

## **New housing options alter rental market**

### **New types of student properties may change dynamics of Charlottesville housing market in 2003-2004, local landlords uncertain of effect on existing residential arrangement**

**Whitney Garrison**

*Cavalier Daily Associate Editor*

While the lease-signing debate continues, alternative housing options ranging from resort-style apartments to cooperative housing programs have the potential to change the Charlottesville housing market.

Eagle's Landing and Sterling University Place, two resort-style apartment complexes opening this fall and summer, respectively, have the potential to lure around 800 students from the traditional off-Grounds market. However, many students and landlords doubt their ability to pull students farther away from the University.

Sterling has leased a little over 50 percent of its apartments already, according to property manager Chastity Meade.

Eagle's Landing declined to release their current leasing statistics.

Stadium Properties owner Richard Ward recalled the impact of the opening of Hereford College on the housing market.

"When Hereford College opened up, it put a dent in the market for two or three years," Ward said. But "I don't think that these places will have the same detriment because they are farther away."

Dean of Students Penny Rue said she thinks new apartment complexes will improve student options.

"I think that the supply of housing can outstrip the demand so that students will have more and better choices," Rue said.

Trisha Cote, community manager for Eagle's Landing, noted specific differences between local landlords and corporate management such as Eagle's.

"The focus is on the student's personal and specific needs," Cote said. "We don't do well if students are not happy, so we also do surveys on a regular basis."

John Crafaik, owner of Charlottesville Apartments, said Eagle's and Sterling have to offer more because of their distance from Grounds.

"By virtue of location, they have to offer you more for less," Crafaik said. "That's what I would do."

Meade said her company understands there is a history to where students live at the University.

"We just encourage students to start their own legacy at Sterling," Meade said.

Cote added she feels the presence of Eagle's Landing will raise the standards for quality service in the Charlottesville housing market.

John Bailey, Student Council housing committee chair, said he thinks Sterling and Eagle's are misguided by what they think students want.

"I think that students want to live in a place with a strong sense of community in which they have full access to other students and other aspects of university life," Bailey said. "I think that means being able to walk to class."

Sterling and Eagle's offer a shuttle service to Grounds continually throughout the day.

In response to the increased competition of Sterling and Eagle's, Woodard properties now uses the advertising slogan "Don't let the shuttle bus run your life!"

Another housing alternative on the horizon is a

new program called Co-operative Housing at the University of Virginia.

First-year Graduate student Laura Hartman is one of six students who have tackled the complicated task of founding a cooperative house in Charlottesville.

Hartman explained that housing co-ops provide students with several benefits.

"Co-ops offer cheaper rent that also puts pressure on the market so rents in the area don't get too high," Hartman said. "It's a housing option that offers a community-oriented lifestyle and educational opportunities."

A cooperative housing project at the University of California, Berkeley currently houses 914 students in 17 buildings.

Hartman says due to legal technicalities, the group was unable to buy a house this year and will rent space for the 2003-2004 academic year.

Hartman said Cooperative Housing will continue to fundraise, and plans to buy a house for the 2004-2005 school year.

-- Associate Editor Natasha Altamirano contributed to this report.

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Address: University of Virginia; PO Box 400703, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4703  
Phone: (434) 924-1086 | FAX: (434) 924-7290 |  
E-mail: cavdaily@cavalierdaily.com