

## Planning board says no to project design

**Riverfront Park residents disliked its "fortress" look. The zoning administrator will make the final call.**

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Denver's planning board has shot down the design of a senior adult community in downtown's Riverfront Park.

"There was overwhelming public testimony opposing the design," said Ellen Ittleson of the community planning and development agency.

Plans for the \$110 million Cosmopolitan Club proposed by Balfour Senior Living included a seven-story tower built 20 feet from the Promenade and Riverfront Tower condominium buildings. Residents likened the design of the project to a fortress and complained that it would not integrate residents of the Cosmopolitan Club into the rest of the neighborhood.

Balfour founder and chief executive Michael Schonbrun said he was surprised by Wednesday's decision because the plan already had been blessed by the Landmark Preservation Commission and the neighborhood's design-review board.

"There was obvious concern, but we didn't think it would rise to the level of overturning staff recommendation and questioning whether the zoning and PUD (planned unit development) were in place," he said.

The project now will be presented to zoning administrator Kent Strapko, who will make the final decision. If the administrator upholds the planning board's decision, Schonbrun said he isn't sure what his next steps will be. He could redesign the project or sell the land.

"If it doesn't work financially or we don't think we can get what is marketable, we'll have to consider those other options," he said.

Residents in the neighborhood support the concept of the project but not its design, said Chris Grasso, who was the first resident to move into the Promenade building when it opened in 2002.

"It needs to be integrated into the neighborhood," he said. "It can't be exclusionary. We want them to be part of our community, and we want to be part of their community."

Planning-board member Rich Delanoy, a commercial and residential real-estate broker, said he was concerned that public outreach on the part of the developer was inadequate.

"Had these homeowners formed registered neighborhood organizations, there would have been a requirement to inform them much earlier in the process," Delanoy said. "The developer did exactly what he was required to do, but the requirement was lacking."

Delanoy also is worried that residents who bought condos considered "affordable" under the city's inclusionary housing ordinance will have an even tougher time selling them because of the project's design.

"The value of those units is going to plummet, and you have to sell it to someone in your same category," he said. "When you bought it with a nice view and then it's gone, that's a real hardship to those folks."

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