

Final Report - Birchmount Road Area Study Design Framework

Date:	January 2, 2007
To:	Scarborough Community Council
From:	Director, Community Planning, Scarborough District
Ward:	Ward 37 – Scarborough Centre
Reference Number:	File No. 04 103376 000 00 TM

SUMMARY

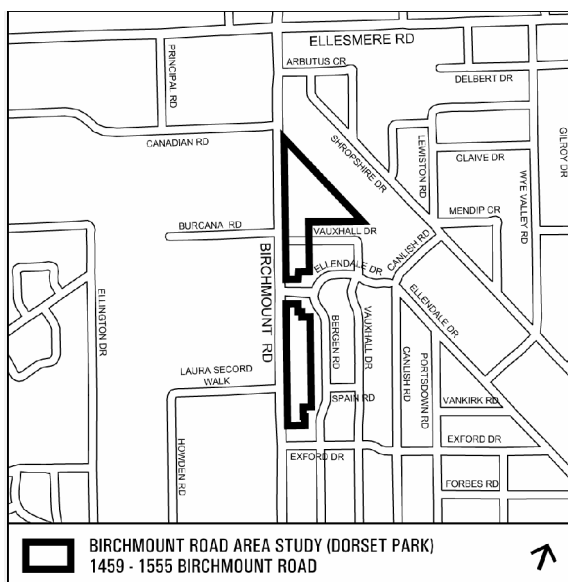
The purpose of this report is to advise Scarborough Community Council of the findings of the Birchmount Road Area Study, to recommend guiding design principles for any residential intensification within the study area, and to advise on the further processing of an application within the study area at 1483-1485 Birchmount Road.

Any housing intensification within the study area should be limited to 1463 to 1485 Birchmount Road (excluding the two apartment buildings at 1475 and 1477), and should continue to be evaluated on an individual basis through site specific rezoning and site plan applications having regard to the design framework proposed in Attachment 6.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council endorse the design framework for reviewing development applications which propose residential infill and intensification generally between 1463 and 1485 Birchmount Road, as set out on Attachment 6; and



2. City Council direct staff to continue their review of the active Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment application for 1483-1485 Birchmount Road, including discussion with the applicant on changes to the proposal required to achieve consistency with this framework.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Planning staff will continue discussion with the applicant for 1483-1485 Birchmount Road regarding the relationship of the findings of this study to the proposed development concept for that property, with the intention of further refining the proposal and potentially targeting the Public Meeting on the application at Scarborough Community Council for the second quarter of 2007.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On January 5, 2004, Toronto East Community Council considered a Preliminary Report on a combined application for Official Plan amendment and rezoning to permit eight townhouse dwellings on the single-family residential property at 1465 Birchmount Road. Planning staff had recommended that the application be processed in the usual manner, however the application was refused by Community Council (and subsequently approved on appeal by the Ontario Municipal Board (O.M.B.) for seven units. In view of this application and previous applications for residential intensification on the subject lands, Planning staff were also directed to undertake a land use study for this portion of Birchmount Road to address 'appropriate guidelines and standards for potential residential redevelopment and intensification which respects and has regard for the surrounding neighbourhood'.

On February 17, 2004, Toronto East Community Council approved the terms of reference for this study encompassing lands on the east side of Birchmount Road from the former Ontario Hydro corridor to the north, southerly to just north of Exford Drive.

On January 17, 2006, Scarborough Community Council approved a Preliminary Report on a proposed rezoning by Jaymor Developments Ltd. for 1483-1485 Birchmount Road for 38 stacked townhouse units (now revised to 36 units, as shown on Attachments 2 to 4). The report addressed the need for a concurrent Official Plan amendment application and a withdrawal of an earlier appeal to the O.M.B. by a previous owner of the property, prior to processing the application. The application has now been amended to include an Official Plan amendment, and the earlier O.M.B. appeal has been withdrawn. As the subject property is also situated within the Birchmount Road study area, Community Council specified that the application is to be considered in the context of that study.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Lands on the east side of Birchmount Road were originally subdivided in the 1940's into rural 2 acre residential lots. The interior of the neighbourhood was further subdivided into typical 9 by 30 m (30 by 100 ft.) lots in the mid 1950's. Many of the remnant residential properties fronting on Birchmount Road retain frontages of 12 to 18 m (40 to

60 ft.) with a depth of 57 m (190 ft.), resulting in properties that are approximately 2.5 to 3.8 times as large as a typical single-detached residential lot immediately to the east of the study area on Bergen Road.

