

**COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION****B***HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS***SUBJECT: BURNABY HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH ONLINE DATABASE****RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. THAT Council approve the revised mandate for the City Archives to include community records.
2. THAT Council approve an expenditure of \$10,000 from the Community Heritage Commission budget to complete Phase I of the Burnaby Historic Photograph Online Database, as outlined in this report.

**REPORT**

The Community Heritage Commission, at its meeting held on 2006 September 07, received and adopted the *attached* report outlining a proposal to establish a Burnaby Historic Photograph Online Database under the auspices of the City Archives.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor C. Jordan  
ChairCouncillor G. Begin  
Vice Chair

Copied to:	City Manager
	Deputy City Manager
	Director Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
	Director Finance
	Chief Librarian
	Chief Information Officer
	Director Planning & Building

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

**DATE:** 2006 September 05

**FROM:** DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** PC 3520 20  
*File Ref:* HPOD

**SUBJECT:** BURNABY HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH ONLINE DATABASE

**PURPOSE:** To outline a proposal to establish a Burnaby Historic Photograph Online Database under the auspices of the City Archives.

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### RECOMMENDATION:

**THAT** the Community Heritage Commission approve the creation of a Burnaby Historic Photograph Online Database, as outlined in this report, and forward the following recommendations to Council:

1. **THAT** Council approve the revised mandate for the City Archives to include community records.
2. **THAT** Council approve an expenditure of \$10,000 from the Community Heritage Commission budget to complete Phase I of the Burnaby Historic Photograph Online Database, as outlined in this report.

## REPORT

### 1.0 BACKGROUND

The City of Burnaby has a rich history and heritage that spans over 100 years which is represented in its civic and community archival collections. Historic photographs of the city form one of our most important community heritage resources and the management and accessibility of the resource to the public remains a key issue for the City's overall heritage program. The City of Burnaby has approximately 12,600 photographic images in its own civic and community archives collections. These archival photograph collections form an important historic record of Burnaby's development, family history, industries, landscape, politics, education, sports and culture. Currently, however, access to all of the collections is limited by the sheer volume of material which is not indexed and the fragile nature of original prints, negatives and digital files.

At their meeting of March 20, 2006, Council received and approved an initial report from the Community Heritage Commission directing staff to prepare a report to create an online database to allow for public access to historic photographs of Burnaby. The proposed Historic Photograph Database project is intended to be inclusive of all collections and will create new partnerships for

the conservation and interpretation of Burnaby's heritage. This report outlines a phased proposal to establish a Burnaby Historic Photograph Online Database for the consideration of the Community Heritage Commission and Council.

## **2.0 CITY OF BURNABY ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS**

### **2.1 *City of Burnaby Archives***

The City of Burnaby Archives was established in 2001 under the Clerk's Department which has the authority and responsibility for managing all the City's records. The City Archives has achieved considerable progress in terms of the description and housing of the City's historic records during its first five years of operation with the establishment of the archives facility. The archives retains a large volume of over 5,000 historic photographs that largely span the modern period of Burnaby's growth and development following World War II. The significant portion of this collection relates to civic projects and operations, including celebrations and events.

The proposed historic photograph database requires the establishment of departmental responsibility for its creation and management. In reviewing the options available, it has been determined that the City Archives, under the auspices of the Clerk's Department, is the most appropriate civic agency to undertake and manage this project. This proposal for an expanded mandate for the City Archives was determined in consultation with Burnaby Village Museum and the Burnaby Historical Society. As such, it is proposed that Council approve that the mandate of the City Archives be expanded to incorporate community records to encompass all the historic photograph collections owned by the City. This will allow the City Archives to progress incrementally to build its capacity to serve the public by managing the community's historic photograph collection and online website and database.

In relation to Burnaby's various photo collections, the following outline provides an overview of impact and opportunities that the new City Archives mandate and Historic Photograph Database will create for Burnaby Village Museum and the Burnaby Historical Society.

### **2.2 *Burnaby Village Museum***

Since its establishment in 1971, the City's Museum has been a repository for archival collections from the community and in a limited scope for City records. The museum has, with due diligence and within the spirit of their mandate, undertaken the task of preserving community archival material. The City Museum manages a collection of over 2,600 historic photographs. The Museum will retain physical custody of this civic collection but will partner with the City Archives to create and manage electronic data files to allow for full public access and enjoyment of its holdings. This will allow the Museum to continue to retain and manage its collections and thus ensure their integrity

with existing artifact collections and the ongoing responsibilities associated with past donors and its own collections policies.

Once the City Archives has approval for an expanded mandate for collecting community archival materials, the Museum, through its curatorial staff, will refer all future potential donors of archival materials to the Clerk's Department. The City's Museum will still retain the mandate to collect archival materials that document its collections and also have full and cooperative access to the City Archives collection for research and exhibit purposes. This ongoing partnership between these two professional civic institutions will ensure the success of the proposed Historic Photograph Database project and expanded mandate for the City Archives.

### **2.3 Burnaby Community Archives Collection**

Established in 1958 under the B.C. Societies Act, the Burnaby Historical Society has maintained an independent pioneering role in the collection of archival materials including photographs. The society has operated its 'Community Archives' with the cooperation and financial assistance of the City. The collection has always been stored in various civic owned facilities. In 1990, the collection was relocated to a new public facility in the main administration building of Burnaby Village Museum.

The society has recognized that its operation of the community archives was a temporary volunteer service and has long-advocated for the establishment of a permanent City Archives with an expanded mandate for community records. The Historical Society currently receives an annual modest city grant to provide an honorarium for its archives staff person and for materials and supplies. The community archives is open one-day per week and in 2005 logged 20 visitors and 30 research requests.

