

Proposed development along 606 trail highlights tension over rising rents and home prices



A rendering of the planned development at 1750 N. Western Ave., as seen from The 606 trail looking west. (GW Properties)

By **Corilyn Shropshire**
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Juan Carlos Linares doesn't like to use the term "gentrification."

It's loaded, he said, with both positive and negative implications of what happens when an influx of affluent residents moves into new or rehabbed homes, pushing out less-wealthy residents.

Linares, the executive director of Latin United Community Housing Association, or Lucha, an advocacy group in Logan Square and Humboldt Park, prefers to call that process "the acceleration of real estate values" — and it's in full display in the neighborhoods along The 606 elevated trail.

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The latest development proposed near the 2.7-mile bike and pedestrian trail is a 127-unit apartment building at 1750 N. Western Ave. at the edge of the Logan Square neighborhood, expected to open in the fall of next year.

The seven-story building, which awaits zoning approval, will connect directly to The 606, which runs between Ridgeway and Ashland avenues.

Rents for the units, which will range from studios to three-bedroom apartments, are undecided, but 15 percent of them will be set aside for affordable housing, said Mitch Goltz, principal of developer GW Properties.

The building will also have 8,000 square feet of retail space along with 127 spaces for bicycles and 36 spots for cars. Goltz said the retail space in his building is ready for a small grocery, restaurants or a coffee shop, since “it would be a good place for people to meet along the trail.”

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Between when construction started on the trail in 2012 and 2016’s second quarter, single-family home prices west of Western Avenue rose 48.2 percent, according to data from the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University.

East of Western Avenue, home prices have increased less dramatically because the area was already flush with higher-income residents and higher-priced homes.

West of Western Avenue, the median household income between 2010 and 2014 — the most recent period for which data is available — was \$49,700, according to the housing institute. If no more than one-third of one’s income is to be spent on housing, some area rents that start at \$1,500 for a studio near the trail price current residents out.

Competition for apartments in the area is intense, given the low supply and high demand, particularly for affordable housing units, said Geoff Smith, executive director of the housing institute.

In a really competitive market, there are fewer rental units available, creating long waiting lists for those in need of more affordable apartments. “Most of the production of new housing is not accessible to moderate- and low-income people,” Smith said.

Linares said his group is “happy to see The 606.”

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said.

lding 45 scattered affordable apartment units in

Humboldt Park.

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