

CITY OF BURNABY

ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS

RE: KELLY DOUGLAS SITE (4443,4373, 4343 STILL CREEK AVENUE
AND 2561 WILLINGDON AVENUE

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** Council receive this report for information.

REPORT

The Environment and Waste Management Committee, at its meeting held on 1999 May 11, received the attached report regarding environmental and development aspects associated with the Kelly Douglas site.

Arising from discussion, the Committee emphasized its desire that all reasonable measures be taken to minimize disturbance to the crow roost and to retain elements of the roost to the extent possible. In addition, the Committee requested that consideration be given to establishing a program to monitor displacement of roosting crows and further review alternate crow roosting sites in the area.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor D. Johnston
Chair

Councillor C. Redman
Member

Councillor D. Lawson
Member

:COPY - CITY MANAGER
- DIRECTOR ENGINEERING
- DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING
- DIRECTOR PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES
- DIRECTOR FINANCE
- CITY SOLICITOR

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

1999 May 7

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

SUBJECT: KELLY DOUGLAS SITE (4443,4373,4343 STILL CREEK AVENUE & 2561
WILLINGDON AVENUE): ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT
ASPECTS

PURPOSE: To provide information to the Committee regarding the environmental and development aspects associated with the Kelly Douglas Site.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to Council for information.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 1999 April 13, the Environment and Waste Management Committee considered Manager's Report No. 08 from the Council meeting of 1999 March 08 regarding Rezoning Reference #79/97 - 4231, 4261 and 4333 Still Creek Drive (Slough Estates) which had been referred to the Committee from Council. The subject area is shown in the *Attached* Figure 1. Council requested the Committee to investigate the feasibility of setting aside the City's land for the Northwestern Crow roost and further, to examine the CD guidelines for the private site (4443, 4373, 4343 Still Creek Ave. and 2561 Willingdon Ave.) that would govern the northern setbacks for the lots north of Still Creek Road to assess the impact on the crow roost.

2.0 NORTHWESTERN CROW ROOST IN BURNABY

Staff consulted with Mr. George Clulow of the Vancouver Natural History Society (VNHS), Dr. Nico Verbeek, Professor of Biology at SFU, Mr. Rob Butler from the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) and Mr. Tom Plath of the Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks (MOELP) as well as various articles and reports regarding the roost and Northwestern crows. As indicated in the previous Council report, a highly significant number of crows from Burnaby and neighbouring municipalities including New Westminster and Vancouver use the roost which is located at the Kelly Douglas site. Crows are known to pre-roost (congregate prior to roosting) in the vicinity of Still Creek near the MacDonalds headquarters as well as treed areas south near BCIT. Estimated counts of crows using the roost at one time are up to 12,000. The roost has been identified as the ultimate overnite resting site for crows using it. Appropriate light conditions determine the timing of crow roosting.

Northwestern crows have become extremely prolific in urban areas over the past 30 - 40 years due to readily available food sources and the lack of predators. Crows are opportunists which feed on a variety of food sources. They are also known predators of songbird nests. The Burnaby crow roost is believed to be one of the largest crow roosts in an urban area in British Columbia. Other significant roosts were noted on Douglas Island (east of the Port Mann bridge in the Fraser River), in Richmond and on Bowyer Island in Howe Sound (near Bowen Island). A previous Burnaby roost was known to exist on the site where Lougheed Mall was developed.

Crows prefer to roost in isolated locations away from human disturbance and in association with deciduous species, mainly alder and cottonwood. The subject site is vegetated primarily with second growth cottonwood and alder. Due to the previous industrial facilities on the site, the forest is young and stand age is estimated in the range of 15 years with some older, larger trees adjacent to the railway line. Crows were reported to be most dense on the eastern portion of the site adjacent to Willingdon and the BNR where trees are larger and the canopy is consistent. Roosting crows are known to be extremely sensitive to disturbance. All of the crows at the Burnaby roost have been known to take off from sudden sounds such as clapping.

