

Report to Development Services Committee

TO: DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

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DATE: JUNE 11, 2013

SUBJECT: HEIGHT REVIEW & TALL BUILDING PRINCIPLES

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That a public meeting be scheduled to consider an Official Plan Amendment to include policies on the design of tall buildings within the Urban Growth Centre.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Report Overview

2. The purpose of this staff report is to review the existing maximum building height standards within the Urban Growth Centre (UGC).
3. The report also recommends the inclusion of new Official Plan policies establishing guidelines intended to facilitate the appropriate design, fit, and integration of tall buildings into the UGC.

Background

4. The current standards and policies for regulating height within the area of Barrie generally referred to as the UGC originated from a Height Review Study prepared by Proctor and Redfern and adopted by Council in 1989. During the late 1980s, Barrie began experiencing tremendous population growth pressures which included proposals for several high-rise developments ranging from 10 to 19 storeys, exceeding the three storey tradition of the historic downtown. At the time, no Official Plan polices or Zoning By-law standards existed for the purpose of regulating height within the waterfront areas of the UGC. The lack of height restrictions was related in part to low growth rates in the 1970s and early part of the 1980s. The purpose of the 1989 study was to establish new height and built form controls as development pressures increased.
5. The 1989 Height Review Study resulted in amendments to the Zoning By-law to incorporate new regulations for building height and other built-form standards for development within the waterfront area. This included the creation of new sub-categories of the Central Area Commercial (C1) and Transition Area Commercial (C2) zones with standards specifically related to height and stepping provisions, known as the C1-1, C1-2, C2-1, and C2-2 zones. Similarly, sub-categories were created for the Apartment Dwelling 1st Density (RA1) and Apartment

Report to Development Services Committee

Dwelling 2nd Density (RA2) zones. The Height Review Study also resulted in amendments to policies in Official Plan section 6.6 'Height Control' to include a consideration of major public views.

- The City of Barrie has continued to experience pressure for high-rise buildings within the UGC over the past two decades. A number of high-rise development projects within the UGC have received approval through site-specific rezoning or minor variance applications permitting increased heights from 5 to 18 metres above the maximums established by Zoning By-law 2009-141. A list of the buildings with approved increased heights is provided below:

Building Name	Location	Zone	Permitted Height	Actual Height (approximate)	Difference
Grand Harbour	2 Toronto Street	C2-2	45 metres	53 metres	8 metres
Waterview	6 Toronto Street	C2-2	45 metres	53 metres	8 metres
Nautica	33-37 Ellen Street & 2-18 Victoria Street	C2-2 (SP-369)	45 metres	55 metres	10 metres
Watercrest	15 Maple Avenue	C1-1 (SP-455)	30 metres	45 metres	15 metres
Bayshore Landing	140-150 Dunlop Street E	C1-1	30 metres	48 metres	18 metres
Marina Bay II	75 Ellen Street	RA2 (SP-28)	40 metres	51 metres	11 metres
Marina Bay	65 Ellen Street	RA2-2	40 metres	45 metres	5 metres

- In response to the number of proposals for building heights above the existing Zoning By-law standards, Planning Services included a Height Review Study to be completed as part of the 2013 work plan to consider the performance of the existing standards, and to consider the impacts that tall buildings were having on the UGC.

Rationale & Methodology

- The principles that underpinned the recommendations of the original 1989 Height Review Study were based on the need to balance population growth pressures with the desire to appropriately manage built-form, while protecting the public interests of the city. The introduction section of the 1989 Height Review Study states that planning for building heights is not simply about establishing a numerical metric. Rather, building heights need to also consider the visual impacts of built form, the relationship between adjacent buildings, and the effect on the street and the surrounding pedestrian realm.
- A similar approach was taken during this updated height review, whereby the opportunities of taller buildings within the UGC were balanced along with the need to protect various public interests, including access to and from the waterfront, the protection of public views and vistas, the integration of taller buildings with the existing built form, and the overall impact of tall buildings on the vibrancy and attractiveness of the downtown. One objective of this study is thus to ensure that when tall buildings are proposed within Barrie's UGC, consideration should be taken to make certain that any potential issues and conflicts are addressed.
- The methodology for reviewing building heights and the impacts of tall buildings on the UGC involved four key approaches. The results of these approaches inform the analysis and recommendations made throughout this Staff Report. These approaches include:

Report to Development Services Committee

- a) A review and synthesis of the underlying principles guiding the recommendations for built form and building height as found within the original 1989 Height Review Study, the current Official Plan and Zoning By-law, as well as several other plans and studies conducted for various areas within the UGC, including:
 - DRAFT Urban Design Guidelines for the Intensification Area (2012)
 - City of Barrie Intensification Study (2009)
 - Downtown Commercial Master Plan (2006)
 - Downtown Next Wave Community Improvement Plan (2004)
 - Bradford Street Corridor Study (1996)
 - b) A visualization and understanding of the potential built form possibilities for the City of Barrie's UGC under the existing maximum building height standards.
 - c) An examination of the planning process for obtaining building heights above the maximum permissions of the Zoning By-law.
 - d) Research into the best practices for regulating tall buildings within the downtown and waterfront areas of other urban municipalities across Ontario, and the development of tall building principles for the City of Barrie.
11. Following a discussion on the above topics, the report concludes with a discussion of staff recommendations on maximum height permissions and the handling of tall buildings (defined as any building above 3 storeys) within Barrie's UGC.

ANALYSIS

12. The addition of each new tall building has the potential to contribute significantly towards achieving Council's goal to 'Create a Vibrant and Healthy City Centre', as described within the Strategic Plan 2010-2014. Tall buildings can contribute to the revitalization of the city centre, adding a critical mass of new residents, businesses, and customers to support local businesses in the downtown. The design of mixed-use high-rise projects offers the ability for residents to live, work, and play all within walking distances of each other, contributing to the sustainable development of the city, while curbing urban sprawl. Tall buildings can also redefine a city's skyline, creating a modern identity and unique signature for Barrie.
13. Due to the scale of tall buildings, they can also pose challenges in terms of how they impact and relate to their local surroundings. These impacts can be experienced as adverse shadowing on the streets, the interruption of key public views, the obstruction of public access to key surrounding areas (including the waterfront), the elimination of a three-storey pedestrian scaled environment, and other such examples.
14. The objective of this study is to take a comprehensive approach in considering the impacts that tall buildings have on key public interests and priorities for the City of Barrie. The recommendations of this report recognize that the good design, strategic location, and appropriate fit within their surroundings are important factors to achieve when planning for tall buildings.

Current City Centre Zoning Standards

15. Barrie's tallest buildings will generally be located within the UGC, as the UGC is designed and intended to accommodate the highest densities within the city. This is reflected in the zoning for core areas of the UGC including the Central Area zones (C1-1, C1-2), the Transition Centre zones (C2-1, C2-2), as well as the Residential Apartment zones (RA1-1, RA1-2, RA1-3, RA2-1,

Report to Development Services Committee

RA2-2), which permit the tallest building heights for Barrie as-of-right. In comparison, the low density (RH, R1, R2, R3, R4) and medium density (RM1, RM2) residential zones each permit a maximum height of 10 metres (about 3 storeys). A table of maximum building heights between different Central Area and Transition Centre zones is provided below.

