

Developments Along the Phoenix Light Rail Corridor

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by Jessica Driver

Phoenix, the fifth most populous city in the United States, with over 4 million people living in the ever expanding metropolitan area will receive a slew of new development projects. Centered around the valley's Metro Light Rail, these projects will include everything from affordable housing to a new children's hospital. The light rail which has recently connected much of the city's older establishments to innovative, urban businesses and lodgings will continue to do so in 2010 and beyond.

Located east of McClintock Drive in Tempe is Block 1949, a new contemporary student housing complex. Developed by JLB Tempe, LLC, Block 1949 will feature modern apartment living with plush amenities such as a state of the art fitness center, a media room complete with a plasma TV, an internet café, a coffee bar and a pool with an outdoor party deck. These one to four bedroom units are conveniently located near Tempe Marketplace, Arizona State University, Sun Devil Stadium and Mesa Community College. Thanks in large part to its position near the light rail, Block 1949 provides a modern, urban setting for students to live and study. Block 1949 is produced by Asset Campus Housing, Inc., an affiliate of the Houston-based Asset Plus Companies, a third party property management firm.

In addition to the student housing, a new 75-unit apartment community for persons who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing called Apache ASL Trails is under way on Apache Boulevard in Tempe near the light rail station 27. Developed by The Arizona Deaf Senior Citizens Coalition in conjunction with Cardinal Capital Management, Apache ASL Trails will mark the conception of low income housing for seniors 55 and older. These 1 and 2 bedroom units will feature design amenities appropriate for persons hard of hearing or deaf including flashing signals for the phone and doorbell, videophone technology, glare minimizing lighting, amplification systems for hearing aids and the staff will utilize American Sign Language as a method of communication.

Slated for a grand opening of March 27, 2010, Ryan House, a non-profit hospice care facility for children will be located at Merrell Street and First Avenue in Phoenix. Ryan House is named for Ryan Cottor, a 7-year-old boy diagnosed with a genetic motor-neuron disease currently defying a grim prognosis. Ryan House, which is partnered with Hospice of the Valley, St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center and the Junior League of Phoenix is meant to provide support and care for families facing illness.

Housing is one sector that seems to be booming along the light rail leaving many developers to take advantage of the central locale. Native American Connections is currently planning a new affordable housing community on Phoenix's Central Avenue. Developed by Pyatok Architects, Inc., these apartment style rentals will be adjacent to the light rail. Reminiscent of the Anasazi Pueblos of the Southwest, the complex features a large metal and glass sculpture by a Native American Artists with lots of space for natural lighting and ventilation to sweep throughout the building. This complex is purported to be completed sometime in 2010.

Lastly and perhaps most impressively downtown Phoenix is set to receive a brand new, multi-use destination for urban living, business and entertainment called CityScape. This 7-acre venture will provide high rising towers for offices, retail shops and housing between Central Avenue and Washington Street in Phoenix. The goal or vision of CityScape is to provide a center of activity for Phoenicians, bridging work, play and housing in one functional, urban setting. For example the office tower will provide approximately 600,000 square feet of office spaced located near the Metro Light Rail, all three major valley freeways and Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. The retail space will feature an upscale grocer and drug store and urban boutiques. As of April 2009 several Phoenix law firms have already signed leases with CityScape along with several restaurants and a coffee shop. In addition to the condominium style housing travelers could also potentially stay at Kimpton's Hotel Palomar, expected to be added into CityScape. CityScape was developed by Red

Development, a leasing and management company operating throughout the Southwest and Midwest. Ground breaking took place in October 2007 and the completion of Phase II is set for February 2011.

After so much expansion into cookie-cutter suburban housing and with the slow crawl of “urban sprawl” Phoenix is finally developing its true urban areas. Places where transportation meets the community are deserving of fresh ideas and developers and management companies are starting to see the light where it concerns the Metro Light Rail. With developments like the promising CityScape the future looks bright for metropolitan Phoenix, as bright as the afternoon sun that warms out sidewalks everyday.

Sources:

<http://www.cityscapephoenix.com/about.asp>

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