

**Letter to the Editor: openforum@dailycamera.com
Daily Camera (Boulder, Colo.)**

RE: “Charting a new course for the planning board?” from Jan. 26, 2009

The American Institute of Architects, Colorado North Chapter (AIA Colorado North), was disheartened by several statements in the “Charting a new course...” article appeared in the Jan. 26 issue of the *Daily Camera*.

Specifically, AIA Colorado North is responding to the statements, “Critics charge that the planning board has become dominated by...architects...technical experts who see things from their profession’s point of view while ignoring concerns that neighbors of large, four-story projects might bring to the table,” and “City Councilwoman Crystal Gray said worries if an architect or builder can see the big picture are valid.”

By this same logic, doctors serving on a public health board also have a conflict of interest, as would ecologists that serve on the parks and recreation or open space board. In fact, the technical aspects of the planning and zoning code are extremely complex and an architect’s professional training makes them uniquely qualified to decipher and understand the intent and details of the code.

If there was an actual conflict of interest due to influence or business involvement, any planning board member, including an architect, would be bound to recuse themselves from the proceedings.

Architects spend their lives studying how to best shape the built environment, while considering the health, safety and welfare of the public. While multiple perspectives are useful and appropriate on the planning board, it is inaccurate to assume an architect has any particular perspective other than what is generally in the best interest of citizens of a community.

AIA architects are further bound by a national Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct (see www.aia.org for more information). This code ensures that AIA architects are dedicated to the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and competence. In fact other planning board members may not be held to similar standards.

Everyone who sits on a planning board should have the community’s interests in mind and use their experience and/or technical expertise as an asset. The planning board should be concerned most about picking the best person for the job, regardless of one’s profession. It’s not about who is right or wrong for the position, it’s about effectiveness.

Sincerely,
Whitney Churchill on behalf of
AIA Colorado North 2009 Board of Directors