

BRA REJECTS W. ROXBURY CONDO PROPOSAL AS 'RIDICULOUS'

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The Boston Redevelopment Authority yesterday rejected as too large a proposed 1,119-unit condominium complex for senior citizens on the West Roxbury-Brookline border. The proposal, which featured a 17-story tower, would have been the largest building in West Roxbury.

Linda Bourque, the **BRA's** assistant director of neighborhood planning and zoning, said Brookline developer Edward Zuker's proposal was totally out of scale with the character of the neighborhood.

"It's too ridiculous to even review. The proposal has no relationship with what is allowed by law and what would be an acceptable proposal," Bourque said, noting that zoning laws prohibit the building of condominiums on part of the site and that the proposed number of units is 10 times the allowable size.

Bourque said that the site could adequately support 50-55 single-family homes and 100,000 feet of commercial space, but she contended that accommodating Zuker's proposal would require a series of zoning variances.

The site off the VFW Parkway was purchased in March 1986 along with the adjacent property -- **Hancock Village**, 789 town houses and a small shopping center -- and is larger than Boston Common.

The proposed complex, **Hancock Woods** -- which was to be built on six of the site's 58 acres, with walking trails, a swimming pool, tennis courts and 24-hour medical and security services -- was expected to cost \$220 million and take anywhere from 18 months to 5 years to complete, according to Zuker.

Zuker, who said he envisions the complex as a place for "active seniors," said he has targeted people over 55 who had owned homes for more than 20 years, had paid off their mortgages and whose children had left home.

Neighborhood residents expressed concerns about the size of the project and the impact it would have on traffic, according to Donald Gillis, director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services.

"We feel strongly that this is not a proposal we can take seriously," Bourque said. "When there is a realistic proposal we will be glad to look at it."

But Zuker says the real issue behind his project -- affordable senior housing -- has been ignored. "The tower and units have clouded the issue," said Zuker.

Zuker said he was told by the **BRA** that he was out of touch with the neighborhood and has lost its trust. "They thought I was trying to push something down their throats," Zuker said.

Neighbors complained that the large size of the tower would have damaged the community's landscape. Zuker offered to subject his proposal to a stringent review process normally used for downtown Boston buildings, which would have taken 6-18 months.

But Zuker, who said he has conducted aerial surveys, disputes contentions that it would damage the neighborhood's landscape, noting that the site would have been 500 feet back from the parkway and hidden by trees.

Michael and Jeanne Ford, who have lived across from the site on Garnet Road for 15 years, said the proposed complex would worsen already hazardous traffic conditions.

"Basically, they are trying to take the neighborhood out of the neighborhood, and make it into a city," Michael Ford said.

Zuker said the project would create an additional 3,600 car trips a day in the vicinity, but would not cause major traffic problems.

He said he plans to scale down the project and see what the neighborhood wants. "I think with input from the task force, we'll come out OK," Zuker said. KIRBY ;06/08
NIGRO ;06/15,10:29WESTRO15 Caption: PHOTO Globe photos/Carlos Mantilla Batlle / Jeanne and Michael Ford of West Roxbury live across from the site of a 1,119-unit condominium complex for senior citizens that was proposed by developer Edward Zuker (left).