As increasingly evident in Scarborough since the early 1990's, such large remnant single-detached residential parcels came to be viewed by the development industry as having potential for in-fill residential redevelopment and intensification, typically with townhouses. Within the study area particularly, the O.M.B. in 1990 overturned a decision by the former City of Scarborough Council to refuse Official Plan amendment and rezoning applications for the property at 1483-1485 Birchmount Road, approving redevelopment of the site for a high density 6-storey, 42-unit condominium apartment building. (The adjacent existing 3-storey, 21-unit rental apartment building at 1477 Birchmount Road was to have been retained.) The Official Plan was amended accordingly, although the new zoning was not enacted due to outstanding Section 37 requirements and the apartment development never proceeded.

In 2003, new owners of this property (the Devco Group) filed applications to permit a stacked townhouse redevelopment of 28 units. While the proposal complied with the density provisions of the Scarborough Official Plan (as amended), the applications were refused on the basis that the particular built form proposed represented overly intensive redevelopment of the site. Devco appealed the decision to the O.M.B., however the appeal was never pursued and, as referenced above, was withdrawn in 2006.

The current application by Jaymor Developments, now revised to 36 stacked townhouse units, represents the third redevelopment proposal on this site.

In directing initiation of this study, Community Council recognized that the ongoing history of applications for residential intensification would likely continue, and that significant attention is paid to residential in-fill intensification issues by the new Toronto Official Plan. The Plan emphasizes that there is a need to protect and maintain the integrity of established residential neighbourhoods where such changes are being proposed. The primary purpose of the study, therefore, is to identify acceptable built-form, scale and related development standards to best guide any further residential changes in this area.

Toronto Official Plan

The study area and the surrounding neighbourhood east of Birchmount Road is designated Neighbourhoods, which are considered physically stable areas made up of residential uses in lower scale buildings such as detached houses, semi-detached houses, duplexes, triplexes and townhouses, as well as interspersed walk-up apartments that are no higher than four storeys.

The Plan does not contemplate significant physical change and housing intensification within Neighbourhoods. Such changes are primarily directed to the Downtown, Centres, Avenues and, to a lesser degree, Mixed Use areas. The Plan also recognizes, however, that while Neighbourhoods are essentially stable, they are not static and some changes

may occur where the existing physical character of the area is both respected and reinforced. Some planning factors particularly relevant to this study include:

- a) consideration of prevailing building types; the heights, massing, scale and dwelling type of nearby residential properties;
- b) the size and configuration of lots;
- c) setbacks of buildings from the street or streets;
- d) the prevailing patterns of rear and side yard setbacks and landscaped open spaces; and
- e) continuation of special landscape or built-form features that contribute to the unique physical character of a neighbourhood.

Historic Planning Context

The Dorset Park Community Secondary Plan was first approved in 1960 which applied a blanket 'Residential Uses' designation over most of the community, with a 'Neighbourhood Commercial' designation on both corners of the Vauxhall Drive entry into the neighbourhood from Birchmount Road. This neighbourhood was predominantly developed in the mid-1950's with single-detached dwellings but includes many semi-detached units as well.

A number of apartment buildings within the study area, however, were also developed under this general designation. A 6-storey, 45 unit apartment building was constructed at the north end of the study area at 1555 Birchmount Road. South of this, two 4-storey apartment buildings having 74 units were constructed at 1535-1545 Birchmount Road, and another 4-storey building with 52 units at 1525 Birchmount Road.

Further south, within the block of larger, deep remnant single-detached lots, are two additional apartment buildings; a 3-storey building with 21 units at 1477 Birchmount Road adjacent to the Jaymor site, and south of this, 20 units in a 5-storey building at 1475 Birchmount Road.

The residential density of apartment buildings in the study area ranges from 75 to 110 units per hectare (30 to 45 units per acre).

Three characteristics are common to all of the apartment buildings, beyond their relatively limited height. The buildings all contain rental apartment units. The sites are predominantly covered with hard-surfacing for vehicle circulation and parking, with limited landscaping. Lastly, the building orientations are generally front to rear on the site, with a very limited functional building relationship to the street.

