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Legislators, University at odds over housing project

Declining enrollment prompts officials to reconsider need for new housing units

By Carrie Dennett
Emerald Associate Editor

Construction of 134 units of off-campus student housing is on hold while University officials reevaluate the need to house a shrinking student population.

Legislators who lobbied for the bond issue want construction to continue, but University administrators are fearful that the smaller student body might make new housing units hard to fill.

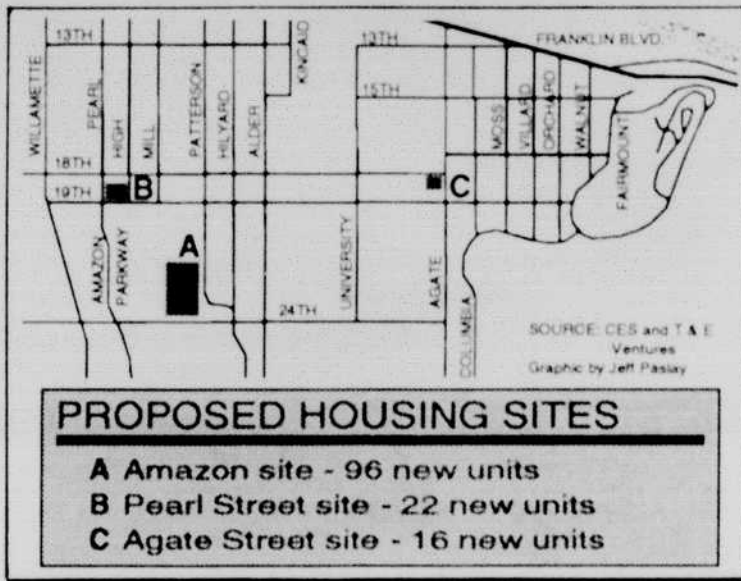
In spring 1989, local politicians began pressuring the University to build more student housing, blaming record student enrollment for Eugene's housing crunch. A few months later, the Oregon Legislature approved sale of \$11 million in bonds to finance the project.

An architect was selected in January 1991 to carry out the building project, followed quickly by the decision to build 96 new units at the Amazon Family Housing site, 16 units at 18th Avenue and Agate Street, and 22 units at 19th Avenue between High and Pearl streets.

\$4.4 million of the bonds have been sold, and this money has been earmarked for construction at the three sites. The additional bonds were not sold before the state Treasurer put a temporary freeze on bond sales.

Contract negotiations began in March 1991, and the \$895,000 contract was ratified and signed by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education in August.

Work on the construction project began and continued



until Nov. 15, when University officials notified CES and T&E Ventures, a professional architectural corporation formed specifically for this project, that they were considering reducing the scope of the construction.

This change of heart came amid a changing financial climate in the wake of Measure 5, a climate that led to a larger-than-anticipated drop in student enrollment.

"During these past 12 months there have been a lot of changes at the University," said Dan Williams, vice president for administration.

"Our interest is in doing the right thing, but we don't want to over obligate our students," he said.

If new housing is built with the bond money, the bonds will be repaid over time with money from student rent. University officials fear that if enrollment continues to drop, the rentals may be plagued with vacancies, and the bond payments might not be met.

Scott Bartlett, aide to Sen. Bill Dwyer, said a recent fall survey of apartment rental va-

cancies showed a 2 to 3 percent vacancy rate in the campus area, similar to other sections of Eugene.

The campus vacancy rate actually showed as 7 percent, but the survey indicated this was because of abnormally high vacancy rates at two campus-area apartment complexes.

Family housing units are currently full, but questions have been raised about the possible effect of a dramatic rent increase on the vacancy rate.

New two-bedroom apartments at Amazon are expected to rent for \$425 a month, 10 percent below the current market rate, but high compared to the current monthly rent of \$142.

"That rent increase is inevitable, and we want to work with the University to minimize that," said David Edrington, one of the project architects.

Regardless of the rent issue, Edrington said the Amazon units, originally meant to be temporary housing for World War II veterans, are in poor condition and need to be rebuilt in the near future.



Amazon Housing units were originally built as temporary housing for World War II veterans.

The bonds on Westmoreland family housing are almost paid off, and future rent on those units will be surplus money that Edrington said can be used to minimize rent increase at Amazon.

Even if University administrators opt to continue the construction project on some scale,

many people are questioning when they will commit to a decision.

"It's been kind of like a roller coaster," Edrington said. "Sometimes we have cause to be optimistic, and sometimes it looks like they're going to call

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Combining loans may aid students

Agencies offer consolidation as alternative to paying off several lenders

By Jim Winkle
Emerald Reporter

College graduates who face paying off heavy loans to several lenders may find an alternative method easier to handle — consolidating their loans through an agency.

"The basic purpose of our program is to help minimize the number of students defaulting on their loans," said Phoebe Hollenbeck, vice president of the Loan Consolidation Program, a Northwest loan association.

When debts are consolidated through the ELCP and programs like it, a student's loan is paid off by the agency, who then charges the student one monthly bill. This makes the debt more manageable for the graduate owing to many different lenders.

"All of a sudden students may find themselves pay-

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FLICKS

JFK placed as the 10th best movie of 1991. Complete rankings inside.

See ENTERTAINMENT, page 8

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Jon Franklin, Tom Wheeler, and Roger Lavery joined the University's School of Journalism faculty this fall bringing impressive credentials.

See FACULTY, page 3



WIN, BABY

The Oregon men surprised Cal Thursday, winning 67-57.

See SPORTS, page 13

Recycling efforts grow on campus

Student program is now serving EMU, three sororities and the dorms

By Kirsten Lucas
Emerald Reporter

Students approved a ballot measure last year that gave way to a comprehensive campus recycling program now on the cutting edge of university recycling efforts.

The Student Recycling Program was founded and funded by students to complement and expand campus recycling, which was previously handled solely by the University Recycling Program.

In last May's ASUO election, students approved a fee of 50 cents per student per term, amounting to an annual budget of \$25,000. This money pays for recycling services specifically designed to meet student needs, including education about recycling.

Prior to the student-funded, student-run program, the University Recycling Program faced rising costs

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