

Building plan appears destined for OMB

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Eglinton-Lawrence Councillor Karen Stintz said she hopes a controversial development proposal near Yonge Street and Eglinton Avenue can be settled before an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) hearing this month.

But she isn't holding her breath.

Although city officials and the developer will try to reach a compromise before the Oct. 14 hearing, Stintz said she believes the two sides are too far apart to find common ground.

"I have no hope it is going to be resolved. The gap is too wide," she told The Mirror after councillors rejected the proposed development at the Oct. 4 meeting of North York community council.

Owner Premium Properties Ltd. wants to build a 48-storey apartment building at the northeast corner of Eglinton and Duplex Avenue, one block west of Yonge.

Stintz said an appropriately sized building for the relatively small lot would be 27 to 32 storeys because buildings should decrease in height the farther it gets from Yonge.

The proposed building would include 396 residential units and a three-storey base building with retail units on the ground level and offices on the second and third floors.

The development would contain 266 parking spaces in car stackers. Valet parking attendants park cars in machines that elevate vehicles to create additional room for more vehicles.

Speaking for his client, lawyer **Bruce Engell of law firm WeirFoulds** told councillors the projects would fit in well in the neighbourhood.

"This project is attractive and well-designed," he said.

The building is appropriate for the site, which is close to the major Yonge and Eglinton intersection, he said, adding the developer has tried to address concerns over the last two years.

Residents Steven Pinnock and Paul Brown praised the project, saying the building will increase the tax base and fit in with the busy community, which will be on the new Eglinton LRT line.

"It just seems to me...it makes common sense," Brown said.

But others opposed the project.

In a report to councillors, Allen Appleby, the city's director of community planning for the North York district, said the development is too large for the site.

"The proposal is an over-intensification of development on this site. It is out of scale and character in comparison to other developments in the centre," he said.

"The proposed height and density would, if approved, create a negative precedent by eliminating transition toward lower scale commercial and residential areas."

Those are strong words coming from planning staff, who are often supportive of development proposals, "often to the chagrin of the community," Willowdale Councillor David Shiner said.

"In this case, they are flatly against this." Shiner challenged Engell's claims the project is appropriate for the site.

"I'm lost how you are saying all of this with a straight face. I'm really trying to understand how you can say it is appropriate. So please, try to convince me," he said.

"Come back with something more modest or see you at the board (OMB)."

Tom Cohen, chair of the Eglinton Park Residents' Association and a professor at York University, said many in the community are "uneasy" about the scale of the project.

He urged councillors to consider the overall impact of development in the area.

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