



The Westmoreland Apartments, located more than 2 miles west of campus, could be sold, forcing residents to move by June 30.

KATIE GLEASON | PHOTOGRAPHER

Westmoreland: Residents express concern

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Spencer View Apartments or into East Campus graduate housing. There may not be enough space for all residents who wish to move into University Housing complexes after the sale, Eyster said.

"There may be some students that are currently living in Westmoreland that would like to continue to live in University Housing that may not be able to, but there is other housing available in the community," Eyster said.

Before selling the property, the University must first get permission from the Oregon State Board of Higher Education, which will hear the proposal at its early November meeting.

The properties were valued at \$15-\$18 million earlier this year, but that was a conservative appraisal, Eyster said.

Money from the sale will go toward improving housing close to campus, although some funds could first go to other purposes, Vice President for Finance and Administration Frances Dyke said.

"You may see us purchasing another piece of property and guaranteeing an equivalent amount when housing is ready to use the funds for development," Dyke said.

The money wouldn't completely fund a new residence hall, but it could help fund the construction or renovation of one, Eyster said.

"I don't need enough money to totally pay for residence halls," Eyster said. "I just need some help."

The average cost of a new 480-bed residence hall is \$34-\$36 million, not including land and infrastructure extension costs, according to a University press release.

Dyke and Eyster also discussed using the money for property in the east campus neighborhood.

The University wants to have money to buy land if the opportunity arises, Dyke said.

"There are opportunities down there with various parcels of land that could provide sites for housing

or for academic or research programs or something else affiliated with the University," Dyke said.

Eyster wrote a letter dated Oct. 19 to Westmoreland residents informing them of the decision.

But residents contacted by the Emerald Thursday evening were all unaware the University is seeking to sell the properties.

Some were concerned. Cheelo Namalala, a 24-year-old international student from Zambia, said she doesn't know if she'll be able to find housing as affordable as the Westmoreland Apartments. Other University-owned apartments and Eugene apartments are more expensive, she said, and she's nervous she won't be able to find another racially diverse environment where residents are tolerant.

According to a University press release, 25 international students hold leases at Westmoreland. The sociology student plans to get her undergraduate degree after summer term but may need to search for Eugene housing if she decides to attend graduate school here.

"What would I do if there was no Westmoreland?" she said. "I just hope that I'll be able to find something that'll work for me, somewhere I'll be comfortable."

Tina Jensen Augustine lives at the Westmoreland Apartments with her husband, an architecture graduate student. Augustine said they chose to live there because it is cheap and convenient.

"It's the most affordable we can find," she said. Derrick Mathias, a graduate teaching fellow in the ecology and evolutionary program, said though he'll be graduating at the end of the school year, he feels bad the apartments will be sold because they are the most affordable ones for students.

"It's not going to affect me, but I still think it's a shame," Mathias said.

Approximately 39 children enrolled at a Westmoreland childcare center will also have to relocate for next year.

Dennis Reynolds, EMU child care coordinator, told parents in an e-mail Thursday that the move will impact the Child Care and Development Centers' "ability to provide continuing services for families currently enrolled at Westmoreland and for some at the Moss Street Childrens (sic) Center who may compete with displaced Westmoreland families for a reduced number of total CCDC child care slots."

University Housing has tried renovating the units to make them more attractive to families, but Eyster speculated that families are choosing to pay more for larger apartments with different amenities.

Westmoreland apartments range in size from 375 to 500 square feet. Approximately \$190,000 was spent on renovations for 37 apartments, 30 of which are currently occupied.

The Westmoreland property was purchased in the 1960s using bonds, Eyster said, which were repaid with revenue from rent collections.

University Housing financed the purchase of the property now occupied by the Riverfront Research Park for the purpose of building residence halls.

When the park was built on the land in the 1980s, a plan to reimburse housing approximately \$220,000 in 2003 was drafted.

But in 2003, Melinda Grier, general counsel to the University, concluded that money from a financially independent department like housing can be used by the University for purposes not related to the department.

Housing was given \$34,746. Though it is not known what exactly will be done with the Westmoreland sale's proceeds, Dyke said there "will be a public acknowledgment of the commitment to housing" at the time of the sale that will guarantee it money.

Contact the news editors at mcuniff@dailyemerald.com and jpaben@dailyemerald.com

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