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RedPeak honors history and Evan Lichtenfels with One City Block

by John Rebchook

One City Block, under construction in Denver's Uptown neighborhood, is being built with all of the modern amenities expected in an urban apartment community.

At the same time, the 302-unit, four-building property acknowledges Denver's history with its design, naming each building after a park and even the way the buildings relate to each other.

"Uptown is a neighborhood that evolved over time and has taken a classic urban form and that is how we've approached One City Block," said Mike Zoellner, president and CEO of RedPeak Properties, the developer of the community.

"I really don't know of another project like it," Zoellner said. "We really want it to reflect the character and charm of the neighborhood."

On a personal level, it also holds incredible significance to Zoellner because Evan Lichtenfels, RedPeak's development director, had been working tirelessly on the project, earning praise from City Councilman Albus Brooks and members of neighborhood associations.

Lichtenfels gave his last interview to the Colorado Real Estate Journal on One City Block days before he tragically and unexpectedly died at age 35.

"We are just beginning to discuss how to commemorate Evan's many contributions to the project," Zoellner said.

"His leadership and contributions were significant," he said. "There is a big part of him in this community."

One City Block, in the heart of Uptown, is on 2.44 acres bordered by East 18th and 19th avenues and Pennsylvania and Logan streets.

The architecture of the buildings, each named after a city park, looks back to the area's history by picking up architectural cues from prominent architects, such as Frank Edbrooke and Jacques Benedict.

It looks to the future with its sustainable construction, expected to earn it a Silver LEED certification.

The first phase is scheduled to open in August.

"Part of the design challenge from the beginning is we wanted to embrace what Edbrooke and other architects did in the past, while looking to the future with all of the modern amenities and features that today's residents expect," Zoellner said.

He hired Davis Partnership to design it.

"We felt like Davis Partnership really picked up on that," Zoellner said.

Edbrooke has been described as the "dean of Denver architects" for designing a number of iconic buildings, including the Brown Palace, Oxford Hotel and Tabor Grand Opera House.

Benedict also put his stamp on a number of homes and buildings in Denver and Littleton, from the Sports Castle owned by the Sports Authority to the Woodbury Branch Library building. He even built the boathouse at Washington Park in 1913, personifying the "City Beautiful" era of Denver.

"We named each of our four buildings after four different parks – the Benedict, Congress, Washington and Commons," Zoellner.

Even the spacing of the buildings from each other was by design to reflect historic distances between buildings in Capitol Hill and Uptown, Lichtenfels said.

"The design of this is very



A construction shot of One City Block shows skyline views.

intentional," Lichtenfels said.

"A lot of buildings constructed in Uptown and Capitol Hill were U-shaped buildings with shared courtyards," he explained.

"The idea at One City Block was to create individual buildings with very distinctive architecture in a way that would create a smaller sense of community within each building, as opposed to being just another 300-unit project," he said.

Brooks, the day after Lichtenfels died in mid-May, said he is extremely pleased with the way One City Block is shaping up and said a lot of that is owed to Lichtenfels, someone he considered not just a developer, but a friend.

"Evan always cared about the community," Brooks said. "He always did the right thing. He was one of the good guys."

Lichtenfels said it was a pleasure working with city and the neighborhood associations, such as Capitol Hill United Neighborhood and others.

"The neighbors actually wanted us to double the height," Zoellner said.

"They wanted us to go to

10 stories, but we thought five stories would be more appropriate for that site and a better fit for the neighborhood," Zoellner said.

Zoning allows up to 12 stories, he said.

"Selfishly, we also didn't want it to compete with our 1600 Glenarm high-rise," he said.

"We often walk from Glenarm to this site," he said. "It really is an easy walk to downtown. It also is an easy walk to the nearby hospital district. We expect we will get a lot of people who work in the hospitals."

Zoellner said all of the design and architectural details probably added another 5 percent to 10 percent to the \$65 million development.

It's worth it, he said.

"We think we are going to create an environment where people will pay more in rent and stay longer," Zoellner said.

"Every project we build is meant to not only fit in well with its surroundings, but contribute to and enhance the area as a whole," said Zoellner. "One City Block will not only meet, but will surpass, that goal."▲