



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study – Status Report

Date:	June 8, 2007
To:	Planning and Growth Management Committee
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	Ward No. 36 – Scarborough Southwest
Reference Number:	File No. 03 180350 ESC 36 TM

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Planning and Growth Management Committee with an update on Phase 2 of the Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study, to outline next steps in the study process, and to advise on the status of planning applications within the study area.

Phase 1 of the study, which examined the history of the Quarry Lands and their context within the larger community existing today, was completed in 2005. Phase 2 of the study is now well advanced. First principles for developing more detailed conceptual planning alternatives are emerging, and an environmental investigation into the City’s lands within the study area is nearing completion. Planning staff anticipate that a report to Planning and Growth Management Committee on the completion of Phase 2, which will include recommendations to implement a comprehensive land use approach for the future use of the Quarry Lands during Phase 3, will be available in the fourth quarter of 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council direct City staff to continue with Phases 2 and 3 of the Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study and to also continue consideration of the planning applications by Gerrard/Clonmore Developments and Shell Canada within the context of that study.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications.

DECISION HISTORY

In 2003, Gerrard/Clonmore Developments (the Conservatory Group) applied to the Committee of Adjustment for a minor variance to reduce the minimum unit size requirements relating to 1,455 apartments in four high-rise towers permitted on its site (indicated on Attachment 1). On October 15, 2003 the Committee deferred the application sine die without a decision.

In September 2003, City Council directed, in part, that the Commissioner of Urban Development Services 'carry out a study of land use policies in respect of that area of land lying east of Victoria Park Avenue, south of the CN rail tracks and fronting on Gerrard and Clonmore'. This study has been initiated as the Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study.

In March 2005, the Planning and Transportation Committee endorsed a framework for the study. Staff were directed to report further on the Phase 1 Community Profile findings the following month. Staff were also instructed to report on a process for undertaking an environmental review of the City's own approximately 6.7 ha (16.7 ac.) of lands within the study area known municipally as 411 Victoria Park Avenue (Attachment 2).

The 'Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study Phase 1 Report: Study Area Profile' from the Chief Planner and Executive Director dated April 11, 2005 was received for information by Planning and Transportation Committee on May 25, 2005 and by City Council on June 14, 15 and 16, 2005.

The Chief Planner and Executive Director provided a second report dated June 23, 2005 on a recommended study approach into environmental issues involving the Quarry Lands. As recommended by Planning and Transportation Committee on June 27, 2005, City Council on July 19, 20, 21 and 26, 2005 directed and authorized Facilities and Real Estate staff to initiate such a study.

On January 23, 2006, Policy and Finance Committee considered a report dated January 16, 2006 from the City Manager. The report addressed the declaration as surplus of seven City-owned properties across the City, including 411 Victoria Park Avenue which is currently under lease to a golf driving range operation (Attachment 2), and the transfer of these sites to the Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO). As amended by the Committee, City Council approved the recommendations with further amendments on January 31, February 1 and 2, 2006.

In April 2006, Gerrard/Clonmore filed a rezoning application (file no. 06 128393 ESC 36 OZ) for similar unit size reductions proposed in the earlier minor variance application. As well, Shell Canada in November 2006 applied for official plan and zoning by-law amendments (file no. 06 191778 ESC 36 OZ) and for site plan approval (file no. 06 191784 ESC 36 SA) with respect to 2498 Gerrard Street East within the study area. Shell is proposing a modernized new gas bar facility to replace the existing Beaver facility, which would also include a convenience store and car wash.

Preliminary Reports from Planning staff on these applications were considered by Scarborough Community Council on July 11, 2006 and January 16, 2007 respectively. Staff were directed to process these applications concurrently with the Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study, to initiate community consultation and to report back to the Planning and Transportation Committee in the first quarter of 2007 on the status of both the Birchcliff Quarry Lands Area Study and these applications. This report to Planning and Growth Management Committee responds to that direction.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Birchcliff Quarry Lands were used from the 1930's through to the early 1950's for various industrial uses largely associated with sand and gravel extraction and brick making. Over the years large portions of the site were quarried, creating a number of pits. The lands were, until approximately 1960, subsequently filled with both municipal landfill waste and other unknown, potentially industrial, waste material. Today, few traces of these former activities remain. Other than some more recent commercial developments along its edges, the lands largely remain a combination of open meadow with some treed areas along the rail line to the north and the east side. A number of major buried municipal trunk sewer and water lines now traverse the site. Over time, one remnant pit area on the Gerrard/Clonmore lands adjacent to Gerrard Street East gradually filled with water, evolving into a wetland feature.

Redevelopment of the Quarry Lands has largely not occurred, particularly on the Gerrard/Clonmore site which has been zoned for high density apartment use since 1969 (Attachment 5). The new Toronto Official Plan (Attachment 3) has now re-designated the Quarry Lands as a Mixed Use Area, with the central portion designated Parks. (Gerrard/Clonmore has appealed this designation on its lands to the Ontario Municipal Board.)

There are few such large, under-utilized and well-situated land opportunities remaining within the City of Toronto. The location of the Quarry Lands offers good accessibility to both the Downtown and Scarborough City Centre, and is close to the Bloor-Danforth subway line. Many commercial and other services for residents are also available nearby (e.g. Danforth Avenue and Kingston Road).

The new Official Plan provides substantial guidance on how urban infill and redevelopment should proceed where intensification opportunities exist, particularly in Mixed Use Areas. Until initiation of this study, however, comprehensive planning for the Quarry Lands as a whole has never been undertaken at the level of new public streets, pattern of development blocks, distribution of land uses, attention to parks and open spaces, building forms, densities and community facilities.

