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Upgrades of WKU Greek housing continue

By DON SERGENT dsergent@bgdailynews.com 5 hrs ago

A yearslong effort to upgrade housing for Western Kentucky University's fraternities and sororities took another step forward Monday night.

The University District Review Committee – an offshoot of the City-County Planning Commission of Warren County – approved applications that advance the building of new houses for Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity and Alpha Omicron Pi sorority.

The approvals continue a process of replacing older fraternity and sorority houses.

“We started probably 12 years ago with the SAE (Sigma Alpha Epsilon) house,” said Charley Pride, WKU’s director of student activities. “Upgrades have been made to 13 houses now. It has been a steady process.”

Pride said the Greek organizations raise the money for the new houses through alumni donations or other contributions.

The latest two building projects are significant enhancements.

Alpha Omicron Pi moved out of a Normal Street house that could accommodate eight sorority members and will build a three-story, 8,665-square-foot house at 1438 Chestnut St. that will have room for 17. The 0.23-acre Chestnut Street property was home to an apartment complex that has been demolished.

The Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity is getting an upgrade from an aging building at 1415 College St. that was torn down in January.

“The other house dated back to 1905 and had been renovated several times,” said Lee Ross Dinwiddie, president of the Graf Studio architectural firm that designed the new building. “It was not salvageable.”

Now the 0.3428-acre site on College Street will be getting a three-story, 6,628-square-foot house that is expected to cost more than \$1 million to build. It will increase the fraternity house’s capacity from 11 residents to 19.

Dinwiddie said plans call for the new frat house to be completed by the spring of 2020.

These latest building projects come on the heels of another building project, this one for a new Delta Zeta sorority house on Chestnut Street. Pride said that project should be completed by August.

Pride said plans for a new Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity house at 1504 Chestnut St. will come before the University District Review Committee next month, nearly completing the long process of upgrading Greek housing.

“We’ll have only three fraternity houses that haven’t been upgraded,” he said. “Once you get started (with upgrades), there’s sort of a competition factor among the organizations.”

Although most of the university’s older Greek housing has now been upgraded, Pride isn’t necessarily approaching a finish line.

“By the time we get to the end (of the upgrades), it’s time to start over,” he said.

Don Sergent

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