Crows are known to be highly intelligent and display the ability to reason and learn and are even known to "play games" as part of their behaviour. They are social birds who may take comfort in communal activities including roosting. It is hypothesized that information such as current food sources may be somehow communicated between birds at roosts. The risk of exposure to predators is also reduced at roosts. Numbers at roosts are highest in winter months when food supplies are more limited and conditions are inclement. During the breeding season in spring and summer, their numbers at roosts are significantly reduced while crows and their extended families care for and raise their young.

3.0 DEVELOPMENT PLANS ASSOCIATED WITH KELLY DOUGLAS SITE

The subject site is shown in Figure 1. As indicated and supported in the City's 1998 Official Community Plan (OCP), the site is designated as Business Centre which is part of an overall strategy to meet the City's employment and tax return objectives. Existing site zoning is Industrial: M1 (Manufacturing District) and M2 (General Industrial) zones which are subject to conditions to ensure compatibility with surrounding land uses. An approximate 3 acre City-owned site (also with M1 zoning) is adjacent north and east of the site.

3.1 Proposed Road Development

The adopted Burnaby Transportation Plan includes the Still Creek Connector which would connect Still Creek Avenue by the City's Recycling depot with Still Creek Drive (at Slough Estates) through a

connection under the Willingdon overpass adjacent to the BN Railway (see Figure 1). The road which is defined as a major collector (primary), would provide an important east-west connection through an industrial district (see *Attached* Figure 2). The road has been included in Burnaby's Transportation Plan for many years and the need for this road is now recognized as a priority. The Ministry of Transportation and Highways (MOTH) is now requiring work on the connector road be initiated within two years as a condition of approval of the current Slough Estates rezonings due to congestion and safety concerns associated with the left turn movements to and from Willingdon onto Still Creek Drive as well as access problems onto the TransCanada highway from Willingdon travelling north. Dedication of the road right-of-way, achieved by way of the future adjacent development or property acquisition by the City, would be required to develop the road.

Alternatives to the Still Creek Connector have been reviewed with staff including the provision of an at grade signalled intersection at Still Creek and Willingdon and various ramp and overpass configurations connecting to Highway 1. However, these options are either substantially more costly or would exacerbate the traffic congestion on Willingdon and are not considered suitable.

3.2 Site Contamination

Historically, the subject site had been used for scrap metal and auto wrecking operation by Commercial Scrap Iron and Metal Trading Company Ltd. This site is at present vacant.

Environmental assessments undertaken at the site have shown copper, lead and zinc concentrations in soils to be above commercial level criteria. In localized areas, lead was found to be at special waste levels. The metals in soils are immobilized within the sand/ hogfuel interface and the groundwater has generally not been impacted.

In August 1994, a remediation plan involving *in-situ* management with capping and groundwater treatment was prepared for the site and subsequently submitted to the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MOELP) for their review and approval. In January 1996, the MOELP issued an *Approval in Principle* for the remediation plan to Kelly Douglas & Company Limited.

The construction of proposed road would entail removal of a minimum of 0.6 metres of surface soils. Soils in excess of commercial level criteria would have to be assessed and disposed appropriately. Geotechnical aspects relating to road construction would also need to be addressed. In addition, considerations would also have to be made to protect the utilities and/or to ensure that it would not become the migratory pathway for discharge of metal contaminant.

3.3 Business Centre Development Potential

The site is privately owned and currently for sale with several developers recently expressing interest in potential future Business Park/ light industrial development. Due to the significant level of contamination on site, proposals would involve capping the site through the construction of the building and parking surfaces and treatment of ground water being discharged to Still Creek in accordance with approval from MOELP. The development of underground parking is expected to be restricted due to site contamination. The development of Business Centre facilities would be seen in keeping with the Slough Estates developments along Still Creek which incorporate high-technology facilities, environmental protection and enhancement measures. Any development would desirably be rezoned to Comprehensive Development (CD zoning) thereby providing opportunities to incorporate sensitive development practices including potential retention or establishment of vegetation or buffer areas, alternative stormwater management practices, energy conservation measures and incorporation of environmentally responsible building materials. The required Still Creek extension right-of-way would be dedicated as a condition of rezoning depending on timing. Prospective developers have acknowledged this.

