

# Apartment complex sells to Calif. buyer

BY ABBY ROEDEL | NMBW STAFF

From one California-based owner to the next, one of New Mexico's biggest landlords has sold an apartment complex in its Albuquerque portfolio to a buyer out of Encinitas, Calif.

The purchase of the 228-unit Whispering Sands in the southeast quadrant of the city, which was listed for approximately \$11.8 million, represents the Coastal Exchange Group's first acquisition of property in Albuquerque.

The buyer, Don Meagher, purchased the property from Nevens, Adams, Lewbel, Shell, a conglomerate of Santa Barbara-based owners, according to Todd Clarke, president and chief executive officer of New Mexico Apartment Advisors.

Anita Maestas, an associate at CB Richard Ellis and Vice Chairman Tyler Anderson, of CB's Phoenix office, represented the seller.

Whispering Sands was on the market for about four weeks before it went under con-



Maestas



Anderson

tract, with about 12 offers.

Next to the city of Albuquerque and the University of New Mexico, the Santa Barbara group, says Clarke, currently owns the most rental units in the metro area with nearly 3,000 out of the close to 77,000 units.

Whispering Sands has an occupancy rate of 97 percent, about a percentage point shy of the overall occupancy rate of rental properties throughout the city.

"Now that we are pretty full as far as occupancies go, we are going to start to see rent increases. They [rents] have been

stable and flat historically over the last 10 years, but this year will set the bench mark and we will see rents climb five to seven percent," says Maestas.

With the need for more multi-family properties at about 1,300 to 1,500 new units every year, adds Clarke, there are few parcels left in the city that are zoned for apartments. Clarke estimates there are about two parcels remaining.

As for Whispering Sands, rents are currently at 67 cents per square foot, compared to the city's average of 74 cents per square foot.

The 20-year-old, two-story property, with an average apartment size of 808 square feet, is categorized as a B-class property by New Mexico Apartment Advisors.

"For every listing we take to market, we get five to 10 offers and 80 percent are California buyers," says Clarke. "It doesn't matter if it's two units or 200."

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