

**Kingston Road Revitalization Study – Phase 1 Profile
Kingston Road – Birchcliff Community**

Date:	January 30, 2007
To:	Scarborough Community Council
From:	Director, Community Planning, Scarborough District
Wards:	Ward No. 36 – Scarborough Southwest
Reference Number:	File No. 05 106102 EPS 36 TM

SUMMARY

This report presents the Phase 1 Profile Report for the Kingston Road Revitalization study of Kingston Road through the Birchcliff Community. The purpose of the study is to develop a revitalization strategy for Kingston Road in Birchcliff that promotes reinvestment along Kingston Road in the context of the policies and directions of the Official Plan and that builds upon and supports local community improvement initiatives. The Phase 1 Profile report includes a review and analysis of existing conditions in the study area with respect to: land use; housing; population; environment; economic conditions; transportation; and community services and facilities. Issues, obstacles and opportunities for revitalization are also identified.

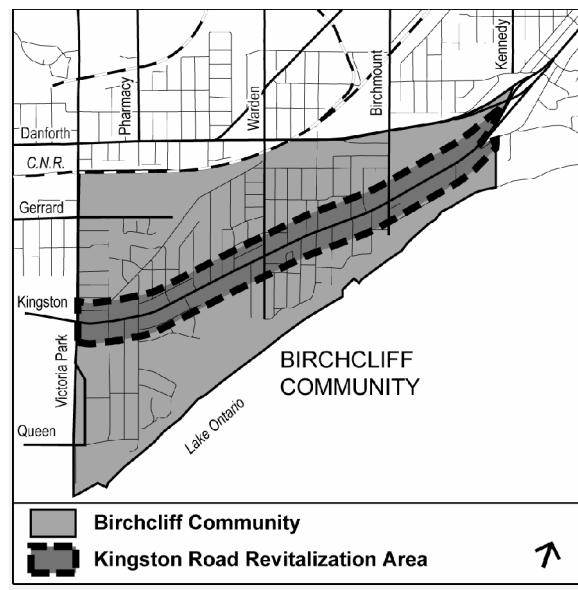
The emerging directions from the Phase 1 work will form the basis for developing a vision for Kingston Road through the Phase 2 work.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications.

DECISION HISTORY

In September 2005 Council adopted the Terms of Reference for the Kingston Road Revitalization Study. The purpose of the



study is to develop a revitalization strategy for Kingston Road in Birchcliff that promotes reinvestment along Kingston Road in the context of the policies and directions of the Official Plan and that builds upon and supports local community improvement initiatives.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Kingston Road in the Birchcliff Community extends about 3 kilometres from Victoria Park Avenue in the west to east of Birchmount Road (Attachment 1). Kingston Road exhibits characteristics of a traditional small town ‘main street’ with clusters of low rise commercial buildings nestled close to the street, a mix of low rise apartments, and single and multiple family dwellings along its extent. However, Kingston Road lacks the vibrancy of more successful ‘main streets’. There are commercial vacancies, a number of stores have been converted to apartments, many buildings are in need of repair, and car repair and sales establishments occupy key sites along the street. These factors contribute to the overall appearance and feeling of this main street.

There is some recent development activity along Kingston Road in Birchcliff. A six storey mixed-use, commercial and residential building was approved by Council in 2006 on the northwest corner of Fallingbrook Road and Kingston Road. This building is currently under construction. In 2006, the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) approved a development for seven townhouses on the south side of Kingston Road east of Birchmount Road. A development application has been submitted for a 7 storey mixed-use, commercial and residential building at 1725 Kingston Road, on the southwest corner of Birchmount Road and Kingston Road. This application is currently under review and a preliminary report about the application is being considered in a separate report on this same agenda.

In December 2005 Council initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA) to examine options for higher order transit on Kingston Road from Victoria Park Avenue to Eglinton Avenue. An important component of the EA is the integration of services and a direct connection to the downtown core. The EA will identify a preferred approach to providing reliable and efficient transit service along the corridor, serving the communities such as Birchcliff along its extent.

The Phase 1 Study Area Profile includes an overview and analysis of existing conditions in the study area such as: land use; housing; population; environment; economic conditions; transportation; community services and facilities; and planning policies and tools that can be used to promote revitalization. Issues, obstacles and opportunities for revitalization are also identified. The Phase 1 Profile Report is included as Attachment 2. A synopsis of the report is provided below.

COMMENTS

Study Area

The focus of the study is the properties that front along the north and south sides of Kingston Road through the Birchcliff Community. The larger study area incorporates all

of the Birchcliff Community. The larger study area will give a broader understanding of the community to assist in identifying where efforts should be focused to achieve revitalization in this area.

Community Consultation

Community Consultation is an important component of the study. In June 2005, a community consultation meeting was held to introduce the study and obtain input into the development of the Terms of Reference. An Advisory Committee that includes local community representatives, residents, business owners and operators, and the Ward Councillor was then formed, and began meeting in December 2005.

As representatives of the larger community, the Advisory Committee assists in identifying community needs, the issues of importance to the community, opportunities and challenges for revitalization and provides overall guidance for the study.

