

Fight condo plan in court, mayor urges

Rejects as 'utter nonsense' developer's claim that critics oppose project because of its affordable housing component

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A developer who won Ontario Municipal Board approval for a condo development in the Queen West Triangle says critics of his application are opposed to the fact it envisions a high-rise with affordable housing.

"The only reason anyone would be blocking this, as far as we're concerned, is to stop the affordable housing," Cary Green, executive vice-president of the Verdiroc Development Corporation, told reporters at Toronto City Hall yesterday.

His firm's plan proposes an 18-storey building with 190 units of affordable housing – 30 to 40 for artists – as well as a 14-storey condo tower with market units, and an eight-storey podium connecting both buildings.

The project is planned for 48 Abell St. and is one of three OMB-approved projects in the Queen West triangle. The Abell address is now an industrial building that's been converted to artists' studios and homes. It would be demolished under the proposal.

Toronto Mayor David Miller and some city councillors oppose the projects. Among their concerns, Miller says, is that the area is a "creative and cultural hub" and that artists and jobs would be displaced by the overdevelopment of residences.

The OMB ruling came despite the objections of local residents and city planners.

Toronto councillors yesterday debated a motion that would see the city going to Ontario Divisional Court in a bid to win a new OMB hearing.

But city councillors heard it could cost as much as \$350,000 if the city is granted leave to appeal the initial OMB ruling, then loses the appeal.

"There is something very special going on in that area of the city," Miller told council yesterday, urging the court challenge. He wants the "mixed-use" character of the area maintained.

Miller described as "utter nonsense" claims that critics of the 48 Abell St. project are opposed to affordable housing.

"I haven't heard a single resident talk about that. This is about the heart of Toronto. The big cities that succeed in the world are ones that nurture their creative economy ... (the Queen West Triangle) is the heart of that," he told reporters.

But Councillor John Parker questioned whether the city has "satisfactory grounds" for an appeal to take the OMB to court.

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