



WEST HARTFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

SPECIAL MEETING AMENDED AGENDA

Wednesday 25th June, 2025

In-Person Town Hall Room 312 – 7:30 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

Certificate of Appropriateness Application to construct (1) Duplex and (5) Carriage Houses and (2) detached three car garages at 136-152 Raymond Road, West Hartford, CT by Mark Chu Jr.

SPECIAL MEETING

Deliberation of Public Hearing Items

Approval of Minutes: 28th May, 2025 Special Meeting, and 18th June, 2025 Special Meeting

Commissioners' Report on Belden House Letter

Commissioners' Concerns

NEXT REGULAR MEETING DATE: **Monday 28th July, 2025**

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

Mr. Mark Chu, Jr. / markchujr@gmail.com

Mr. Jack Kemper / jkemper@kemperarch.com

Dear Sirs,

This is an update (6/18/2025) to the Report (5/28/2025) previously submitted, reflecting revisions to the design in materials and structures, though the overall strategy remains intact. It still reports on the design and spatial arrangement for new and renovated housing, and associated pedestrian and vehicular accommodations, for properties located at 136 through 152 Raymond Road, within the Boulevard-Raymond Road Historic District, and to judge its conformity with it. (The latter is described in The Handbook of the West Hartford Historic District Commission, revision of 3/28/16.) I'm happy to do so, as this grouping will certainly contribute positively to the character, appearance, and livability of that District.

Let me begin with a short preface to set the scene. There is a long history, interesting in its own right, of what's been esteemed as interestingly historical -- and it's changed and been augmented over time. Famous persons, then their houses; famous events, then their places; inventions and industries, then the neighborhoods they generated, and so on. There is now a national organization calling itself the Vernacular Architecture Forum, which foregrounds background buildings. The name is an oxymoron or, to be Latinate, it's a *contradictio in adjecto*. Today places can be esteemed enough — simply for being good urbanism with a representation of characteristic streets, blocks, building types, building intervals, and vegetation -- to be declared historic districts. The Boulevard - Raymond Road Historic District (B-RRHD) is precisely such a place, hence deserves to be valued and protected.

The Handbook links to a short history of the District. To add to that, the B-RRHD's area (once part of a large dairy farm) is defined by **four varieties of connection**. First, to the north there is the Town center of West Hartford, which straddles the very old east-west route now called Farmington Avenue, from Hartford out to the former countryside. Second, running east-west as well, is the District's spine, Boulevard, envisioned in 1896 as a link from Hartford to a new-style trolley car suburb, enabling workers to reach city jobs. The existing trolley on Farmington killed the new one, but the new houses were close enough to walk to it, so the new neighborhood worked as intended. Third, there is Trout Brook, running north-south, perpendicular to both Farmington and Boulevard. Farmington was originally the Brook crossing point, the ford, for cattle and humans alike, eventually bridged. Ecologically and perceptually, it's the entry to West Hartford center. Fourth and last, Raymond Road, parallel to Trout Brook, links all three of the other connections to form a complete system. This is, as it were, the Gameboard on which individual buildings are deployed.

Now, to speak to the itemized five points on qualities, relationships, and factors worth which The Handbook mentions (pp. 19-20). Please refer to the revised drawings accompanying this application. I'll cover Raymond Road itself, then the smaller structures proposed behind. For "Qualities of Building Form", four of the five houses are existing. The fifth, a new two-family home, can be read as two "unbalanced" houses

combined, hence relating both to the Raymond Road context as described and to its functional facts. For "Qualities of Facade", all dwellings are taller than broad, and there are indeed gables, front porches, and sun porches. Points three and four, "Relationships" to District and as well to Immediate Neighbors, everything conforms. Finally of the five points, "Environmental Factors" is the link to "Open Space" and to "Dependencies", in other words to Trout Brook, the Trail, and their green environs, and to the town homes and garages. Parking areas are now to be "stabilized turf", i.e. grass growing through below-grade matts. Building materials, except for asphalt shingles, will be natural. Revised drawings show, as before, long views from Raymond Road between and through the 136-152 properties to Trout Brook and the tree line. The five smaller rear buildings, massed perpendicular to Raymond, are domestic in character, three "carriage houses" and two garages, and have variations in detailing to afford visual variety. The new sixth rear building, newly proposed, is a 2-unit dwelling, tucked behind the wider two-family on Raymond Road.

Below is a revised graphic showing the 136-152 Raymond Road site plan inserted into a recent aerial photograph of the area, looking north over Boulevard up along Trout Brook towards the contiguous Center. It sums up visually the points in this Report concerning the conformity and reinforcing contribution this project will make to protecting and enhancing the Boulevard-Raymond Road Historic District. (5/28, revised 6/18/2025)

PLPFAIA



To: DJM
From: FAN
Date: 5/19/2025
RE: Whether the rear yard exemption releases Mark's obligation to receive a COA for the West Hartford Historic District Commission

Issue:

1. Whether the rear-yard exemption contained in the West Hartford Historic District Commission (WHHDC) handbook exempts Mark from the requirement that he receive a certificate of appropriateness before commencing construction in the rear yard(s) of his property(ies).

Short Answer:

1. I could not find any case law interpreting or addressing exemptions to COA requirements. However, it appears that, assuming Mark will only be adding separate detached units/improvements in the rear-yard of his properties, the exemption provided in the WHHDC Handbook exempts Mark from the COA requirement.

Analysis:

In Connecticut, the general rule is that a certificate of appropriateness (COA) is required for alterations to buildings or structures within historic districts or properties. However, based on the rear yard exemption contained in the West Hartford Historic Commission Handbook, there is a strong argument that building detached buildings in the rear yard does not require a COA, subject to certain limitations.

The Connecticut General Statutes typically require a COA for alterations to buildings within historic districts. *Gibbons v. Historic District Commission*, 285 Conn. 755, 762, 941 A.2d 917 (2008); *Borough of Fenwick Historic District Commission v. Sciame*, Docket No. CV106003531, 2012 Conn. Super. LEXIS 1951, at *3 (Super. Aug. 2, 2012). According to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-147d, no building or structure shall be altered within an historic district until a certificate of appropriateness has been approved by the historic district commission. *First Church of Christ v. Historic District Commission*, 46 Conn. Supp. 90, 93-94, 738 A.2d 224 (1998); *Rutherford v. Fairfield Historic District*, No. 25 58 74, 1990 Conn. Super. LEXIS 419, at *1 (Super. May 18, 1990). Furthermore, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 7-147f provides that the commission shall consider various factors in determining appropriateness, including the historical and architectural value, style, and features of the structures involved.

