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AMAZON

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there was no reason from a technical point of view to tear down the family housing site, especially the one-story units. Gibbons said any good contractor or HUD inspector would reach similar conclusions if allowed to inspect Amazon.

"If the Oregon Legislature can float a bond to level the place," Gibbons said, "why can't they float a bond to remodel it?"

Jim Fisher, graduate in architecture, told Hosticka and Edmunson that the cost overruns at the 18th and Agate project and the proposed plans for Amazon indicated that the total building costs were double the market rate for housing construction in the area.

Fisher also said that as a community, Amazon was already the ideal architectural model: inexpensive, self-supporting and an environment that built a spirited sense of community. Fisher

said that for reasons he is just beginning to understand as an architect, "the place just works."

According to the Aug. 18 calculations from architect Christopher Alexander, a new two-bedroom Amazon apartment will rent for \$464 per month and a three-bedroom will rent for \$564 per month. Currently, Amazon families pay between \$175 and \$340.

The original contractual agreement between the University and Christopher Alexander set the construction costs for 18th and Agate and the Amazon master plan at \$39 per square foot.

H.P. Barnhart, who was housing director at the University from 1949 to 1980, gave testimony at the Aug. 16 housing board hearing that the actual total costs, including design and construction, will be from \$100 to \$120 per square foot.

Federal and local governments do set price ceilings for low-income housing construction costs.

Kelly Madding, a recent University graduate in planning, public policy and management, works for the city of Eugene in community development.

Madding said the city of Eugene's standard for low-income housing averages \$54 per square foot, including design and construction.

One low-income housing developer, John Hubbard of the Neighborhood Economic Development corporation, kept his costs to \$38 per square foot by getting low bids and even some donated labor.

Dwyer did not attend the meeting, but in a phone interview he said the intent of the bond was not to tear down Amazon, but to build additional affordable student housing.

"The University and higher ed have never acted in good faith about building student housing," Dwyer said. "The bond was issued to build new housing, not tear down old housing."

It was Dwyer's impression from reading the engineer's report that Amazon had serious problems, was a fire trap and had asbestos problems. He said the only reason for Amazon to

come down was for health reasons.

Additionally, Dwyer said he had received a memo that morning that indicated the rents at 18th and Agate would be only \$350 per month.

Of the proposed Amazon rents, Dwyer said, "there is no excuse for charging \$450 to \$500 per month — the private sector can do that."

Dwyer then speculated that the University might be in collusion with local private sector landlords to keep rental prices high.

"Supply and demand, supply and demand," Dwyer said.

Whichever way the family student housing controversy goes, Amazon students and their families are frightened and emotional about losing their homes.

Jean Hanna, 42, a recent graduate of the art education program, told representatives that she had been pressured by administration officials to vacate her apartment, which is scheduled for phase one demolition.

Hanna said she had been told that if she didn't move soon, her apartment could be condemned. Hanna said she was already terrified at the prospect of finding a teaching job to support herself and her eight-year-old son in the post-Ballot Measure 5 school system.

Moved by the outpouring of emotion and ideas, Edmunson said the students had better questions than he had answers for, and promised to help.

Hosticka suggested placing a moratorium on evictions, new construction and rent increases until the matter could be investigated.

The legislators believed that some political pressure was being leveled against the University and that the housing fiasco was part of it. But the students wanted more than removed, abstract ideas.

"It's really clear what we want. We want to preserve Amazon," Fisher said. Currently, family student tenants are moving out of Amazon in anticipation of Amazon's demolition.

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