COMMENTS

Study Purpose

The challenge for planning the Quarry Lands is in determining the elements necessary to achieve a high quality, well-designed and environmentally appropriate new mixed use urban neighbourhood that compliments and is well-integrated within the community around it. The study is therefore intended to consider the future development of the Quarry Lands in a comprehensive fashion.

The main objectives of the study are to:

- a) develop a consultation process that engages the landowners, residents, and other stakeholders in identifying a vision for the future use of the Quarry Lands and principles for future development;
- b) identify options for the future development of the Quarry Lands that are consistent with the directions and policies of the new Official Plan;
- c) prepare concept plans for the future use of the Quarry Lands; and
- d) identify options for the implementation of the concept plans over the longer term.

The Study has been proceeding on the basis of three phases:

Phase 1: Study Area Profile

This involved the review and analysis of the existing land uses, natural environment, environmental constraints, planning context, housing, demographics, physical infrastructure, transit, transportation network, and community and social services and facilities within the larger study area.

Phase 2: Vision for the area

This phase, the subject of this report, will determine principles for development and a vision for the Quarry Lands, and preparation of concept plans that reflect this vision.

Phase 3: Implementation Plan

This final phase will address options for implementation of an appropriate concept plan for the Quarry Lands.

Status of the Study

Phase 1

As noted above, the 'Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study Phase 1 Report: Study Area Profile' was concluded and reported on in the spring of 2005. The report is now posted on the City's web site (<http://www.toronto.ca/planning/birchcliff.htm>) together with other study-related information.

Planning staff presented the Phase 1 report at an open house and community information meeting at Malvern Collegiate on June 27, 2005. Notice for the meeting encompassed the entire larger study area, and approximately 300 residents attended. In keeping with the objective of engaging residents, landowners and stakeholders in the study, a focussed working group was established to contribute to the more intensive work involved in Phase 2. Of approximately 50 names submitted, a core of approximately 20 people have participated most actively in Phase 2. This group includes a number of resident members of the local Concerned Citizens of Quarry Lands Development group.

Phase 2

City Planning staff, with support from Parks, Transportation Services, Technical Services, and Facilities and Real Estate, have conducted a number of meetings with the working group to explore issues, discuss city planning principles and the new Official Plan, directions for the study, emerging information, etc.

A ‘brain-storming’ session was held on June 21, 2006 where residents were asked to suggest in general terms what works or doesn’t work today in the community. What do they like and dislike? What are existing issues, concerns or needs related to community services, parks or roads and traffic? What would they like to see improved? What kinds of things should or should not happen in any redevelopment of the Quarry Lands?

This open-ended discussion assisted Planning staff to organize a full-day ‘design charrette’ on Saturday, October 21, 2007 with the working group. Approximately 20 residents, Councillor Ashton and Deputy-Mayor Bussin attended, as did representatives from Shell, Gerrard/Clonmore and Runnymede.

Participants were divided into three working tables with various City staff at each to facilitate. Each group was provided with a table-sized air photo of the Quarry Lands, overlay tracing paper, scaled templates for various types of development (i.e. streets, parks, different types of residential development, etc.), markers and similar materials. The groups were then encouraged to lay out a land use plan concept, having regard to both the previous brainstorming ideas and directions expressed in the new Official Plan.

The charrette proved to be an excellent format to stimulate creative and wide-ranging ideas among the various stakeholder participants about possible futures for the Quarry Lands. Two general themes in particular emerged. High-density, high-rise residential developments was generally viewed to be an out-dated and inappropriate planning approach for these lands. As well, any plans for the Quarry should set a clear precedent in the City of Toronto for achieving a very high level of environmental diligence and a seamless integration of any new neighbourhood with the existing community. (Further information on the charrette is also available on the City’s web-page noted above.)

Emerging Planning Principles for the Quarry Lands

Planning staff have used ideas arising through the working group discussions and charrette, together with objectives and directions contained in the Official Plan, to

formulate a set of emerging principles for the Quarry Lands. The principles are summarized below and set out in more detail in Attachment 8.

- A variety of housing types, commercial facilities and community services to serve both existing and future residents should be considered for the Quarry Lands.
- The area should extend and complement the surrounding neighbourhoods, with any new streets into the Quarry Lands reinforcing this connection.
- The fabric of land use blocks should reflect and complement the existing neighbourhood.
- Gerrard Street East should be transformed from a busy through arterial to a more pedestrian friendly link between new development and the existing community to the south, with careful attention paid to a transition in built form, height and land uses along the street.
- An identification or ‘sense of place’ should be achieved for the Quarry Lands, which would include a “gateway feature” at Victoria Park and Gerrard (i.e. a public art installation) and the careful organization of land uses to create focal points and meeting places for the new neighbourhood and the larger community.
- Very careful attention needs to be given to the environment. This includes designs for the lands which discourage auto dependency and foster pedestrian activity and transit use, careful attention to parks, open spaces and particularly retaining and recreating the wetland space as another focal point for the community. The Green Development Standard should guide development.

These emerging principles will be further refined as part of Phase 2 of the study.

The City’s Site Environmental Investigation

Facilities and Real Estate Services staff engaged DCS Environmental Engineering Services in the fall of 2006 to undertake a Phase 1 and 2 site environmental investigation for the City’s 6.7 ha (16.7 ac.) lands within the Quarry Lands study area. TEDCO is cost-sharing in the study.

