

the gateway

Edmonton, Alberta vol. 63 no. 2

housing HUBbub

HUB is home — for whom

North American architects and planners are keenly interested in the U of A's HUB (Housing University Building), the first student-owned housing project on the continent. According to Diamond and Myers, the university's long range planners who designed HUB in association with R.L. Wilkin of Edmonton, a U.S. magazine, "Progressive Architecture", plans to devote a major portion of an upcoming issue to urban planning in Alberta, using the U of A and HUB as examples.

HUB merits the interest. It is the biggest single dome structure in Canada, the first major commercial development allowed on the U of A campus, the first link in the system of covered walkways called for in the long range plan and the first residence on campus which will not attempt to regulate the behaviour of its inhabitants.

HUB was originally proposed to provide convenient and economical housing for the then growing U of A student population. According to HUB manager, Fulton Frederickson, HUB will in fact be economical, but he cautions that it is "definitely not designed to be 'low cost'." He predicted that the on-campus location will mean significant savings in both time and money for residents.

Rents in HUB range from \$90 for a bachelor suite to \$150 for a 2-man unit and \$240 for four. Furniture is available for \$11 per month. This is slightly higher than the "average" rates of \$70 per person quoted in the SU Housing Guide.

Eventually about 1000 students will be housed in the 956 foot long building. Despite the phenomenally high vacancy rate in apartments around the University (10.8% according to an Edmonton Journal report), demand for apartments in HUB is healthy.

All the suites which are now scheduled for completion in September and October have been leased, but there are still vacancies in those to be finished in November and December. Frederickson recommends that those who wish to move into HUB later in the year take temporary accommodation now. This will guarantee first option on an apartment for next fall.

Tenants whose apartments were not ready on time and who cannot find temporary quarters are staying in St. Stephen's College. About 75% of the space in the shopping mall has been leased but much of the commercial space will not be ready until December. Some stores will not open until next spring. There is still room for two 'boutiques'.

HUB will cost about \$6,300,000, half a million more than was originally planned. According to Jim Humphries, chairman of the housing commission which did the original planning for the building, university specifications were one reason for the increased cost. Had the university not objected the building would have had aluminum siding, a 'futuristic' and inexpensive finishing.

HUB will cost nearly \$3.50 a square foot more than another apartment complex which is currently under construction. Of this, about ninety cents a square foot will be borne by the university which is responsible for road work, lounge furniture and landscaping.

The main reason for the relatively high cost of HUB is the plan itself. In a recent telephone interview Humphries explained that high rise developments are less expensive because the same unit is repeated over and over again. HUB, on the other hand, contains commercial space and lounge areas as well as apartments.

Edmonton architect Peter Hemingway, the designer of the Coronation Pool and Central Pentecostal Tabernacle, has chided HUB planners on the extravagance of their design. 'The basic fact of student life has to be economic,' Hemingway asserted recently. 'This was pointed out to the planners by more people than just me two years ago.'

He charged that the commercial space had been 'designed for expensive Yorkville boutiques. What kind of stores do students need? Low, low cost stores. The concept of HUB is not low cost.'

Hemingway predicted that the horizontal design would raise the costs of operation and maintenance. As one administrator of the city's low cost housing projects remarked, 'Some one has to pay for the dome and the heating of the mall.'

About 10% of the people in the city's subsidized housing are students but most of them are attending Alberta Vocational Centre or NAIT which do not provide student housing. The city housing administrator commented that students' need for cheap accommodation is not critical because they are only temporarily in a low income category.

Michener Park residents are writing larger rent checks this fall because of an attempt to make the married students quarters break even. According to L. Leitch, vice-president finance and administration, Michener Park and Lister Hall have always been subsidized by other components in the housing and food services.

Rents at Michener Park were raised by \$6 a month as of the first of September despite a 'rent strike' staged by over one hundred of the 299 tenants last May. Part of the increase was designed both to absorb the municipal taxes which were first levied on university residences last year and to cover operating expenses.