Zone	C1	C1-1	C1-2	C2	C2-1	C2-2	RA1-1	RA1-2	RA1-3	RA2-1	RA2-2
Maximum Height	15m	30m*	45m*	15m	30m*	45m*	10m	15m	30m	30m	45m
Approximate Storeys	5	10	15	5	10	15	3	5	10	10	15

* With 5m step backs, except when on Collier Street

16. The majority of the high rise development within the UGC is located within the City Centre Planning Area, as represented in Schedule B of the Official Plan. Appendix “A” attached to this report depicts the boundaries of the UGC, with the City Centre Area overlaid above.
17. The City Centre Area primarily consists of the Central Area (C1-1, C1-2) and Transition Centre (C2-1, C2-2) zones, a few sites zoned Apartment Dwelling Second Density-2 (RA2-2), and the Open Space (OS) zone located directly along the waterfront park areas. This area contains the traditional central business district in the form of the historic downtown, a number of high-rise condominium buildings constructed within the past few decades, as well as some of the City’s older residential areas.

Planning Documents Discussing Height within the UGC

18. This section begins with a review of the 1989 Height Review Study, examining the contributing factors that informed the maximum height permissions and building standards, which ultimately were adopted into the Zoning By-law and Official Plan. Following this, a number of other plans and studies produced since the original Height Review Study are also examined, focusing on their recommendations for maximum heights within the UGC.

1989 Height Review Study

19. The current built-form standards, as found within Zoning By-law 2009-141, are based on the analysis originally conducted as part of the 1989 Height Review Study. A discussion of the key factors that informed the creation of the current height standards helps to understand the impacts that building height can have on Barrie’s downtown. These factors include :
 - a) *Integration within local context:* This factor refers to the relationship between adjacent buildings, including a transition of heights that reduces the appearance of out of scale and out of character buildings. Figure 1 below illustrates the transition of building heights from the low scale profile of the waterfront (OS) areas, transitioning to a low and medium scale profile along historic commercial areas such as Dunlop Street (C1-1), reaching a medium to high scale profile in the central business areas as on Collier Street (C2-1).

Report to Development Services Committee

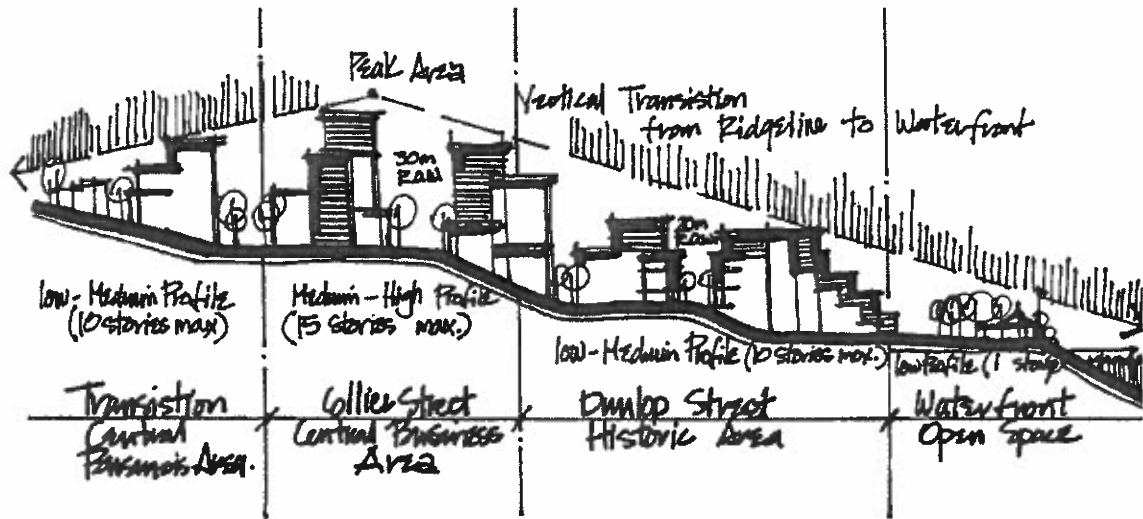


Figure 1 – Transitioning height from low (waterfront), medium (Dunlop Street), to high (Collier Street)
(Source: 1989 Height Review Study)

- b) *Form and massing*: Refers to the vertical and horizontal distribution of the floor area (building mass) on the site. Floor area standards can be molded to achieve specific goals. For example, tall and narrow buildings may offer opportunities for views of the waterfront from the City, while lower and wider buildings can provide better integration with historic downtown and waterfront areas.
- c) *Pedestrian orientation*: The height, form, and massing of a building should not impede the ability to ensure a comfortable and inviting pedestrian realm. Buildings should be designed to maintain a strong connection to the waterfront.
- d) *Relationship to the Algonquin ridge line*: Buildings that disrupt views of the Algonquin ridge (see Figure 2 below) may erode the sense of Barrie being located within a natural setting.

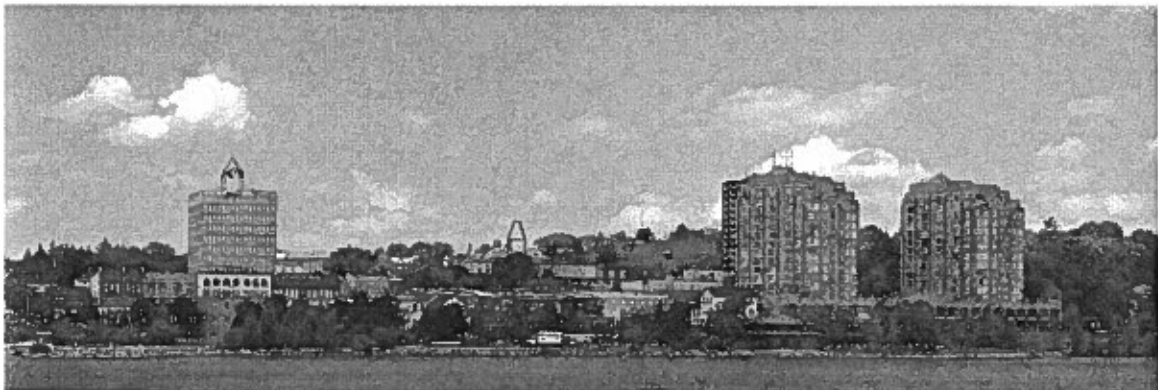


Figure 2 – Views of the top of the Algonquin ridge line's greenery can be seen behind and between buildings as a backdrop to the downtown (Source: Adapted from the Wikimedia Commons image "File:Barrie_Waterfront.jpg" URL: [http:// commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barrie_Waterfront.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Barrie_Waterfront.jpg))

- 20. With a consideration of the impact that tall buildings can have based on the above mentioned factors, the maximum heights (and other building standards) for C1-1, C1-2, C2-1, C2-2, RA1-1, RA1-2, RA2-1, and RA2-2 zones were developed within the 1989 Height Review Study. The

Report to Development Services Committee

variation in building heights between zones is attributed to the unique characteristics of each individual area, as described below:

