Hall Governance Committee approved a new constitution specifying the functions and meeting procedures of the Committee.

The Committee has been functioning without a constitution or any workable guidance document for years, and the new constitution "sets down on paper what has long been hearsay," says RHGC chairer Doug Rappaport.

The document, which took effect immediately, is the result of "a lot of time and thought," he says, adding that its passage is one of the major accomplishments of this year's Committee.

Among major changes from the present system the document makes are that a student cannot serve on the committee for any length of time during two academic years, allowing more students on the Committee, and that Presidential Councils may review and even recall complex representatives at the end of any term.

Among other changes are that a complex representative cannot simultaneously serve on the RHGC and the complex's Presidential Council, and that a resident assistant on the RHGC cannot serve simultaneously as an adviser to a complex Presidential Council.

The new constitution will not assist the current RHGC's functions since the year is almost over, but will be "a big plus for next year, the year after, and all coming years," Rappaport says.

KOOBDOOGA BOOKSTORE
651 13th St. Eugene, Ore. 97401

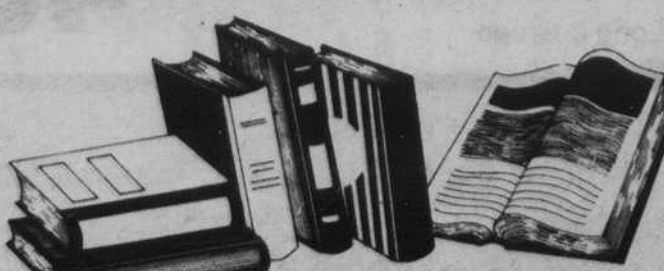
YOUR PAPERBACK PLACE

"Portable Paperbacks for Summer"

From surfside to riverside to mountainside
Don't go vacationing without a paperback from Koobdooga.
Thousands of paperbacks to choose from

Ed Abbey, *Down the River*; Frank Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune*; Jan Morris, *Destinations: Essays from the Rolling Stone*; James Clavell, *Noble House*; *Roadside Geology of Oregon*; *Hot Springs and Pools of the PNW*.

2 Blocks From Campus
503/343-3551



VIDEO-CINEMA center

Blue Steel
West of the Divide

PRO BALL
Cheerleaders

JOHN WAYNE
A LONG RIDE WESTERN

Plus second feature

1049 Willamette 342-1616

Jostens

ATE COLLEGE

Ring Day Special Offering!

A timeless symbol of your achievements...

Wed. & Thurs. June 2 & 3
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

UO BOOKSTORE

13th & Kincaid
Mon-Fri 7:30-5:30
Sat 10:00-3:00



EWEB customers:

If you're moving, say STOP!

Don't get stuck owing more than you should. When you move, tell EWEB to stop service in your name. EWEB will then read the meter to be certain you are charged only for what you used. Remember, you are responsible for paying all charges from when you begin occupancy until you tell EWEB to stop service.

Simply call 484-6016. Please give at least three day's notice.

Wherever you move, if utilities are not paid by someone else, be certain to call the serving utility to start service in your name.

EUGENE EWEB MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

Eugene Water & Electric Board
500 E. 4th Ave.
Eugene, Oregon
Office hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
Monday through Friday
484-6016

Owned by the citizens of Eugene