

## Homeless highrise stalled for three more months

### Mustard Seed addresses fears of 'warehousing'

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A controversial affordable housing tower in the Beltline is facing another three-month delay as officials work to gain support from its potential neighbours.

The Mustard Seed Street Ministry, which is seeking city approvals for a 31-storey tower at 10th Avenue and Centre Street S., is on the agenda for Monday's city council meeting. But the ward alderman said he will ask for another delay until April.

"We're going to see it being tabled," said Ald. John Mar, noting there is still a need for more public input.

The project was also delayed in November to address ongoing concerns in the community -- including whether the apartment tower would become an inner-city ghetto.

Mar, who campaigned in support of the affordable housing project during the fall civic election, said there are several reports in the works that could have an impact on the project.

Later this month, for example, the Calgary Committee to End Homelessness is set to unveil an ambitious report with recommendations to end homelessness within a decade.

"This is going to be something that is going to have ramifications all the way up and down, from the federal government straight down to the municipal government," Mar said. "We need to determine . . . how we as a city deal with affordable housing for our chronic homeless people."

Officials with the Mustard Seed said they are fine with another delay.

"If we're not willing at the start to deal with this as a community and have that dialogue, it's really not going to have the right kind of start," said executive director Pat Nixon.

Other aldermen, however, said it's time to stop stalling the project.

"This is a significant project and it's very much needed," said Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart. "It certainly needs a public hearing and we need to debate the merits of it.

"But I get the sense from council that they are very polarized on allowing this in that area."

Both Nixon and Mar said they are confident the project will go ahead -- once it gets enough support.

"It shows all of the people of Calgary that this is a thoughtful process, that we are not just going to jump into it willy-nilly," said Mar, who has been the

alderman since October.

"Is warehousing the right solution or is so-called diffusion the right solution?"

Some aldermen have raised concerns about concentrating large populations of vulnerable people in one area.

However, Nixon said they have evidence to suggest high-density projects have been successful, with proper planning, in cities such as Portland.

"When you talk about issues around NIMBY, this is a big one," said Nixon.

"We are about to build a tower that houses over 400 people who were homeless at one time.

"What does that look like and can that work?"

According to a Mustard Seed report, the project will see 25 floors of rental apartments, including 340 studio-style suites and 70 one- and two-bedroom apartments. The remaining floors will be used for retail and office space.

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