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As part of the Path to Prominence, Lehigh plans to make several changes in terms of on-campus housing and construction on campus. SouthSide Commons, which will stand on Broad St., is the first-ever Lehigh-affiliated apartment complex to be built. (Ada Tao/B&W Staff)

New housing to accommodate growing student body

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BY JULIA DIRUBBO — READ TIME: 6 MINUTES; PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 8, 2018, 8:31 AM

NEWS

As the undergraduate and graduate populations grow with the Path to Prominence, Lehigh students will have to choose between housing options, which are affiliated and non-affiliated with the university.

These on- and off-campus construction projects are catching the eye of students as they transform the university and South Bethlehem landscape.

Bridge West

Bridge West will be the newest addition to the underclassmen housing portfolio and is expected to be completed in two phases.

Bridge West Project Manager Melanie Fluck said the first phase will be built where the old Kappa Delta house stood and is expected to be completed by August 2020.

The complex will be comprised of both regular and suite-style dorm rooms.

The second phase will be similar in design to the first and will be located where Trembley Park stands. Despite initial plans to demolish Trembley Park following this academic year — in order to make room for Bridge West — it is now unclear when the apartment complex will shut down and construction of Bridge West Phase II will begin.

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“What many people don’t know is that we were doing a lot of work over the summer to install underground utilities that we need before the construction process can begin,” Fluck said. “As for the building itself, we are still waiting for the permits to be approved to build on the land.”

Fluck said there will be around 400 beds in the phase one building, as well as a fitness center and a cafe. The recreational aspects of the building will be available to all students, not just residents of the building.

SouthSide Commons

SouthSide Commons will serve as the first Lehigh-affiliated apartment complex available to upperclassmen.

There will be single, double, triple and quad apartments available. However, due to the recent housing crisis, many of these rooms are no longer available.

Despite this, Jordan Weintraub, '20, doesn't think the residence will be popular among juniors.

“I think even though the rooms will be ready for our class to live there, it's unlikely that many current juniors will live there next year since most of us have already signed leases for off-campus housing,” he said.

University architect Brett Stringfellow said he is excited about the concept as a transition between on- and off-campus living.

“It has an affiliation with Lehigh, but there's not a Lehigh presence within it, so there's (no) Gryphons — it's an independent building,” Stringfellow said. “It's also an option for students who don't want to move into a house on (East) Fifth Street or something of that nature.”

The project is expected to be complete in August 2019. The rooms will be available for students to move into next fall.

Brinker Loft Apartments

Brinker Loft Apartments will become another off-campus option for upperclassmen at Lehigh.

Jefferson-Werner LLC designed the complex, which is a converted storage facility in South Bethlehem. Unlike SouthSide Commons, it is not considered affiliated housing with the university.

Charles Jefferson, the founder of Jefferson-Werner LLC, said the vision of the project is to encourage people to interact with the surrounding community.

Sam Ruland, '21, will be able to live in the complex by the time she is an upperclassman. However, she is wary of the distance from the building to university classrooms. The apartments are located on the corner of Adams and East Fourth streets.

“Location is very important,” she said. “Living further away from campus makes it difficult for students like me without cars to get back and forth.”

Ruland said the fact that the building will be open to both Lehigh students as well as the Bethlehem community also deterred Ruland from considering the apartments as a housing option.

“When walking through the halls of a potential apartment building, I would hope to see my friends and peers, not strangers,” Ruland said.

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Path to Prominence

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The Brown and White is Lehigh University's student newspaper based in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The newspaper covers Lehigh University news and the surrounding Bethlehem area, and it aims to serve as a platform for conversation and idea exchange.

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