- a) *Central Area Commercial C1-1:* New developments in C1-1 zones are permitted up to a maximum height of 10 metres (3 storeys) within the first 5 metres from the front property line, and up to 30 metres (10 storeys) beyond the first 5 metres. The “stepping provision” of the building heights is intended to maintain the pedestrian scale of the traditional three storey 19th century buildings (for example, on Dunlop Street), while accommodating additional height and density set back away from the street.
 - b) *Central Area Commercial C1-2:* The C1-2 zone permits buildings up to a maximum height of 45 metres (15 storeys). The zone also features a stepping provision, with 10 metres high permitted within the first 5 metres, and the full 45 metres permitted beyond (however, this stepping provision does not apply to Collier Street, where the full 45 metres may be built right up to the property line). Areas zoned C1-2 permit taller buildings as they are located further away from the waterfront, providing an appropriate transition of building heights as illustrated in Figure 1 above, and ensuring that buildings in C1-2 zones also have views and a connection to Kempenfelt Bay. C1-2 areas do not feature a significant amount of traditional 19th century buildings, providing no need to preserve a three storey scale.
 - c) *Transition Centre Commercial C2-1 & C2-2:* The Transition Centre (C2-1 and C2-2) zones permits the same uses and building heights as the Central Area (C1-1 and C1-2) zones (30 metres and 45 metres, respectively). However, the Transition Centre zones require greater side-yard setbacks, and permits less gross floor area (GFA) in comparison to their Central Area zone (C1-1, C1-2) counterparts. The Transition Centre zones are intended to act as a buffer between the urban character of the C1-1 zone and the lower scale residential character of the areas surrounding the downtown core.
 - d) *Residential Apartment Dwelling RA1-1, RA1-2, RA2-1, & RA2-2:* The purpose of the Apartment Dwelling zones are to accommodate a higher density apartment while maintaining a residential character. As such, the Apartment Dwelling zones permits residential and certain institutional uses, but do not permit commercial land uses as in the Central Area and Transition Centre zones. The heights consist of 10m, 15m, 30m, and 45m, respectively. The RA1 and its sub-categories permit a GFA of 100%, while the RA2 and its sub-categories allow greater densities at 200% GFA.
21. Each of these zones and their respective building heights work together to provide a variety of built-form typologies for the downtown. The current height and building standards are designed to find balance between the need to be accommodating of change and renewal in the existing building stock, while also respecting the traditional scale, pedestrian orientation, and strong waterfront connection that permeates the core areas of Barrie’s UGC.
 22. Staff notes that increasing the existing maximum height above the current standards could impact the planned form and function of each of the above mentioned City Centre zones. Increased height could place buildings out of scale with the historic nature of the downtown, may hinder views and accessibility to the waterfront, or could harm the aesthetics of the downtown set against the backdrop of the Algonquin ridge.
 23. Although several high-rise developments have been approved and constructed above the current standards, staff note that the site-specific rezoning process allowed Council to approve special provisions to address the impacts of additional height for each individual project. However, increasing the as-of-right maximum heights could significantly restrict the City’s ability to assess

Report to Development Services Committee

each project on its own merits. A more in-depth discussion on the planning process for increasing maximum building heights is found later in this report.

24. Staff recognizes that one of the impetuses for reviewing heights within the downtown is the fact that the standards produced by the 1989 Height Review Study are now nearly 25 years old. Since then, the policy framework for planning in the City of Barrie has changed considerably. This includes the creation of a new Official Plan in 2010, which established new target densities for Barrie's UGC in conformity with the policies outlined within the province's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.
25. The target density for Barrie's UGC area is set at 150 persons and jobs per hectare to be achieved by 2031. In a memo received by Council on January 21, 2013 entitled 'Growth Plan Monitoring', Planning Services explained that since the Growth Plan took effect in 2006, the density within the UGC has been steadily increasing from 77 to 84.12 persons and jobs per hectare as of the end of 2012.
26. Population projections prepared by Watson & Associates as part of Barrie's Growth Management Strategy have forecasted the residential growth required within the UGC area for Barrie to reach its target density of 150 persons and jobs per hectare by 2031. The projections are as follows:
 - 2011-2016: 59 units
 - 2017-2021: 1,141 units
 - 2022-2026: 1,640 units
 - 2027-2031: 2,396 units
27. Following the completion of the Watercrest Apartments (15 Maple Avenue) and the Mady Lakeview Condominiums (90 Collier Street) developments, Barrie will have experienced an increase of over 250 residential housing units by 2016. This is well above the projection of 59 units between 2011 and 2016, and is also an indication that the existing height permissions are adequately serving the needs of the City of Barrie in terms of its ability to meet the density target for the UGC.

Other Plans & Studies Discussing Height within the UGC

28. In addition to the 1989 Height Review Study, a number of other planning documents have since contributed to the discussion of maximum building heights within the UGC. The following is a summary of the documents that have contributed to the discussion on maximum height permissions in Barrie's UGC, focusing specifically on the recommendations for height standards:
 - a) *Intensification Area Urban Design Guidelines (2012)*: Generally, new buildings within the UGC should consist of a midrise scale ranging from 4 to 8 storeys (12-24m), with the maximum height of 8 storeys to be permitted only when it is demonstrated to be in compliance with design guidelines in terms of step-backs, angular planes, etc (see Appendix C1).
 - b) *Intensification Study (2009)*: The Intensification Study was completed to determine a strategy for achieving the density targets set for Barrie's UGC by the province's Growth Plan. The Study anticipates that densities typified by the high-rise zoning category will be required to meet the density target for the UGC. Intensification opportunities are identified on Bradford Street, the Allandale Centre, on Collier Street and on Bayfield Street. The study notes that intensification on Dunlop Street should respect the scale and character of the historic main street, and should respect the connection to the waterfront.

Report to Development Services Committee

- c) *Downtown Commercial Master Plan (2006)*: The DCMP suggests height limitations lower than the Zoning By-law standards along certain stretches of Dunlop and Simcoe Streets. Examples of this are the recommendations for 2 to 3 storeys (10m) along historic downtown Dunlop, while allowing greater heights of 10 storeys (30m) at prominent corners and intersections (see Appendix C2).
 - d) *Downtown Next Wave (2004)*: The Next Wave contains recommendations similar to the DCMP, suggesting that planning documents be amended “to restrict the height of buildings adjacent to the waterfront and historic main streets of the downtown”. A height restriction of 5 storeys (15m) is recommended to be applied for key stretches of the downtown identified within the document (see Appendix C3).
 - e) *Bradford Street Corridor Study (1996)*: This study recommends various building heights as described on the map in Appendix C4. The recommendations provide for a ‘step-up’ approach to building heights, transitioning from the existing lower density RM2 properties along Sanford Street towards the higher density developments along the waterfront. Starting with the 3 storey (10m) RM2 properties on Sanford, the height is stepped up to 5 storeys (15m) on the west side of Bradford as well as for a few blocks north of Victoria and Vespra Street. Building heights are further stepped up to 10 and 15 storeys for some of the properties along the waterfront south of Dunlop, to the north and south areas of Vespra and Victoria Streets.
29. Generally, each of these documents contains recommendations for maximum height permissions lower than what is currently permitted within the Zoning By-law. None of the documents recommend an increase in the maximum heights. Many of these documents have been produced by outside consultants hired by the City of Barrie, with the exception of the Intensification Study and the Downtown Next Wave, which were produced in-house by Planning Services staff.