In summary, the site appears to have development potential within its current zoning and therefore significant monetary value is associated with it.

4.0 ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS:

It is recognized that the Burnaby crow roost is a natural part of the Still Creek ecosystem and a interesting natural feature attracting thousands of crows from Burnaby, New Westminster and Vancouver. However, from a Provincial wildlife perspective, Northwestern crows are not recognized as rare, endangered or vulnerable species and are not (including roosts) included on Provincial red or blue lists or protection strategies. MOELP has expressed some concern regarding the proliferation of Northwestern crows in urban areas and their potential impacts on songbird populations.

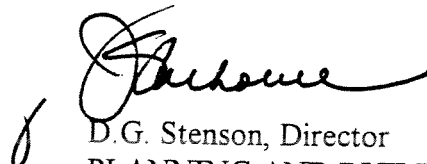
MOELP and CWS have suggested that if the site were redeveloped as indicated, the crows would be displaced but adapt and likely travel to another roost or establish a new roost in the vicinity in similar habitat. Due to their needs for an isolated, undisturbed roosting site, it is unlikely that retention of some trees on the development site would facilitate retention of the roost or a portion thereof. A significant amount of similar habitat exists along the Still Creek corridor east of the subject site. In particular, the City owned Still Creek conservation area west of Kensington (east of Cahill) provides an extensive riparian area adjacent to Still Creek containing similar predominantly second growth alder and cottonwood habitat in a relatively isolated area. Additional habitat also exists just east of Willingdon including City-owned lands (zoned P3) on the south side of Still Creek. It was also suggested that the crows could potentially roost in nearby treed areas.

It is recognized that construction of the Still Creek connector road is needed from an overall City perspective and is a requirement by MOTH due to congestion and safety concerns associated with left turn movements from Willingdon to Still Creek Drive. Alternatives alignments and road designs have been explored and the proposed alignment under the Willingdon overpass and through the eastern portion of the subject site is seen as the only viable alternative. Future Business Park Centre development of the Kelly Douglas site is not in process at this time however, current interest in the development community suggests the land is developable based on an economically viable approach to management of site contamination. The land is seen to hold significant value for development and consistent with the adopted OCP.

Given these conditions of privately owned land with associated development interest, the requirement of a connector road, the site contamination and in light of the abundance and adaptability of crows, it does not appear warranted to recommend City acquisition for retention of the roost due to the attendant costs. If circumstances were more amenable to maintain the roost, it would be more appropriate to try to retain this fascinating component of the urban ecosystem at this location. It is anticipated that crows may adapt to another site along the Still Creek corridor where similar habitat is found.

