

## Mayor urges fight against Queen condos

### Triangle development: Miller wants to salvage city plan for artists' studios

**Peter Brieger**

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City councillors were divided last night over a proposal from Mayor David Miller to challenge in court an Ontario Municipal Board ruling that approved a condominium development on Queen Street West, putting off a vote on the issue so that it could be discussed further today.

Debate over a possible appeal of the OMB decision to permit three high-rise condominium complexes to be erected in the lucrative Triangle area on Queen near Dovercourt Road, stretched past 10 p.m.

There was certainly no consensus either way, with the Mayor and some councillors pushing for a court case as a way to wrest control of the city's growth from the provincial adjudicators and others suggesting the initiative would waste time and money.

"This is about the heart of Toronto. The big cities that succeed in the world are the ones that nurture their creative economy ... Queen West is at the heart of that," Mr. Miller said, arguing the city had a plan for the area that would see 40,000 square metres earmarked for commercial space so artists could still work and live in the area at affordable rates.

"The OMB is there to decide planning issues. It's not there to decide economic development issues. That's our job," he said.

Adam Vaughan (Ward 20 Trinity Spadina), who backed fighting what he described as the OMB's "bad decision," argued the city must have detailed neighbourhood plans in its back pocket before developers apply to build in cultural hubs.

But several councillors decried a court fight as a waste of money after city lawyers said the legal battle could top \$350,000 if the courts side with the OMB.

"We don't have that kind of money," argued Rob Ford (Ward 2 Etobicoke North).

Critics also echoed the developers' lawyers, who pointed out that the city has almost no chance of winning because the OMB didn't make any legal errors.

"Is it worth the risk to beat a dead horse at the courthouse for a [case] that is iffy at



CREDIT: Brent Foster, National Post

Three condominium complexes have been approved for construction on Queen Street West, near the Drake Hotel. Mayor David Miller is against the development in the "heart of the city's creative economy."

best?" said Doug Holyday (Ward 3 Etobicoke Centre).

Mr. Ford also noted that fighting the decision could spark a slew of requests to fight OMB rulings by disgruntled councillors.

"All of us have lost at the OMB," he said. "We all have unique circumstances [in our wards]."

But even critics of the legal fight took potshots at the municipal board, noting the Liberals did not follow through on a plan to ditch the land adjudicator. Glenn de Baeremaeker (Ward 38 Scarborough Centre) described the tribunal as a "Frankenstein monster" that is "pro developer."

"It is an out of control, unelected body," he said. "It has to be destroyed. The sooner we abolish this thing the better."

The most controversial of the proposed buildings will be constructed at 48 Abell St., where an industrial building has been converted into live-work space for artists. The building, considered by some to be the heart of Toronto's art community, was denied heritage status by city council in November.

Mr. Miller also criticized a plan to relocate an area park inside one of the proposed condominium complexes, "essentially privatizing" public green space.

"Should the park be located where the parks department wants it to be or where the developer wants it, inside his building?" Mr. Miller asked.

While councillors spent most of the day hashing out the Queen West battle, they also considered a proposed lobbyist registry.

The new plan calls on councillors to say whether they have held meetings with lobbyists who have a stake in public policy decisions.

In other council news, Richard Butts, the city's general manager of solid waste management, has been hired as deputy city manager.

Pbrieger@nationalpost.com

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