

Low-income housing foes now like it

Two neighbors who fought against past project see no problems now as they try to persuade others fighting new project at Ustick and Five Mile.

By Charles Etlinger
The Idaho Statesman

Anne Sims poured over microfilm in Boise City Hall in 1991, trying to find some law, some way to stop a low-income housing project planned for her Veterans Park neighborhood.

The retired bank employee, and the 40 neighbors she rallied, failed, and the 41-unit Davis Park Apartments opened that December by 29th and Gooding streets.

Now, as Boise Neighborhood Housing Services Inc. proposes another apartment complex in the West Bench, Sims had this message on Thursday for opponents:

"I hate to say it. No. I'm happy to say it: It's been no problem at all."

Residents of the Five Mile-Ustick Road area pounced on the 77-unit development — 57 of the units low-income — at a City Council hearing Tuesday night. The council will decide the project's fate May 18.

Sims and fellow Davis Park opposition leader Mike Daly say they know of no neighbors who still are rankled over the project.

These reformed "NIMBYS" — Not-In-My-Backyarders — say property values have gone up, traffic hasn't significantly worsened, and crime hasn't increased.

Boise police say crime incidents in the Veterans Park area actually dropped from 96 in 1991, to 73 in 1992.

But Gary Halverson, an opponent of the new venture, isn't comforted by the reception in Veterans Park.

The projects are in different kinds of neighborhoods with different traffic patterns, said Halverson, a sales manager for a car dealer.

"Our objection is purely logis-



Katherine Jones/The Idaho Statesman

Mike Daly was once a leading opponent of the Davis Park Apartments, low-income housing built in his neighborhood on 29th and Gooding streets. But the problems he anticipated haven't materialized.

tical," he said. "You can't even get on Five Mile the way it is now. We haven't factored in new commercial development plus the project. And there's the overcrowding of schools."

Daly, a golf cart store manager, maintains "there's no viable reason for them to oppose the pro-

ject. It will have minimum impact on their life-style. I predict that five years from now, they won't pay any attention to it."

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Before and after the low-income complex

Here are views of opponents of the Davis Park Apartments, before and after the low-income complex was built in 1991.

Anne Sims, 63, retired bank customer service representative

1991: "This particular project is far too extensive for the size of the property being used. Try to imagine this one block accommodating 150 to 200 people. To me this would be nothing more than a nice new 'ghetto.'"

Today: "I'm really amazed. The place is very well kept up. The kids have a playground in the middle. We've had no problem with a lot of cars parking on the street. It's no big deal at all."

Mike Daly, 40, golf cart shop manager

1991: "My personal concerns are the impact on the schools, any negative impact on my property values and impacts on the traffic. I also didn't like the size of project in relation to the single-family, single-level homes here."

Today: "It's a very nice looking project. It's very well maintained. The people who live there are very good. The construction minimized a 'big block' appearance. It has not had a negative impact on property values."

Jaime Simpson, 24, program supervisor for retarded adults

1991: "The presence of an unsightly complex paired with the increase in vehicular traffic will greatly reduce the aesthetic, seclusive nature of the area, leading to a reduction of property values and further deterioration of the neighborhood."

Today: "They haven't made as big an impact as I thought they would. They haven't really made any difference traffic-wise. As far as my house (two blocks away), it hasn't affected aesthetics, but when I drive over, it has."

Boise runs short on low-income housing

Plan to build 57 low-income units won't be enough to fill needs, city agency says.

By Charles Etlinger

The Idaho Statesman

Even if the City Council approves 57 low-income apartments in a West Bench project, Boise still will be an estimated 370 units short of affordable housing in 1994, according to city housing projections.

"Fifty-seven is a drop in the bucket for what they need, but it is something," Jeff Lake, assistant director of Boise Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc., said Thursday.

The non-profit corporation is sponsoring the project near Five Mile and Ustick roads, over the intense opposition of 500 neighbors over traffic and school crowding.

"We're not objecting to low-cost housing or the housing itself," said foe Gary Halverson.

Boise needs 500 new units of low-income housing annually, for the next five years, just to keep up with growth, according to the city's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS). Only half the 1993 goal is in the cards.

In the past five years, a total of 523 were on line — this year's target alone — with the help of federal subsidies.

They include the 41-unit Davis Park Apartments near Veteran's Park. It also was denounced by neighbors, but they generally accepted it after construction.

Neighbor Jaime Simpson re-

GROWTH

"I know how devastated and stressed I was when I needed to find something for my family."

Single mom Pamela Stevenson
Davis Park resident

mains opposed to Davis Park on principle, even though she acknowledges its impacts haven't been as feared.

"I don't think they should be intensifying the poor sections of the city by putting low-income housing into an already low-income neighborhood," she said.

"If they keep putting low-income houses in low-income neighborhoods, we're going to

get the big-city effect of poor neighborhoods and wealthy neighborhoods.

"In a city like Boise with a small-town atmosphere, we should spread it out."

To single mom Pamela Stevenson, Davis Park was a God-send.

She's 44, with two children at home, working two jobs as a secretary and caring for the elderly. She pays \$342 per month subsidized rent in the complex.

"I know how devastated and stressed I was when I needed to find something for my family," Stevenson said.

"It really bothers me that our community is so apprehensive about helping the working poor."