Leitch praised the administrators of Michener Park who, he said, 'have almost been able to reduce costs in a time of rising prices.' An increase of \$11 a month was made when the city first levied taxes against the residences. Leitch said that the complex is expected to 'break even' this year.

Rents now range from \$137 for row houses and maisonnettes to \$139 for one bedroom suites in the hi-rise. J. R. Raven, director of the housing and food services, estimated that rents in Michener Park are about \$20 a month lower than those in commercial apartment houses.

However, a representative for Canadian Homefinders, a firm which sells rental listings, estimates that the average cost for a one bedroom apartment in the south central section of the city is between \$130 to \$135 per month. This figure might not include laundry or electricity, which together would cost \$8 or \$9 per month. According to this estimate, accommodation for couples is approximately competitive with commercial prices. Units for families, the maisonnettes and row houses, are considerably less expensive than their commercial counterparts.

An attempt to make Lister Hall 'break even' has raised the rent by the price of the telephone service and has reduced maid service. The SUB cafeteria, which Leitch described as 'badly designed and not economic', will continue to lose money. Leitch said that the university would phase out the SUB operation were it not for its location.

as, cs



Banff parley

Amidst decreasing university enrolment and increasing dissatisfaction with higher education in general, a conference in Banff this weekend will discuss student finance, the cost of education, and the status of departmental exams. Organised and sponsored by Catalyst: Your Choice of Futures (a Student Temporary Employment Programme project), the conference is intended to collate student reaction to the Worth Commission recommendations. The Students' Union representation is embodied in a brief submitted by Patrick Delaney, vice-president academic.

Whilst there is agreement on a number of points, the brief disagrees vehemently with the commission recommendations that: "An increase in student fees to around the twenty-five percent level of programme costs is warranted in the interests of equity and efficiency." Says Delaney, "This is an incredible statement with an equally incredible lack of factual backup." Additionally, he charges that, "There is some evidence to support the contention that only thirty to forty percent of university resources are directed towards teaching.

Research detrimental

According to a study of the cost of university programmes in 1969-70, cited in the brief, a "majority of the university's budget by its own admission is directed to research, and not to teaching." Delaney questions the wisdom of requiring students to pay disproportionate amounts for research and community services, since this contradicts the report recommendations that the university pursue "activities in accordance with...emerging convictions."

The brief also suggests that the university has been negligent in advising students about post-graduation employment opportunities and proposes that "more comprehensive counselling

is required at enrollment...taking into account market predictions and seeking to provide alternative fields of study."

The Worth Commission warn that "concentration on senior level studies carries with it the danger that research and development might be over-emphasized to the detriment of learning and teaching," a position echoed by SU. The brief states that whilst it "does not wish to deny the importance of research both to the continuing learning process and updating of courses as well as to the public," it asks, "Is a professor paid to teach?" and suggests that there should be some way of allowing a "research orientated individual to pursue his interests and not inflict his incompetence at teaching on students."

Staff power

The SU brief agrees with the Worth Commission that, "some aspects...reflect a total lack of consideration on the part of the staff for the student and the public" and cites as an example the "erosion" of Student Health. In concurring with the Commission report accusation that staff estimates of faculty time are "consistently and predictably" exaggerated, the brief recognises staff rights in educational planning but questions the commission proposal regarding the role of lay members of the BOG, whose representative effectiveness has been somewhat questionable.

Universities Commission

The commission charge that the AUC are an "elitist" group is supported by the Delaney brief. Arguing that the AUC have "served for too long as a buffer behind which the government and the university could hide," Delaney predicts that its demise will "increase accountability to the public by making both government and the university make their plans and priorities known, without submitting them to closed hearings of a commission."

Department applauded

A Department of Advanced Education has been established by the government of Alberta. The SU brief applauds this step as proof that the government have realised "the need for special treatment of advanced education," but criticises its secondary status beside the Department of Education. In view of its specialised function, it probably should be granted greater autonomy.

lw.