Visualization of Potential Built Form Possibilities

30. The purpose of the following visualization exercise is to showcase the potential for land development and the transformation of the UGC using the current maximum height standards of Zoning By-law 2009-141.
31. The models shown below in Figure 3 are colour coded to illustrate various concepts. Buildings shaded beige are actual buildings that already exist today, while the buildings shaded orange are new developments that are approved and are currently under construction. The blue shaded models depict hypothetical illustrations of what buildings could look like if they were constructed up to the maximum as-of-right standards today, without the need for a rezoning or minor variance application. The pink buildings are also hypothetical, but refer to locations where actual site plans have been submitted to Planning Services in the past, with building heights above the maximum zoning standards.
32. Two visualizations in Figure 3, one showing a ‘before’ indicating what the City looks like today, and another showing an ‘after’ illustrating what the City could potentially look like in the future after being fully built out under the current height standards. These visualizations make the assumption that the assembly of land parcels occurs in order to facilitate higher density developments, as is the case with the Mady Lakeview Condominium development located at Mulcaster Street and Collier Street.
33. Figure 3 below is an illustration showing a view of downtown Barrie between Maple Avenue and Poyntz Street:

Report to Development Services Committee

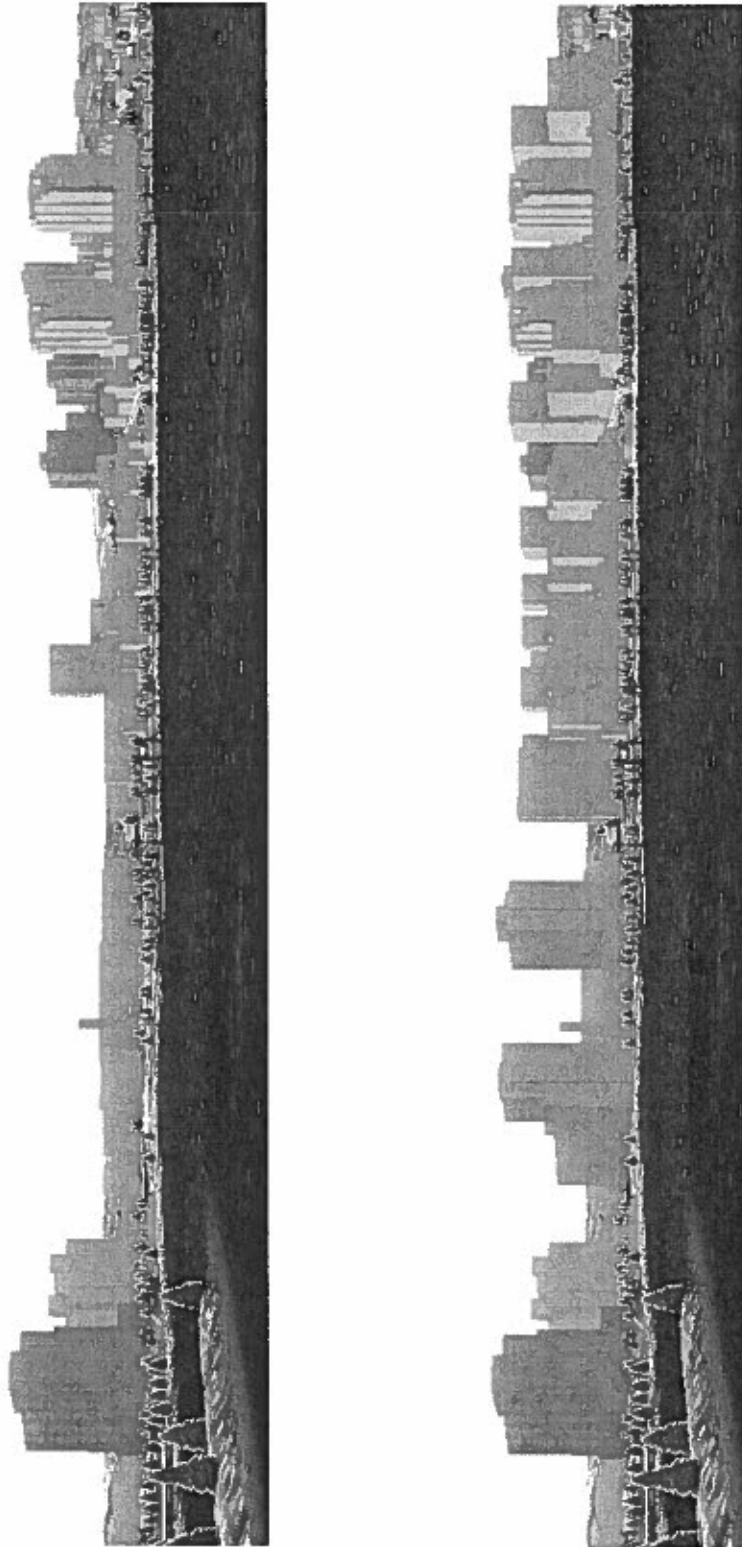


Figure 3 – View of the Downtown, between Maple Avenue and Poyntz Street

Report to Development Services Committee

34. In staffs' opinion, the visualizations reveal that the current standards already permit significant amounts of development potential that can accommodate a substantial level of new residential and commercial intensification into the downtown, and will have a considerable impact on the urban form and fabric of the downtown.

Current Planning Process for Maximum Building Height Increases

35. For development projects that propose building heights above the maximum standards set out in the Zoning By-law, the proponents of the development must apply for either a Zoning By-law Amendment, or in some cases they may be considered for a minor variance application.
36. The rezoning and minor variance process for obtaining additional building height provides an opportunity for staff to consider the impacts that tall buildings would have on the goals and objectives of the Official Plan and on the surrounding neighbourhood. These impacts can be experienced as adverse shadowing on the street or public amenity areas, the interruption of key public views, the obstruction of connections to the waterfront, and other such examples. If it is determined that there may potentially be negative impacts resulting from the proposed development, staff are able to work with the applicant to find solutions to eliminate or mitigate any concerns.
37. In situations where sensitive or critical issues arise, Council has the ability to require site-specific zoning standards designed to address the unique circumstances. The nuanced controls of the rezoning and minor variance process allow for the City of Barrie to ensure that the interests of the public are protected, while still ensuring the successful completion of the project.
38. Both the Zoning By-law amendment and minor variance process have requirements for informing the public of the proposed development, allowing them an opportunity to provide their input and voice any concerns with the project.
39. An example of a site-specific by-law intended to address certain design considerations include the articulated 'saw tooth wedge' building design of the Watercrest Apartments, located at 15 Maple Avenue. Council approved a land use control by-law with requirements that the Watercrest building feature a series of setbacks for the exterior walls of floors 5 to 15 (see Figure 3). One of the purposes for these setbacks was to ensure that the impacts of shadowing on adjacent properties were reduced. Planning staff were subsequently able to enforce the building setback requirements of the by-law during the site plan review stage.

