

## Mayor wants to fight OMB

**Review agency's decision to allow large condo developments in the Queen Triangle will destroy arts community, says mayor as he seeks council backing for appeal bid**

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CITY HALL BUREAU

Mayor David Miller wants to fight the Ontario Municipal Board over a decision to allow large condominium developments in the Queen West Triangle.

Miller will seek council's support to have city staff "pursue all available options" to overturn an OMB ruling that critics say could lead to over-development and displace artists working in the neighbourhood. The ruling was made over the objections of residents, city planners and Toronto politicians.

The provincial development review agency okayed condos in the stretch of Queen St. west of Dovercourt Rd. Among the structures to be demolished is 48 Abell Ave., an industrial building converted to artists' studios and homes.

"It's a jobs issue," said Jane Farrow, chair of Active 18, a community group that proposed alternatives. "If you take all the jobs out of Toronto, that's a big problem. I'm just so happy the city is taking a stand on it."

The Queen West Triangle is a distinctive area featuring galleries, studios, storefronts, Victorian buildings and old industrial space. It is considered ready for growth and the city wants to focus on protecting the "creative industries," with a modest proposal that included some residential development, mainly in low-rise buildings.

To fight the OMB decision the city can appeal to the Ontario cabinet, ask the OMB to review its decision or appeal to the Divisional Court on points of law, said Councillor Adam Giambrone, whose ward includes the Triangle district.

The OMB, an appeal agency of the provincial government, has been sharply criticized for siding too often with developers. The city is studying the possibility of setting up its own land-use appeal board to better control the development goals of the city and its residents.

Miller's motion to pursue all options, seconded by Giambrone, will be voted on by city council at its meeting next week. Giambrone (Ward 18, Davenport) said the arts sector is one of the city's largest employers.

"Our concern is we wanted to act in this case to protect the cultural sector," Giambrone said. "That area has the fourth or fifth highest concentrations of artists in the country."

Giambrone said alternatives had been proposed by Active 18 members who call themselves YIMBYs (Yes, In My Back Yard).

"They wanted to see a mixture of commercial and residential," he said. "They wanted to make sure the arts community was protected and parks were provided. Unfortunately, the OMB didn't agree."

Toronto planning consultant Ken Greenberg said he was pleased the city is taking a stand.

"What the OMB did was reject basically all the work the city had done, all the work the community had done, and approve a hodgepodge of buildings with virtually no public spaces, no relationship to each other, overshadowing Queen St., doing nothing to support or sustain that creative community," Greenberg said. "It was just a real shock, frankly, to lots of people that the ruling was as bad as it was."

Margie Zeidler, a founder of Active 18, said she was delighted by Miller's intervention. "I think it is spectacular," said Zeidler, who has worked to preserve historic buildings.

Zeidler said she regrets that the community's ideas haven't gone anywhere.

"We worked with some of the top planners and architects in the city to come up with schemes which were allowing the developers to do what they wanted but were also good urban design schemes," she said.

"We know what it's like when you do these things wrong," she added. "They did Regent Park wrong 50 years ago, and you have to tear it all up again."

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