Medium or High Density Residential designations were applied to these apartment sites when the Secondary Plan was updated in 1983. The remainder of the neighbourhood was re-designated Low Density Residential, again reflecting the existing built form, which permitted single-detached, semi-detached and street townhouse building forms to a maximum of 37 units per hectare (15 units per acre).

The Medium Density Residential designation in particular included townhouses and low-rise development having a maximum net density of 100 units per hectare (40 units per acre), and a maximum height of 4-storeys. With the exception of the one apartment building at 1555 Birchmount, all of the developments noted in the table above fall within this range. Only 1555 and 1475 Birchmount Road exceed four storeys.

Current zoning limits single and semi-detached dwellings to a maximum height of 9 m (29.5 ft.), and requires minimum rear yard building setbacks of 7.5 m (25 ft.) plus 50 percent of any lot depth greater than 33.5 m (110 ft.). Maximum building coverage permitted is 33 percent of the lot area.

The ‘prevailing building type’ within the study area and the general character of the surrounding neighbourhood can be therefore be described as ‘mixed’, consisting of single and semi-detached dwellings and interspersed low-rise apartment buildings. The potential introduction of additional townhouse dwellings would be consistent with this mixed character.

COMMENTS

Study Findings

Initially, an analysis of the sizes and shapes of the various properties in the study area, together with current zoning permissions and restrictions, was undertaken to determine (re)development potential. The existing apartment buildings have limited zoning potential today for intensification, and as they are all rental buildings, their demolition for complete site redevelopment is not encouraged. As such, they were excluded from further urban design analysis with respect to built form and scale.

Clearly, the lands with the greatest potential for redevelopment, and which caused this study to be initiated, are those large single-detached residential lots from 1463 to 1485 Birchmount Road (excluding the two apartment buildings at 1475 and 1477). The Ontario Municipal Board has already approved a proposed development at 1465 Birchmount Road, and the approved project has been considered in the design analysis for potential development in the study area. All other properties between Exford Drive and the Hydro corridor are seen as stable, lacking potential for more intense development than already exists on them.

The built form and urban design analysis on the properties from 1463 to 1485 Birchmount Road (excluding the two apartment buildings at 1475 and 1477) has had regard to both the Infill Townhouse Guidelines and D.I.P.S., and has focussed on the following areas:

Front yard setback:

There are several different building types in the study area with varying setbacks from Birchmount Road. The variations, however, are not large and it is anticipated that a front yard setback from the street line of +/- 8m (+/- 26 ft.) is appropriate for any development in the study area. This will ensure that new development reinforces and extends the

prevailing building line along this section of Birchmount Road, established by the existing apartment developments.

Rear yard setback:

Any development in the study area needs to be particularly sensitive to its proximity to the existing houses on Bergen Road. Given the greater 57 m (190 ft.) depth of these lots, current zoning for single or semi-detached units requires a minimum rear yard building setback of approximately 19.7 m (64.6 ft.), which in this case represents fully one-third of the lot depth itself. Maintaining this standard would clearly limit options for any more intensive site redevelopment.

There are two methods for regulating an appropriate separation. The first involves imposing a setback which is commonly used in such situations. A minimum 7.5m (25 ft.) has been used as a standard rear-yard setback for many years in the Scarborough community, and is also the standard reflected in the City's Infill Townhouse Guidelines.

The second method involves establishing a 45 degree angular plane from the rear lot line. No construction would be allowed above this line. For a 3 storey building, this would normally result in a setback slightly larger than 7.5m (i.e. closer to 10m, or 33 ft.). The taller the building proposed, the greater the setback required to allow the building to fit within the specified angular plane. Both rear yard setbacks and angular planes would be an appropriate approach to regulate distance separation given the context and relation of these lands to sensitive abutting uses.

Density, Massing and Building Heights

Two massing considerations come into play when dealing with the type of deep lots which are found in the study area; the massing of buildings at the rear of the site adjacent to the existing houses on Bergen Road and building massing along Birchmount Road.

At the rear of the study lots, massing and setbacks need to combine to ensure that any development does not have an adverse impact on the existing residents such as overlook and loss of privacy, shadowing, etc. Careful attention to building massing and height will also contribute to screening possibly taller development at the front of the property along Birchmount Road from homes to the rear on Bergen Avenue. In addition to ensuring that rear yard setbacks are at least 7.5 metres, and that building heights here do not exceed 3 storeys, there should also be no driveways or vehicle parking within these rear yard spaces. Attachment 5 illustrates the relationships discussed above.