DSC commenced historical research and background information collection for the Quarry Lands late in 2006, with field work consisting of test pits and boreholes on the City’s lands commencing early in 2007.

At the working group meeting on May 22, 2007, DCS representatives reviewed the background research conducted and the methodology for the study. As much of the laboratory analysis on various ground samples taken was still underway, study findings were not yet available. Planning staff understand DCS’s final report will be completed for submission to the City in the near future. These findings should inform discussions on specific land use alternatives.

Gerrard/Clonmore Site

By virtue of Gerrard/Clonmore’s earlier appeal of the Mixed Use Areas designation of the new Official Plan, the High Density Residential and Residential Commercial

designations of the former Scarborough Official Plan remain in place on this site. Gerrard/Clonmore has also now appealed the zoning application to the Ontario Municipal Board pursuant to Section 34(11) of the Planning Act given the lack of a decision on it by the City. A typical elevation for one of the proposed apartment buildings is included as Attachment 6.

While the current application addresses requirements for the size of dwelling units, it is based on 1969 zoning for apartment buildings of a form, height and density which are potentially in conflict with the emerging principles for the Quarry Lands discussed above. This includes potential impacts on the wetland adjacent to Gerrard Street East by two of the four proposed buildings, and possible limitations the buildings could pose on appropriate options for introducing new public streets into the Quarry Lands.

Desirable planned future land uses for the Quarry Lands collectively are now being addressed in a comprehensive manner. Planning staff conclude that further consideration of this application by the City should properly continue to be carried out within the context of the study only, and not separately.

Shell Canada

The current applications request approval for the gas bar, retail use and mechanical car-wash being proposed, and appropriate development standards overall to the redevelopment. Shell's proposed site plan is indicated on Attachment 7. Review of the Shell Canada applications in the context of the Quarry Lands Study is continuing. Shell Canada representatives continue to attend the working group discussions.

Most recently, Shell Canada submitted a letter dated May 31, 2007 to City Planning reaffirming its intentions to proceed with its redevelopment, requesting that the City more actively address the proposed site plan, and suggesting that the proposal satisfies many of the emerging planning principles for the Quarry area. Shell requests that its applications now be processed in parallel with, but independent of, the study.

Again, Planning staff believe that consideration for vehicle-oriented land uses should also be properly considered within the larger context of the comprehensive land use review underway. For example, any introduction of a future public street adjacent to this site could have particular implications on site planning. As previously directed by Scarborough Community Council, these applications as well should continue to be addressed within the context of the Quarry Lands Study.

Next Steps

Phase 2 Completion

Planning staff are currently refining the 'first principles' discussed above as a basis to commence more detailed design work on land use options over the summer months. Staff anticipate developing two or three alternative design scenarios for the Quarry Lands which best reflect the framework of the principles. This work will continue to be informed by on-going working group discussions, results from the City's environmental

investigation, input from TEDCO, and any further progress achieved with respect to the current planning applications as discussed in this report.

Once alternative scenarios have been developed for further discussion with the working group, Planning staff will then be able to ‘test’ the development scenarios. In this regard, the City’s planning studies to date with respect to the Warden Woods, Danforth Avenue, Victoria Park Subway Station and Kingston Road surrounding the Quarry Lands will provide useful background information to assess potential community services, traffic and similar impacts related to further development on the Quarry Lands.

Members of the working group have suggested that once this further work on alternative scenarios has been completed, the results should then be presented back to the larger community for information and discussion. Planning staff fully concur, and anticipate that such a meeting can be held this fall. This would conclude the ‘visioning’ portion of Phase 2.

Phase 3

Alternative land use concepts and appropriate directions for the Quarry Lands will be developed through completion of Phase 2. Phase 3 of the study will involve implementation of the study’s findings.

Planning staff anticipate reporting further to Planning and Growth Management Committee in the fourth quarter of 2007. The report will contain recommendations on the preferred land use approach for future Quarry Lands development, and appropriate actions which should be initiated for implementation, including the holding of any statutory Public Meetings as may be warranted.

CONTACT

Rod Hines, Principal Planner
Tel. No. (416) 396-7020
Fax No. (416) 396-4265
E-mail: hines@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

