



UMKC Hires Company to Study Twin Oaks Option

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By Lynn Franey, The Kansas City Star

The University of Missouri-Kansas City's governing board on Thursday hired a consultant to study options for UMKC's Twin Oaks Apartments, but one board member questioned why the study was being done more than two years after the board bought the buildings.

John Mathes, a member of the University of Missouri's Board of Curators, said UMKC leaders should have known more about the cost of renovating the 11-story, 240,000-square-foot buildings before the board bought them in 1998.

"It's too bad you couldn't do this sort of analysis before we made such a big investment," Mathes said at the board's meeting Thursday on the Kansas City campus.

Dennis Cesari, who handles building projects for the four-campus University of Missouri system, responded: "I agree."

On the recommendation of UMKC leaders, the curators paid \$7.3 million for the twin towers at 5000 and 5050 Oak St.

Campus leaders said then that renovations would cost between \$15 million and \$20 million.

Curators and other university administrators were surprised to find the buildings in much worse condition than they had thought. The renovation estimate has grown steadily.

Cesari said Thursday that UMKC had an engineering firm analyze the building before the purchase. But the analysis apparently missed some major problems, Cesari said, including damaged pipes, and the need to replace every window. The study also did not include the cost of adding air conditioning, a must for today's college student, Cesari said.

The curators decided Thursday to pay Washington, D.C.-based Brailsford & Dunlavey up to \$125,000 to complete a residential life master plan at UMKC.

Because UMKC only has one 300-student dorm, the main study priority will be to evaluate costs and benefits of various levels of renovation at Twin Oaks. The consultant also will study the possibility of tearing down the two buildings down and constructing a dormitory there.

In other action, the curators approved hiring a consultant to help UMKC implement improvements outlined in the Blueprint for the Future developed under the leadership of new Chancellor Martha Gilliland.

The contract with Starr Consulting Group calls for payment up to \$750,000, but Gilliland told the curators she is getting private donations to cover the costs. She already has raised \$315,000, she said.

The consultant will lead workshops to develop the talents and ideas of professors and staff members who are working on implementing individual parts of the five-year blueprint.