

Expert: Fort Lee glass towers won't cause reflection problem - NorthJersey.com

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FORT LEE - A building facade expert attempted to quell fears of potential sun glare a new high-rise development might emanate at the fourth public hearing dedicated to the Center at Fort Lee project.

Jeffrey Somerlot, of Israel Berger and Associates, LLC, provided testimony to the Planning Board at the Fort Lee Community Center on March 5, comparing various glass types and their reflectivity.

Renderings for Phase 1 of the \$700 million development depict a glass exterior enclosing each of the two 47-story luxury residential towers at the center of the debate.

The design feature has prompted criticism from residents worried about the potential safety hazard this may pose to drivers and pedestrians.

Somerlot produced a blue-tinted, square sample of the proposed glass for the board, stating that the reflectivity of the glass is about 36 percent compared to 85 percent for a mirror and 12 to 16 percent for clear glass without coating.

"The glare that results from the sun will never be more intense than the sunlight itself," said Somerlot, explaining that the building will absorb a large portion of the energy and transmit it inside the structure.

"If the sunlight doesn't cause an unsafe condition, then the glare will not cause an unsafe condition," he said.

The glass type used is comparable to that of Times Square Plaza, Trump SoHo Tower and the new 7 World Trade Center in New York, all high-rises Somerlot also worked on. There have been no complaints about glare issues from the buildings so far, he said.

Though this glass will have "moderate" reflectivity, the positive tradeoff will be in thermal performance, which usually decreases with less reflective glass.

"It's a superior product from a thermal and sustainability perspective," Somerlot said.

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