Report to Development Services Committee

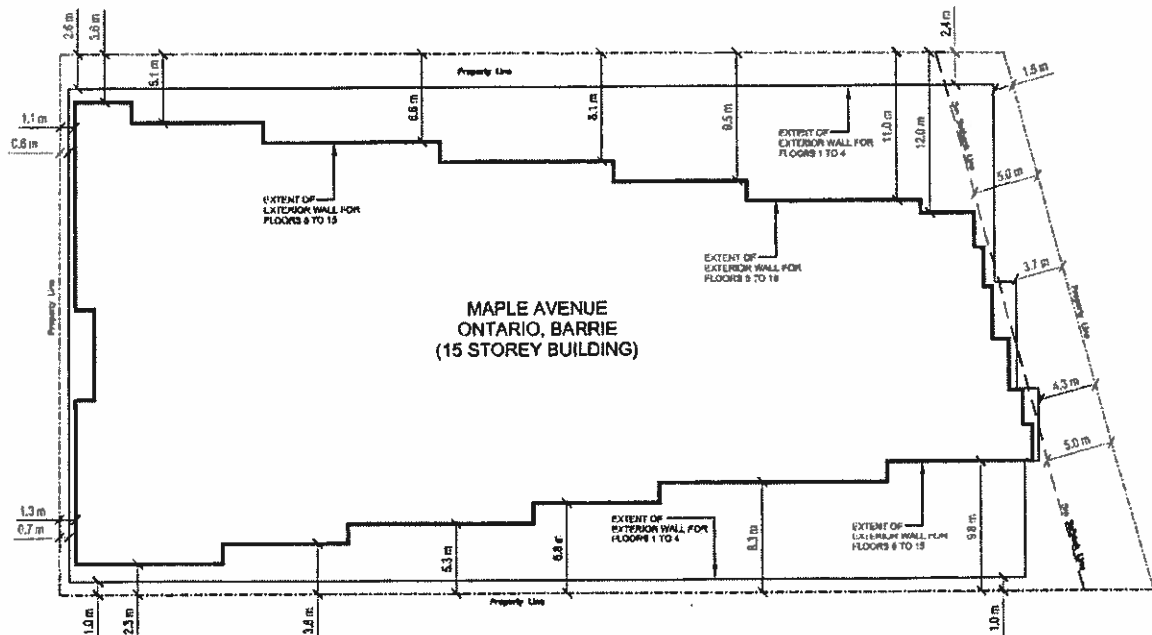


Figure 3 – Exterior wall setbacks for building at 15 Maple Avenue, designed to allow additional sunlight and views for neighbouring property at 6 Bayfield Street.

40. One of the effects of increasing the maximum height permissions across the UGC would be a reduction in Council's ability to set site-specific by-laws intended to address some of the impacts that could be associated with a tall building, such as was the case with the 15 Maple Avenue example. This would occur if a proposed tall building's height was permitted as-of-right, thus not being required to undergo a rezoning process.
41. In the absence of the requirement for a rezoning application, the project would still undergo the site plan review process. Staff are only able to enforce conditions for site plan approval that fall within the constraints of the Zoning By-law. The site plan process does not provide Council with the ability to set site-specific conditions that would go above and beyond what is already permitted as-of-right within the Zoning By-law. There is no statutory public process requirement for site plan applications.
42. One of the considerations staff took into account was the number of developments which have sought an increase in height to determine if that was an indicator that the existing standards were too restrictive for current development pressures. In staffs' opinion, pressure to seek increased height and density is largely driven by a desire to maximize return which in turn is based on costs. Increased development rights as-of-right is expected to result in an increase in the cost of land, which will then likely result in applications for increases in heights beyond any new standards that might be implemented.
43. Staff have reviewed a number of rezoning applications over the past several decades that have sought an increase in height above the maximum standards of the Zoning By-law. This review was conducted to assess the possibility of any deficiencies within the current Zoning standards, which may be impeding the development of tall buildings within the UGC. Staff were unable to find any such deficiencies. The following is a summary of frequent justifications provided by applicants seeking additional height:

Report to Development Services Committee

- a) *Additional building height is necessary to achieve density targets:* High rise buildings are certainly necessary for achieving density targets within the UGC, as is discussed in the City of Barrie Intensification Study (2009). However, Barrie already features a number of high-rise zones within the Zoning By-law capable of accommodating high-density buildings, including the Central Commercial, Transition Commercial, and Apartment Residential zones. In addition, the Intensification Area Urban Design Guidelines (2012) have demonstrated that high-density intensification can be achieved through a mix of 4 to 8 storey buildings in addition to tall buildings. To date, no justification has been offered through a rezoning application explaining why the current maximum height permissions within the high-density zones are insufficient for Barrie to achieve the target density for the UGC.
- b) *Tall buildings will attract further development within the UGC:* Since the adoption of the 1989 Height Review Study, the City of Barrie has experienced considerable development pressures within the UGC, with a number of high-rise condominium development projects completed over the past couple decades, two major high-rise developments currently under construction, and additional high-rise projects currently under review by the Planning Services department.
- c) *Other buildings have been approved with increased height permissions:* Development proposals are considered based on their own merits, and not based on the decisions of other buildings. While tall buildings with additional height may be justified in some locations, they may not be appropriate in other locations.
- d) *Tall buildings promote high quality urban design and architecture:* Design excellence should be promoted in all development proposals or all sizes and densities, and should not be confined strictly to tall buildings. The permission of additional building height does not inherently result in higher quality architecture. Staff also proposes that new policies be added to the Official Plan intended to guide the design of tall buildings, such that all buildings above 3 storeys be subject to a high degree of urban design and architecture.

Principles for Tall Building Design within the UGC

- 44. As was stated earlier in this report, the objective of this study is to review the existing height permissions within the downtown and to develop strategies for addressing the potential impacts that tall buildings may have on their surroundings. Along with an examination of the current policies, staff underwent a review of contemporary best practices amongst other Ontario municipalities for ensuring the good design of tall buildings. These practices were then adapted to fit within the context of Barrie's UGC.
- 45. The result of this exercise was a set of policy guidelines intended to encourage the high quality design of tall buildings, ensure protection from increased shadowing on waterfront and other public open space areas, protect key views and vistas throughout the City, and encourage improvement of the pedestrian experience at the street level.
- 46. The proposed policy guidelines are designed to provide Council with an enhanced toolkit for determining the merits of a tall building within the UGC. The policies will also clarify the City of Barrie's priorities to the development industry, and will allow staff to enforce these policies when reviewing future development applications.
- 47. The intent of these tall building policies is not to prohibit or discourage any and all development proposals for buildings with proposed heights in excess of the maximums within the UGC. Rather, these policies will ensure that when tall buildings (any building above 3 storeys) are proposed, they should be able to demonstrate that they respond to each of the principles described below.

Report to Development Services Committee

48. If the recommendations of this Staff Report are adopted by Council, staff will proceed with the drafting of an Official Plan Amendment, as well as the scheduling of a public meeting for a future date. The Official Plan policies would be based on the principles for tall building design described below. The amendment would expand section 6.5 of the Official Plan on "Urban Design Guidelines", as well as section 6.6 on "Height Control".

49. The following is a list of eight priorities that would form the basis of the Official Plan Amendment, as proposed in the recommended motion of this Staff Report:

a) Prevent adverse building shadows on waterfront amenity areas, on pedestrian oriented streets, as well as existing and future planned open space areas.

