



Wraps are off proposal for unusual building

Members of review board call for more refinement of plan

By John Rebchook

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Developer Buzz Geller on Thursday unveiled drawings of his proposed \$300 million residential and office tower along Speer Boulevard and Larimer Street.

Geller and architect Curt Fentress say the 33-story building would be unique in Denver.

The tower would have 33 units starting at about \$1,000 per square foot, with the possibility of the penthouse commanding about \$2,000 per square foot.

With an average size of 7,500 square feet, the typical unit could cost \$7.5 million. The penthouse unit could cost \$25 million.

"These are for someone who is downsizing from a 30,000-square-foot home in Cherry Hills, or a star hockey player, the quarterback of the Denver Broncos, a big-time basketball player, or a CEO of a big corporation - not you or me," Fentress said following the meeting of the Lower Downtown Design Review Board.

Members of the board agreed that they had never seen anything like the green and white glass building, where numerous balconies jut out like shards. Some board members said they liked how the building has evolved, but they made no final decision and called for the plan to be refined more. They said they wanted it to appear "lighter, more slender, more featherlike."

Dee Chirafisi, an owner of Kentwood City Properties, at one point held up two drawings of Bell Tower, saying she liked the way it looked from one perspective, but from another angle it appeared too massive.

Geller said he thought he had accomplished what the board had asked at the last meeting and was "somewhat frustrated" that they didn't give him a green light.

He said what board members are calling for would necessitate building more of a typical box, and he wouldn't be able to command the prices of a unique tower.

"The bottom line is that this has to make money, even if it is only a nickel," Geller told Tyler Gibbs, a city planner, after the meeting. "If I'm going to just stack the floors on top of each other, it's going to be like what Great Gulf planned or Brooks Tower."

Geller said he could revert to an option that would cover the site with two relatively low-rise buildings and lose a park.

Fentress, who designed Denver International Airport and the Colorado Convention Center, said he has run into initial resistance of his designs in the past.

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