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## MacKenzie House fills senior housing niche

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Many developers and homebuilders anticipate immense senior housing needs for the estimated 78.2 million baby boomers.

But MacKenzie House, a Denver-based diversified development company, aims at a different niche. It's building what it calls "residential campuses" for the "silent generation" -- the nearly 33 million people born between 1925 and 1945.

"The silent generation made their net worth through homeownership," said Don MacKenzie, president and CEO of MacKenzie House. "Being able to continue to have that is integral to their appreciation for life."

Many senior housing options don't allow residents to retain home ownership nor are there different levels of care within the same community, MacKenzie said. At the same time, the quality varies dramatically from public-subsidized senior housing to upscale retirement communities that require substantial entry fees but don't provide for fee simple ownership.

MacKenzie House and its branded MacKenzie Place retirement communities aim to fill the gap by incorporating different housing types within one development, MacKenzie said. The components include single-family, cottage-style homes with garages; one-, two- and three-bedroom rental



Ronald Vaughn, senior vice president; Don MacKenzie, president and CEO; and Don Gorsuch, vice president; at MacKenzie House in front of plans for its senior communities in Fort Collins and Colorado Springs.

apartments; an assisted-living facility; an Alzheimer's nursing facility; and other community buildings and open space.

Too many of the current options for both independent and assisted living were designed for what MacKenzie calls the "G.I. generation," those Americans born between 1901 and 1924, and sometimes referred to as the "greatest generation."

MacKenzie House relies on Elisabeth Borden, a Denver-based market researcher at the Highland Group, to help it better understand the subtle distinctions between America's aging populations, according to Don Gorsuch, MacKenzie House's vice president of lifestyle and sales.

"She is really the authority on what's happening in senior housing in Colorado," Gorsuch said.

Borden often suggests a 1992 book titled "Generations: The History of America's Future 1584 to 2069" to help clients understand the different wants and needs of aging Americans.

MacKenzie takes that kind of research seriously. In the past couple of years, he, along with several members of the MacKenzie House executive team, including Senior Vice President Ronald Vaughn, attended the Erickson School of Aging Studies at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County to learn more about the silent-generation demographic group.

Vaughn, who came to MacKenzie House after building Concordia on The Lakes -- a senior housing project in Littleton -- was amazed by some of the information gleaned from their training and individual research.

"Statistically, the average age [for someone looking for a senior housing product] is 80, and that's gone up a lot in the last decade because of better health care and preventative medicine. But 90 percent off those people are rejecting that product," Vaughn said. "They're rejecting it because they're not happy with what they see."

MacKenzie and Vaughn hope the silent generation will like what it sees at two MacKenzie Place retirement communities under construction in Fort Collins and Colorado Springs. Future residents -- some already have given deposits to live there -- will begin moving in by early summer 2007.

Though MacKenzie House is looking at three sites in the metro area to build a third MacKenzie Place, the company decided to try outside of Denver for several reasons. Fort Collins and Colorado Springs have earned reputations nationally as excellent cities for retirees. MacKenzie House also was able to locate premium urban infill development sites.

"Plus we were looking to be the only game in town," MacKenzie said.

While there are a variety of senior housing options in both cities, there are no "aging in place" campuses such as MacKenzie Place, he said. The "aging in place" concept provides

care-level transitions within the same neighborhood.

For instance, if the owner of a single-family home becomes ill and unable to care for himself, he can easily be moved to the assisted living facility. Sometimes single-family homeowners decide they want to sell their home, collect the equity and live at the MacKenzie Place apartments.

"We've been able to take a fresh approach," Vaughn said. "It's all about choice."

Choice is also built into the single-family home designs. Buyers pick from several floor plans, mostly on one level, that range from 1,300 square feet to 2,000 square feet. Prices range from the high \$200,000s to the low \$400,000s.

MacKenzie Place in Fort Collins was designed with a 5,000-square-foot community center after the MacKenzie House development team recognized its importance. "People in Fort Collins really enjoy the arts, and this is a place where they can have small productions," Gorsuch said.

The facility also can be used for weddings, meetings "or just a place to get a cup of coffee," he said.

Because MacKenzie House partners with Leisure Care, a senior housing management company based in Seattle, the list of amenities goes beyond conventional offerings such as swimming pools, fitness centers, meal programs and scheduled transportation.

They include the Brain Fitness Center for memory restoration; PrimeFit, a personal training program; and TLC, a travel agency, which arranges trips that include a staff person or other companions.

Although each community includes 24-hour security and emergency services, overall convenience is a key component of MacKenzie Place projects, most of which will be built on urban infill sites.

"We pick areas that are near shopping, parks and medical communities and that are near commuter routes so adult children can drop by after work," Gorsuch said.

While each community is planned and developed for maximum convenience and security, they're not gated -- an important

distinction from many retirement communities, Gorsuch said.

"We're of the philosophy that we're a resource to the community," Gorsuch said. "We don't want to be a community behind gates. We want to engage the community."

It's that philosophy MacKenzie hopes to bring to Denver soon, where only a small number of senior housing projects have the aging-in-place capabilities built within the community in an unobtrusive way.

"What we're doing is a little bit different from our competition," MacKenzie said. "We look like a neighborhood you'd expect to see in Stapleton or Lowry. No one has made a commitment to the residential aspect of the community like we have."

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