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UT to Close Sutherland and Golf Range Apartments in May 2010

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KNOXVILLE — The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, plans to close its Sutherland and Golf Range graduate and family student apartment complexes May 31, 2010, officials announced today.

After extensive evaluation, the university determined that it is not economically feasible to renovate the adjacent apartment properties. The university notified residents of the decision on Feb. 18.

Over the years, many graduate and family students have chosen to live in the complex because of its proximity to campus and the relatively economical rental rate structure as compared to privately owned area properties. Consultants have estimated that development of a new housing complex on the site meeting current codes and competitive standards could cost in excess of \$80 million.

“The demand for university-provided graduate and family housing has declined over the years. As we looked at our options for renovating this property, the current advantage of rental rates would be lost, putting us in direct competition with the private market,” said Ken Stoner, executive director of university housing for UT Knoxville.

“We will certainly assist to make sure that our students have information available over the next 15 months for exploring other options that will best suit their needs,” added Stoner.

The Sutherland Apartments section is 40 years old and the Golf Range section is 50 years old, and renovations would be more expensive than new construction due to outdated electrical and plumbing

systems. Significant resources also would be required to address energy efficiency and compliance with current fire safety and accessibility standards.

The university operates the Golf Range Preschool and Toddler program on the property and will relocate the program.

UT Knoxville has closed or reallocated several graduate student properties in the past six years, including Woodlawn Apartments in 2003; Taliwa Court in 2004; and Kingston Apartments in 2006. The university renovated the Laurel Avenue Apartments and reopened it as undergraduate housing in the fall of 2008 to meet the demand for undergraduate housing. The anticipated closure follows a trend at other Southeastern Conference (SEC) schools like Arkansas, Auburn and Alabama, which also have recently closed or are in a similar process of phasing out their remaining graduate and family housing complexes.

The university will be exploring the feasibility of using the 40 acres to accommodate student recreation fields. University officials have spent the past several years evaluating more than 20 sites for intramural and club sports and general student recreation. Officials noted that several characteristics of the 40-acre plot make it a favorable option for student recreation, including its connection to the Third Creek Greenway, availability of utilities and proximity to campus. UT currently ranks last among its peer institutions in availability of outdoor space allocated to student recreation.

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