

Construction begins on new WSU residence hall

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Winona State University will spend substantially less than it expected on its latest building project and may use the savings to build a parking ramp.

Construction has already begun on a new 400-bed residence hall on what's now a university parking lot at the corners of Huff and Mark streets.

The initial budget for the dorm was more than \$23 million, and bids came in at about \$18 million. Some of \$5 million difference will be used for construction upgrades, and WSU officials are contemplating using a portion for a parking ramp, said Kurt Lohide, vice president of finance.

The ramp would have to be a revenue-generating, student-parking space, because of the kind of bond the dorm is being funded by, he said.

A ramp may partially alleviate neighbors' concerns about parking, but it is unlikely to stop the spread of student rental homes into outlying neighborhoods because the new dorm isn't actually adding beds to the campus.

Two existing dorms, Richards and Conway, will become office space when the new dorm opens in 2010.

Enrollment has steadily increased in recent years, but the last time WSU added more student living space was the 2003-04 school year when it built the East Lake apartments and purchased the Tau Center.

Both Lohide and Winona Mayor Jerry Miller said it may be time for WSU, city and rental companies in town to meet to decide whether WSU should expand its dormitory capacity.

"I've been hearing from people in the community saying maybe it's time WSU could add more on-campus housing with parking," Miller said.



Construction workers begin putting up posts for a chain link fence Friday around the construction site for Winona State University's new residence hall. The residence hall is scheduled to be completed by ___. (Photo by Rory O'Driscoll/Winona Daily News)