

Spencer View residents celebrate end of construction

Direct Internet access and child care services are among the new structure's amenities

By Megan Turner
Higher Education Reporter

Residents of the Spencer View Family Housing complex celebrated the conclusion of the final phase of construction and the closure of more than a year of controversy surrounding the complex on Saturday.

Mike Eyster, director of University Housing, was among the guest speakers who shared a few words at the gathering. Eyster was one of the major decision-makers in the razing of the Amazon Family Housing complex to build Spencer View.

The tearing down of the World War II-era building caused controversy a year ago when a coalition of community members and former residents repeatedly attempted to appeal the decision to demolish the complex. The Amazon



Wendy Fuller/EMERALD

Rainbow The Clown and friends have a parade near the community center at the Spencer View Apartments as part of an event celebrating the complex's opening.

Coalition advocated the renovation of the structure.

Eyster said a renovation was impractical for several reasons.

Amazon was much smaller and was not cost-effective for students and University Housing. Also, the buildings were struc-

turally unsafe.

"At the time the controversy was going on we had to make predictions," he said. "Now we know

from experience that the decision [of the courts] was a good one."

Eyster said some of the reasons the construction was such a good decision is that Spencer View is much safer in terms of fire safety, is much more cost-effective, has a larger child care facility and has direct Internet access.

"There are a number of amenities that are much nicer than [those] we would have been able to provide with a renovated structure," Eyster said.

Suzi Blanchard has been the co-op family director for 14 years and was formerly the director of the Amazon complex. She agrees with Eyster that the new complex is a much better one.

"It's safe and much easier to maintain," she said. "Families are safe, kids are safe. ... I think they did a good job, and the rent is still below market. A sense of community is starting to develop, too. It's a wonderful place."

Ayanna Luvert, an educational studies major, lived in student housing before her move to Spencer View. She said that compared to other student housing complexes, it is much more modern, the rent is inexpensive and it is more accessible to University students.

"I've also been able to talk to professors that live here, and they've been able to help me [with classwork]," Luvert said.

About a hundred students who reside at Spencer View flocked to the Commons Building with their families, where several activities were scheduled for the all-day affair. Many activities were designed for children, including an all-children talent show, a visit by Rainbow the Clown and a fire engine display.

There were also several activities for parents, including bike registration, tours of the complex and a parenting workshop. Jon Davies of the University Counseling Center said the workshop consisted of a discussion of issues related to balancing the stress of being a parent with the stress of being a student.

Jimmy Bickerstaff, a parent, said, "[The workshop] was really helpful in finding a lot of resources for us. Because this is not an ongoing group, it was good to get a list of resources for who to talk to."

Bickerstaff, a doctoral student, also said it was nice to meet and share experiences with other parents who are students.

Spencer View, located on East 24th Street and Patterson, includes 272 two- and three-bedroom apartments. Rent is \$445 a month for two-bedroom apartments and \$545 for three bedrooms. There is already a lengthy waiting list to move in. Aside from direct Internet access and a big community center within the complex, other features include several laundry rooms and covered and open play areas, as well as reasonably priced child care facilities within the Commons Building. Costs for child care is around \$18 a week for infants and \$30 for toddlers.

Students who have families or those who are in master's degree or doctoral programs are highest on the priority list for residence at Spencer View.

The complex, built under budget by \$700,000, was financed not by taxpayer money but by the sale of 30-year bonds, which will be paid off with student rental fees.

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