

The Oak Creek Apartments

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By Lee Herzenberg

Have you had a chance yet to drive by and see the Oak Creek Apartments on Stanford land? What do you think it is that makes it worth while paying \$240/month for a one bedroom apartment? Is it the trees, the 5 swimming pools, the 4 tennis courts, the putting green, the services available (e.g. maids at a small extra cost, internal TV station), or is it the general poshness of the construction, the prestige of the address, the security of knowing that the neighbors can all afford to live in a place like this and aren't ashamed to say so?

Maybe it's the desire to live close to Stanford or the Welsh Road office area, so that driving to work will be easy. Take your pick. The reasons don't really matter. The fact is that one good look at Oak Creek and anyone knows, as Tevya in "Fiddler on the Roof" put it, that "here lives a wealthy man."

Well, all right. Wealthy is a relative adjective. Let's look at the figures. The FHA, most banks and the Stanford Business office for that matter, when it is negotiating with faculty over construction in the faculty housing area, state that a maximum of 25 percent of real income should be budgeted for housing. This means that a single person, or a couple (perhaps with one small child) renting a one bedroom apartment at Oak Creek should be earning a minimum of \$11,520 a year after taxes, or somewhere upwards of \$16,500/year gross income. About 5 percent of Stanford employees are in that salary range, and most of them are faculty,

who probably need more than one bedroom anyway.

Boyd Smith's Inaccuracies

All this notwithstanding, Boyd Smith, Stanford Real Estate Manager, in an article in Monday's Daily castigating "Grass Roots" for "inaccurate and misleading statements" tells us that Oak Creek Apartments "rents reflect moderate cost housing without subsidy at today's prices." With a series of figures sufficiently incomplete so as to make checking them impossible, he claims to show that because of interest rates and subsidies, a \$240 rent for an Oak Creek one bedroom apartment should be equated with the \$125 rent for an Escondido Village apartment of the same size. If that's the case, Escondido residents ought to organize immediately to demand their swimming pools, tennis courts and built in dishwashers before someone gets away with the money!

But this isn't a joking matter. Boyd Smith is playing fast and loose with the Stanford Community on an issue which is crucially important to the lives of people in this community—lives of people who have a hard enough time buying food and clothing with what's left after they pay inflated rents for roofs that leak, rooms that are too small in apartments that are far enough away that when the car breaks down it's a major catastrophe—and lives of people who may not be struggling themselves, but who care enough about what's happening to their brothers to try to inform themselves so they can pressure

for a just and equitable solution to the housing problem. How can a housing committee, for example, function in an atmosphere where the Business office of the University feels free to make such absurd public statements?

Boyd Smith's Credibility

If the Oak Creek Apartment story raises serious doubts as to Boyd Smith's credibility, the rest of his article does nothing to allay our fears. His discussion of Coyote Hill politely fails to tell us that a group of permanent local citizens have filed suit against Stanford of dodging the subdivision law and against selected members of the Palo Alto City government, including Stanford Married Student Housing Director Frank Gallagher (who is also a Palo Alto City Councilman), naming Gallagher for conflict of interest. Presumably this oversight is due to the fact that Stanford is contesting the suit.

The discussion of the Dillingham project fares no better. Smith erroneously states that "the City Council of Palo Alto thoroughly examined traffic surveys and projections."

In fact, the Dillingham project was approved without consideration of the traffic contribution of the Coyote Hill project (not to mention the Syntex project currently going up), even though all three projects feed onto the same major artery: Page Mill Road. And the list could go on.

Smith's Redeeming Features

No doubt Smith's article has redeeming features, and perhaps

some of his criticisms should be taken to heart by Grass Roots. But his irresponsible juggling of "facts" cannot be ignored. By putting out a smokescreen of calculated invective and misleading financial information, Boyd Smith and the Business office for whom he speaks are guilty of making a mockery of even the inadequate decision-making procedures operant in the community today,

and those people involved in such procedures should be put on their guard.

Then again, perhaps compared with what has already been done to the mid-peninsula by the Business office, Fred Terman and the Stanford Trustees, Smith's heavy-handed manipulations don't really matter very much, anyway.

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