The community archives collection, although rich in content, is relatively small in scale as it only occupies 168 linear feet of shelf space. The collection includes approximately 5,000 photographic images. The City Archives can accommodate this collection within its existing storage facility at the McGill Library. The collection would only occupy less than 9% of the shelf space available.

A review of the options for incorporating the community archives collection into the proposed online photograph database determined that it would be necessary for the City to own the collection as there would be significant difficulties with the ongoing management of a collection that is legally owned by a non-profit society. Given the small scale of the community archives collection, its high heritage value and the society's willingness to work towards a comprehensive archives facility, it appears timely to pursue its transfer to the City Archives.

Upon Council's concurrence with the recommendation of this report, staff will work with the Burnaby Historical Society's executive board and membership to determine a mutually satisfactory plan to donate its collection to the City. Staff will also work closely

with the society to pursue its continued involvement in the collection and preservation of local archival and research materials through establishing volunteer opportunities and partnerships.

### **3.0 PROPOSED ON-LINE DATABASE PROJECT**

Today's technology makes it possible to provide public access to valuable cultural resources through the Internet and has established a new standard of access for historic photograph collections. Online database access to archival collections is now the norm of practice for archival institutions that brings the opportunity for expanded information sharing and ease of retrieval.

Online web-base historic photograph databases provide a remarkable resource for the general public and researchers. With the standardization of simple search screens, anyone searching for a historic photograph of a place, person or event in Burnaby would be able to locate and see images available in the City's archival collections. This type of website provides a tremendous learning opportunity and research tool for students, family genealogists and the general public. It also can serve an important role for the City's archives and museum by more easily connecting the community to its public collections. Users can also be invited to email comments and feedback that can provide detailed identification of Burnaby's historic photographs. Historic photograph websites have also been credited with raising the overall awareness of community history and the importance of archives, thereby creating additional donations to local archives and museums from private collections.

An online historic photograph database does present the opportunity to provide integrated access to Burnaby's photograph collections through an innovative public website that highlights Burnaby's unique history and its neighbourhoods. Using other online historic photograph websites as examples, there is the ability to create a website database that builds on the experience of other communities.

This project proposes, as an end product, the creation of a searchable database of historic photographs available for public viewing on the City of Burnaby website. The database will include photographs from the City-owned collection currently managed by Burnaby Village Museum, and the City Archives. This single portal of information to the City's cultural collections would create a powerful tool for researchers and significant access to the citizens of Burnaby to a valuable historic resource.

The proposed project is planned in two phases, which will not only result in the creation of the searchable on-line database, but also create the necessary infrastructure for future digitization projects which could include web-based access to information on the museum's artifact collections, textual records of the City Archives and heritage information projects initiated by the Community Heritage Commission, and from other sources.

### **3.1 Phase I - 2006**

Phase I includes completing the detailed research that is required for planning for the database infrastructure to support the project. It is proposed to engage a project consultant to undertake a detailed evaluation to define the needs of the project for data management and software and to recommend the specifications for implementation proposed under Phase II of the project. Concurrent work is also being pursued by the Burnaby Village Museum, through a student summer grant project, for digitization of its photograph collection of 2,600 images which will assist in defining the parameters of the proposed Burnaby Historic Photograph Database.

It is proposed that a consultant be retained to evaluate the needs of the City Archives and Burnaby Village Museum for data management and software and to prepare recommendations for implementation products. The Community Heritage Commission has available funds within its 2006 budget for this component of the project, and by way of this report is requesting Council approval and authorization for the expenditure of \$10,000 of these funds for this purpose.

### **3.2 Phase II**


Phase II of the project would involve the purchase of the necessary equipment and installation of the new collections management software to enable the City Archives and Museum to manage their collections data consistently, and to create on-line public access to the historic photograph database. The results of the Phase I work will guide and confirm software and hardware needs such as computer upgrades and software implementation. This component of the project is currently estimated to be in the order of \$100,000. This phase of the project would also result in the creation of item level descriptions of all of the City's archival images and to uploading them to the on-line database. This component of work is currently estimated at \$75,500.

Phase II of this project is proposed to be included for consideration as part of the development of the upcoming 2007-2011 Provisional Capital Program. Staff would propose to advance the estimated allocation of \$175,500 within the 5 year Capital Program for Council consideration in relation to other City Capital priorities. It is proposed that the project be funded by the use of Gaming Funds consistent with Council's adopted guidelines. With subsequent Council adoption of an allocation within the 2007-2011 Capital Program, staff would, at the appropriate time, seek the approval of the Finance Committee and Council for the required expenditure to proceed with Phase II of the project. Once the Burnaby's Historic Photograph online database was established, annual operating costs, currently estimated at approximately \$15,000 per year, would need to be accommodated within the City's Annual Operating Budget.

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From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Burnaby Historic Photograph Online Database  
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#### 4.0 NEXT STEPS

With Council authorization for funding of Phase I of this project, staff would proceed to retain the necessary consultant services to fully define the parameters and requirements for the Burnaby Historic Photograph online database. The results of this work will serve to finalize the implementation requirements of the project. A subsequent report would be prepared to seek Finance and Civic Development Committee and Council approval for implementation of the project based on the results of the Phase I work and in-line with the City's Capital Program. This important community heritage initiative will also continue to be guided and supported with regular updates submitted to the Community Heritage Commission.

  
Basil Luksun, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

JW:tn

cc: City Manager  
Deputy City Manager  
City Clerk  
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services  
Director Finance  
Chief Librarian  
Chief Information Officer

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