Locating tall buildings adjacent to the lake creates the potential for periods of excessive shadowing over park and recreation amenities including the waterfront areas, Memorial Park, and other existing or future planned open space areas (see Appendix "C" for examples of this shadowing along Lakeshore Drive). This will in turn restrict the number of weeks out of the year when residents of Barrie can comfortably enjoy the waterfront amenity areas. Part of the appeal of the waterfront beaches, boardwalks, and open space areas includes the enjoyment of direct sunlight and views of the sky throughout the day. Tall buildings will be restricted from imposing significant shadowing over public open spaces.

b) Protect views and access to the City's waterfront.

The stretches of publicly owned land surrounding Kempenfelt Bay are an asset to the City of Barrie and its residents. Key public views and the ease of accessibility to Kempenfelt Bay should be protected in order to ensure the City's continued connection to the waterfront. Special consideration should be given to specific view corridors, including Bayfield, Mulcaster, Poyntz, and Berczy Streets, which consist of corridors providing unobstructed views of the water.

c) Integrate new development within the context of the local urban form.

Ensure that proposed new development is compatible with the context and character of the local area's existing and planned built form. Where high density uses are planned adjacent to low-rise residential area, ensure that a transition in built form is achieved with heights progressing between high-rise, mid-rise, and low-rise scales.

d) Minimize adverse microclimatic impacts on the streets.

The close enclosure of tall buildings creates the potential for adverse microclimatic effects, including the channeling of strong winds, the creation of urban heat island effects, and the reduction of access to sunlight. Mitigating these microclimatic impacts contributes to the comfortable pedestrian realm desired for significant streets adjacent to tall buildings within the Urban Growth Centre.

e) Retain views of the Algonquin Ridgeline to preserve Barrie's "natural setting".

The Algonquin Ridge serves as a backdrop to Barrie's downtown, and can be observed from the South Shore area, along Lakeshore Drive, and from the lake. The Ridge provides the impression of a city integrated into a natural green setting, softening the visual impact of Downtown Barrie's urban built form. High-rise development within the UGC should ensure views of the Ridge are available between buildings.

Report to Development Services Committee

f) Foster a pedestrian oriented environment that encourages street level activity.

The first few storeys of a building can have a tremendous impact on the pedestrian experience. Special attention will be given to the lower storeys of new development to ensure that a safe and accessible pedestrian environment is achieved by fostering a continuous street wall of at-grade activity, minimizing gaps between buildings on the ground level.

g) Protect views of major geographical landmarks, buildings, and principle viewing areas.

Special consideration will be given to the effect of new development on the views and backdrops of certain major geographical landmarks, historic buildings, and other principle viewing areas. This may include (but is not limited to) Memorial Square, the Spirit Catcher, the Allandale Centre, the Old City Hall Arch, the historic churches within the downtown, as well as the Nelson Street and Vancouver Street lookouts.

h) Contribute to a visually interesting skyline for the City of Barrie.

Tall buildings directly contribute to the look and feel of the City's architectural styles. Accordingly, tall buildings will be held to a high standard of design excellence in order to promote a visually interesting skyline.

Recommendations for Maximum Building Height Permissions

50. Planning Services welcomes development proposals for tall buildings within the UGC, as they contribute to the mix of built form typologies required to achieve a healthy and vibrant downtown, and are a necessary component in achieving the City's density targets. Accordingly, Planning Services does not object to tall buildings, including those that propose a height above the maximum permissions of the Zoning By-law.
51. However, staff has been unable to determine any justification for increasing the maximum height permissions of the zoning categories within the UGC as-of-right. This has been concluded following a review of the opportunities and constraints for tall buildings in Barrie's UGC, including the current maximum height permissions, a review of the original 1989 Height Review Study and other pertinent planning documents, the planning process for obtaining additional building height, and a review of the development applications received by the City seeking additional height. As such, staff recommends that the current maximum height standards within the UGC remain the same.
52. The following is a summary of the factors that were considered throughout this Staff Report, which resulted in the conclusion recommending the maintenance of the current maximum height permissions:
- a) Staff has assessed the underlying rationale that formed the basis of the current maximum height permissions, as described in the original 1989 Height Review Study. In staffs' opinion, the rationale behind these standards continue to be relevant today, including a strong connection to the waterfront, an appropriate integration of buildings into their local context, and the creation of a comfortable pedestrian realm. Staff is of the opinion that the current standards effectively balance the need to protect key priorities for the City of Barrie, while also remaining accommodating to new development.
 - b) Staff reviewed a number of previous applications for additional height within Barrie's UGC to determine if there were any deficiencies within the current Zoning standards that is

Report to Development Services Committee

impeding on the development of tall buildings. Staff was unable to find any deficiencies within the Zoning By-law that would provide a reason to consider increasing the maximum height permissions as-of-right.

- c) In staffs' opinion, pressure to seek increased height and density is largely driven by a desire to maximize return which in turn is based on costs. Increased development rights as-of-right is expected to result in an increase in the cost of land, which will then likely result in applications for increases in heights beyond any new standards that might be implemented.
 - d) Planning Services does not object to the development of tall buildings, including those above the maximum standards of the Zoning By-law. However, it is staffs' opinion that any building proposed to be taller than the maximum permitted heights should be subject to a planning process such as a rezoning or a minor variance application. This is in order to ensure that Council retains the ability to set site-specific conditions intended to address any unique circumstances associated with a development application, thus ensuring that the interests of the public are protected.
 - e) As depicted through the 3D model visualizations, the current standards already permit a substantial level of development potential that can accommodate the residential and commercial intensification necessary to achieve the City's density targets. This development would result in a significant change to the built form of much of the UGC.
53. In order to provide Council with additional criteria for considering the merits of tall buildings within the UGC, staff recommends that the Official Plan be amended to strengthen the planning framework by including additional policies related to tall building design. The inclusion of these policies will ensure that when tall buildings are proposed, the public interest is protected. This includes the reduction of shadowing on public amenity areas, the protection of key public views and vistas, the enhancement of the pedestrian experience at the street level, and other such priorities.

ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

54. There are no environmental matters related to the recommendation.

ALTERNATIVES

55. The following alternatives are available for consideration by Development Services Committee:

Alternative #1

Development Services Committee could alter the proposed recommendation by directing staff to hold a public meeting to consider increasing the maximum building height permissions for the C1-1, C1-2, C2-1, and C2-2 zones.

This alternative is not recommended as staff have been unable to determine any justification to increase the maximum height permissions as-of-right.

FINANCIAL

56. Increases to the maximum height permissions could result in increased assessment values for the affected areas, which could result in increased property tax revenue.