However, the "Rear Yard Exemption" provision in the WHHDC Handbook creates an exception to this general rule. This exemption explicitly states that:

Rear Yard Exemption: A COA shall not be required for any change occurring in the rear yard, even though visible from the street, except for:

1. Exterior alterations and enclosed or roof covered additions to the main building,
2. Alterations to the doors and/or front wall of the garage, and
3. Fences.

(Emphasis added.) (Handbook of the West Hartford Historic District Commission, Part One, Section 3, p. 5). The construction of detached buildings in the rear yard is not listed among these exceptions.

Notably, the construction of new detached buildings in the rear yard is omitted in these exceptions. This omission suggests that such construction is intended to fall under the general exemption for rear yard changes, and therefore a COA is not required. Principles of statutory construction employed by Connecticut Courts are helpful:

When construing a statute, [o]ur fundamental objective is to ascertain and give effect to the apparent intent of the legislature. . . . In seeking to determine that meaning, General Statutes § 1-2z directs us first to consider the text of the statute itself and its relationship to other statutes. If, after examining such text and considering such relationship, the meaning of such text is plain and unambiguous and does not yield absurd or unworkable results, extratextual evidence of the meaning of the statute shall not be considered. . . . The test to determine ambiguity is whether the statute, when read in context, is susceptible to more than one reasonable interpretation. . . . When a statute is not plain and unambiguous, we also look for interpretive guidance to the legislative history and circumstances surrounding its enactment, to the legislative policy it was designed to implement, and to its relationship to existing legislation and common law principles governing the same general subject matter. . .

Commissioner of Emergency Services & Public Protection v. Freedom of Information Commission, 330 Conn. 372, 380, 194 A.3d 759 (2018). Here, the language is clear on its face—a COA is not required for any changes occurring in the rear yard, except for exterior alterations to the main building, and enclosed or roof covered additions to the main building.¹ To interpret this exemption to not include detached improvements, would swallow the exemption in the first place. If the exemption was interpreted that way, then the exemption wouldn't apply to any improvements made in any rear yards in the historic district.

It is important to distinguish between alterations to existing structures and the construction of new detached buildings. The first exception in the rear yard exemption refers to "alterations and enclosed or roof covered additions to the main building." This language specifically addresses changes to the primary structure on the property, not the construction of separate, detached buildings.

Furthermore, Connecticut law recognizes a distinction between alterations and new

¹ I don't believe Mark is altering any garages, or fences, so I have not addressed those provisions of the exemption.

construction. For instance, in the context of zoning regulations, alteration is commonly defined as a modification or change to an existing structure, while a new building would be considered a separate construction. Munroe v. Zoning Board of Appeals, 75 Conn. App. 796, 807-08, 818 A.2d 72 (2003).²

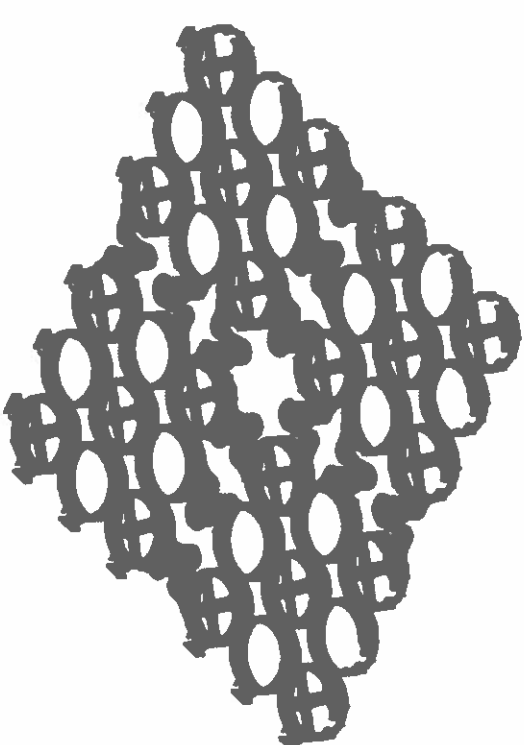
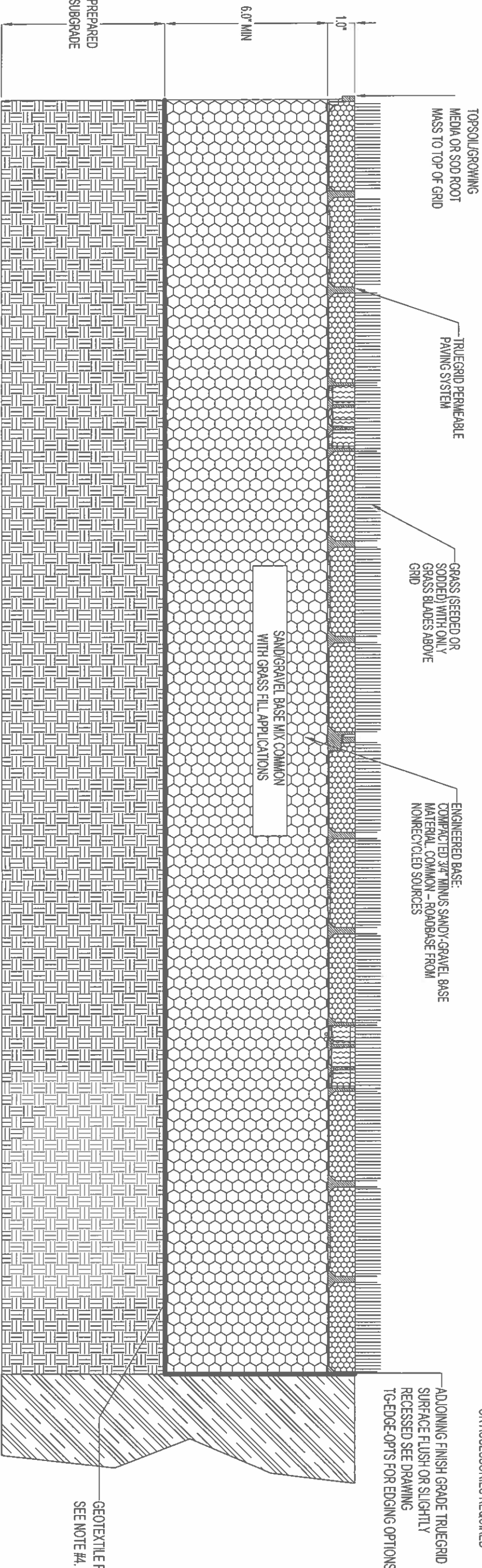
While the historic district commission generally has broad authority to regulate changes within historic districts, its decisions must not be arbitrary or illegal. Interpreting the rear yard exemption to allow the construction of detached buildings without a COA, unless specifically prohibited elsewhere in the regulations, would be consistent with the plain language of the exemption and would not be an arbitrary or illegal interpretation.