Along Birchmount Road, there are already a number of apartment buildings in the 4-5 storey range. Birchmount is a very wide arterial road and the buildings do not seem out of scale with the size of the road. To this end, massing on the study lots should be concentrated along the Birchmount frontage, with 4 storeys being an appropriate maximum height (in accordance with the Neighbourhoods designation of the Official Plan). Development adjacent to Birchmount Road should parallel the street and always maintain a front façade and direct building access relationship from the street.

In order to best respect and reinforce the established character of this neighbourhood, the maximum height of any new infill redevelopment should be limited to 4 storeys or less and the maximum density of development should generally be in keeping with the prevailing density of the existing apartment buildings in the study area.

As noted previously, the existing apartment sites have limited amenity or landscaped space. Future development should be required to meet a higher standard of landscaping and amenity. This can be achieved by limiting the density and/or introducing underground parking to free-up surface space to accommodate landscaping and amenities.

Building Envelopes

The combination of rear yard, front yard and side yard setbacks along with building height criteria result in the creation of “building envelopes” which outline the maximum area of the lot available for development. Within these envelopes, functional considerations such as vehicle circulation, servicing areas and landscaped amenity spaces are best determined on a case-by-case basis through individual site plan applications. Consistent with the Infill Townhouse Guidelines, a minimum 15 m (49 ft.) facing distance separation should be maintained between separate buildings on the front and rear portions of a site.

Building Types

Within the study area there are a number of small apartment buildings as well as single family residences. As noted above, the apartments are at an appropriate scale for the area. The O.M.B. has recently approved townhouse redevelopment on 1465 Birchmount Road as well. It is therefore likely that either townhouses or small apartment buildings, within the parameters and building envelopes established above, will likely continue to be the preferred form of intensification proposals in the study area. While there are currently no existing townhouses within the study area or immediately adjacent neighbourhood, it is reasonable to support the introduction of more townhouses on the identified redevelopment sites as a complimentary form of development.

Parking and Landscaping

Depending on the scale of development proposed, surface parking can be accommodated, however as evidenced with the City’s position on the Devco application, the space required for surface driveways and parking for too many units will impact severely on space remaining for outdoor landscaped amenity space, tree planting, etc. To compensate, underground parking may be an option, however it can be cost restrictive and the economics involved often results in much higher unit counts being proposed to compensate.

In no case should the amount of space remaining for landscaping be compromised to accommodate additional surface parking, or a greater number of units or greater building massing than is appropriate for the site simply to justify and accommodate underground parking.

Infrastructure Capacity

The primary focus of this study has been to address desirable built form and design for potential housing redevelopment and intensification within the study area. Many of the subject properties are still occupied by privately owned single-detached family dwellings, however, and as suggested by the lengthy history of development applications here, the process of further intensification through redevelopment will most likely only continue incrementally and over an extended period of time.

Accordingly current capacities of servicing infrastructure such as road capacities, sewers and water to accommodate further intensification of the type and scale discussed in this report were not reviewed as part of the study. Planning staff believe it is still most appropriate to fully assess these matters in response to individual rezoning and site plan applications having regard to servicing capacities and development conditions existing at the time such applications are submitted.

Public Consultation

In consultation with the Ward Councillor, Community Planning and Urban Design staff held a community consultation meeting June 19, 2006 for both this study and the current Jaymor application, for which over 500 notices were mailed to area residents. The meeting was attended by 20 residents together with Jaymor's representatives.

Initially, it was necessary for staff to address concerns raised by many of the attendees, residents in the various apartment buildings in the study area, that this study was not intended to lead in any way toward the possible redevelopment of their buildings or loss of their housing.

It was evident that residents did not wish to see redevelopment within the study area, but many understood that redevelopment pressures would continue. The primary concern raised was the potential impact on their privacy and enjoyment of their properties due to overly tall buildings behind their rear yards, overlook, etc. A secondary concern was that such redevelopment might lead to further intrusion into their neighbourhood with similar forms of housing intensification. It was suggested that rear yard setbacks and building heights for any new development must be controlled, and generally, townhouses were the only acceptable building form (other than single or semi-detached dwelling) immediately behind homes on Bergen Road. Taller buildings on the front of the properties would be acceptable only where they would be fully screened by those buildings to the rear.