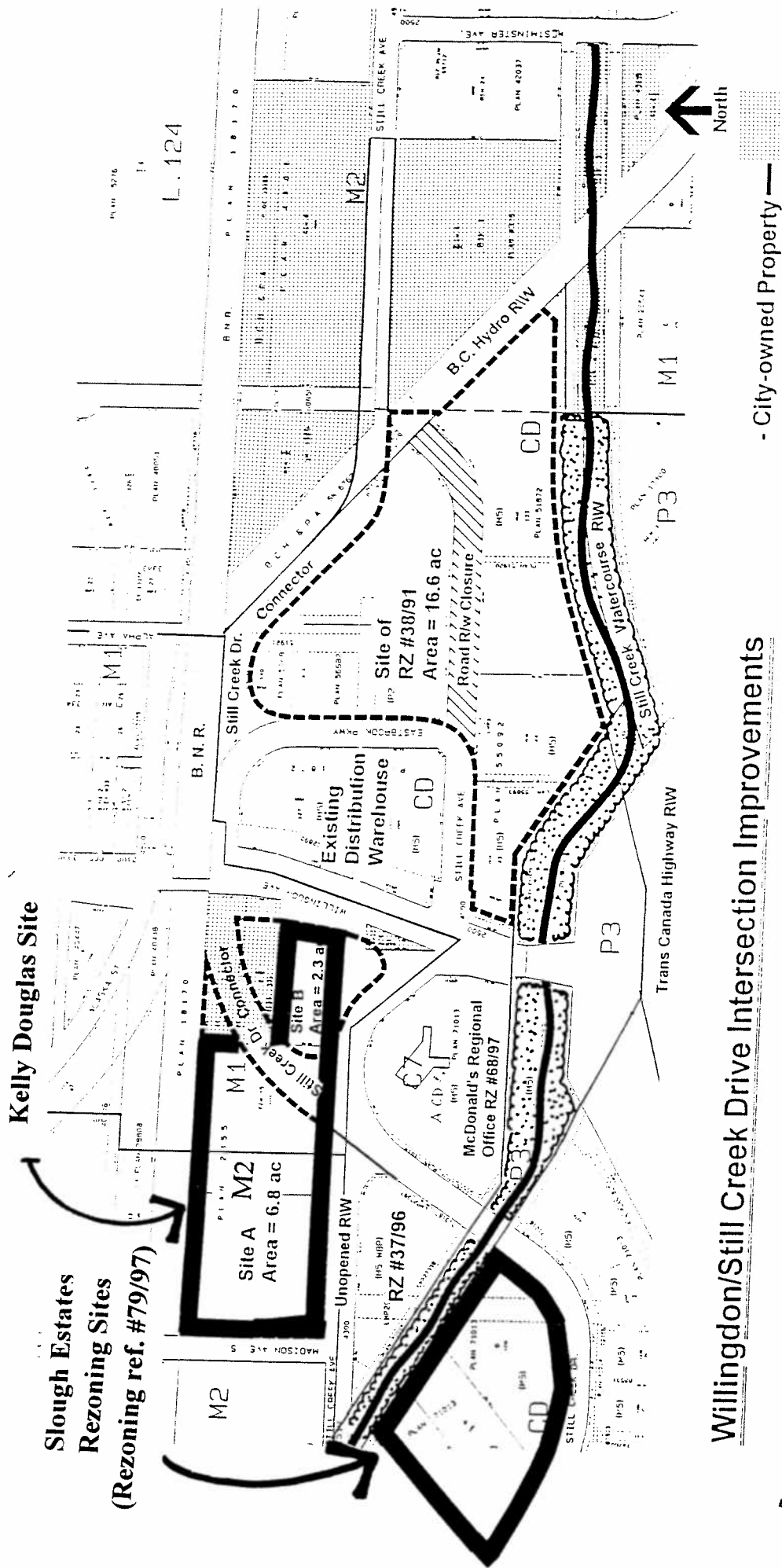
It is the view of staff that CD zoning is not a vehicle to maintain the crow roost. Rather, it will be utilized to ensure an environmentally sensitive approach to development. It should be pointed out that the City, through its many other environmental enhancement initiatives in the Brunette Basin, will be providing other opportunities for bird habitat.

This report is provided for the information of the Committee.


