Residence Life takes over La Aldea for grad housing

By Natasha Bhuyan
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Residents living in the La Aldea apartment complex can expect to see changes in the upcoming months, such as community assistants, after Residence Life gained ownership of the complex last week.

La Aldea, located on North Euclid Avenue, is a $21 million apartment-style complex that can house up to 325 students in single, apartment-style units.

However, after complaints from student residents and problems with the private ownership, UA Residence Life bought La Aldea at the end of last semester and acquired the property Jan. 5, said Jim Van Arsdale, director of Residence Life.

Van Arsdale said although changes for this semester will be minimal, university officials are working out details for next year such as rental rates, more community assistants and increased security.

Van Arsdale described a community assistant as a cross between a resident assistant and a desk assistant.

They spend some amount of their time distributing mail and helping out with some of the programs there," Van Arsdale said.

"But (unlike RAs) community assistants won’t do rounds or be on duty."

Three community assistants were recently hired for La Aldea, a new position only open to graduate students, and Residence Life is accepting applications for more, Van Arsdale said.

Sergio Olmedo, Spanish senior and resident of La Aldea, said he does not mind the presence of the community assistants because they do not act like RAs who take on restricting duties such as enforcing quiet hours.

"As long as they only do programs, it’s OK,” Olmedo said.

In addition to community assistants, another change La Aldea residents will experience this semester is their rent paying process. Residents can now pay their rent through their bursar’s account instead of writing checks to the former management company, which makes the process more convenient, Van Arsdale said.

Another change is a larger maintenance staff responsible for cleaning and responding to resident concerns, he added.

However, some residents and prospective residents feel the complex also needs a change in rent prices.

Amanda Brobbel, president of the Graduate and Professional Student Council, said she hopes for an adjustment to the rent to better reflect the market.

"We were pretty clear with (Van Arsdale) that the rates are too high for the market in the area,” Brobbel said.

Van Arsdale said changes to the rent are still under consideration,