

# Students protest Amazon plans

By Koalani Roberts  
Emerald Contributor

Plans to rebuild Amazon family housing may put student families on the streets and force them to abandon their educations, a group of Amazon tenants said Thursday.

About 30 student parents said their concerns are not being represented and challenged planners, housing representatives and administrators to more adequately address the cost of the proposed new units.

They called for the administration to increase support of low-income student parents.

"We understand (Amazon) will have to be rebuilt. But we're willing to live in the most miserable conditions the law will allow," said James Fisher, a graduate student in architecture.

The University announced in February that Amazon would be rebuilt after a University commissioned report said the structures were habitable only until 1996.

The project is also a response to the 1989 Oregon Legislature, which said the University helped contribute to a housing shortage in the Eugene area and allocated \$11 million in bonding for new University housing. Bonding money will be repaid with student rent.

Concerned tenants have formed Students for Low-Income Housing, a sub-committee of the Amazon Tenants Council, to assure the continuance of housing.

Rent for a two-bedroom apartment at Amazon could be raised from \$142 a month to as much as \$425. This is 10 percent below the market rate but unaffordable for single mothers on welfare and families facing tuition increases and a 30 percent reduction in child care subsidies.

Tenants said this increase would defeat the purpose of the bonding measure and would force many out into the local housing market.

They also questioned whether the housing project was necessary in light of decreasing University enrollment. Amazon has about 10 vacancies, and has begun admitting single graduate students into apartments.

Many voiced outrage at the architect's design statement for the rebuilt Amazon. They said the

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— James Fisher,  
graduate student

plan mentions ponds, winding walkways, a 200 year life-span and units that "make an immediate impact on you when you walk in."

"Nowhere in there is there any indication of low-cost," Fisher said.

The students said the University erred in hiring Berkeley architect Christopher Alexander, who was also author of the University's campus master plan in 1970.

Alexander is paid about 2 percent more than an average architect, said Dan Williams, University vice president for administration.

However, the tenants said Alexander was chosen by a group of planners and housing representatives who do not represent student interests.

Amazon tenant Hillary Moser said many tenants believe their representatives in the user group are architecture students who selected Alexander because he would be exciting to work with, not because he would design the lowest-cost housing.

Moser, a single mother of one who graduated last term, suggested University planners use the state prototype for low-income housing and hire a contractor rather than an expensive architect.

The students challenged the University to develop a fundraising effort for family housing, in the same way they raise money for athletics or campus projects.

"The bottom line is access to education for those who can afford it least," said University Planning Associate Fred Tepfer.

However, Tepfer said the user group, made up of Amazon tenants, planners, architects and housing representatives, is not the best forum for students concerns.

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