1483-1485 Birchmount Road Application

Aspects of the current proposal are inconsistent with the findings of the study with respect to the overall site density proposed, building heights and setbacks, and facing distance separation between the buildings.

The applicant should be encouraged to reconsider this development in light of this report and discuss possible design changes with Planning staff. Subject to the satisfactory outcome of these discussions the Public Meeting on the application could be targeted for the second quarter of 2007.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Study Area

Attachment 2: Proposed Site Plan for 1483-1485 Birchmount Road

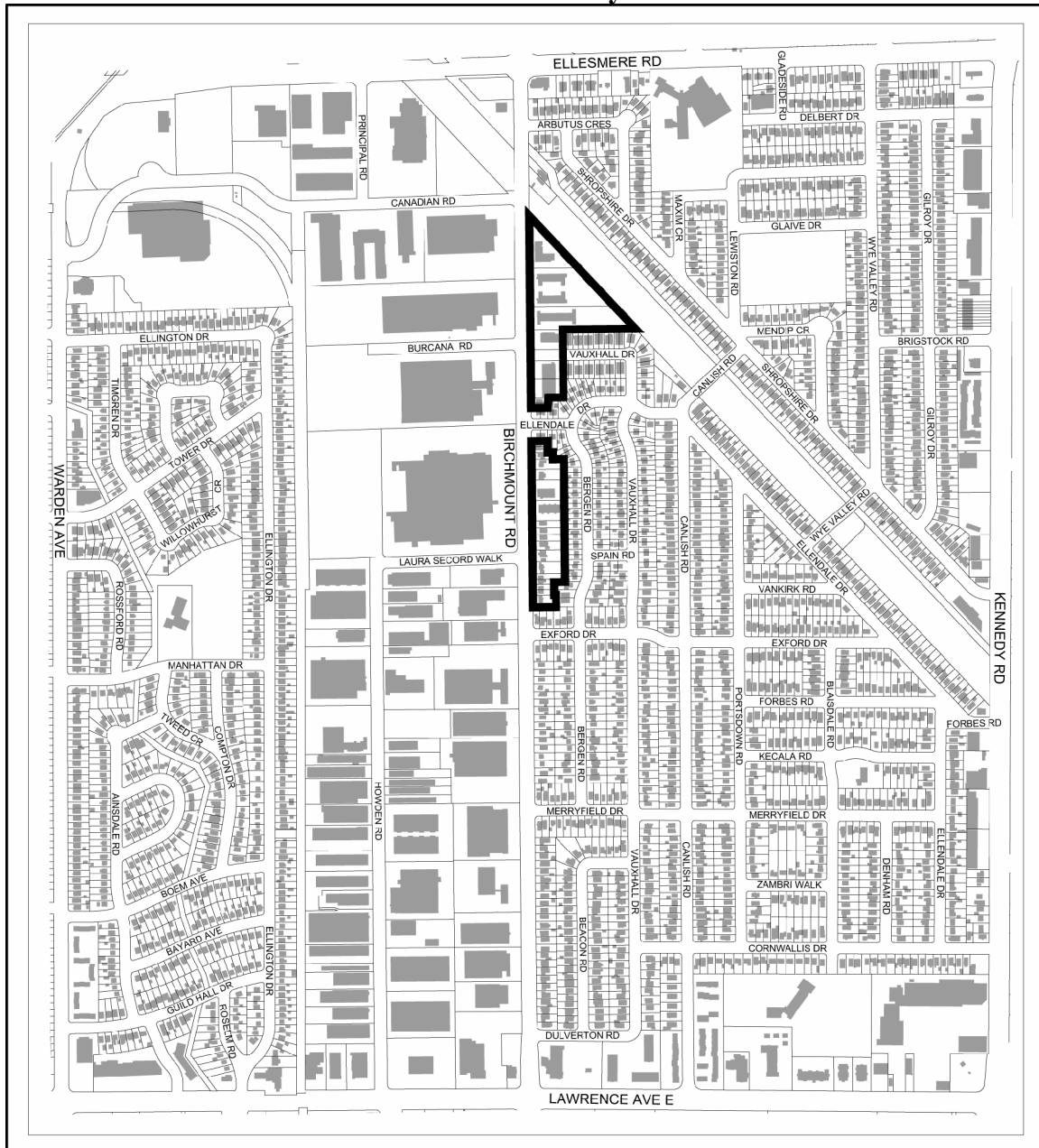
Attachment 3: Proposed Building Elevations for 1483-1485 Birchmount Road

