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Unhappy

Keep Kuhlman Court is plea at UMC forum

By Gail Snider
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Hidden among modern, more utilitarian structures, Kuhlman Court is one of the University's last nostalgic niches. But its future looks dim and so do its rapidly deteriorating front steps, window sills, roofs and guttering.

More than 50 disgruntled University faculty, staff and students attended a planning discussion Monday night to try to persuade University officials to save and restore the property.

Many faculty offices in the departments of history, romance languages, art, philosophy and English are housed in the block of old houses now owned by the University. The University has considered plans to raze the block for several years.

Faculty members whose offices are located in Kuhlman Court, however, not only are satisfied with the location, but do not want to take a chance on different facilities.

While there are no concrete dates for demolition, Duane Stucky, director of institutional research and planning, said things "certainly point in that direction."

Plans call for the resulting space to be used for Ellis Library extension, Brady Commons expansion, improved walkways, additional parking and more green space, said planning consultant Jack Robinson.

Chancellor Barbara Uehling and Stucky hired Robinson in 1981 to study the future of the University's physical environment. Robinson and Stucky have conducted discussion and information-gathering sessions after drawing up preliminary long-term plans.

During a general University planning program in December, the future of Kuhlman Court arose as a major issue of concern to history department faculty in the audience.

Assistant Professor Kerby Miller said the facilities on Kuhlman Court are more than adequate and implied that the University would not be able

to create another homey, personal atmosphere like that at Kuhlman Court.

He said the offices at 613 Kuhlman Court are preferable to the ones in the more modern Arts and Science Building. "The offices in Arts and Science are entirely too small for faculty research, totally inadequate for writing books and totally inadequate for holding small seminars," Miller said.

Miller accused the administration of destroying a human area in order to create vast open wastelands.

"Kuhlman Court is already a green space," he said. "Why don't we concentrate on what we have now and not let it fall? You could fix up a couple of buildings for what you paid in consulting."

History Professor William Wiecek said, "None of us are opposed to to green space but we're concerned that the planning process will result in razing buildings and paving it over for a parking lot."

Another representative of the history department offered one of the few practical suggestions — that the library extension plans could be changed to include office space for faculty members uprooted by the fall of Kuhlman Court.

Stucky said that was not possible because the plan is before the legislature and already has been modified once. He did, however, recognize the problem of relocation and admitted that the University has no plans.

Stucky said he was not surprised by the responses at the forum.

He said everything is in planning stages and nothing would happen to Kuhlman Court for another two years. He stressed that faculty do have input in the decision through forums, their departments and representatives on the Chancellor's Campus Planning Committee.

Faculty members remain pessimistic. "The chancellor and Stucky are determined to tear down Kuhlman Court," Miller said.