



2	WINDOWS
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PROPOSED CONVERSION OF STUDIO TO SEMI-DETACHED No. 6 CROFT ST. TORONTO - ONT.	
FRONT ELEVATION (EAST)	
DATE	DEC 15, 2005
DRAWN BY	PD
SCALE	3/16" = 1'-0"
PROJECT No.	1105
DRAWING No.	

Subject *to approval*

Renovation is not just about the hammers and nails

By Howard Biderman

As realtors, we are constantly reminded of the phrase, “the highest and best use.” This refers to the maximizing of value, whether an existing building, lot or parking lane. Today, Toronto is buzzing with the construction of condominiums, the replacement of small bungalows with larger homes, and the transformation of existing work-spaces into modern living spaces by creative entrepreneurs. Such is the case with #6 Croft Street, sited on a lane running from College Street to Bloor Street, east of Bathurst.

This is the story of a conversion from a photography studio to two single-family dwellings in a very vibrant part of the city. The plan is simple: take a two storey, 3100 square foot building, on a 52' x 45' lot without parking, and transform it into two 2000 square foot three bedroom homes, each with parking and outdoor green space. Of course, the challenge is keeping the neighbours and the municipality happy.

On November 15, 2005, the photography studio was purchased with two conditions. The first stipulated that the developer, Kilbarry Hill Design Build, be satisfied that a severance could be obtained. The second condition dealt with environmental issues, as the building was once used in the automotive industry, and soil testing was required. Both conditions were waived, and the 'facelift' had begun. “We were optimistic, but we knew that we were in for a battle,” says Shawn Mecklinger, Vice President for Kilbarry.

On December 5, 2005, the developer went to the Committee of Adjustment to make an application for lot severance. Minor variances were also required to the zoning by-law, which included an increased front yard, rear and side yard setback reductions, green space requirements and parking. The Committee is the first step in the development or renovation process at the

EAST ELEVATION

city level. Applicants can go on their own or with representation and, unlike in a formal courtroom, the committee is made up of a number of panel members. Here, the applicant and surrounding neighbours can have their say about construction proposals.

To obtain severance, designs were drawn and presented to the neighbours on Croft, and the neighbouring Borden, Vankoughnet, Lippincott and College Streets. At a subsequent hearing at the Committee of Adjustment, several neighbours including a City Councillor opposed the plans. Their concerns related to privacy issues, subsequent lighting and shadows, and a fear of overdevelopment. Thus, the city deferred the initial application.

Two months later, the application was presented for a second time at the Committee of Adjustment. The project was denied, and a decision was made by the developer to seek an appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board. The OMB represents the last chance for a homeowner to reverse a decision made by the Committee. It is a formal courtroom and representation is required. Any witnesses who are called must have an expert designation.

For the OMB hearing on August 10th, the developer brought letters of support from the neighbours. Following their earlier rejection, they had

met again with the neighbours and were able to convince them to support the project after agreeing to a few minor design revisions. They also had to hire a planning design consultant and a lawyer to present their case. On September 1st, 2006, a successful decision was passed and the project was a go.

A month later, final drawings were submitted to the Building Division, and the builder awaited a building permit. Nearly one full year following the purchase of the property, the transformation of 6 Croft Street from a photo studio into two single-family loft-style town homes would soon begin.

While often rewarding, renovations or new urban construction projects can be time consuming and demanding. Before throwing your hat into the ring, be sure to know the rules. It is always recommended that you have a qualified design consultant and project manager to help you through this exciting time.

For information on:

- Building Permits www.toronto.ca/building/building_permits.htm
- Committee of Adjustment www.toronto.ca/planning/comm_adj.htm
- The Ontario Municipal Board www.omb.gov.on.ca

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