In conclusion, based on the “Rear Yard Exemption” language and the general principles of historic district regulation in Connecticut, there is a strong argument that building detached buildings in the rear yard does not require a certificate of appropriateness. The exemption clearly states that changes in the rear yard do not require a COA, and the construction of detached buildings is not listed among the specific exceptions to this exemption. However, it is important to note that this interpretation is based solely on the provided facts that Mark is not altering the buildings currently on his property, but is trying to add additional structures in the rear lot(s).

² The Court there stated, “[a]n alteration is commonly defined as a modification or change. A building or structure is a ‘constructed edifice designed to stand more or less permanently, covering a space of land, [usually] covered by a roof and more or less completely enclosed by walls’ and serving a particular purpose. (Internal quotation marks omitted.) Id. The garage in this case fits the definition of a building. It may also be termed a structure. See *Hendryx Co. v. New Haven*, 104 Conn. 632, 639-40, 134 A. 77 (1926) (one definition of structure is something constructed or built). A structural alteration exists if a building would be changed into a different structure. See *Guilford v. Landon*, 146 Conn. 178, 183, 148 A.2d 551 (1959). We conclude that the addition of a second story is a structural alteration because the addition would convert the garage into a substantially different building. See *Marris v. Cedarburg*, 176 Wis. 2d 14, 38, 498 N.W.2d 842 (1993).”

NOTES:

1. BASE DEPTH AND PREPARATION IS DEPENDENT ON SITE CONDITIONS PLUS LOADING REQUIREMENTS.
2. SEEDING METHOD: FILL SOIL/GROWING MEDIA TO TOP OF GRID. APPLY SEEDING OR HYDROSEEDING PER MANUFACTURERS' (BY OTHERS) REQUIRED APPLICATION RATES.
3. SOD INSTALLATION METHOD: USE 1" SOD (ROOT/SOIL DEPTH) WITHIN TRUEGRID AND PRESS IN SOD SO THAT TOP OF GRID IS AT SOIL/ROOT LEVEL AND ONLY THE GRASS BLADES EXTEND ABOVE THE GRID.
4. GEOTEXTILE FABRIC RECOMMENDED AND MAY BE REQUIRED BETWEEN SUB-GRADE & BASE FOR CERTAIN SOILS AND SITE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS. FOR CERTAIN SOILS AND SITE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS.
5. NO STAKING NECESSARY WITH TRUEGRID PRO LITE WHEN SLOPE IS BELOW 3 DEGREES. ASSESS PROJECT, AS NEEDED.
6. TRUEGRID PRO LITE IS ADA COMPLIANT WITH PROPER FILL MATERIAL.
7. ALTERNATIVE ENGINEERED BASE MIXES CAN BE USED PROVIDED THEY PROMOTE GRASS GROWTH, HAVE ADEQUATE VOID SPACE FOR DRAINAGE, AND PROVIDE REQUIRED STRUCTURAL SUPPORT.
8. THIS CROSS SECTION IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY.



TRUEGRID BLOCK REFERENCE VIEW

PREASSEMBLED & DELIVERED
IN 4' X 4' SHEET. RECONFIGURED
AS NEEDED. NO EXTRA TOOLING
OR ACCESSORIES REQUIRED

ADJOINING FINISH GRADE TRUEGRID
SURFACE FLUSH OR SLIGHTLY
RECESSED SEE DRAWING
TG-EDGE-0PTS FOR EDGING OPTIONS

GEOTEXTILE FABRIC.
SEE NOTE #4.

TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL VEHICLE GRASS FILL PRO LITE

MANUFACTURED IN
NORTH AMERICA

CLIENT / PROJECT

APPROVAL
INFORMATION



1-855-355-4743

UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED,
DIMENSIONS ARE IN INCHES.
PROPOSED NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION. THIS
DRAWING IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY.
IT IS THE USER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO
VERIFY THE EXISTING PROJECT OR TRUEGRID
WITH THE DESIGNER/ENGINEER. NO
REPRODUCTION OR USE OF THE
INFORMATION CONTAINED HEREIN
WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION BY
TRUEGRID.

DRAWN: J. L. H. DATE: 2/22/2020
CHECKED: J. L. H. DATE: 2/22/2020
APPROVED: J. L. H. DATE: 2/22/2020

TRUEGRID PRO LITE
GRASS FILL
TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL VEHICLE
TGPR-LITE-GRS-FILL

APPLICATION EXAMPLES:

DRIVEWAYS
RV PADS
OVERFLOW PARKING

02 UPDATED NOTES, FLAG NOTES, AND DRAWING

REV

ANGLERS TECHNOLOGIES

TRUE GRID

TRUE GRID

DATE

DRAWN

CHECKED

APPROVED

DATE

TRUEGRIDPAVER.COM

SECTION

1

2

3

4

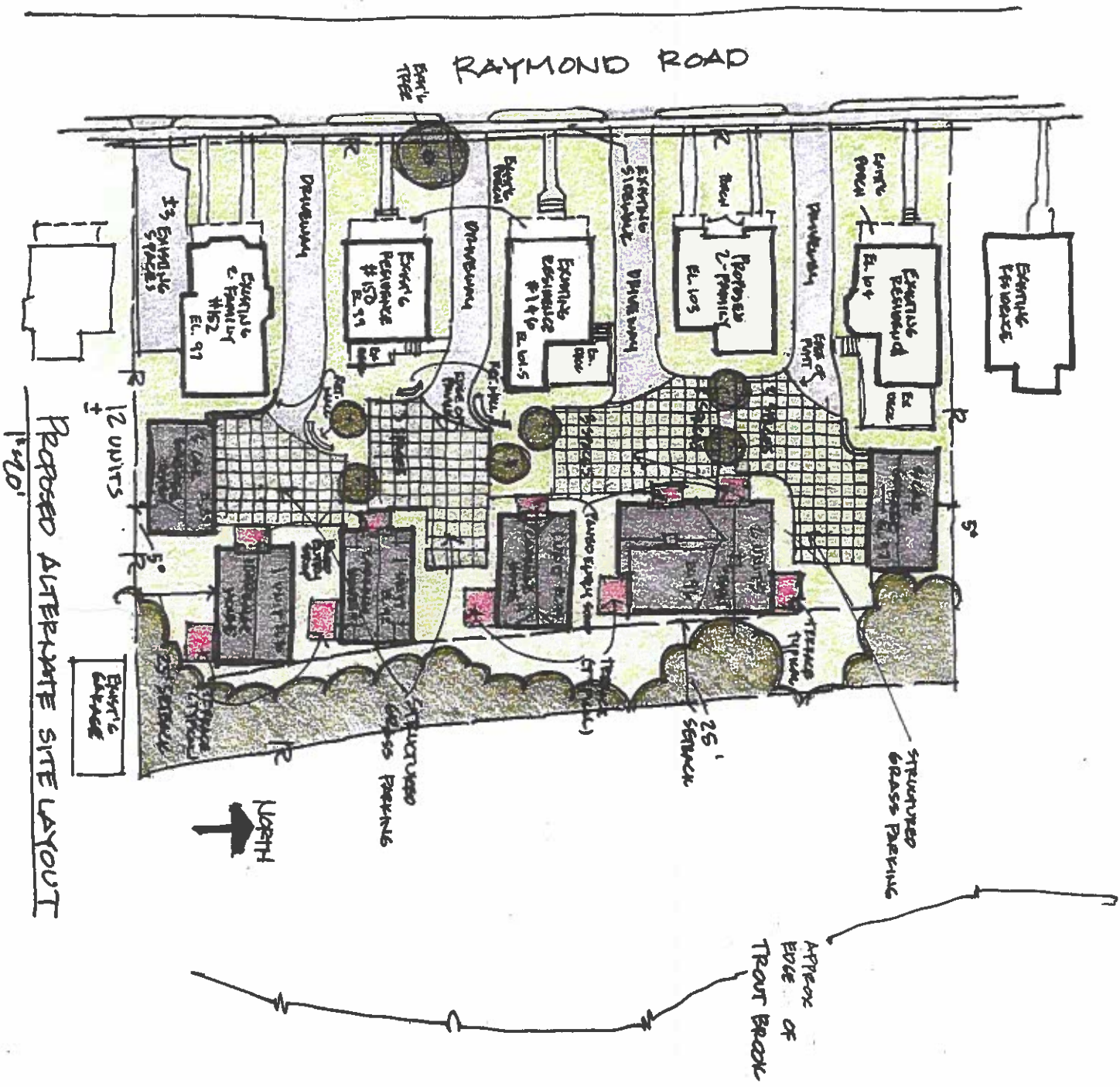
5

6

7

8

9



PROPOSED ALTERNATE SITE LAYOUT
12 UNITS
120'

136-152 RAYMOND ROAD
WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

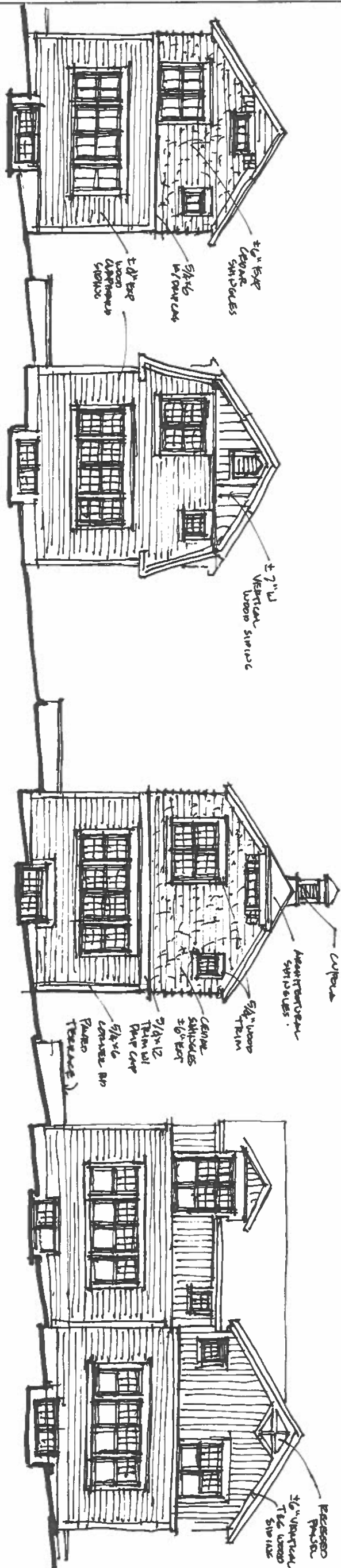
Kemper Associates Architects, LLC
700 Farmington Avenue Bldg 2 • Farmington, Connecticut 06032
(860) 408 - 7155 Fax (860) 408 - 7180

Date
5-16-25
5.21.25

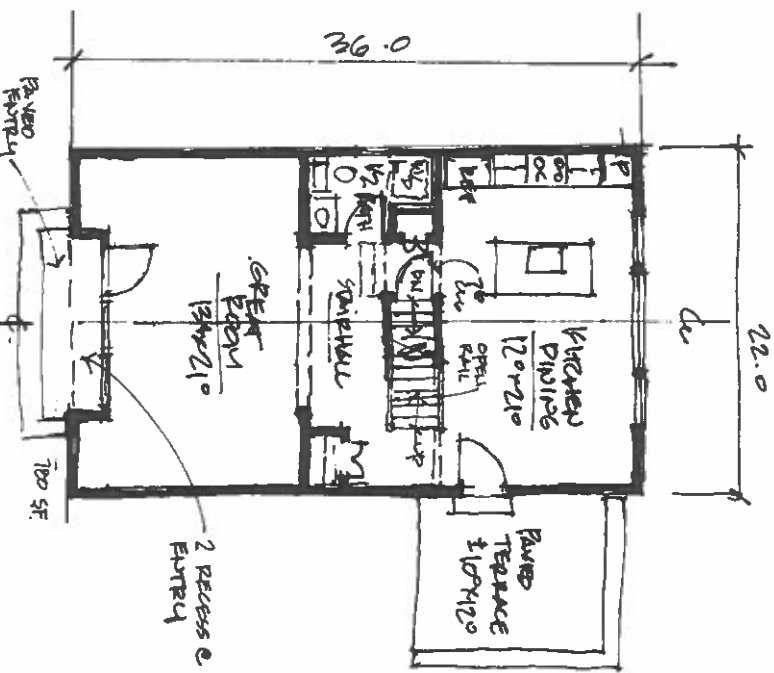
© 2025 KEMPER ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS, LLC
COPYRIGHT WARNING: FEDERAL COPYRIGHT PROTECTION
EXTENDS TO ORIGINAL AND MODIFIED DERIVATIVE PLANS,
AS APPLICABLE TO INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL
INFRINGEMENT, AND PROVIDES FOR SPECIFIC STATUTORY
DAMAGES, BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL. THESE
ARCHITECTURAL WORKS ARE COPYRIGHTED AND PROTECTED
BY TITLE 17 OF THE U.S. STATE CODE AND REPRODUCTIONS
ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND FORBIDDEN.

