

## Multi-family housing neighborhood takes shape east of Ann Morrison Park

By: Teya Vitu  October 2, 2014 



Framing has reached three stories for the La Pointe Apartments (left), while the concrete podium has been poured for the River Edge Apartments. Photo by Pete Grady.

Drive across the Boise River on Ninth Street and look left; you'll see the Micron Business and Economics Building. Look right and you might get a glimpse of the place where nearly a thousand Boise State University students could be living one year from now.

Three student and multi-family apartment complexes, one next to the other, are under construction between La Pointe Street and Dale Street from the Boise River to Sherwood Street. They are called the La Pointe, West Sherwood and River Edge apartments – for now at least. La Pointe has already had a name change from Boise Heights.

"We haven't decided if we're done with the names," said Bruce Tibbett, assistant general manager at Topanga Management, the Fresno, Calif.,-

based developer of La Pointe Apartments.

The new buildings are transforming the Lusk Street Neighborhood, once largely industrial with shops that included a trucking terminal and bus maintenance facility.

A fourth multi-family housing project is in similar stages of construction a couple blocks to the south, behind the Marriott TownePlace Suites and near the foot of the Boise Depot. Lusk Place Apartments will add another 126 units with 369 beds.

All of the new buildings follow the new trends in student housing, where luxury elements come into play.

Gone are the barren dorm rooms and shared hallway bathrooms so dear to college graduates from the last half dozen years and before. These days, there's a bathroom for every bedroom.

"That started with the housing bubble," Tibbett said of the changes.

"When the single-family housing market collapsed in 2007-08, multi-family housing was the place to go. A lot of developers looked into student housing: 'let's make that our niche.'"

The change is also an outgrowth of expectations found in many of this generation's students. Growing up in the suburbs in an era of relative affluence, many didn't have to share a bedroom.

But this lifestyle may not last once they graduate.

"Kids will have to downgrade when they get a job," Tibbett predicted.

The new student housing complexes may not even fill up entirely with students, said Dean Kennedy, Boise State's director of housing and residence life.

University Park Apartments, student housing owned by Boise State, is already in place nearby with 46 apartments and 97 bedrooms. The other four projects are not affiliated with Boise State, he said.

"The university district area definitely doesn't need any more student housing," Kennedy said. "I don't envision those entirely full of Boise State students for the next several years. We don't have enough students that would choose to live that close to campus and pay that price. I think they will be seeking non-students."

La Pointe, West Sherwood, River Edge and Lusk are all on a fast track. They broke ground earlier this year and students are expected to occupy the apartments for the 2015 fall semester.

Construction is farthest along at La Pointe, where wood framing is reaching the fourth and top level at this point.



Framing has started for the West Sherwood Apartments (front). Construction on these student housing projects is farthest along at the La Pointe Apartments (rear). Photo by Pete Grady.

ESI Construction, the largest local general contractor, started construction in February, first clearing the site of a former trucking terminal.

Living quarters for all four projects are perched above ground-level parking. All four have concrete podiums set upon hundreds of columns, and the apartments will be set upon these podiums. The Lusk podium, for example, required about 2,200 cubic yards of concrete, the equivalent of 217 concrete trucks, according to McAlvain Construction, which is building the other three student housing complexes.

The La Pointe Apartments sit on 183 square columns that are 14 feet tall. These are 14-by-26-foot squared off columns, which provide more space for parking than round columns, said ESI senior project manager Jan-Erik Peterson.

A post-tensioned cast-in-place concrete podium was poured atop the columns. It's not just a concrete slab. The podium has 853 penetrations for all the utility lines.

"Placing that was a major challenge," Peterson said. "It was very challenging coordinating all lines inside the slab."

ESI started the wood framing of apartment units in late July and about half the framing is done.

"We're up to the fourth floor in one section," Peterson said. "The next thing I'm looking to get into is roofing."

La Pointe will offer 336 beds in 130 apartments, most of them two-bedroom units with some three- and four-bedroom.

Michael Simmonds, the principal at ZGA Architects and Planners, described the La Pointe design as "contemporary, not flamboyant. Something timeless so it doesn't become dated" with a color scheme of "contemporary earthtones, not 1960s earthtones."



ZGA Architects is adding a rock veneer to La Pointe as a neighborhood enhancement. Photo by Teya Vitu

River Edge, West Sherwood and Lusk are all being built by McAlvain Construction, the third-largest local general contractor. USL Boise LLC owns River Edge and Atlanta-based Carter, one of the nation's leading real estate investment, development and advisory firms, is the developer behind West Sherwood and Lusk.

The concrete podium for River Edge was just poured in the last week of September with framing expected to start in the first half of October. The first level of framing is already well under way at Lusk and West Sherwood, according to material provided by McAlvain.

Wood framing on the three floors of both Sherwood and Lusk will continue until February. River Edge will have four levels of apartments with 175 units and 622 beds. West Sherwood is slated for 110 units and

170 beds.

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## ABOUT TEYA VITU

Teya Vitu is an Idaho Business Review reporter, covering commercial real estate, construction, transportation and whatever else may intrigue him in the moment.