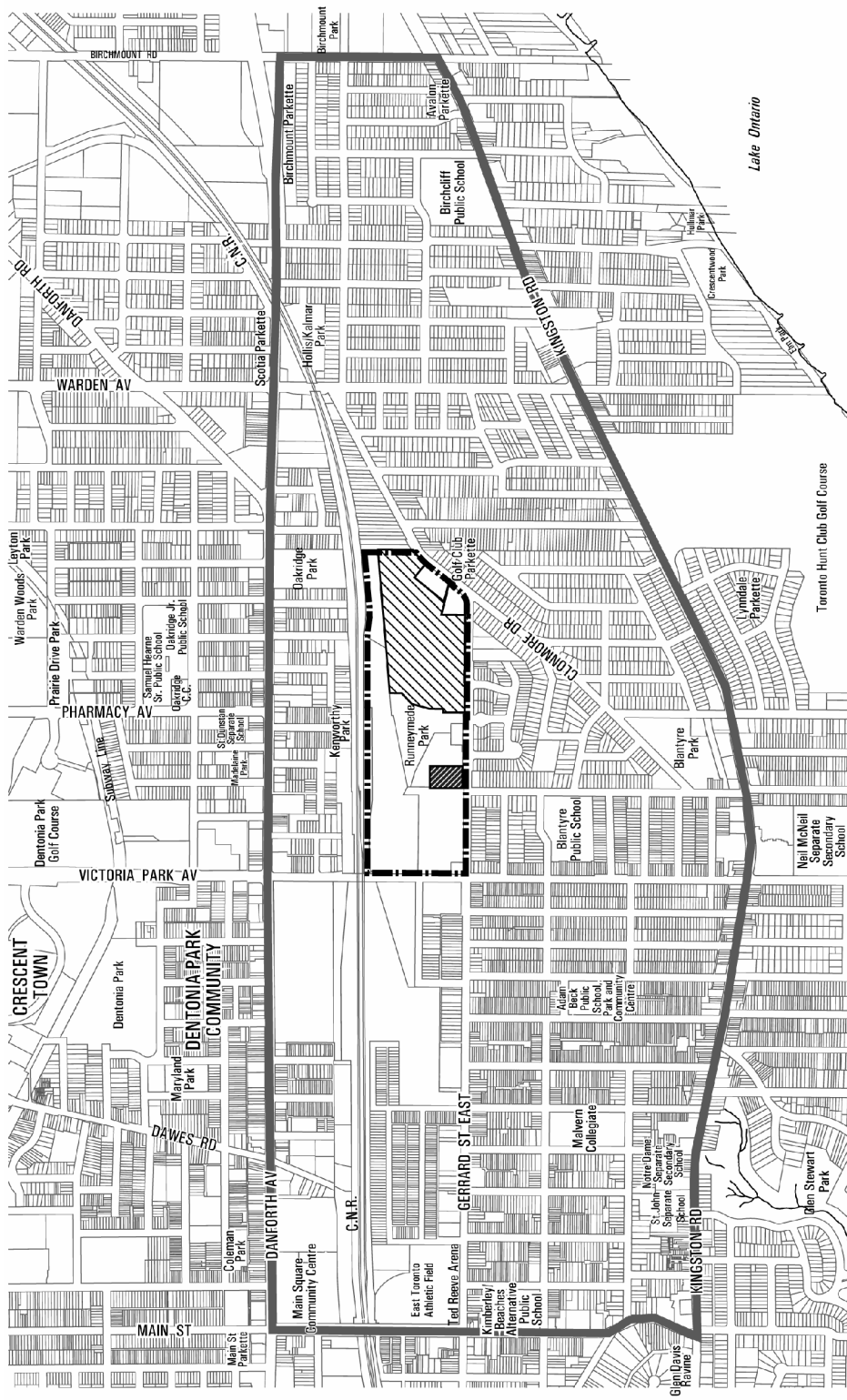
Ted Tyndorf, Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS







Attachment 1: Birchcliff Quarry Lands, Study Area and Apartment Site
Attachment 2: Quarry Land Parcels
Attachment 3: Toronto Official Plan

- Attachment 4: Quarry Lands Zoning
- Attachment 5: Gerrard/Clonmore Zoning
- Attachment 6: Gerrard/Clonmore Apartment Building Elevation (Typical)
- Attachment 7: Shell Canada Site Plan
- Attachment 8: Discussion on Proposed First Principles for Quarry Lands Development
(October 2006 Design Charette)

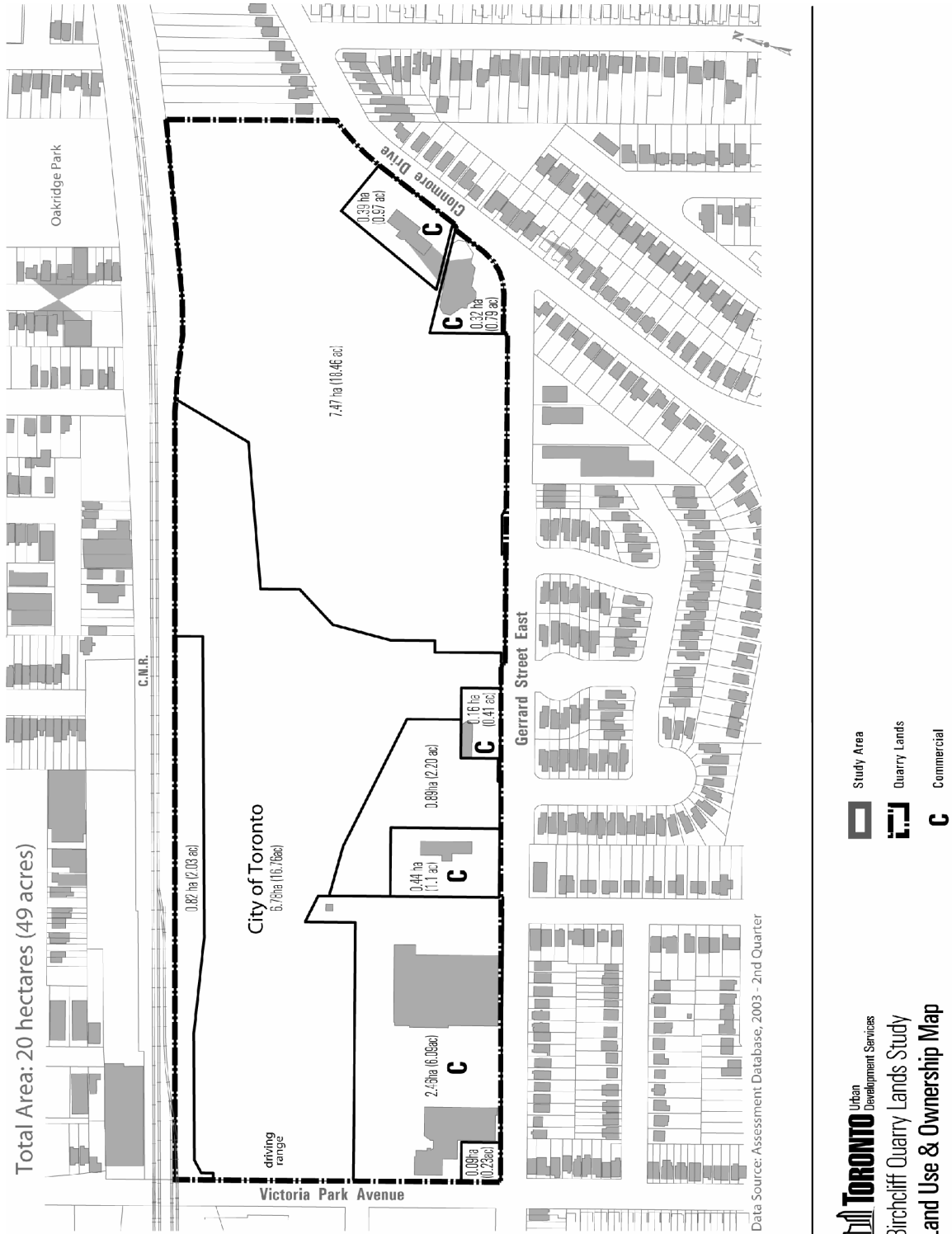
Attachment 1: Birchcliff Quarry Lands, Study Area and Apartment Site