Emerging Directions

In addition to the review and input into the preparation of the profile of existing conditions in the study area, valuable insights about the unique attributes of Birchcliff, perceptions of Kingston Road, the events, businesses and services that attract people to Kingston Road were offered by the community and the Advisory Committee. Four general themes to inform later phases of the study have emerged from this work and these are summarized below.

Strengthening Community Identity - Birchcliff and the Lake

The close proximity of Lake Ontario was identified as one of the most important features of Birchcliff that makes it special. The lake contributes immensely to the community's identity. It provides opportunities for walking and places for respite. Promoting the image of Birchcliff as a lakeside community and improving connections to the lake were seen as important to help revitalize Kingston Road. Residents are also protective of the natural environment along the lake and bluffs. New development along Kingston Road, particularly at the east end of the community where Kingston Road is nearer to the bluffs, must be sensitive to the natural environment.

Historic Character & Neighbourhood Fit

Birchcliff is viewed by its residents as a community with a small town atmosphere; a transition place within Toronto not fully urban or suburban. Local streets have a small town feel and residents describe the character of Kingston Road as 'intimate'; different from neighbouring communities like the Beach or Cliffside. Building upon the small town character was considered important to assist in transforming Birchcliff into a destination within the larger City. Residents want to see changes that maintain the character of the area and development should be compatible and fit the community.

Community Amenities – A Resource

The range of community amenities in Birchcliff was noted as a significant benefit. There are schools, churches, recreation & cultural facilities, and a library within walking distance of most residents of Birchcliff and many are located on Kingston Road. Many residents identified these facilities as the most important places along Kingston Road. That these community amenities are within walking distance for many residents is not only a benefit for the local community, but provides a solid base upon which to build and attract new residents and businesses into the area.

Kingston Road should reflect Birchcliff

Residents identified the dichotomy of Kingston Road in Birchcliff. There is a great deal of investment in the neighbourhoods to the north and south of Kingston Road, but this investment is not matched along its main street. Kingston Road is seen as a commercial area in decline, although there are sections where local efforts are resulting in improvements and new investment. Residents described sections of the street as ‘dumpy’ and that Kingston Road ‘is out of touch with the community’. The types of businesses along many sections of this main street are not seen as meeting the needs of local residents.

Emerging Principles

Emerging principles have been prepared based on the community input and information from initial investigations of the study area. These principles will inform later phases of the study and include:

- i) **Community Identity**
Investigate ways to strengthen Birchcliff’s identity as a lakeside community.
- ii) **Unique Challenges**
There are areas along Kingston Road with unique challenges that require individual solutions – “one size does not fit all”.
- iii) **Key Sites & Nodes**
Identify key sites & nodes where new development, infill or intensification is appropriate to strengthen the urban character.
- iv) **Compatible Development**
New development should be compatible and fit with the neighbourhoods to the north and south of Kingston Road.
- v) **Heritage Preservation**
Existing heritage structures should be retained and new development should reflect the historic character where appropriate.
- vi) **Cultural Opportunities**
Investigate ways to promote and enhance the cultural opportunities in the community.
- vii) **Fill the Gaps**
Focus on strategic locations and sites to “fill in the gaps” rather than large scale redevelopment of the street.

- viii) **Larger Sites**
Where larger site redevelopment opportunities exist a comprehensive framework to guide change should be developed.
- ix) **Street Edge**
Bring new buildings close to the street edge, to strengthen the main street character, but ensure there are opportunities for pedestrians and landscaping.
- x) **Streetscape Improvements**
Explore opportunities through streetscape improvements to develop a consistent and unifying 'image' along the street.
- xi) **Sustainable Development**
Sustainable 'green' development principles should be promoted and reflected in new development.
- xii) **Excellence in Design**
High quality design should be promoted on all sites.
- xiii) **Public & Private Investment**
Explore opportunities for public and private investment as a catalyst for change.
- xiv) **Connections**
Explore opportunities to enhance connections between activity centres along the street and within the community.
- xv) **Parking**
Investigate opportunities for more parking within the area.
- xvi) **Improved Transit**
Improvements to transit service along Kingston Road are needed.

Next Steps

Planning staff propose that the Phase 1 Profile Report be presented to the large community at an Open House to seek further community input as the study moves into the Phase 2 work program. The Profile Report will also be circulated to agencies and City divisions for review and comment.

Phase 2 of the study is the development of a vision for Kingston Road. The emerging principles will be further defined and expanded, key sites and areas where redevelopment or reinvestment should be promoted will be identified, approaches and actions that can be used to promote revitalization will be explored. Design charettes will be conducted where issues such as height, building mass, setbacks, site layout and streetscape design will be explored in detail.

Phase 2 of the study will be conducted in consultation with the Advisory Committee and community meetings will be held to ensure that the broader community has opportunity to participate in this visioning exercise. A Phase 2 report that includes the results of the visioning exercise is targeted for a report to Community Council in the third quarter of 2007.

CONTACT

Susan McAlpine, Senior Planner

Tel. No. (416) 396-7721

Fax No. (416) 396-4265

E-mail: smcalpin@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Allen Appleby, Director
Community Planning, Scarborough District

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Context Plan – Kingston Road Revitalization Study

Attachment 2: Phase 1 Profile Report – Kingston Road Revitalization Study (under separate cover)

