



ILYA CHIGIREV/ACTING TARGUM PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

The New Brunswick City Council approved amendments Wednesday to the Gateway Center to be built on the corner of Easton Avenue and Somerset Street, above, despite opposition from local businesses.

# City advances Gateway

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The Gateway Center is one step closer to becoming a reality.

The City Council unanimously approved amendments to the building's height and surrounding traffic conditions Wednesday — despite the opposition's pleas to cease all voting on the matter.

Attorney Saul Wolfe was on hand representing New Jersey Books, a long-standing store on Easton Avenue that would be forced to relocate because of the construction of the \$127 million multi-use facility proposed for the corner of Easton and Somerset Street.

NJ Books owner Ed Mueller has filed suit to chal-

lenge the status of the area as "blighted."

Wolfe did not suggest the council throw out the proposed project, but rather urged it to place the matter on hold until a decision was reached in court.

"We are dealing with a viable economic area," Wolfe said. "There isn't a vacant store in the area, the apartments are occupied and nothing indicates that there were any problems whatsoever with regard to that area."

A city can seize property for redevelopment, only if it can prove the property or properties surrounding it are blighted, according to state law.

Wolfe said he has been through many redevelopment issues in the past, and his concern is for the residents being uprooted.

"Let the people stay, and let them live," Wolfe said to the council. "Let them function without hanging this sword over their head, because that's what you'd be doing, and you'd be hurting a lot of people for no reason should the court ultimately conclude that we're right."

City attorney William Hamilton said no immediate action would be taken, as the property can't be seized until a redeveloper has been named.

The most likely candidate is New Brunswick Development Corporation — the firm which initially submitted the Gateway proposal last February — but no decision has yet been made.

**See Gateway on Page 4**

## **Gateway: City Council takes next step in tower plans**

**continued from front**

The amendments that passed Wednesday may clear the way for the New Brunswick Housing and Redevelopment Authority to do just that.

City planner Glen Paterson said even after a redeveloper is named, they cannot relocate the tenants of the property until after the court has made a decision.

"There is nothing so imminent that this will result in anybody getting a notice that they will have to move or shut down or be relocated," Hamilton said.

George Dawson, chair of the New Brunswick Historical Association, said the project's

design doesn't fit in with the surrounding area.

"You have to show some scale in context with registered historical places in the neighborhood," Dawson said.

St. Peter's Church on Somerset Street is a registered historical site — as is Old Queen's campus on the corner of Somerset Street and College Avenue.

Paterson said the project must be presented to the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office to determine if there would be any negative impact on nearby historical sites. If there is a negative impact, the office consults with developers in attempts to rectify the problem.

The Gateway Center would stand at more than 300 feet high, but upper portions of the structure would be required to be set back, in order to preserve the appearance of nearby buildings.