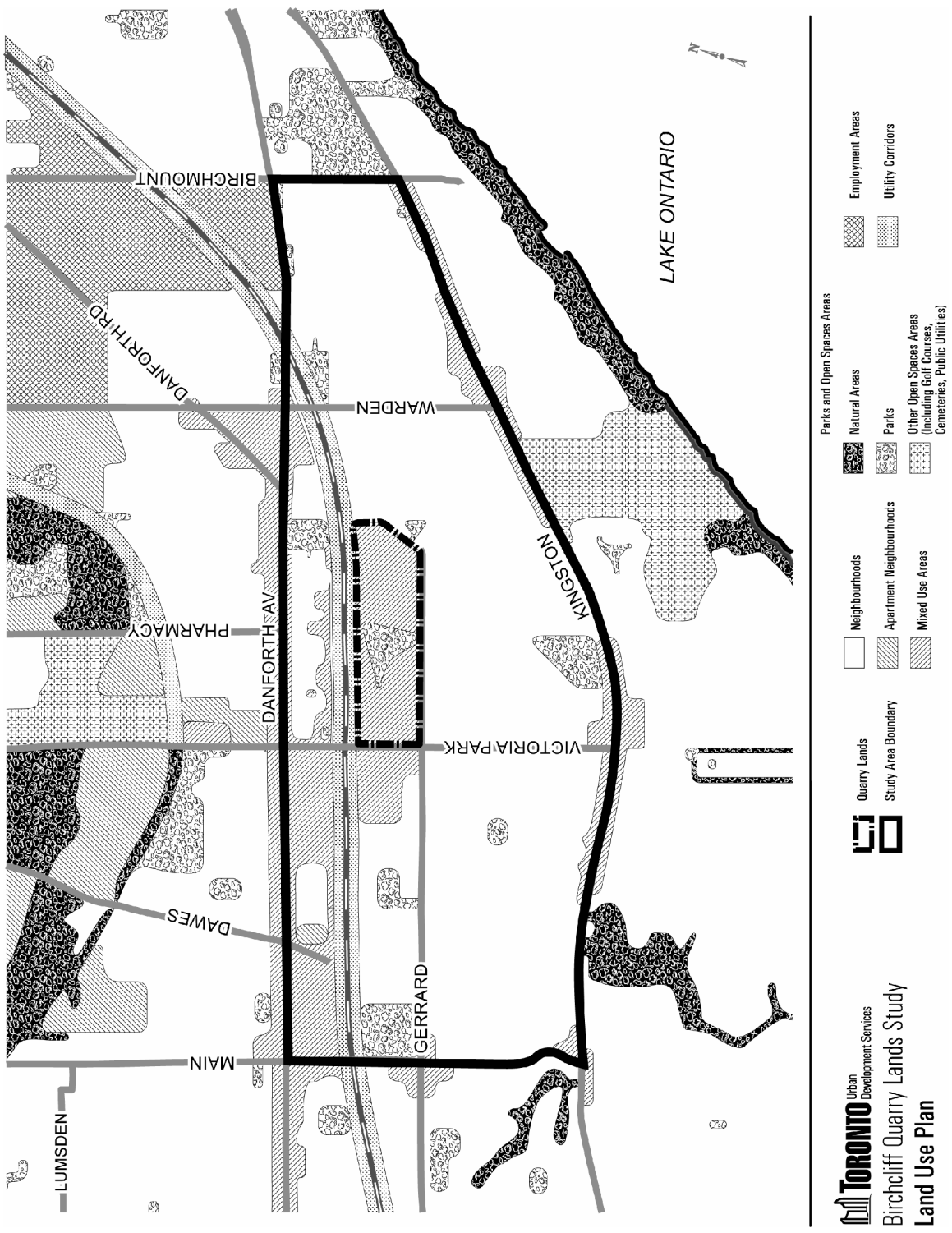
Toronto Urban Development Services
Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study Location Map