Attachment 4: Proposed Building Elevations (North Side) for 1483-1485 Birchmount Road

Attachment 5: Building Height, Location and Angular Plane (Schematic)

Attachment 6: Design Framework for Residential Infill and Intensification Between 1463 and 1485 Birchmount Road

Attachment 1: Study Area




Toronto Urban
Development Services
Study Area Map

 Study Area

Birchmount Rd. Area Study (Dorset Pk.)
1459 - 1555 Birchmount Rd.

File # 04-103376 TM

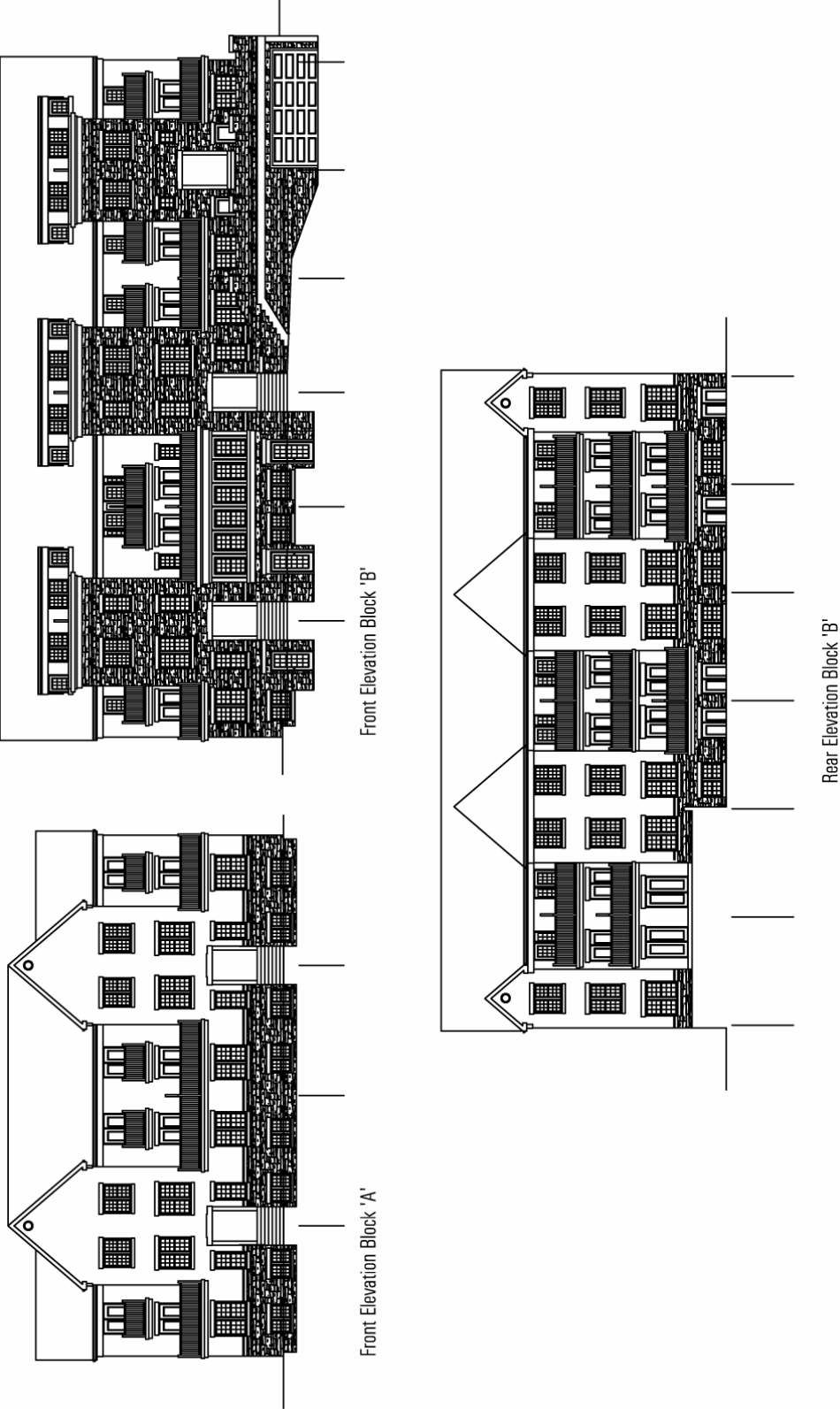
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Applicant's Submitted Drawing