Report to Development Services Committee

LINKAGE TO 2010-2014 COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

57. The recommendation included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2010-2014 City Council Strategic Plan:

Create a Vibrant and Healthy City Centre

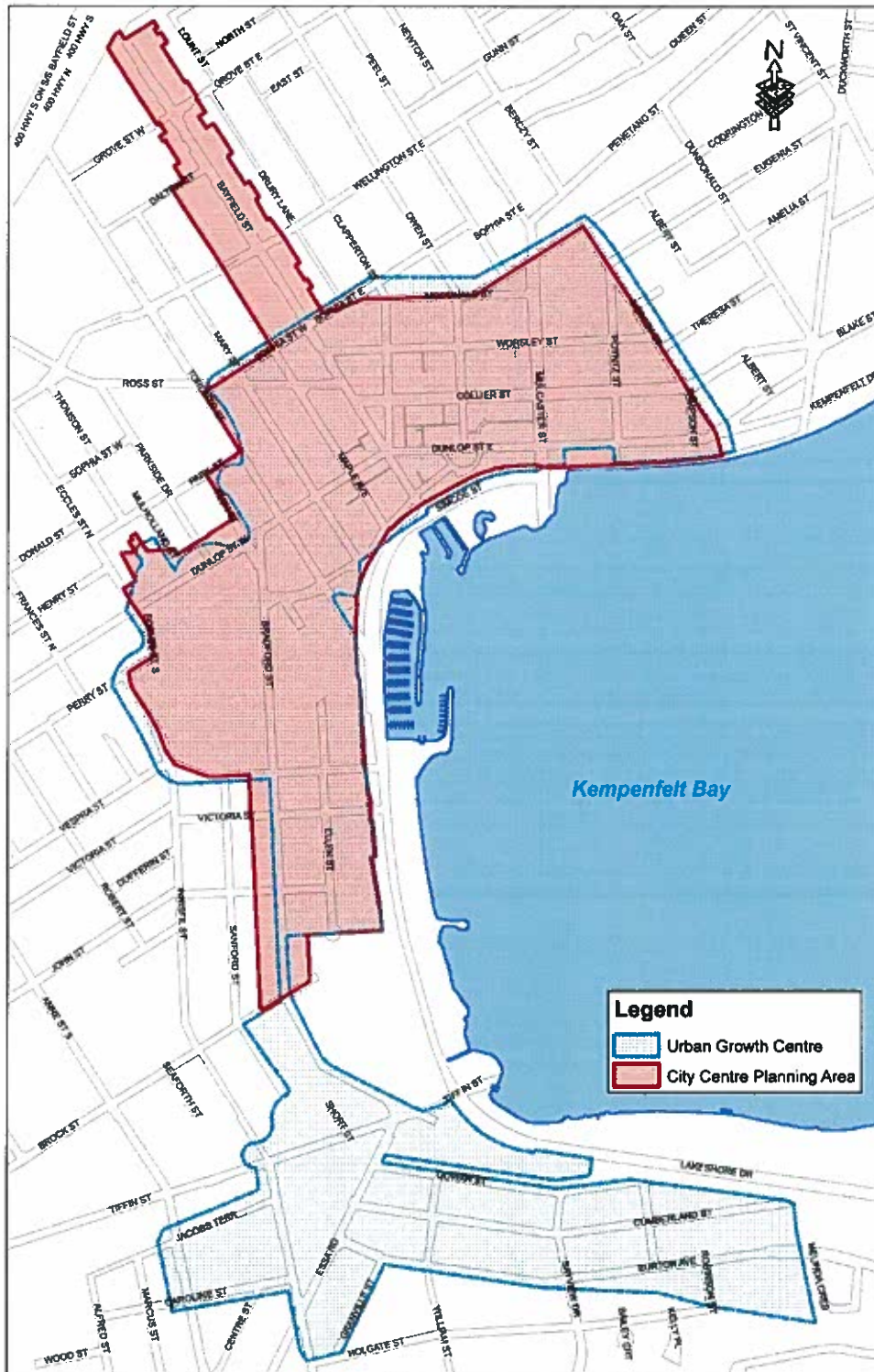
58. The addition of Official Plan policies regarding the improved design of tall buildings can contribute to the revitalization of the City Centre area. The design of mixed-use high-rise projects offers the ability for residents to live, work, and play in a vibrant neighbourhood, contributing to the sustainable development of the city. Tall building policies will also sure that a variety of public interests within the downtown, including the enjoyment of waterfront amenities areas, are protected.

Attachments: Appendix A – Urban Growth Centre with City Centre Planning Area Overlay Above
Appendix B – Tall Building Shadowing on Waterfront Areas along Lakeshore Drive
Appendix C – Built-form Visualizations from Various Planning Documents from 1996-2012

Report to Development Services Committee

APPENDIX "A"

Urban Growth Centre with City Centre Planning Area Overlay Above



Report to Development Services Committee

APPENDIX "B"

Tall Building Shadowing on Waterfront Areas along Lakeshore Drive



Kempenfelt Bay

Source: City of Barrie GIS Portal aerial photographs

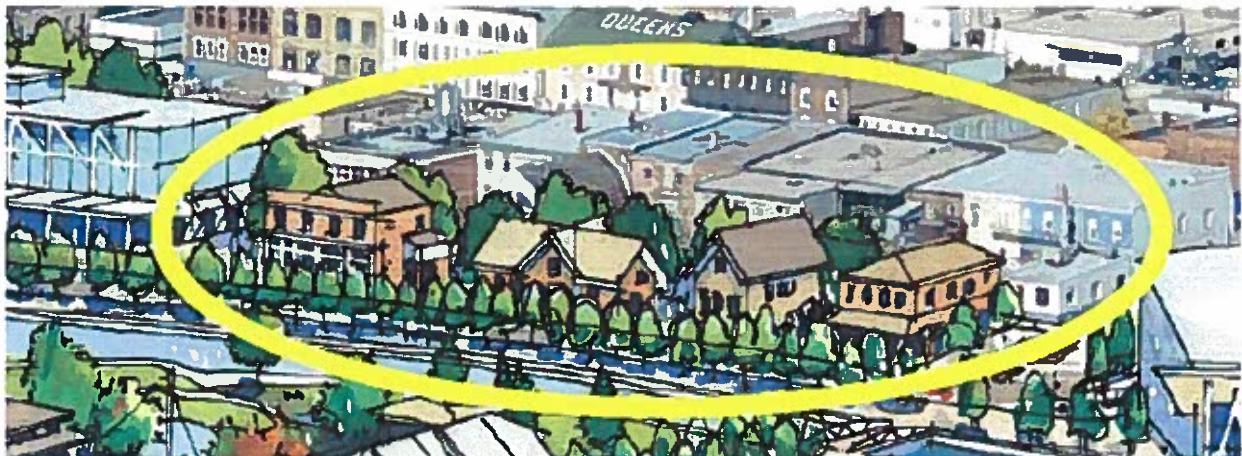
Report to Development Services Committee

APPENDIX "C"

