

Letters to the Editor
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Over their heads

EDITOR: Observers of the Santa Rosa Planning Commission meeting today may sense the City Council's White House site dream turning into a white elephant nightmare. First, a building that started at "up to 10 stories" has already ballooned to 12, and the next proposal is 14. No wonder representatives of the city's three most important boards have advised rethinking height.

Second, the latest drawings, especially of high-rise No. 2, The Rises, are positively Stalinesque. The profit drive is trumping city guidelines specifying "superior design." Third, construction costs are skyrocketing; and fourth, the California condominium market is tanking. The developers won't likely shave profits. Instead they will do things like stop construction after the first phase to wait years for better conditions, seek subsidies (remember Simon and Coddington) or convert condos to offices.

Finally, having spurned an environmental impact report, the city still has its head in the sand on the enormous increase in traffic from four behemoth buildings along two blocks of Third Street. This City Council may smugly say it's all the developer's problem, but in real life the council's in too deep to walk away. It has a tiger by the tail.

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