D.G. Stenson, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

SH\tn
Attached

- cc. City Manager
- Director Engineering
- Director Parks
- Director Finance
- City Solicitor



Willingdon/Still Creek Drive Intersection Improvements

FIGURE 1

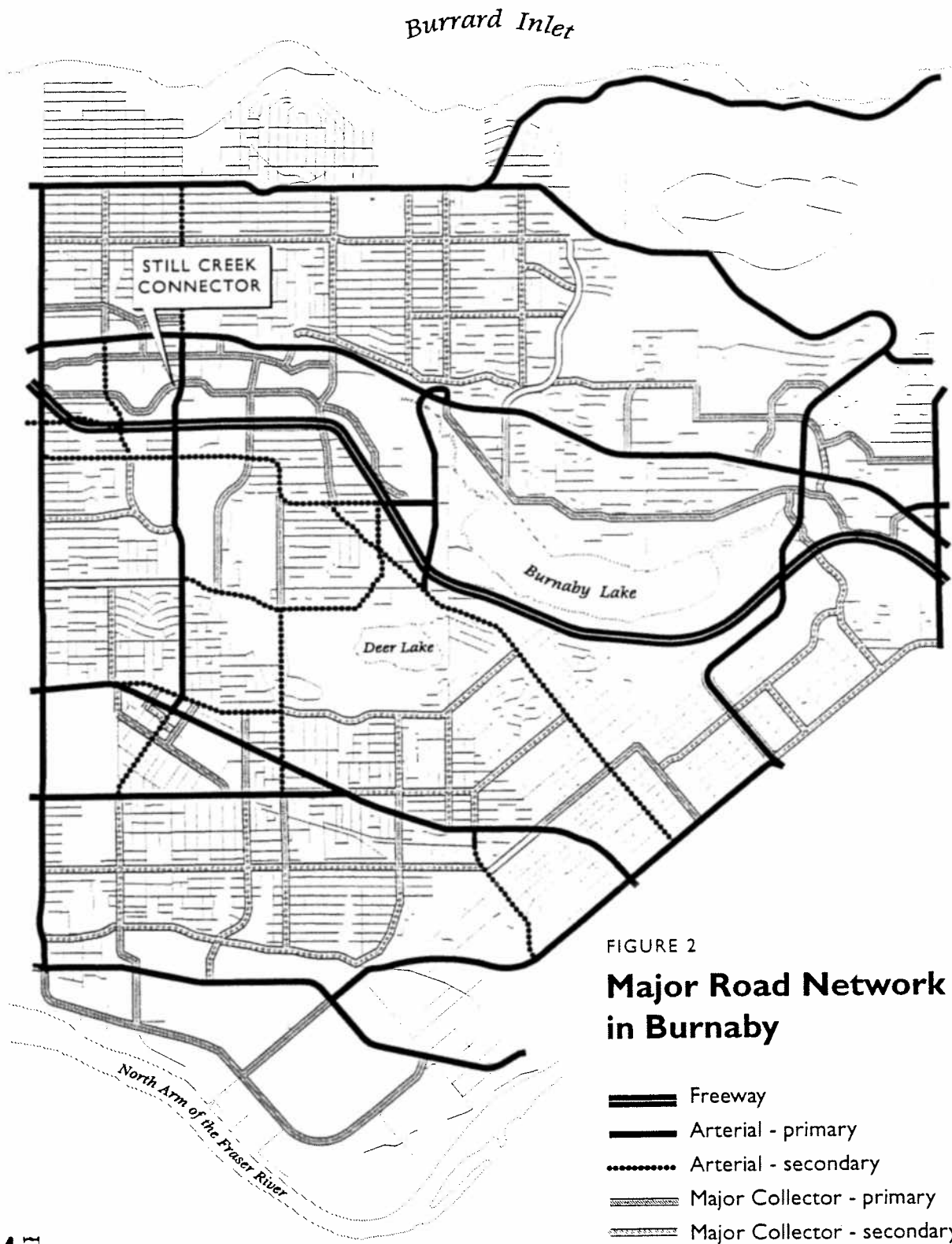








FIGURE 2
**Major Road Network
 in Burnaby**

-  Freeway
-  Arterial - primary
-  Arterial - secondary
-  Major Collector - primary
-  Major Collector - secondary
-  Greenway