

CALIFORNIA HAIRCARE HEIRESS CHERYL MORROW LEADS FIGHT TO DEFEND INDUSTRY AGAINST TORT LAWSUIT

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Black hair care industry manufacturers are rallying to defend their products against "attacks" from customers, scientists and federal government officials who claim they are harmful. The companies are being accused of producing relaxers with potentially toxic ingredients that may cause cancer. On the frontlines of that defense in the Golden State is California Curl heiress Cheryl Morrow, who is also publisher of the San Diego Monitor News. The post California Haircare Heiress Cheryl Morrow Leads Fight to Defend Industry Against Tort Lawsuit first appeared on Post News Group.

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By Ken Epstein

New research, produced by supporters of Geoffrey's Inner Circle and the Black Arts Movement and Business District, has provided powerful evidence against giving a greenlight to Tidewater Capital's 40-story luxury apartment building at 1431 Franklin St., inches from owner Geoffrey Pete's historic venue.

According to the research, which has been shared with Mayor Sheng Thao, arguments in favor of Tidewater Capital's proposal seem to be based on inaccurate facts, which some believe have their origin among past mayoral administrations and city administrators, the planning commission and city staff who for years allowed corporate development to ravage Oakland's diverse communities while trying to convince residents that there is no alternative to gentrification.

State does not require project's approval

Some who support allowing Tidewater's project to be built have maintained that the state would likely revoke Oakland's affordable housing funds if the city does not approve this high-end real estate project.

However, this interpretation does not seem to be based on an accurate reading of the law. The state's "Prohousing Designation Program is what is believed by city officials to prevent Oakland from denying new residential development at the risk of losing their designation" and related funding, according to the research document.

The new research has found instead that "Oakland's housing element is considered to be in 'full compliance' with state law, (and) the city no longer has to worry about losing important revenue, such as the Prohousing Designation Program or triggering rules that could have limited its ability to regulate development."

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The mission statement of the state pro-housing program says it is not designed to force cities to build more high-end housing but is meant to pressure cities and counties that are not building sufficient housing for very low and extremely low-income families. The goal is "creating more affordable homes in places that historically or currently exclude households earning lower incomes and households of color," the mission statement of the state's program said.

"This (Tidewater) proposal isn't remotely connected" to a low-income development and, therefore, would not be impacted by state regulations protecting low-income projects, says the new research.

City failed to seek historical preservation funds

The second major point is that Oakland, unlike neighboring cities, has failed to apply for funding that

would have protected its national resource buildings and districts from luxury developers like Tidewater.

Geoffrey Pete's building at 410 14th St. is a Registered National Resource Building on the State of California Register and a contributing building to the Historic Downtown Oakland District on the State of California Register and the National Department of Interior historic registers.

If Oakland had applied for available grants from the state's Office of Historic Preservation, it could have received millions of dollars. For example, the city and county of San Francisco applied and received millions of dollars more than six times since 2012.

"The City of Oakland has never even applied for this grant once," the research said. "Our neighboring and surrounding cities in San Francisco, Berkeley, and Richmond have all applied and been awarded. Just not Oakland."

"If Oakland had applied and received these funds, then Geoffrey's Inner Circle, a National Registered Resource Building, would have been protected. There would be zero conversation with Tidewater Capital. This situation would not exist."

Because the Black Arts Movement & Business District is a registered cultural district, Tidewater Capital's proposal is in a geographic area with cultural affiliations, and the proposed development will, in fact, cause harm to a cultural resource, Geoffrey's Inner Circle.

Project designed for luxury housing

The third major point in the research holds that, while the project's backers claim that many units would be reserved for very low-income residents, the city's staff report says that only 38 units (10%) out of a total of 381 units would be reserved for low-income residents. Further, there is evidence that none of the units would be available to those whose incomes do not put them among the affluent.

The City of Oakland considers "low-income" to be \$112,150 a year for a family of four. What this means is MOST Oakland families do not earn enough to live in the Tidewater Capital's building. Current data shows that median income for a family of four in Oakland is \$85,628, well below the \$112,150 that is considered low-income by the city's unusual standard.

The research shows that the planning commission and city staff's systematic bias toward high end development has resulted in massive overbuilding of market rate housing, while the city is way behind its goals to build affordable housing.

City statistics show that between 2015 and 2022, the city pledged to build 14,765 units at various income levels. In fact, the city created many more — 18,880 units. Of these, they had pledged to build 4,134 units for residents at the lowest income levels but failed to reach their goal by 1,776 units.

Yet at the same, time, the city built 16,522 high end units, though officials had only pledged 10,631

units for affluent tenants.

"The Oakland Planning Commission catered to developers, such as Tidewater Capital, who solely created luxury housing, so aggressively that they overshot their obligation by 5,891 extra and unnecessary (luxury) units approved," according to Geoffrey's supporters' research.

"Yet low-income housing goals are nearly two thousand units in arrears with no clear remedy or solution at hand," the research said.

"For the eighth year in a row, Oakland's Housing Element progress report shows that while the city has permitted an abundance of market rate housing, we are not building enough affordable homes," said Jeff Levin of East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO), quoted in Oaklandside.

"The trend in Oakland has been to build high-end units that attract new, higher-income residents," doing little for low-income residents and Oakland natives, he said.

Project does not fit the landscape

Finally, the real facts show that Tidewater's market-rate luxury skyscraper, doggedly supported by city staff, does not fit the landscape, dramatically overshadowing surrounding buildings in the downtown Black Arts Movement and Business District.

Tidewater's design would become the tallest building in Oakland at 413 feet tall (40 stories), taller than the Atlas building at 400 feet, which was built several years ago directly across the street from Geoffrey's.

The Post gave council members supporting the Tidewater project an opportunity to be interviewed for this article.



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There are no comments yet.