

Queen St. W. soon another Yorkville?

Uncontrolled building could destroy 'eclectic' community, alderman says

By Chris Welner Toronto Star

City planners must keep a close eye on redevelopment of Queen St. west of University Ave. if they don't want it to turn into another Yorkville, area aldermen and merchants say.

"The natural market forces could easily turn the area into another Yorkville — but it's clear that's not the way we want to go," Alderman Dale Martin said.

"We have to make decisions that will ensure Queen St. stays an

exciting, eclectic community," he said.

Opening up Queen St. to uncontrolled development would raise rents for shopkeepers and tenants, "driving out the artists and the garment-workers — the people that make the area exciting," Martin said.

Plans are under way to build a \$5 million retail-commercial-residential complex at the corner of Queen St. W. and Soho St. An existing century-old building, housing

three clothing stores, is to be demolished to make room for the new building, possibly by October.

Alderman Jack Layton said the city can do little to stop new developments and the higher rents that accompany them. But planners and the local merchants' association want assurances the new buildings will fit in with the architecture and artistic culture of the community.

Architect Michael Wong, 42, is designing the complex. He has

studied Queen St. from University Ave. to Spadina Ave. and will try to blend the new building into its surroundings.

"There's no historical significance to the building that's there; it's just an eyesore," Wong said.

"I would like to capture (in the new building) some of the old architectural language and history," he said. "It's going to emphasize the same sort of atmosphere and activities that are Queen St."

The planned brick building will have dormers and bay windows, retail space on the ground floor, second-storey offices and 57 apartments on three floors above. The development could feature a sidewalk cafe.

Development pressure

But Wong sees Queen St. as a new Yorkville because of development pressure in the area generated by the new CBC headquarters planned for King St. W. and the domed stadium near the CN Tower.

Alex Sgroi, owner of Garbo's Bistro at 429 Queen St. W. and vice-president of the local merchants' association, says most members are concerned about Queen St. changing, but he thinks it will never become another Yorkville.

Sgroi says that while Yorkville is a seasonal spot with a strong emphasis on tourism, Queen St. is year-round activity centred on the people who live and work there.

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