Drawn By
J.K.

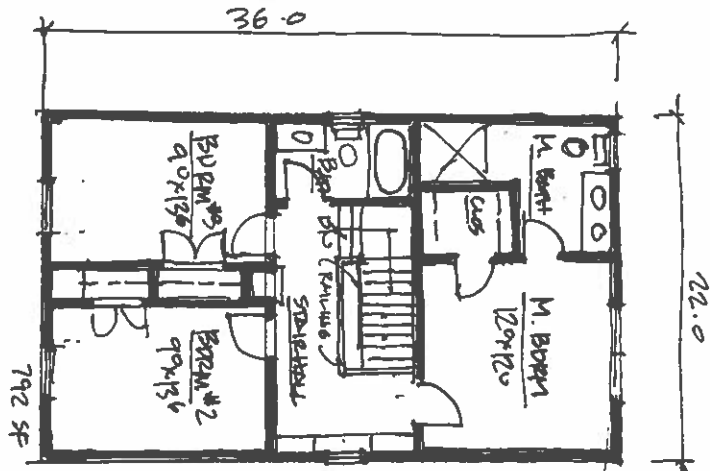
Sheet No.



PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION (FACING TROUT BROOK)
3/16" = 1' - 0"



FIRST FLOOR "CARPENTER HOUSE"
3/16" = 1' - 0"



SECOND FLOOR "CARPENTER HOUSE"
3/16" = 1' - 0"

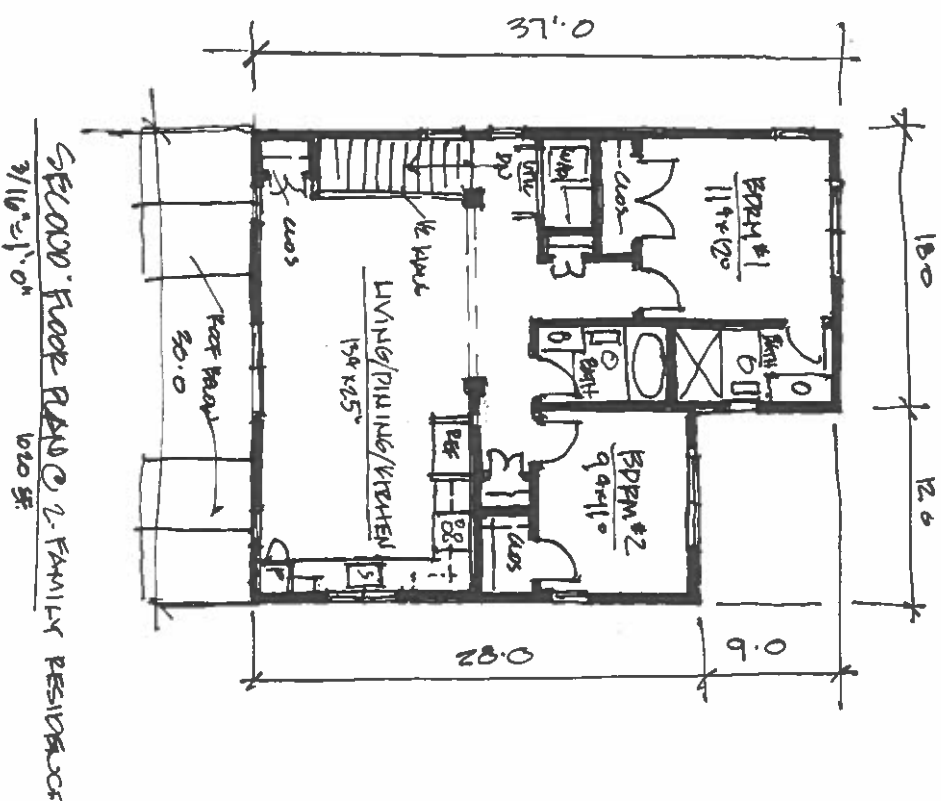
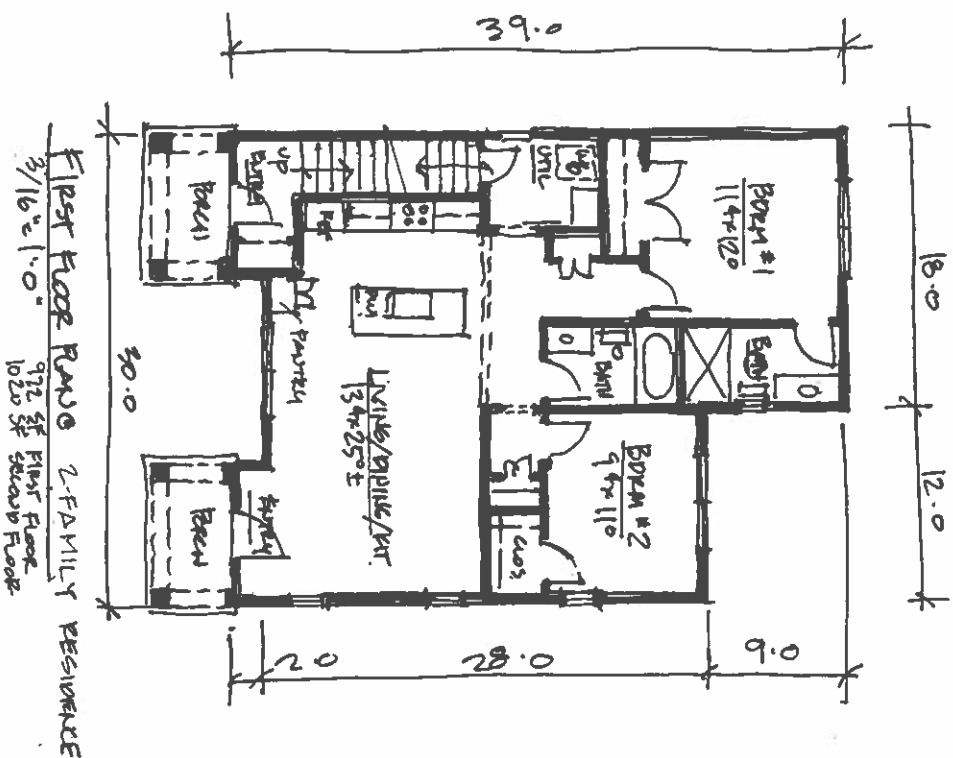
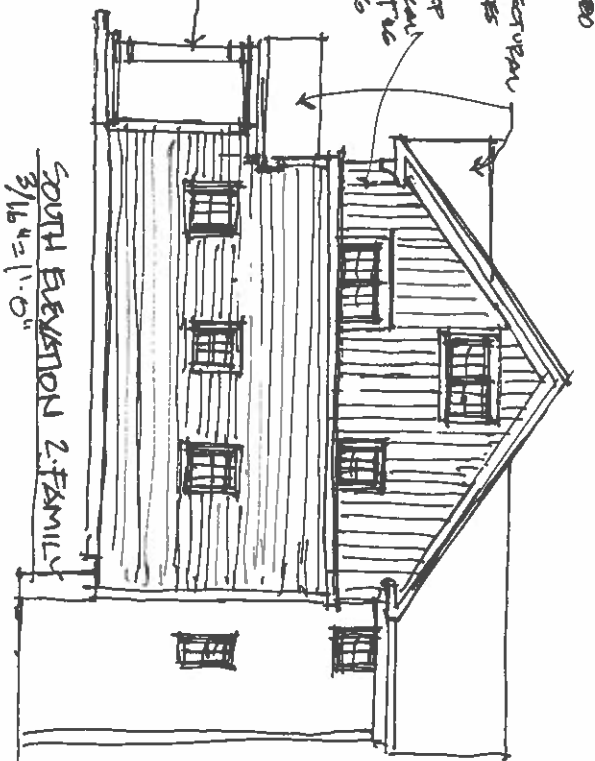
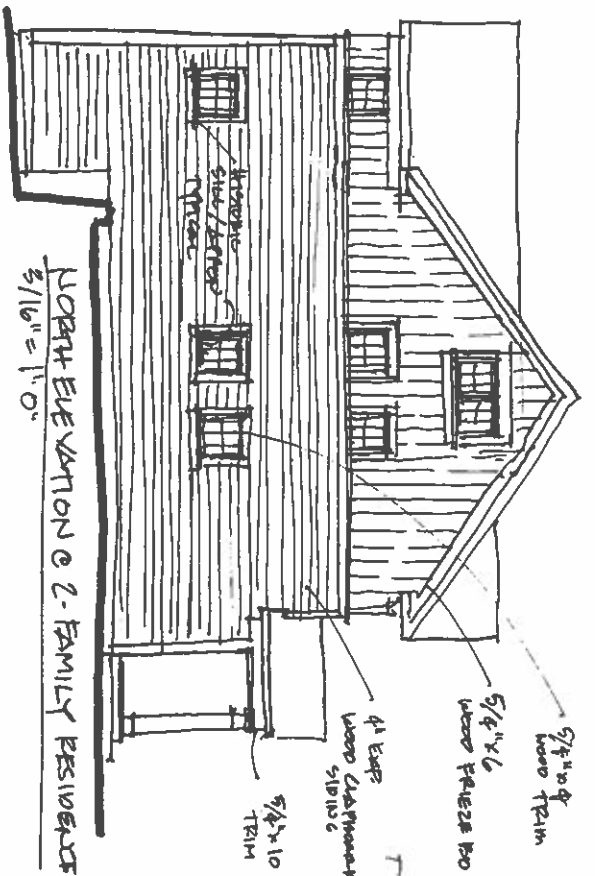
© 2023 KEMPER ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS, LLC
COPYRIGHT WARNING: FEDERAL COPYRIGHT PROTECTION
EXTENDS TO ORIGINAL AND MODIFIED DERIVATIVE PLANS
AS APPLICABLE TO INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL
INFRINGEMENT, AND PROVIDES FOR SPECIFIC STATUTORY
DAMAGES, BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL. THESE
ARCHITECTURAL WORKS ARE COPYRIGHTED AND PROTECTED
BY TITLE 17 OF THE U.S. STATE CODE AND REPRODUCTIONS
ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND FORBIDDEN.