Built-form Visualizations from Various Planning Documents from 1996-2012

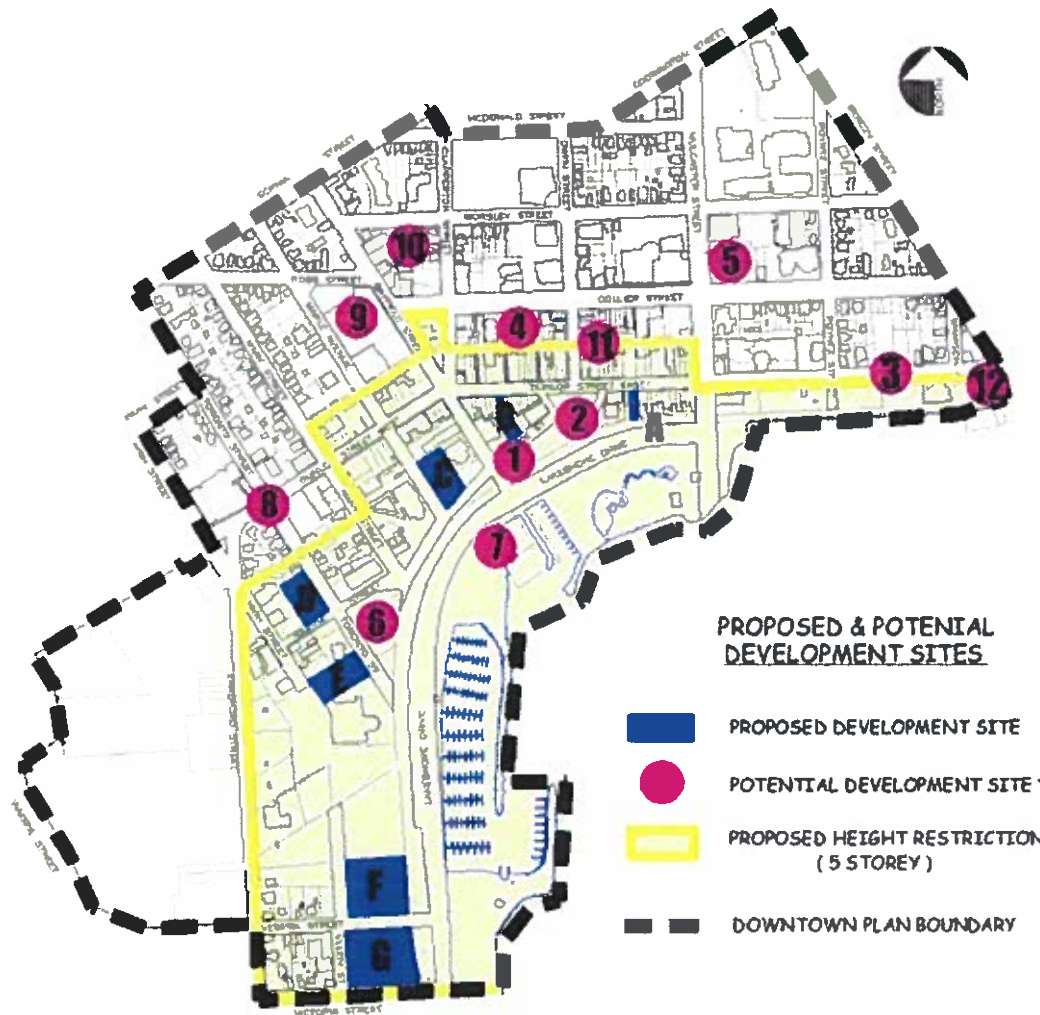


Appendix C1 – Midrise scaled development adjacent to Lakeshore Drive within the UGC area



Appendix C2 – Sensitive lower scale development between blocks to integrate well within local context

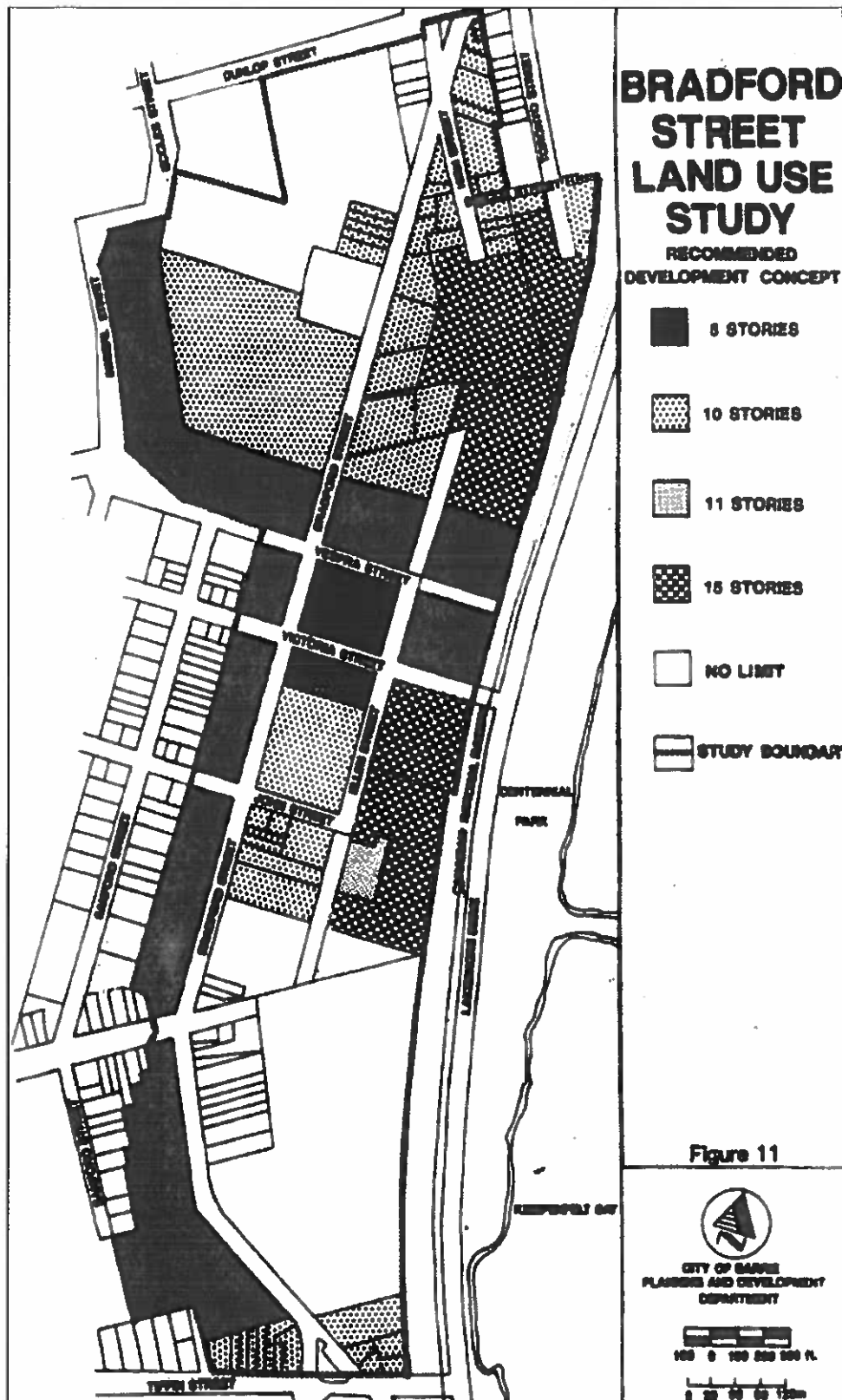
Report to Development Services Committee



* ALL BUILDINGS SHOWN ON THE CENTRAL, EASTERN AND WESTERN DOWNTOWN AREAS ARE CONCEPTUAL ONLY, AND REQUIRE MORE DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN.

Appendix C3 – Downtown Barrie Next Wave Study Area

Report to Development Services Committee



Appendix C4 - Bradford Street Study corridor area