

# The Colorado Springs **Business Journal**

---

September 8, 2006

## **Retirees new focus of housing developers**

**By Becky Hurley**  
CSBJ

Mackenzie House offers living options including apartments and independent living cottages



For years, new home community marketers have focused on young families, single and married professionals, move-up candidates and luxury buyers. But times are changing.

Colorado Springs-based Dunn & Associates and Denver-based MacKenzie House have their sights set on a population which is expected to double from today's 78,000 to 153,000 in the next 15 years: El Paso County's aging baby boomers, according to Mike Decker, of Pikes Peak Area Agency on Aging.

Dr. Sara Honn Qualls, director of the Gerontology Center and Kraemer Family Professor of Aging Studies at University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, said Colorado is the third-fastest-growing senior population in the country.

"We've been known for years as a baby boomer state," she said. "Now time is catching up with us so we will be hit harder than others with large increases in our elder population."

On top of that, military sources say that Colorado Springs is among the armed forces' top three retirement destinations, returning thousands of future residents to the Pikes Peak region where they once served.

The Palisades at Broadmoor Park and MacKenzie Place at Union are designed to serve different segments of the senior market, but both are interested in creating a higher quality of life and providing more recreational and living options than the county's 58 assisted living and numerous independent living centers offer.

Geographically, the two centers differ a great deal.

The Palisades is located in an affluent southwest neighborhood, surrounded by single-family homes, the Cheyenne Montaña Shopping Center and within

minutes of Highway 115 and Interstate 25, off Broadmoor Bluffs and Concerto drives.

MacKenzie Place is situated at the crossroads of two major thoroughfares, Union Boulevard and Fillmore Street, which connect the city's central and northern neighborhoods.

Jeff Dunn, a 35-year veteran of the senior housing industry, sees little product available for older residents who are seeking upscale amenities in a safe, convenient setting, near family and friends on the city's southwest side.

The Palisades' four-acre site will include eight independent living patio homes, a three-story independent-living complex for 42 residents and 59 assisted-living residential buildings, as well as an administrative and model home marketing center.

Dunn also sees an opportunity to offer social, and life-long learning resources through a partnership with the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

"Our goal is to set a new standard of excellence incorporating three inventive programs – wellness, cognitive fitness and an on-site health clinic managed by the UCCS Beth-El College of Nursing," he said.

UCCS Chancellor Pam Shockley-Zalabak calls the partnership "the first of its kind in the country," and sees the program as a model for other communities across the country.

In return for its university's collaboration with The Palisades, Dunn has pledged 1 percent of gross proceeds to the university.

The program is designed to keep residents active as they age through educational and fitness classes, swimming, gardening, golf or other activities.

“This community represents what I always hoped senior living would be,” Dunn said.

Don MacKenzie, founder of MacKenzie House, likewise has found the market wanting, especially when it comes to the recreational side of senior housing.

In addition to its 65 cottages, 95 independent living units, 48 assisted living apartments and 26 Alzheimer-qualified residences, MacKenzie Place will feature social and recreational options through its management company, Leisure Care. The list includes bus trips to Denver museums and performing arts activities, worldwide travel (complete with chaperones to accompany those with special needs), faith-based and hobbyist groups, and continuing education opportunities.

MacKenzie Place also will offer skilled nursing facilities for those in need of physical rehabilitation after surgery or with serious illness.

“After looking at the existing senior housing market, my ‘aha’ moment came when I realized today’s older citizens aren’t looking for old-fashioned communal living with all its limitations,” MacKenzie said. “They’re looking for quality of life, for fun and for a chance to connect with the world around them. That’s what we want to offer.”

*Becky.Hurley@csbj.com*