

Consolidated Clause in Works Committee Report 8, which was considered by City Council on September 28, 29 and 30, 2005.

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**Keele Street and Wilson Avenue Proposed
New Road Connection Class Environmental
Assessment Study (Ward 9, York Centre)**

City Council on September 28, 29 and 30, 2005, adopted this Clause without amendment.

The Works Committee recommends that City Council adopt the staff recommendations in the Recommendations Section of the report (August 31, 2005) from the General Manager, Transportation Services.

Purpose:

To report on the findings and recommendations of the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue Proposed New Road Connection Class Environmental Assessment Study and request authority to file the Project File in the public record in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no immediate financial implications associated with the adoption of this report. The estimated engineering and construction costs of the proposed new road are \$1.0 million. Negotiations for the property required for the new road are being or will be undertaken through the redevelopment process. Property costs, if any, will be determined through these negotiations. The final funding requirements will be identified in a future Transportation Services Capital Budget submission.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the new road connection between Keele Street and Wilson Avenue, as shown in the attached Figure No. 3, be endorsed;
- (2) authority be granted to the General Manager of Transportation Services to file the Project File for the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue Proposed New Road Connection Class Environmental Assessment Study with the City Clerk and to give public notification of such filing in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment; and

- (3) the appropriate City officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

In 1990, the former City of North York passed By-law 31261, which adopted Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 318. Policy 9.39.0 of OPA 318 states that: "In the event that development proposals are received for lands shown on Map C.9.39, Council will seek to obtain an access to Wilson Avenue from the Canadian Tire site at 2701 Keele Street, and a consolidation of the driveways providing access to Keele Street from the sites at 2701 and 2737 Keele Street. Where feasible, the consolidated driveways and new access to Wilson Avenue should be constructed as one road." Map C.9.39 is shown in the attached Figure No. 1.

The southeast quadrant of the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue intersection currently contains a Canadian Tire gas bar/lube facility, a Travelodge hotel, a Petro Canada service station, a Burger King restaurant, a Swiss Chalet restaurant, a car wash as well as vacant properties that front onto Wilson Avenue.

Lands to the rear of the Canadian Tire gas bar/lube facility are currently under redevelopment by Independence Way Inc., for approximately 200 stacked residential townhouses. The Travelodge is also currently undergoing conversion to residential condominium with ground floor commercial uses.

The City of Toronto received a proposal to demolish the former Canadian Tire store and to construct approximately 200 stacked townhouse units. In April 2004, after receiving the Independence Way Inc. development application, staff initiated a study to determine the feasibility of a new road connection between Keele Street and Wilson Avenue in accordance with OPA 318. Prior to the completion of the feasibility study, the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) granted Site Plan Approval (including full access movements) to the Independence Way Inc. proposal. However, the feasibility study showed that a new road connection is justified from a traffic perspective and feasible when implemented in conjunction with the redevelopment of the adjacent lands, including the Independence Way Inc. proposal.

In the fall of 2004, staff initiated a Schedule B Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Study using the information from the feasibility study as a basis for the EA study.

Comments:

Study Process:

The Keele Street and Wilson Avenue New Road Connection Class Environmental Assessment Study has been completed according to the requirements for a Schedule 'B' project under the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (the Class EA). Projects which fall under Schedule 'B' of the Class EA may produce some limited adverse environmental effects and are required to undergo a screening process in which the public and affected agencies are consulted. A screening process in the Class EA comprises the first two phases of the environmental planning process. These two phases are:

- (i) Phase 1 – Identification of Problem or Opportunity; and
- (ii) Phase 2 – Identification and Evaluation of Alternative Solutions.

Phase 1 of the Class EA process consists of identifying and quantifying the problems or opportunities that need to be addressed. These problems/opportunities can either be identified by the municipality through the normal course of transportation programming or through concerns raised by commuters or residents. Examples of problems for road projects include the need for road maintenance, traffic safety concerns and the need for additional traffic capacity.

Phase 2 of the Class EA process consists of identifying alternative solutions that could be implemented to address the problem/opportunity identified in Phase 1; assessing each of those potential solutions to determine which of them would best address the problem/opportunity and what impacts they would have on the natural and socio-economic environments; and consulting with the affected agencies and the public to solicit their input prior to finalizing the preferred solution.

Public involvement is an integral and on-going part of the study process for a Class EA Study. Schedule 'B' studies require two mandatory points of contact with affected agencies, members of the public and interest groups. The public consultation process for this Class EA Study is further detailed in the Public and Agency Comments section of this report.

Study Area:

The Study Area for this project, as shown on Figure No. 2 attached to this report, is bounded by Paxtonia Boulevard to the north, Falstaff Avenue to the south, Cornelius Parkway to the east, and Agate Road to the west. All of the roads within the Study Area are under the jurisdiction of the City of Toronto except for Highway 401, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario.

Keele Street is a major arterial road, running north-south, with a six-lane cross-section from approximately 200 metres north of Wilson Avenue to just south of Falstaff Avenue, beyond which it reduces to a four-lane cross-section. Wilson Avenue is a four-lane major arterial road running east-west. The signalized intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue consists of exclusive eastbound and westbound left and right turn lanes. There are also exclusive northbound and southbound left turn lanes.

Highway 401 also intersects Keele Street south of the Wilson Avenue intersection. The eastbound and westbound ramp terminals are signalized while the on-ramps are free flowing.

Identification of the Problem/Opportunity:

As indicated above, transportation planning work done in support of OPA 318 identified a need for a new road connection between Keele Street and Wilson Avenue in conjunction with the redevelopment of the southeast quadrant of this intersection.

