

Mahogany Court takes shape on edge of Westwood

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Construction on the three-story, 21-unit Mahogany Court apartment complex near Douglas High School on July 9.
Shannon Litz/R-C photos



Bob Bissell checks out the view from a third-story apartment at Mahogany Court in Minden on July 9. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints meetinghouse and World Gym can be seen through the windows.



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A view of the Big George Athletic Complex at Douglas High School from a Mahogany Court apartment.



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As the \$5.5 million, 21-unit Mahogany Court apartment complex takes shape next to Douglas High School, developer Caleb Roope said he hopes the surrounding residents will find the project a good neighbor.

“We want the neighbors to be happy. I think once they see what we do and see how it looks and how we operate things long-term, we’ll win them over,” Roope said in a telephone interview from the company’s Eagle, Idaho headquarters.

The apartment complex – which Roope describes as “workforce” housing – is at the entrance of the upscale Westwood subdivision.

Just a block away, a 4,600-plus square-foot home is listed for sale at \$1.75 million.

That concern about property values led neighbors to protest the affordable housing project when it came before the Minden Town Board and Douglas County in February 2009.

Roope, whose company Pacific West Communities has built 80 similar projects, is sensitive to the issue.

“Typically, how it goes with projects like this, is some developer comes in to make a quick buck and doesn't want to be part of the community,” Roope said. “That's just not the way we operate. We've never sold any of the 80 assets we own and operate. We operate long-term and care about the people in the community and about being a good neighbor. We let our actual activities and production speak for itself.”

Skybox views

Some apartments, especially on the upper floors, offer what could be described as skybox views of the football field. Others provide panoramic views of Jobs Peak.

The company made a few concessions to the neighborhood by reducing the complex to two buildings and leaving more space between the homes and the apartments.

The complex is within walking distance of the high school, Carson Valley Swim Center, World Gym, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints meetinghouse and the Douglas County Public Library.

Minden Town Board Chairman Bob Hadfield is a big supporter of the project. He's made frequent visits to the site and likes what he sees.

He said the 2- and 3-story buildings will blend in with the surrounding properties.

“In my lifetime, I've walked into a lot of buildings under construction,” Hadfield said. “What impressed me is the quality of work being done, the materials being used and the size of the living units themselves.

“It's not what I had anticipated. I was thinking more in terms of ordinary apartment houses. This, in my mind, is a quality project, the way it's being constructed. This is a very professional operation.”

Roope said the project is set to be completed by Oct. 1.

There will be eight two-bedroom units, 12 three-bedroom units and a three-bedroom unit for the on-site manager. Units are 1,000-1,200 square feet. Three of the apartments meet standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Roope said rents for the air-conditioned units average \$740 for a two-bedroom to \$820 for a three-bedroom. Utilities are included.

Tenants have access to laundry facilities, an outdoor space with children's playground and barbecue, covered parking, computers and a community room.

“Probably the best articulation of 'workforce housing' is that it's for people who have jobs. They can't afford to buy a home or can't qualify, but they are workers nonetheless in the community. They work at restaurants in town, or casinos, in the construction industry – any number of trades that pay \$10-\$20 an hour,” Roope said.

Roughly calculated, he said a family of four with an income up to \$43,800 can qualify. A single person may earn up to \$30,660.

Crucial need

Hadfield said the complex fills a crucial housing need.

“We all enjoy this community,” he said. “Aside from those who are retired, people find it difficult to find employment with salaries that can sustain the high cost of housing. Where do people live who wait on us, serve us, keep businesses going in town?”

Hadfield said none of his three children who grew up in Carson Valley could afford to purchase homes here.

“It's important to have young people and a mix of real community,” he said. “I see it as a good addition to our community. Certainly, to my mind it meets the need. I simply don't know how people survive. I don't think they should have to live in an old building in some remote area and drive 40 or 50 miles a day to have a job.”

Hadfield said the project was giving Minden and the county an economic boost.

“That was the second building permit issued in Minden all year,” he said. “This is by far the largest project.”

Project Superintendent Bob Bissell said he had up to 25 workers on the project every day.

Since construction started a few weeks ago, Bissell said the project has attracted its share of sidewalk superintendents.

“People have been very nice,” he said. “They walk by on their way to the pool or the gym or the church and look it over.”

He and his wife are staying at the Carson Valley RV Resort at Carson Valley Inn for the duration of the construction.

“We get recommendations on everything from restaurants to people who want to make sure we know about the farmers markets or Concerts in the Park,” he said.

Bissell said he appreciated the support from the Douglas County School District which allowed him to secure project materials in the high school parking lot.

Roope said Pacific Companies was giving a \$1,000 scholarship to the high school to show his gratitude.

“They have been a great partner to help us stage the construction site. We gave them an easement for access to the football field,” Roope said.

Site's history

The 1.42-acre parcel at the south end of the high school parking lot was owned by the Town of Minden.

Hadfield said the town originally planned to put its corporate yard on the site, but that didn't work out.

“It was donated as part of the Hickey development (Westwood) way back when,” he said. “We decided we couldn't use it and thought the school might want it, but there was no desire.”

Hadfield said the town sold the parcel to developer Greg Lynn, now a county commissioner, who acquired the zoning for a three-story luxury complex for people attracted by the Carson Valley's soaring

facilities and looking for a place to store their gliders.

That project was abandoned and Lynn sold the property to Roope's company, Hadfield said.

Roope said the company has a rigorous application system and stringent housing requirements.

“There's a process we go through that includes a credit check, rent and landlord history, and a criminal background check. We don't rent to felons. Previous landlord references are huge. We want people who take care of the property. There is a whole set of house rules and restrictions. No loud music, no abandoned cars, nothing that detracts from the exterior,” he said.

He said each unit averages 1.5 persons per bedroom.

“That's how it usually works out,” he said. “In a three-bedroom unit, you'll generally have two parents and maybe three kids.”

Rental information will be available on the company's Web site and locally as Mahogany Court nears completion.

Once all the apartments are rented, the company establishes a waiting list.

“We generally have as many people on the list as there are in the units,” he said.

“We're really happy to do this project,” Roope said. “Carson Valley has just taken a beating with the loss of construction jobs. We're happy to create jobs and provide some nice quality housing. It's a privilege to be part of this project and this community.”

ON THE WEB

The Pacific Companies

www.tpchousing.com

DETAILS

For information about rental availability and qualifications, contact The Pacific Companies at (208) 461-0022, ext. 3025.