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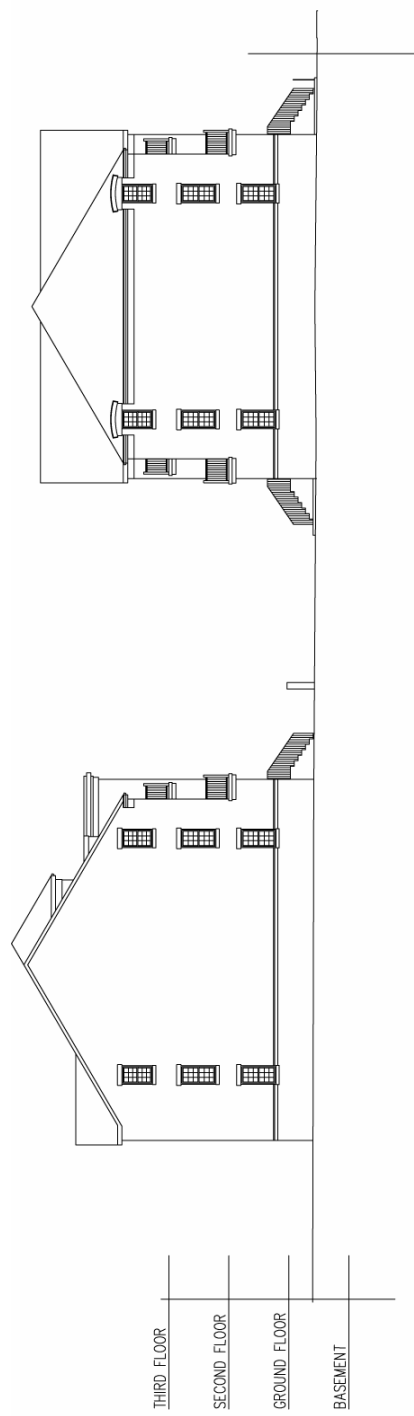
Attachment 3: Proposed Building Elevations for 1483-1485 Birchmount Road



Elevation Plans
Applicant's Submitted Drawing
Not to Scale
12/19/06

1483-1485 Birchmount Road
File # 05-168514 0Z

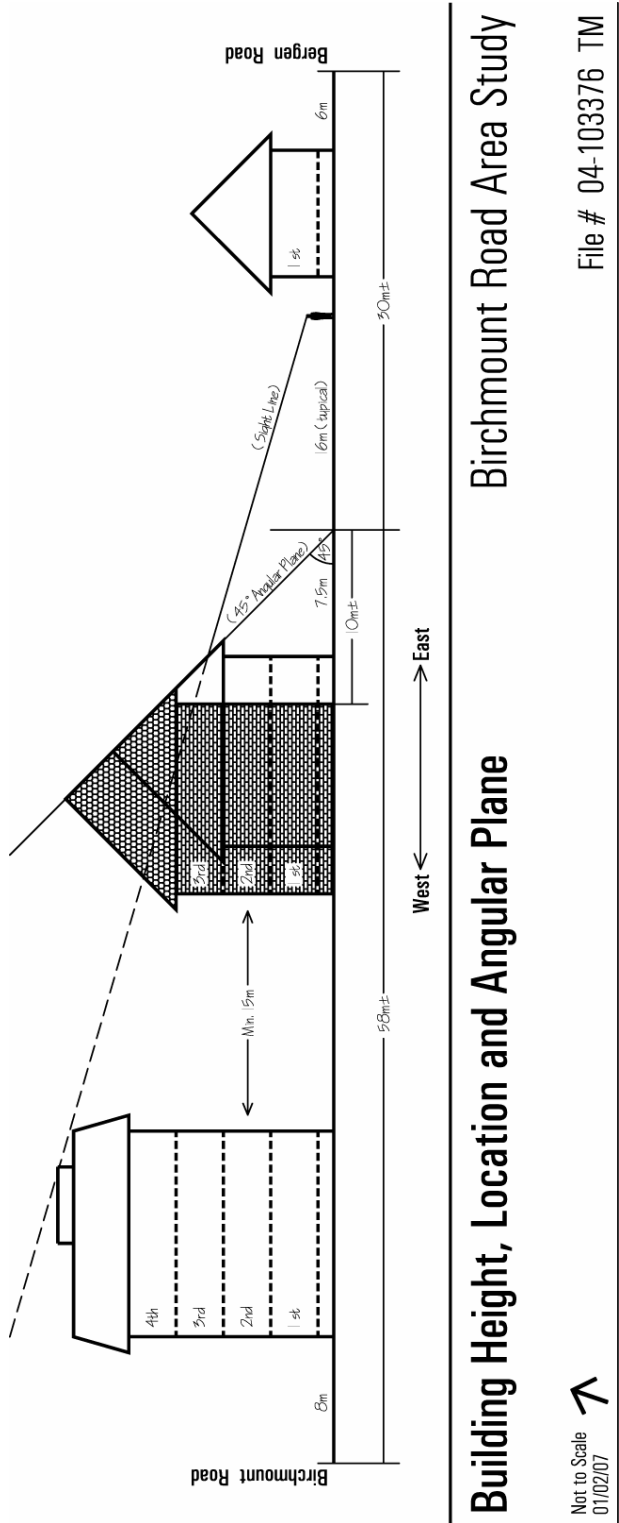
**Attachment 4: Proposed Building Elevations (North Side) for
1483-1485 Birchmount Road**