36-52 RAYMOND ROAD
WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Kemper Associates Architects, LLC
700 Farmington Avenue Bldg 2 • Farmington, Connecticut 06032
(860) 409 - 7155 Fax (860) 409 - 7180

Date: 6-10-25
Revised:

Sheet No. 1
Drawn By: JK

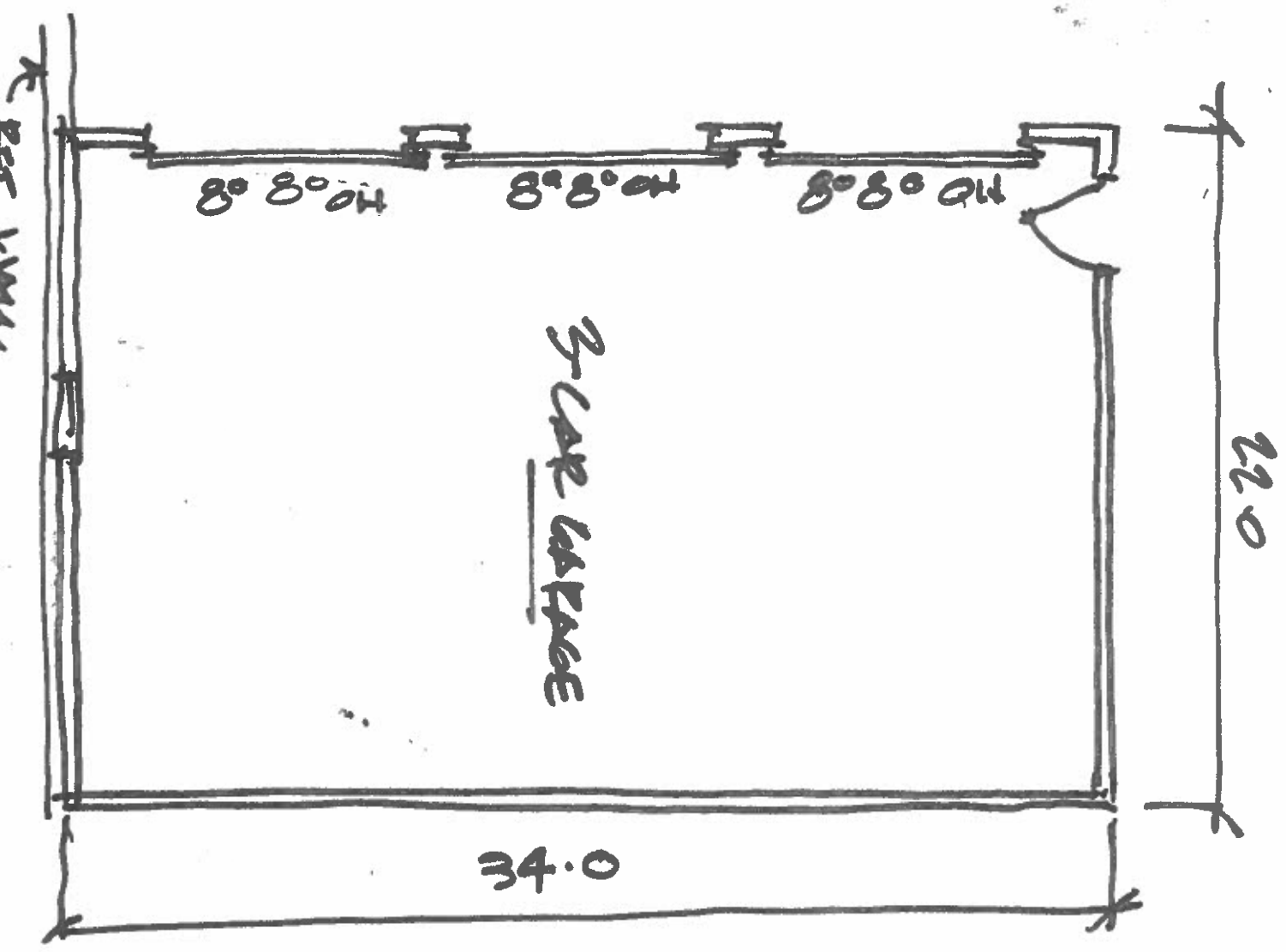


© 2023 KEMPER ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS, LLC
COPYRIGHT WARNING: FEDERAL COPYRIGHT PROTECTION
EXTENDS TO ORIGINAL AND MODIFIED DERIVATIVE PLANS.
AS APPLICABLE TO INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL
INFRINGEMENT, AND PROVIDES FOR SPECIFIC STATUTORY
DAMAGES, BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL. THESE
ARCHITECTURAL WORKS ARE COPYRIGHTED AND PROTECTED
BY TITLE 17 OF THE U.S. STATE CODE AND REPRODUCTIONS
ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED AND FORBIDDEN.

136-152 RAYMOND ROAD
WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

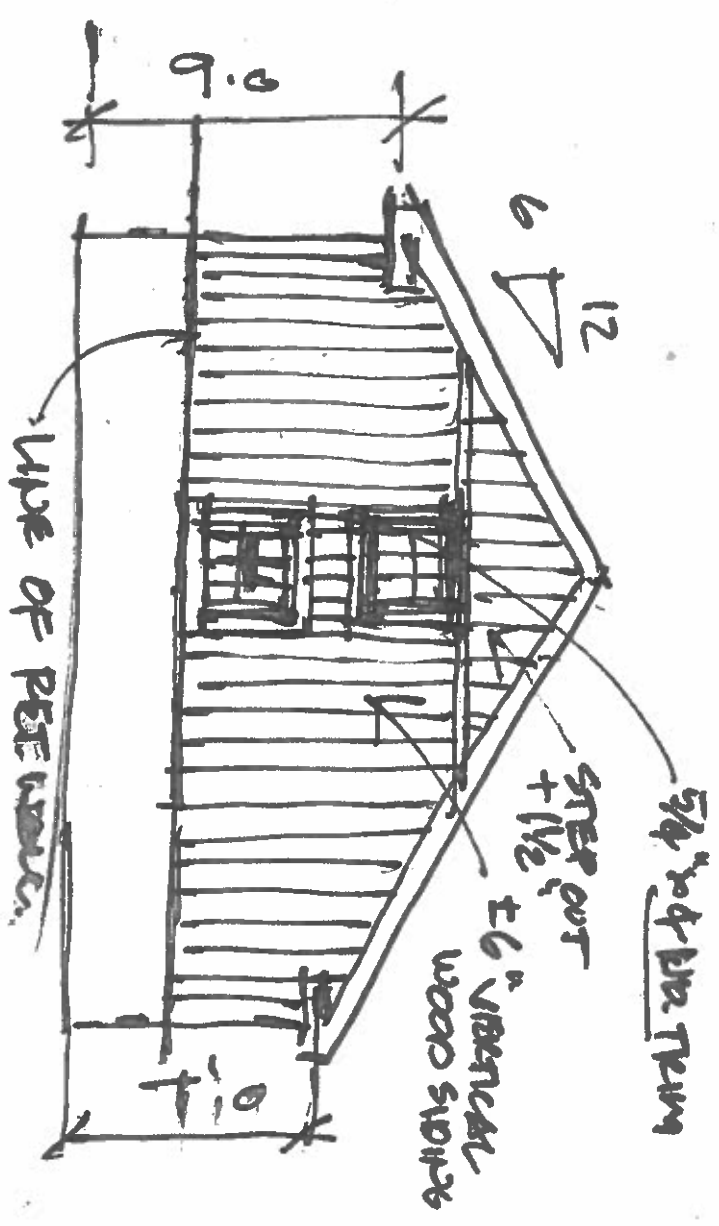
Kemper Associates Architects, LLC
790 Farmington Avenue Bldg 2 • Farmington, Connecticut 06032
(860) 409 - 7155 Fax (860) 409 - 7160

