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Phoenix City Council votes unanimously to approve controversial \$85M condo tower



Phoenix Country Club Residences - South East Corner View

SUNBELT HOLDINGS collectV

A rendering a new condominium project that will be built on the campus of the Phoenix Country Club at Seventh Street and Thomas Road.

PROVIDED BY WITHEY MORRIS



By Angela Gonzales Senior Reporter, Phoenix Business Journal

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Sunbelt Holdings

Scottsdale, AZ

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A controversial condominium tower four years in the making has received unanimous approval from the Phoenix City Council.

At a virtual zoning hearing that lasted about two hours on May 6, Council gave the green light to Scottsdale-based [Sunbelt Holdings Inc.](#) to build an \$85 million condominium on what currently is a parking lot at Phoenix Country Club at the northeast corner of Seventh Street and Thomas Road.

Over the past four years, the project has had seven public hearings and roughly 20 private neighborhood meetings, said [Jason Morris](#), a partner for Withey Morris PLC and zoning attorney representing Sunbelt Holdings on the case.

In addition to a litany of neighbors providing public comment at the virtual meeting both for and against the project, Council also received about 114 letters of support, Morris said.



Jason Morris, partner at Withey Morris PLC law firm in Phoenix.

PROVIDED BY WITHEY MORRIS

The turning point for opposing neighbors was understanding the significant and necessary economic injection of \$85 million this project will bring to this area, he said.

Called The Residences at the Phoenix Country Club, the condo tower will be 110 feet tall and have 125 units.

It originally started at 164 feet, but after an outcry from neighbors who chanted "height is blight," John Graham, president and CEO of Sunbelt Holdings, agreed to limit the height to 110 feet.

The first two levels will be a podium with an amenity deck, topped by seven more floors for a total of nine floors, Morris said.

In his 35 years of real estate development, Graham had said he has never faced such a contentious rezoning case.

"I have certainly gotten my fair share of blowback," he told the Business Journal in March 2019 when he agreed to lower the height. "In this business, you have to be diplomatic and resilient."

It took a lot of negotiation on both sides to get the project done, Morris said.

Because stay-at-home orders during the Covid-19 pandemic could impact how long it takes for the city to work through the planning process, it's too early to determine exactly when construction will begin, he said.

"Typically, it would be nine to 12 months before there were able to move any dirt," he said.

The new condominium will provide an opportunity for the

Phoenix Country Club to recruit new members, he said.

Membership for the club has been going down over the past few years.

"But what you're seeing now is an effort by all the country clubs to bring in new young families that can grow with the country club," Morris said. "There will be a relationship between the condo owner and the club. You can imagine it was a huge motivating factor for the country club because of the potential for membership expansion."

Thinking about the project, Morris said he could imagine living there.

"The idea of being able to walk out of your front door to every amenity the country club has is very attractive," he said.

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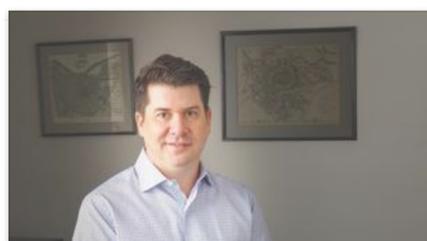
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