

Fort Collins' River Front Project Sparks Controversy

By [Emily Boyer](#) and Molly Armbrister

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A Fort Collins software company is planning a new headquarters near the Cache la Poudre River, but the project is more than an office building and has already sparked some controversy.

KUNC's Emily Boyer spoke with Molly Armbrister a reporter with the Northern Colorado Business Report.

Boyer: So let's start with the basics – what is this project all about?

Armbrister: Well, [Encompass Technologies](#), a software company that serves the beverage distribution industry. Encompass has outgrown its current headquarters and now wants to build a \$9-million, four-story, terraced building on the riverfront to serve as the company's new headquarters.

The project is called Block One and also included 12 apartments, a restaurant and additional office space.

Boyer: Why the name Block One?

Armbrister: The name is a tip of the hat to the historical roots of the land on which they want to build. The property is located very near the river. And that parcel of land is actually designated as "Block One" in the original plat of the City of Fort Collins.

Boyer: Why was Encompass drawn to building so close to the river?

Armbrister: The developers' intent is for the river to be visible from the dining room in the restaurant, something that you can't find anywhere else in the city. It's also possible that the apartments will draw tenants who want to live with a view of the river.

Encompass feels that Fort Collins should be able to boast a restaurant on the river, just like many other river cities nationwide.

Boyer: So this buildings proximity to the river will be something unique for Fort Collins?

Armbrister: Yes. Most of the City of Fort Collins requires a 300-foot buffer between the river and any development. But this piece of land happens to be within what the city calls the River Redevelopment District, an area that in effect allows redevelopment to take place closer to the river.

Boyer: Are there any special building requirement in place for the River Redevelopment District?

Armbrister: Primarily builders need to preserve views and riverbanks. In the case of Block One, the plans include

steps aimed at striking a balance between the environment and development. So we're talking about trees, open meadow areas and shrubs of native species.

Boyer: Now considering the close proximity of this project to the river, are there any environmental groups expressing concerns at the stage in the process?

Armbrister: Absolutely. [Save the Poudre](#) says the plans appear to violate a couple sections of the land-use code and that the building will be too close to the Poudre. The developers submitted an ecological impact study that Save the Poudre considers to be "completely inadequate."

Boyer: Any word yet at what if any action Save the Poudre is planning in an effort to stop the Block One project?

Armbrister: It's too soon to say. A Save the Poudre official said the group is waiting until more final plans have been submitted before it decides on what's next. They should know soon. Encompass is scheduled to go before the Downtown Development Authority today.

[Molly Armbrister](#) is a reporter at the [Northern Colorado Business Report](#).