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## The Slice

NEWS

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# Senior center plan may pass

BY GINA GRATE  
The Slice

A senior living campus is slated for construction in January on a vacant parcel bordered by Fillmore Street, Union Boulevard and Templeton Gap Road.

The Colorado Springs Planning Commission unanimously approved Englewood-based MacKenzie House's request to rezone the 17-acre site from single family residential to planned unit development.

The zone change request went to City Council on Tuesday. As of press time, the council had not made a decision.

MacKenzie House plans a transitional senior living campus that will allow seniors to move from independent living to assisted living on the same campus, as needed.

Two four-story apartment buildings would

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– Tim Yeager, MacKenzie House vice president

house a mix of independent, special care and assisted living apartments. About 60 independent living cottages would be connected by walking paths.

To make life easier for campus

residents, amenities would include grounds and exterior cottage maintenance, repair and concierge services, an emergency call system and transportation to and from doctor appointments and grocery stores.

Also planned are a hair salon, gym, swimming pool, bistro and dining hall.

People in their retirement years can become

isolated when living on their own, especially if their families live far away, said the company's vice president Tim Yeager.

“What we're trying to do is go the other direction and provide them an opportunity for socialization and lots of activities, a chance to mingle with their peer group,” he said. “That's the driving force behind this whole project. A lot of studies have found when people move into communities like this, their health improves, they feel much better, they become stronger on the basis of interacting with folks their own age.”

Construction could begin on the \$55 million project in January.

Some residents in the adjacent Kitty Hawk neighborhood aren't thrilled that hundreds of people may soon be moving in next door.

This spring, about 55 neighbors met with the developer and planners to discuss the development and their concerns – particularly fears that traffic would dramatically increase on Melissa Drive, the only road providing access to the senior living campus.

### About MacKenzie House

- Englewood-based MacKenzie House is planning senior living communities in Colorado Springs and Fort Collins, based on similar community designs on the East Coast.

- The proposed Colorado Springs campus is 17 acres at the southwest corner of Fillmore Street and Union Boulevard.

- Dwelling units: 65 independent living cottages; 95 independent living apartments; 26 special care units; 48 assisted living apartments.

- Amenities include: dining hall, hair salon, gym, swimming pool, bistro, concierge and emergency services, physical therapy center, repair and maintenance.

- Construction on the \$55 million project could begin in January, if City Council approves rezoning the parcel to planned unit development.

# SENIOR: Construction may start in January

However, the planning department refused to give developers other access points on Fillmore or Templeton Gap, arguing that cars turning in and out of the campus from those streets would block traffic flow, Yeager said.

Other neighbors didn't like the apartment buildings' four-story design and requested that it be reduced to two stories.

"I think that no one in this immediate vicinity wanted to have a four-story building," said Vivian Olsen, who spoke in opposition at the planning meeting. She moved into her house in 1976 and, along with her husband, has fought several other proposed developments for the site, including a shopping center.

"They thought two stories should be high enough. No one wanted the density that they are planning for that tract of land," she said.

In response, MacKenzie House tweaked its design for the four-story buildings, Yeager said.

"Initially, it was straight up four stories," he said. "We stepped it back so it's just two stories and then the building moves back significantly, and then it goes up to the third and fourth floors from there to give it a lower scale feel."

The developers plan to add plants to some of the lower roofs and incorporate stucco, wood trim and stone to ensure the building doesn't have a stark, boxy look that might clash with the surrounding neighborhood.

"We really tried to be proactive and do a lot of things that will make it a good neighbor and a nice asset to that neighborhood," Yeager said.

One reason the company kept the buildings four stories is to reduce the amount of walking senior resi-

dents would have to do to get around the campus, he said.

"We think it's a real good use of this particular property," said city planner Rick O'Connor. "The existing zoning (single family residential) is probably an inappropriate zoning for that particular property. Also the greatest impact is the largest building and that largest building is the furthest away from any of the single family residences."

"We thought the density and the number of people that were going to be living and occupying the area, in terms of cottages and apartments there, might pose a problem," said neighborhood resident David Vasquez, who voiced concerns at a June planning commission meeting. "But apparently the city and the traffic people had done their homework, I guess, and they thought it wouldn't be a problem."

Although the campus will be open to anyone 55 and older, Don Gorsuch of MacKenzie House said at the planning commission meeting that the average resident's age would be 75.

Because of the residents' ages and on-campus activities, traffic on Melissa Drive will not dramatically increase, a traffic study showed.

Neighbors don't plan to fight the proposal, Olsen and Vasquez said.

"People in the neighborhood are just accepting that it's coming and can't do anything else about it," Olsen said.

"It's not that the people that were at the meeting were against the project," Vasquez said. "We thought it was presented nicely and they did a good job. It just seemed like the number of units and the height of the building were the main concerns."

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