

## And Unto Dust You Shall Return

### Metzger Drive apartments scheduled to be knocked down

By Alex Seise

The Metzger Drive apartments will be torn down this fall, according to Matt Golden, director of Communications and Media Relations. The apartments, which have stood incomplete since November 2004 due to water damage, will be fully reconstructed by 2009.

"The existing unfinished buildings along Pennington Road are now slated for demolition this fall. Work should begin in early November, and the buildings will be razed and the land graded and seeded until the new building project starts sometime in early 2008," Golden said. "The replacement building design will begin this fall, with design, approvals and bidding taking approximately 12 months to complete."

According to Golden, the fence surrounding the construction site along Metzger Drive will remain. It will be dismantled once the enclosed land "has been properly stabilized," Golden said.

According to Golden, the buildings are expected to be completed for the start of the 2009-2010 academic year.

The current freshman class would be the first class eligible to live in the Metzger Drive apartments if the projected completion date is met.

Students have mixed opinions about the apartments. Many are concerned about missing the housing lottery cutoff, a pressure the apartments could have relieved.

Laura Hargreaves, sophomore English major, said she is happy that the project is finally moving forward. However, she is aggravated about missing out on the opportunity to live in the apartments.

"I'm glad they're finally getting something done, because it's really about time," Hargreaves said. "But I wish they would have been done for (the class of 2009), like intended, so that the housing lottery would be less stressful."



[ Media Credit: Alex Seise ]  
*The partially finished apartments on Metzger Drive are scheduled for demolition.*

"If the apartments were built in time for use this school year, then I assume that it would allow for more students to live on campus," Dave Kong, junior biology major, said. "As a result, I think it would have given junior and senior students who wanted to live on campus a greater chance at doing so, rather than the possibility of not making the final housing cutoff and having to find other living arrangements."



[ Media Credit: Eve Roytsheyn ]

*If completed, the new apartments would create extra housing for students who wish to live on campus.*

A settlement agreement was reached last April between the College and Liberty Mutual, the financial company associated with the original contractors for the apartments, Hunt Construction.

The College was awarded \$18.5 million in damages from the settlement. This sum covers costs incurred through the time of settlement.

Regarding the total price for the project, Golden said: "The final costs associated with the project have not yet been determined. We are working on preliminary estimates for demolition and new construction as part of the planning for the project." He provided an initial total estimate of \$40 million.

Golden also explained that the bidding process for all state colleges is mandated by New Jersey statute.

The statute regarding state college contractual agreements says that bids for any contracts over the amount of \$26,200 must be publicly advertised before being awarded by the state so that other contractors can offer cheaper services. The amount includes contractual payment as well as allotments for supplies and materials. "Our bidding process is the same as other state entities," Golden said. Plans for the apartments have been in progress since late 2002.

The College fired the original contractors after specifications for the apartments were not properly addressed. The College eventually began negotiations with Liberty Mutual.

While reaching a settlement, subsequent water damage ruined the semi-constructed apartments. The extensive damage has rendered the buildings unusable and led to the need for demolition.

Delayed construction has affected other residence facilities on campus. The Spring 2004 edition of TCNJ Magazine anticipated that two of the older residence halls on campus, Centennial and Norsworthy, would be demolished by 2005. In their place, it was projected that a new freshman quadrangle would be built. However, Centennial and Norsworthy remain in use this academic year.