

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
COMMUNITY HERITAGE COMMISSION

DATE: 2020 Jan 20

FROM: CITY ARCHIVIST

FILE: 2410-20
*Reference: Community Heritage
Commission*

SUBJECT: CITY OF BURNABY ARCHIVES ANNUAL REPORT 2019

PURPOSE: To present the 2019 Annual Report of the City of Burnaby Archives

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the report be received for information.

REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2019 was an eventful year at the City of Burnaby Archives (the Archives).

Reflecting on 2019, the Archives was able to make significant improvements to our current archival record program as well as to our preservation program. The Archives was able to: begin a holistic review and reappraisal of our photograph collection; transform all of our unrestricted photographs into freely downloadable high-resolution images on Heritage Burnaby; and preserve over 25% of our digital records through our digital record preservation program.

The City continues to explore new ways of extending the life of the current archives facilities, and in 2019, off-site storage continued to be the most viable short-term solution. This year we also renovated our office space to allow us to more successfully age in place.

The following report provides a summary of our operations throughout 2019.

2.0 POLICY SECTION

Goal

- A Connected Community
 - Digital connection –

- Provide online access to core City services and information
- Partnership –
Work collaboratively with businesses, educational institutions, associations, other communities and governments
- An Inclusive Community
 - Serve a diverse community –
Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community
- A Healthy Community
 - Lifelong learning –
Improve upon and develop programs and services that enable ongoing learning
- A Thriving Organization
 - Organizational culture –
Ensure that our core values are reflected in our policies, programs and service delivery
 - Human resources –
Foster an environment for teamwork, efficiency and excellence to deliver customer service in alignment with our core values
 - Communication –
Practice open and transparent communication among staff, Council and the community
 - Reliable services, technology and information –
Protect the integrity and security of City information, services and assets
 - Technology and innovation –
Support technology development and innovation to empower staff and to advance community objectives

3.0 HISTORY OF ARCHIVAL RECORDS PROGRAM [OVERVIEW]

The City of Burnaby Archives opened in the new McGill Library in 2001 and functions as a division of the Office of the City Clerk. The Archives is the official repository for all inactive civic records of permanent administrative, legal, fiscal, historical, evidential and/or informational value to the City of Burnaby. Archival material is preserved as evidence of the functions, legal rights, obligations, policies, decisions, procedures, accountabilities, and operations of the City.

It is the responsibility of the City Archives to ensure the preservation and accessibility of these vital records by providing proper facilities, environmental controls, and professional management resources to maintain the archival material in perpetuity.

In addition, the Archives supports the protection and preservation of the City's documentary heritage by way of its expanded collections mandate and the incorporation

of the Burnaby Historical Society Community Archives collections into the City's holdings. This transfer saw over 100 metres of textual records and over 10,000 photographs moved to the Archives facility in 2007.

Our City record description and digitization program has produced a current index of all Council minutes, reports and City Bylaws dating back to 1892 that can be searched online where they are available as full-text PDF documents. Descriptions and finding aids for all files and records in our holdings are also available online.

4.0 CURRENT ARCHIVAL RECORDS PROGRAM

In 2019, we began a holistic review and reappraisal of the Archives' photograph collection. During this project, thousands of photographs have been rehoused and described.

Staff finished creating high-resolution JPEGs (access copies) of over 2,700 photographs and made them available on Heritage Burnaby. This work was undertaken in three phases with the purpose of increasing the availability of our holdings, and removing all unwarranted barriers on their use.

The 900 photographs from the first phase (completed November 2018) are part of the Burnaby Historical Society (BHS) photograph collection. The Archives began with the unrestricted photographs that are part of this collection because of their frequent requests for use and the positive and profound impact that this Society has had on the City of Burnaby and its citizens. The 1,000 photographs from the second phase (completed February 2019) are part of the Peers Family and Hill Family fonds or the Hill family and Vidal family fonds and depict daily life, landscapes, and local events in the Lower Mainland, and primarily feature Burnaby's Deer Lake in the early 20th century. The third phase (completed April 2019) involved nearly 800 unrestricted photographs from the City of Burnaby Archives series Pioneer Tales, Burnaby Image Bank, and Burnaby Centennial Anthology.

Staff responded to 407 research requests this year. One of the more notable researchers was musician Stephen Bradley (Steve Kravac).

<https://exclaim.ca/music/article/steven-bradley-takes-trip-to-historical-burnaby-in-capitol-hill-video>

The song "Capitol Hill" is centred in the place I grew up, around the suburbs of Burnaby and East Vancouver, British Columbia. I used a combination of footage shot in the field, archival imagery and living room green screen to create the video.

All the still images you see in the video appear courtesy of the City of Burnaby Archives Department. Their staff helped facilitate the usage of these historical photos and allow you to see life as it existed when I was a child on those streets and in those neighbourhoods.

Thirty-five boxes of permanent records were transferred this year from the Legal Department, the Office of the City Clerk, and the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. These records have now been described and indexed according to the highest level of archival practices and standards, thus allowing the public and City staff quick, efficient, and direct access to this information.

5.0 RECORDS PRESERVATION

Archives staff must take explicit action in order to safely house and provide access to our records so that they will be meaningfully available in perpetuity. For analogue records, this process is straightforward: they can be put in proper storage enclosures and kept in an environment with the correct temperature and relative humidity to slow down deterioration and copies can be created to reduce the handling of originals. For digital records, preservation is a much more difficult and tenuous job. Ongoing and evolving challenges such as hardware obsolescence, mechanical failure, and deterioration of digital media make digital records a highly vulnerable record group.

In 2019, in partnership with the City's Information Technology (IT) Department, we processed approximately one quarter of the born-digital records held by the Archives, with more than 4,400 files totaling 550 GB converted to preservation formats using our preservation software Archivematica. Preservation copies generated by the software are being stored encrypted in Cloud storage servers in Ontario and Quebec and unencrypted on local City servers, which are regularly backed up onto tape. These redundancies ensure that the Archives will be able to access its born-digital records even in instances of environmental or natural disaster or technological failure.

6.0 RENOVATION

Throughout the Archives' history, our office has undertaken projects to increase workflow efficiencies while still ensuring the preservation and accessibility of the City's vital records. The Archives' logical next step was to concentrate on finding ways to improve the efficiency of the space that we occupy inside the McGill Library branch.

With the support of City Council, the Burnaby Public Library, and with guidance from the Engineering, Corporate Management, and Information Technology departments, we developed a renovation plan that provides dedicated scanning areas and appropriate staff work space, including a private area to receive donations from community members and review Freedom of Information requests. The renovation also includes an increase in space for researchers in the Pixie McGeachie Reading Room. The project was completed by the Facilities Management (FM) division of the City's Engineering Department.

The CHC meeting in November was jointly hosted by the McGill Branch of the Burnaby Public Library and the Archives, and included a tour of our newly renovated office to the Mayor and Commissioners.

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CONCLUSION

Archives staff will continue to work in close partnership with the City's IT Department in 2020, focusing on the digital records currently in Archives' holdings and preserving them through our hosted instance of Archivematica.

Our 2020 work schedule also includes processing our backlogged records, and the continued pursuit of a solution to the Archives space shortage. The City plans to implement an Electronic Document Record Management System (EDRMS) in the coming years which will impact both our workload and our storage requirements.

Under the continued guidance and support of the Community Heritage Commission and Burnaby City Council, we look forward to building on these successes as we move into 2020.

Respectfully submitted,



Rebecca Pasch
CITY ARCHIVIST

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Copied to: City Manager
Director of Corporate Services
Chief Information Officer
Director of Planning and Building
City Clerk