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Merge project back on the table

By JODEAL CADACIO

The high-rise Merge development in Takapuna has been resurrected.

North Shore City Council strategic projects manager Simon Guillemain says the project is progressing through the resource consent stage.

Its developers put the application on hold last year as a result of the credit crisis that hit the property market.

Mr Guillemain says the consent process has been reactivated and a tentative hearing date is planned for July.

The council's strategy and finance committee has also extended the council's contract with the Location Group until May 2012 to deliver the 29-storey, \$200 million project.

The Merge complex at the former gasometer site at the corner of Auburn, Huron and Northcroft streets

will have a 750-space public carpark and a mix of prime residential, commercial and office space.

He says the prospects look promising but still challenging given the economic situation.

"The best time to hit the market with a property offering – whether it be retail, commercial or residential – is when the market is about to take off again," he says.

Mr Guillemain says the earliest the Merge would be delivered would be mid to late 2012.

"While addressing Takapuna's carparking challenges, the Merge project also seeks to kick-start its growth and economic recovery," he says.

Council team leader specialist planning Steve Goeldner says no hearing

date has been set.

He says the application had been notified twice, the first one closed in June 2008 and generated 53 submissions, with 40 in opposition.

In response, the proponents revised the design and had a new application publicly notified. Submissions closed in February 2009.

The Sentinel Tower next to the planned Merge complex has opposed the project, saying its bulk and immense scale will have a major impact on its residents and surrounding residential buildings.

The Takapuna Beach Business Association, Progressive Enterprises and BNZ are backing the project.