-  Quarry Lands
-  Study Area
-  Gerrard Clommore Apartment Site
-  Shell Canada
-  Quarry Lands
-  Gerrard Clommore Apartment Site

Attachment 2: Quarry Land Parcels



Attachment 3: Toronto Official Plan



Attachment 4: Quarry Lands Zoning

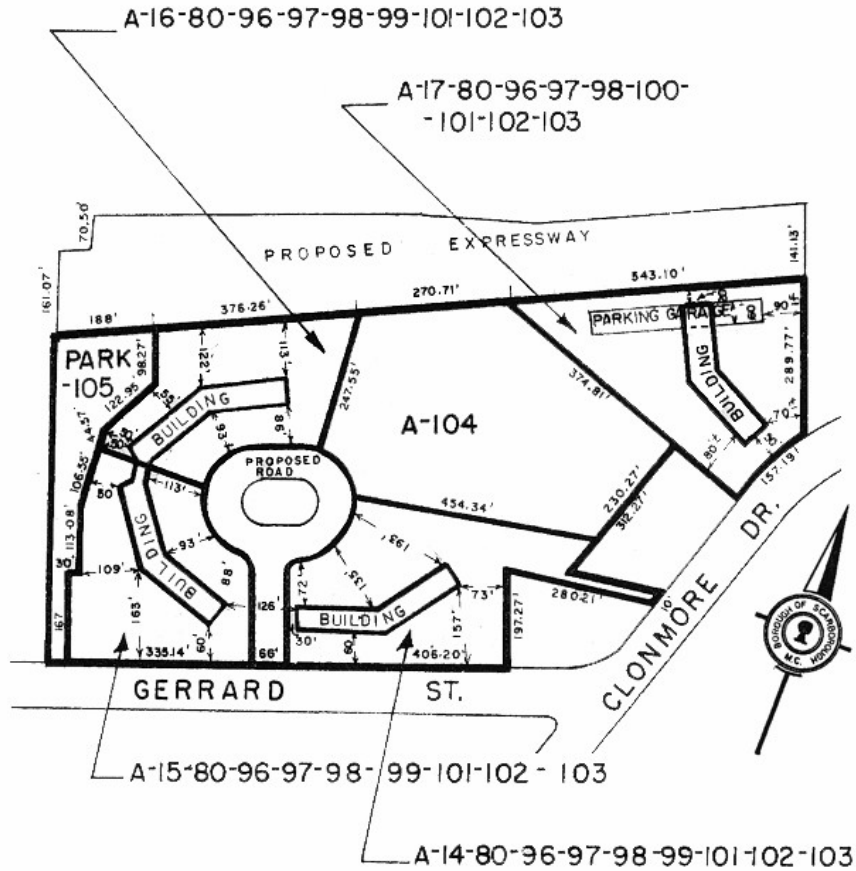


Toronto Urban Development Services
 Birchcliff Quarry Lands Study
 Zoning

Quarry Lands
 A Apartment Residential
 CC Community Shopping Commercial
 RWY Railway Corridor
 P Park
 AG Agricultural Holding

Attachment 5: Gerrard/Clonmore Zoning

LOT 34 CON. A



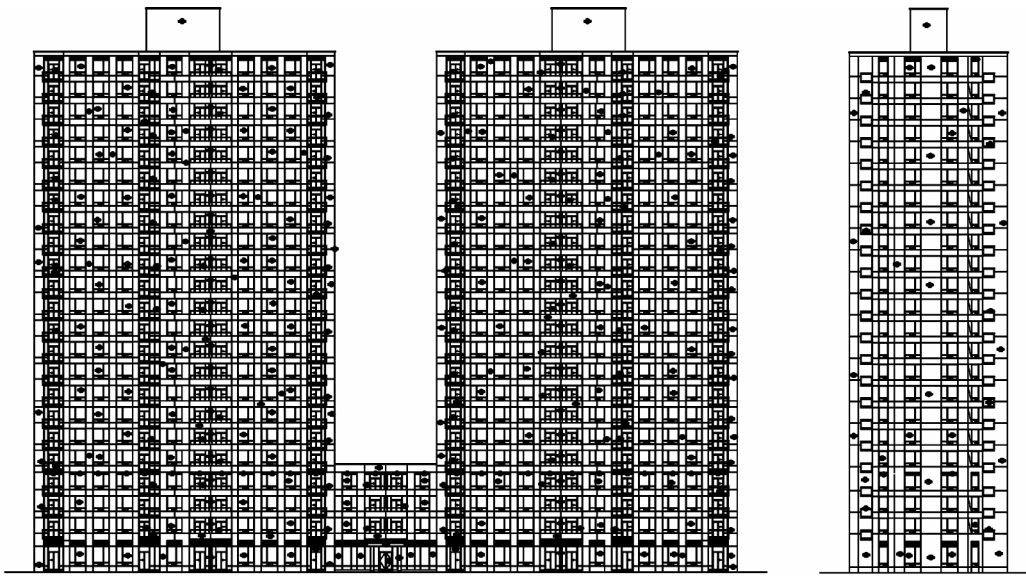
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AS AMENDED BY BY-LAW No. 13310

