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Condo tower proposed for Cherokee Triangle

It would be the second-tallest building in Highlands

By Alex Davis

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A 17-story condominium tower would be added to the skyline of the Cherokee Triangle at Willow and Baringer avenues under a plan by developer Kevin Cogan.

The tower, called Willow Grande, would require the demolition of the Bordeaux Apartments, a 22-unit complex built in 1965 that Cogan's company, Jefferson Development Group, bought in October 2006 for \$2 million.

Plans for the tower were submitted last week to Louisville metro government. Prices for the condominiums will range from \$750,000 to \$1.7 million.

Willow Grande would be the second-tallest building in the Highlands after 1400 Willow, which has 20 floors and sits two blocks away. A zoning change and an architectural review must take place before the tower can be built.

Cogan said yesterday that he expects the approval process to take about six months. His company will meet with neighbors and Bordeaux tenants in the next two to three weeks, he said.

Cogan said he envisions many buyers coming from Louisville suburbs: "They want to come in. Downtown might be a little too much of a jump into the pond. The Highlands is a good halfway" point.

After living at the Bordeaux for the last two years, 87-year-old Nicole Thomas said she wouldn't be surprised if the property was torn down. Lights are rarely fixed, she said, some windows aren't cleaned, and leaves and mud are piled up near the garage.

"It upsets me, because I don't like to move," said Thomas, whose rent is \$790 a month.

Cogan said Jefferson Development Group will offer Bordeaux tenants places to live in its other Highlands rental properties.

Since the company bought the building, he said, the air-conditioning units and the much of the roof have been replaced. Most of the tenants are on month-to-month leases but the 18-month construction process won't start until early next year, Cogan said.

The first step in the approval process for Willow Grande could come as soon as late May, in a meeting of the neighborhood's architectural review committee, which is part of the Metro Landmarks Commission.

Process not quick

Dave Marchal, the city's urban design supervisor and the lead staff member for the Landmarks Commission, said all of the necessary approvals would probably take until late this year. The zoning change, to accommodate more density, must be approved by the city's Planning Commission and the Metro Council.

Willow Grande is being designed by Joseph & Joseph Architects. Merrill Moter, a principal with the firm, said the building will have a brick exterior, and be similar to The Dartmouth, which is across Baringer Avenue and has 11 stories. Sketches of Willow Grande submitted to metro government show two dozen condos ranging in size from 2,400 to more than 4,000 square feet.

The developers also would move a 3,000-square-foot brick home at 1426 Willow Ave. to the rear of the property to make way for the tower. Cogan's company bought the home a year ago for \$525,000.

Jefferson Development also built the nearby Park Grande luxury condominiums, and the company has been trying unsuccessfully to build a condo project at the Aquarius Apartments at 1051 Cherokee Road.

John Downard, president of the Cherokee Triangle Association, said he was reserving judgment on Willow Grande, but he predicted it might have a better chance than the Aquarius condos because the new site is surrounded by taller buildings, and it sits on a corner.

A looming 17-story tower might take away the afternoon sun for some neighbors, said Jim Beckett, a retired attorney who has lived with his wife Patricia at 1430 Willow Ave. since 1977. But he said the project also could raise property values.

"I have mixed emotions about it," Beckett said. "If they end up with 17 stories, it would be a little off putting."

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