Sheet No.
Drawn By
JK
6-10-23
Revised

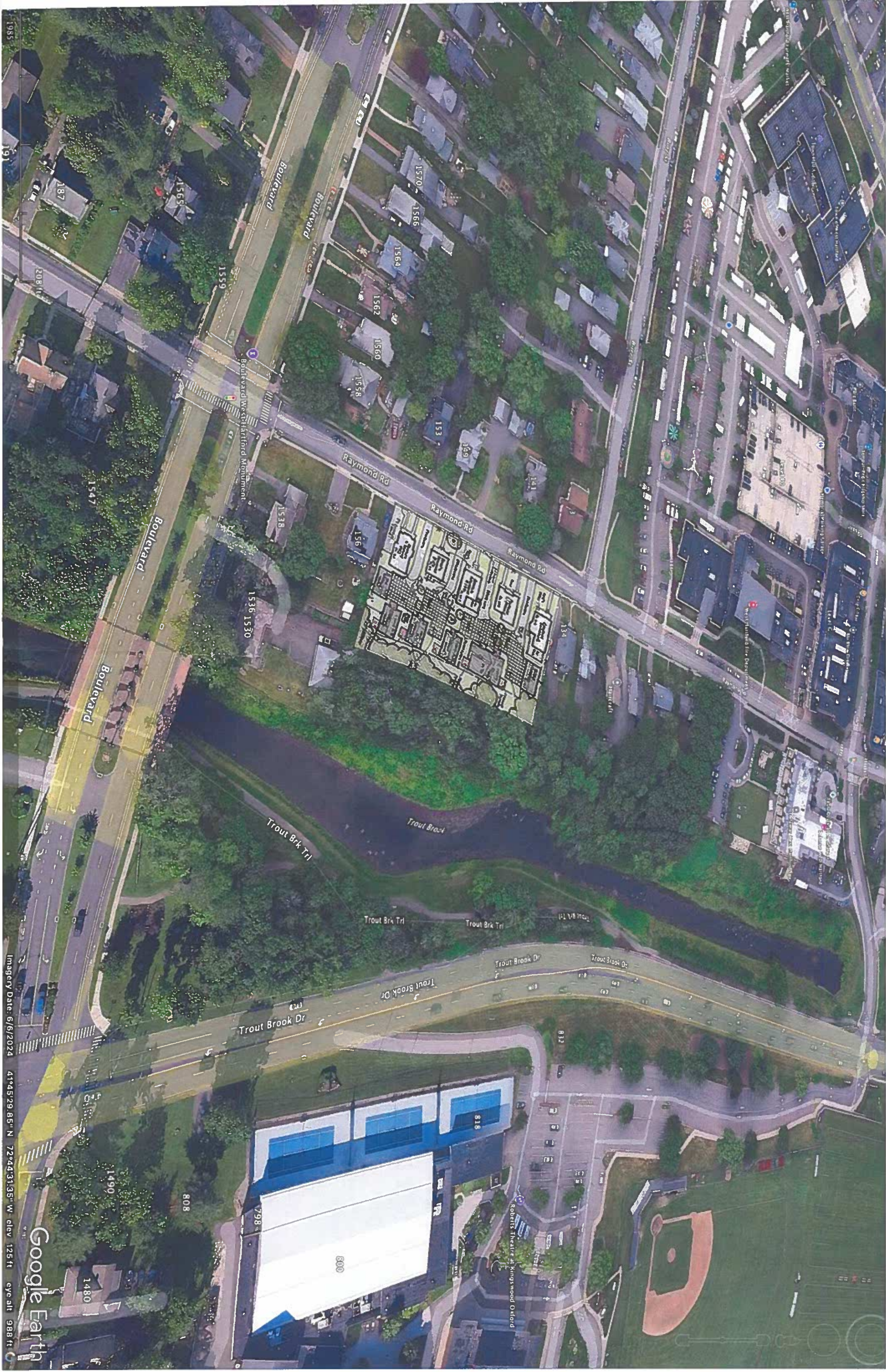


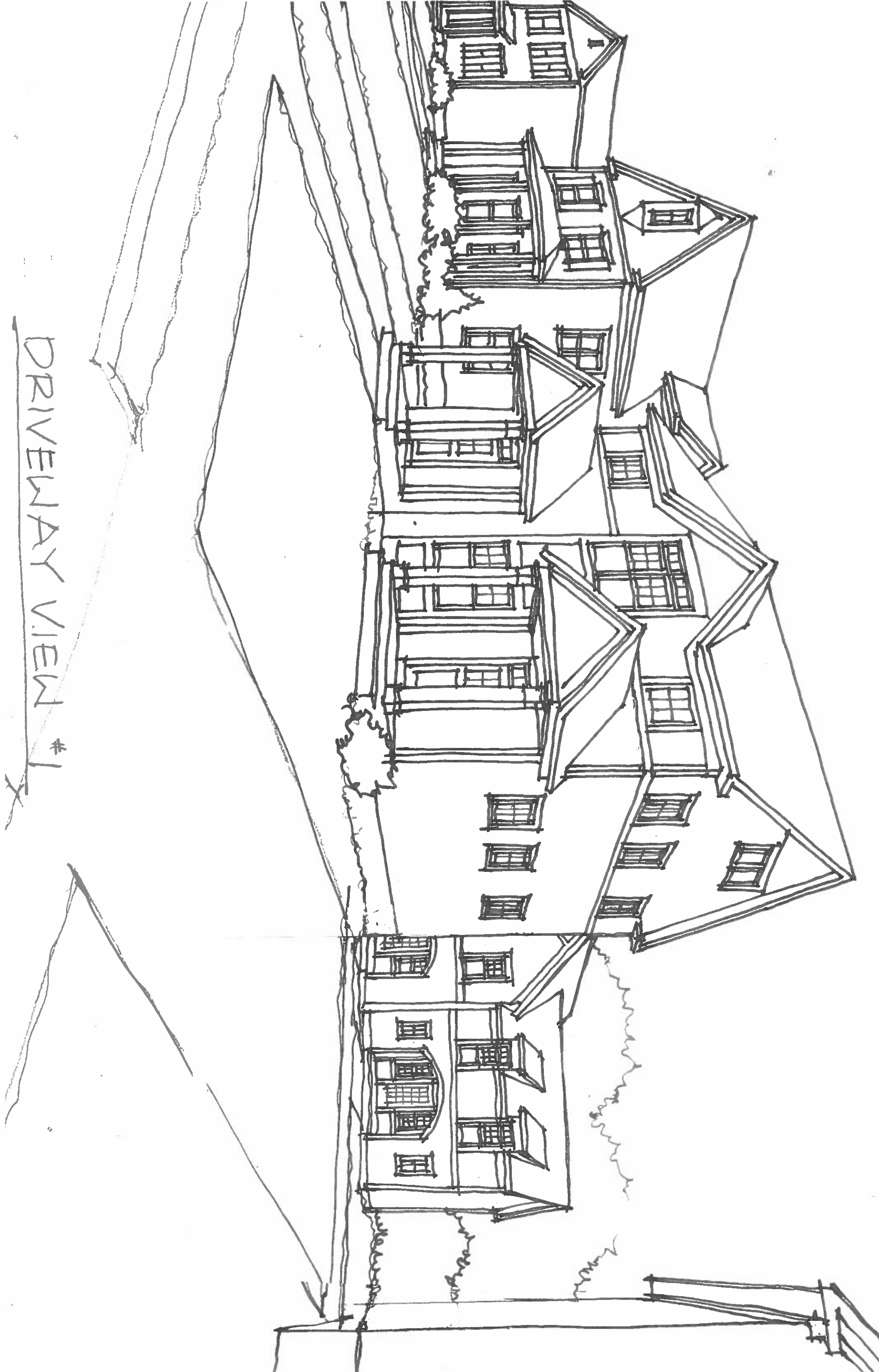
3 CAR DETACHED GARAGE
 3/16" = 1'0"

136-152 RAYMOND ROAD
 06/10/25



WEST ELEVATION OF DETACHED GARAGE (TYPICAL)
 3/16" = 1'0"





DRIVEWAY VIEW #1

DRIVEWAY VIEW #2

