

# Rocky Mountain News

To print this page, select **File** then **Print** from your browser

URL: [http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/real\\_estate/article/0,1299,DRMN\\_414\\_4772957,00.html](http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/real_estate/article/0,1299,DRMN_414_4772957,00.html)

## Neighbors' wish list overlooked

Jefferson Park seeks condos, not rentals, at Baby Doe's site

By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News

June 14, 2006

A battle is raging between a giant California real estate company and a tiny northwest Denver neighborhood over plans for a 7-acre site near Invesco Field.

A.G. Spanos Co., headed by San Diego Chargers owner Alex Spanos, wants to build a 357-unit apartment development on the site of the shuttered Baby Doe's and Chili Pepper restaurants atop a hill at West 23rd Avenue and Interstate 25. But residents of the Jefferson Park neighborhood want condos and retail.

The proposed Denver Overlook Apartments would drive up the number of rentals in the neighborhood to about 95 percent from 80 percent, said resident Brad Evans, a Keller-Williams real estate agent.

Evans said he and other residents of the small neighborhood are locked in a "David vs. Goliath" struggle against Spanos.

"We're getting a development that no one in Jefferson Park can embrace, (but) most residents feel like it's inevitable," Evans said. "We've tried to make our points known, that affordable housing, commercial and for-sale units are what need to be put here."

He and other neighbors also contend the Spanos plan for Denver Overlook is in "direct opposition" to the Jefferson Park neighborhood plan recently adopted by the City Council.

The neighborhood, which has about 2,200 residents, has even had an architect come up with a plan that is predominantly for-sale units as well as retail.

But Bruce O'Donnell, who represents Spanos in Denver, said the company is bending over backward to accommodate the neighborhood on most points.

O'Donnell, principal of Starboard Realty Group, said Spanos has agreed to most of the neighborhood's wish list, except for building for-sale and affordable housing.

Those are the most important neighborhood issues, Evans and others say.

Spanos is an apartment builder, not a condo developer, O'Donnell said, so it can't acquiesce on that request.

O'Donnell said the city's neighborhood plan sees the Baby Doe's site as an ideal location for high-density multifamily housing that can either be rental apartments or for-sale condos.

"Also, these will be luxury units," O'Donnell said. "One thing the Jefferson Park neighborhood plan calls for is more diversity in its housing stock. There are no luxury apartments in Jefferson Park's neighborhood plan."

Also, the units will be constructed so they could easily be turned into for-sale condos, he said.

David Zucker, who is widely praised by the neighborhood for his two condo developments in Jefferson Park, said as a "property rights guy," he respects Spanos for sticking to his guns. On the other hand, he said he thinks with a development this size Spanos could be more sensitive to the neighborhood's concerns.

Evans said he agrees with urban planner Ken Schroepfel, who summed up the situation on his [Denverinfill.com](http://denverinfill.com) blog.

"The Baby Doe's site is special," Schroepfel, an urban planner with the Matrix Design Group, wrote. "It offers a sweeping panorama of not only downtown but (also) of southeast Denver all the way to the Tech Center. You can just about see Kansas from there. The

Jefferson Park neighborhood deserves to have this site be developed with as much quality, sensitivity, creativity and diversity as if it were in Cherry Creek North or next to the Millennium Bridge."

Copyright 2006, Rocky Mountain News. All Rights Reserved.