Elevation Plan - North
Applicant's Submitted Drawing
Not to Scale
10/14/05

1483-1485 Birchmount Road
File # 05-168520 SA; 05-168514 OZ

Attachment 5: Building Height, Location and Angular Plane



Attachment 6: Design Framework for Residential Infill and Intensification Between 1463 and 1485 Birchmount Road

- 1) Grade-related townhouses, stacked townhouses and/or apartment buildings directly adjacent to Birchmount Road will only be supported to a maximum height of 4 storeys.
- 2) Residential redevelopment should be limited to a maximum net site density generally in keeping with the densities of the existing apartment buildings in the study area.
- 3) Buildings adjacent to Birchmount Road should present a front façade to, and direct building access from, the street, with a building setback from the street line of approximately 8 m (26 ft.).
- 4) Only buildings having rear yard building setbacks of a minimum of 7.5 metres and heights which fit within a 45 degree angular plane, as measured from the rear lot line, to a maximum of 3 storeys, should be considered on the rear third of these properties. There should be no driveways or vehicle parking within these rear yard spaces.
- 5) Buildings on the rear of these properties should serve to screen the rear yards of homes on Bergen Road from those buildings on the front of the property.
- 6) Separate buildings on the front and rear portions of a site should maintain a minimum facing distance separation of 15 m (49 ft.).
- 7) Grade-related dwellings on the rear portion of the site should be limited to a maximum of 10 units accessed by a maximum 45 m (148 ft.) long private laneway having a minimum 8 m (26 ft.) wide pavement, a 1.7 m (5.6 ft.) sidewalk, a hammerhead for vehicle turning and suitability for public solid waste and recyclables collection.
- 8) Underground parking should be encouraged where feasible, to facilitate increasing the amount of outdoor landscaped amenity space available, including sufficient planting/growing space to support mature trees, for the enjoyment of the residents and the benefit of residents of adjacent properties.
- 9) In addition to considerations under Policy 4.1.5. of the Official Plan, the particular design of individual site redevelopment proposals will also have regard to the City's:
 - a) Urban Design Guidelines for Infill Townhouses which provide a framework to address the integration or 'fit' of townhouse building forms that minimize impacts on the surrounding area, achieve a high quality of design and amenity for existing and new residents, and ensure efficient, environmentally sound site functioning; and

- b) Development Infrastructure Policy and Standards Review (D.I.P.S.) which addresses criteria for private roadways where the size of redevelopment parcels may not be suitable to incorporate a public street. Development at the rear of these parcels would consist of a maximum of 10 units not directly fronting the public street, accessed by a maximum 45 m (148 ft.) long private laneway having a minimum 8 m (26 ft.) wide pavement, a 1.7 m (5.6 ft.) sidewalk, a hammerhead for vehicle turning and suitability for public solid waste and recyclables collection.