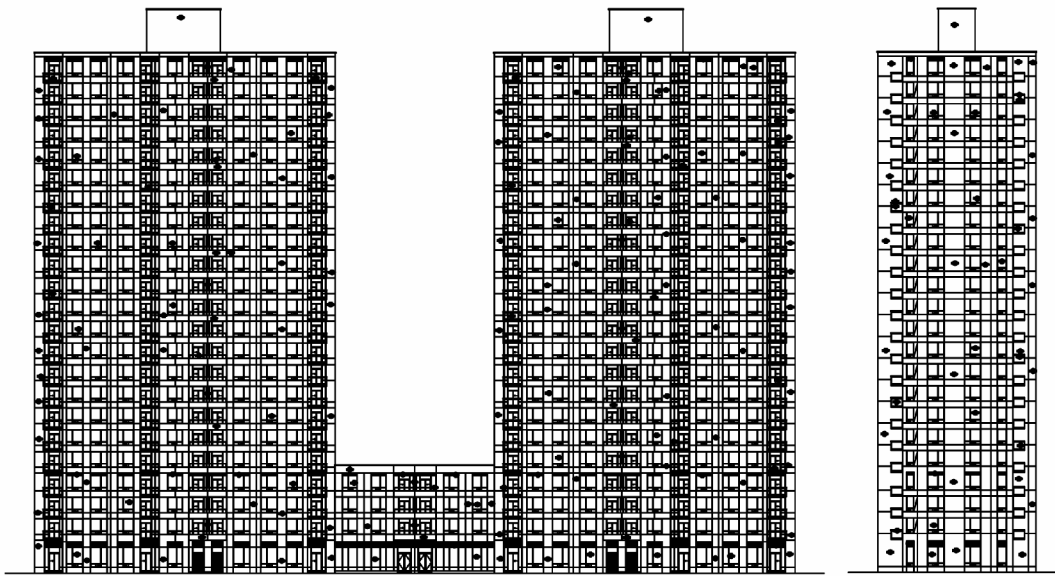
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Attachment 6: Gerrard/Clonmore Apartment Building Elevation (Typical)



Front Elevation

Left Side Elevation



Rear Elevation

Right Side Elevation

Elevation Plans

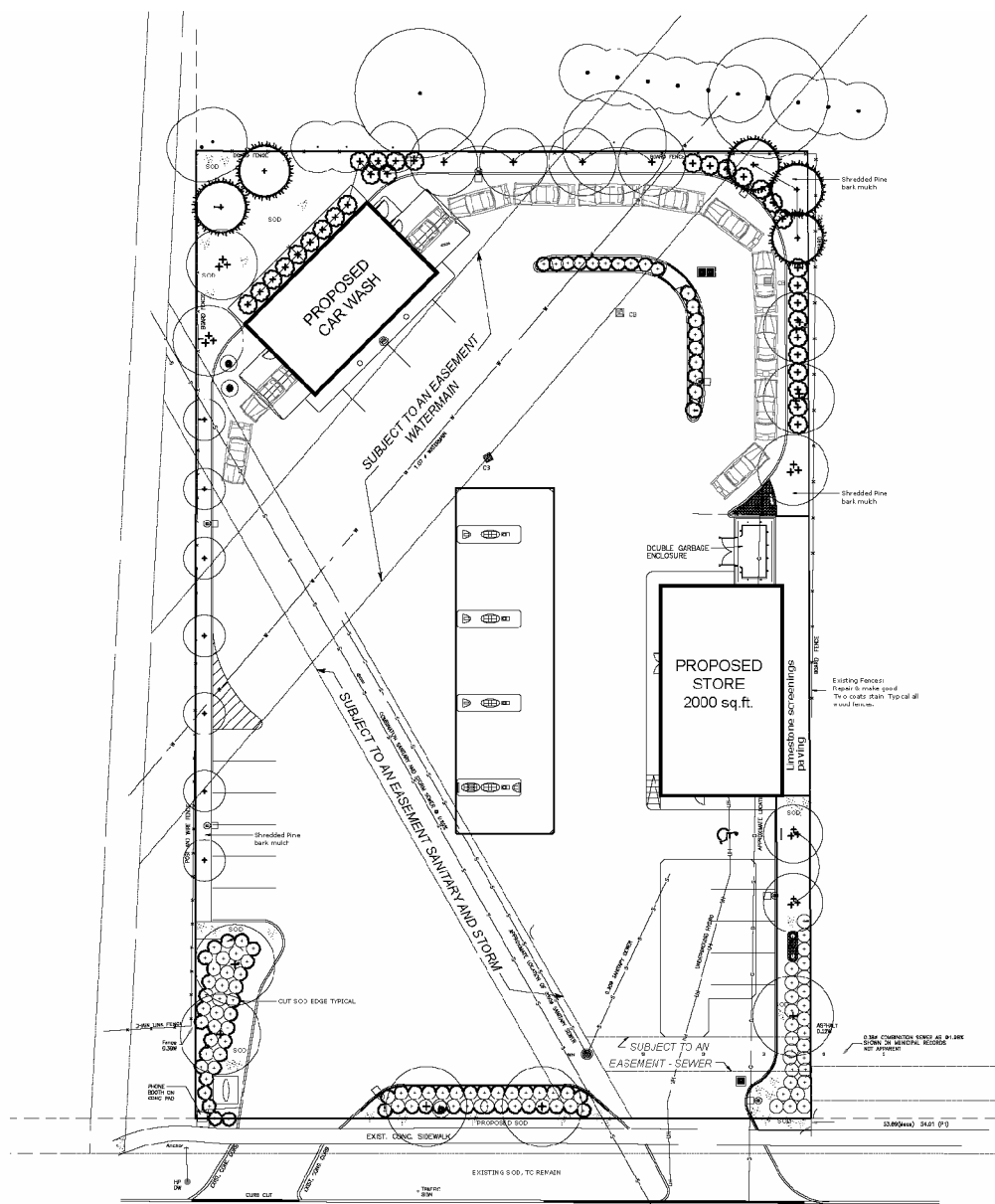
N/W of Gerrard St. East & Clonmore Dr.

Applicant's Submitted Drawing

Not to Scale
05/23/06

File # 06-128393 OZ

Attachment 7: Shell Canada Site Plan



GERRARD STREET EAST

Site Plan

Applicant's Submitted Drawing

Not to Scale 

2498 Gerrard Street East

File # 06-191778 OZ and 06-191784 SA

Attachment 8: Discussion on Proposed First Principles for Quarry Lands Development (October 2006 Design Charrette)

- Existing Roads and Servicing

Summary: All groups believed that the existing condition of Gerrard Street needed to be improved to make it more pedestrian-friendly, with better sidewalks, street trees, additional traffic lights and crosswalks. The re-alignment of the intersection of Gerrard and Clonmore was seen as one way to slow down traffic on Gerrard. Improving the pedestrian connection along Victoria Park from Gerrard to Danforth was seen as an important aspect of the development of the site.

(The current underground servicing infrastructure and existing easements were not taken into account at this stage.)

Principles:

- streetscape improvements to Gerrard Street should transform it from a through traffic artery into a pedestrian friendly connector between the new development and the existing community to the south.
- an assessment of the availability and capacity of local servicing should accompany the final design of any comprehensive plan for the development of the Quarry Lands.

- Place Making

Summary: Any new development should create a destination/focus for the area. Providing a place/places for the community to “come together” was seen as desirable. A gateway feature at Gerrard and Victoria Park was also seen as a way to create identity for the new development.

Principles:

- concentration of services and commercial activity along new streets, or in association with new open spaces, should be encouraged to help create focal points in the community.
- a “gateway feature” at Victoria Park and Gerrard should be encouraged. This could include, but not be limited to, a public art installation.

- New Streets and Blocks

Summary: All groups had some form of east-west road between Gerrard and the railway line. One group felt that this connection should not, however be direct, but circuitous. Within the site, the possibility of rear lanes was entertained along with dedicated bike paths. All new street and block patterns supported the notion of the development of the Quarry Lands into a new neighbourhood compatible with those surrounding it.

Principles:

- the development of the Quarry Lands should result in the creation of a new residential community which extends and complements the surrounding neighbourhoods.
- extending the existing streets, from south of Gerrard Street, into the neighbourhood should be promoted to connect the existing neighbourhood with any new development.
- traffic control measures should be implemented at the extensions of existing streets to ease access and to control traffic on Gerrard.
- new streets and blocks should be designed to minimize the influence of the automobile on neighbourhood character.
- consideration should be given to a public laneway system throughout the area as a means to create pedestrian friendly streetscapes throughout the development.

- Open Space

Summary: All groups retained the ‘wetland’ area as a community open space feature. Combinations of centralized and dispersed, active and passive parkland were also proposed. Retention of the stand of mature trees at the north-east corner of the site was seen as desirable.

Principles:

- consideration should be given to retaining or recreating the wetland area as a focal point in any new development.
- an open space masterplan should be created which includes a variety of open space opportunities both active and passive, large and small.
- a tree preservation and enhancement plan should form an important part of any open space master plan.
- all development should conform as far as possible to the City of Toronto Green Development Standards.

- Connections and Interfaces

Summary: Between one and four entry points from Gerrard were recommended. A “gateway” into the site from Gerrard was also proposed. The lands along the rail corridor were seen as an opportunity to create and retain a landscaped open space/pathway system. The possibility of connecting under the rail line to the community to the north was also explored.

Principles:

- a comprehensive pedestrian masterplan should be created for the area which will focus both on internal connectivity and ease of access to public transit.
- the safe crossing, by pedestrians, of all streets in the area should be given high priority in the pedestrian masterplan.

- cycling both within the area and beyond its borders should be encouraged and promoted in all development plans.
- lands along the railway line should be improved to continue to provide a linear pedestrian connection throughout the area.

- Built Form

Summary: Where the intensity of development was considered, the higher density was recommended to be to the north of the site and toward Victoria Park Avenue. Mixed use mid-rise buildings were proposed at Gerrard and Victoria Park and at Gerrard and Clonmore.

Principles:

- any transition in height and density across the site should be away from the existing community.
- the height and density of development along Gerrard Street should be comparable to the development on the south side.

- Housing Mix

Summary: A variety of housing forms was proposed from singles, semis and townhouses to mid-rise six to ten storey apartment buildings.

Principles:

- a broad mix of housing types can be contemplated for the Quarry Lands given its proximity to both stable residential neighbourhoods and a variety of public transit opportunities.

- Commercial Development

Summary: The need for some form of commercial component in the new neighbourhood was identified, either through retention of the existing or the development of new forms. Gerrard and Victoria Park was seen as the major commercial node.

Principles:

- commercial activity should form part of any new community on the Quarry Lands either through the re-development and expansion of existing facilities or the creation of new facilities as part of the development of the lands.

- Community Services

Summary: The area as a whole was seen to be deficient in a variety of community services. Such facilities as a library, a community centre, a health centre, a police sub-station, seniors' services, seniors' housing and a community garden were identified as desirable.

Principles:

- a complete community services assessment should accompany any comprehensive development proposal for the Quarry Lands.
- a wide range of community services should be easily available to residents of any new community developed on the Quarry Lands as well as the community at large.