Further traffic analyses conducted for existing conditions as part of the Class EA study indicated that the intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue currently operates at levels of service of

“E” in the AM peak hour and “F” in the PM peak hour. As a result the queues in the peak periods are longer than the storage capacity provided for them. Prior to the closing of the Canadian Tire Store at 2701 Keele Street, a point duty police officer was frequently required to facilitate turns into and out of the site in order to avoid conflicts with vehicles travelling on Keele Street. This situation could worsen when these lands are redeveloped if no transportation improvements are made.

Identification and Evaluation of Alternative Solutions:

Five alternatives were identified and evaluated to address the transportation issues in this area. The five alternatives are as follows:

- Alternative 1 “Do Nothing” – this alternative is required to be assessed in all Class EA Studies;
- Alternative 2 Limit Community Growth - no new development within the Study Area;
- Alternative 3 Increase Transit Usage – promote transit usage to higher rates;
- Alternative 4 Widen Existing Roads – widen Keele Street to eight lanes or Wilson Avenue to six lanes; and
- Alternative 5 Build New Road – construct a new road link within the southeast quadrant of the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue intersection.

These alternatives were screened in order to determine if each was a viable alternative to provide transportation services to the Study Area.

Do Nothing - This alternative was not proposed as traffic conditions, including queuing, would worsen as a result of the additional traffic volumes. This alternative would also not increase the network connectivity nor would it provide improved accessibility within the Study Area.

Limit Community Growth - This alternative was not proposed as there would be no change in the traffic operations or conditions in the Study Area. Also, limiting community growth would not comply with the approved Keele Street Study or Wilson Avenue Revitalization Study. This alternative would also not increase the network connectivity nor would it provide improved accessibility within the Study Area.

Increase Transit - This alternative was not proposed as it would not significantly address the traffic problems in the Study Area. This alternative would also not increase the network connectivity nor would it provide improved accessibility within the Study Area.

Widen Existing Roads – The widening of Keele Street and or Wilson Avenue would result in significant property impacts within the Study Area and would not comply with the approved Keele Street Study or Wilson Avenue Revitalization Study. This alternative was also not proposed as it would not increase the network connectivity nor would it provide improved accessibility within the Study Area.

Construct New Road - This alternative was identified as the preferred alternative as it provided an alternate route that would relieve some of the queuing as well as improve traffic operations, it would increase network connectivity and would also improve accessibility within the Study Area for vehicles as well as pedestrians.

The Preferred Design:

A number of different design concepts were reviewed for the preferred solution of a new road connection between Keele Street and Wilson Avenue. The various design concepts identified included four free-flow alignments and three stop-controlled alignments. The preferred design solution consists of an east-west road connecting to a north-south road via an all-way stop intersection at the entrance to the Independence Way Inc. development. A plan of the preferred design is attached as Figure No. 3.

The preferred design solution was selected because it provided the safest access for new residents into and out of the proposed new residential site by removing the sightline obstructions of a free flowing roadway. The preferred design also provided for the least amount of property impacts.

The proposed new roads would consist of a typical 20-metre right-of-way, with one lane in each direction and a sidewalk and boulevard on either side of the road. The proposed east-west roadway would be stop controlled at Keele Street with southbound and westbound left-turn prohibitions consistent with North York Community Council Report 1, Clause 10(b) (Feasibility to Extend the Concrete Median - Keele Street north of Highway 401) adopted by City Council on April 12, 13 and 14, 2005. The proposed north-south roadway will be signalized at Wilson Avenue with a northbound left-turn lane provided for motorists turning westbound onto Wilson Avenue. This proposed signalized intersection with Wilson Avenue and the entrance to Downsview Plaza would require modifications to the Downsview Plaza access and parking lot.

The owners of Independence Way and the Travelodge Hotel have, through discussions with City Planning staff, indicated a willingness to convey any land required for the proposed new road connection should the EA process for this study be approved. Opportunities to obtain other lands required for the new road will be explored through the redevelopment process for 1055 Wilson Avenue.

The engineering and construction costs for the new road connection are estimated at \$1.0 million. This value also includes the installation of traffic control signals at the new intersection on Wilson Avenue, associated modifications to the Downsview Plaza entrance and traffic islands on Wilson Avenue.

Public and Agency Comments:

Notices of Study Commencement were published in the North York Mirror on October 9 and 13, 2004. Letters, including a copy of the preferred design for proposed road, were also sent out to the directly impacted stakeholders, residents of Ingleside Drive and various agencies and provincial ministries.

Comments received included support for the project, in an effort to alleviate congestion at the intersection of Keele Street and Wilson Avenue, as well as a variety of concerns. The two main concerns raised and the measures that have been taken to address these concerns are described below:

(a) Increasing Congestion in the Neighbourhood:

Traffic analyses were conducted taking into account the added traffic of the new approved development at this location. The results indicated that the network will not be denigrated by the addition of the new road connection. Levels of service will not be significantly changed within the immediate vicinity of the new road connection on both Keele Street and Wilson Avenue.

(b) Access impacts to the properties on Keele Street:

The Ministry of Transportation has indicated that they would prefer to see the intersection of the new road connection to Keele Street operate as right-in/right-out only to limit potential impacts on the operation of the Highway 401 and Keele Street interchange. The turning movement restrictions would prevent left-turning vehicles entering and leaving the new road connection at Keele Street. However, there will be a new signalized intersection at the new road connection with Wilson Avenue and this will enable safer access and egress to the properties within the southeast quadrant of the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue intersection.

Next Steps:

If the City of Toronto endorses the recommendations of this report, a Notice of Study Completion will be issued indicating that the Project File will be filed in the public record for a minimum 30-day review period according to the requirements of the Class EA process. During this period, affected agencies, members of the public or interest groups who have concerns with the proposed project, which cannot be resolved with City staff, may write to the Minister of the Environment to request a Part II Order. If a Part II Order is granted, then the project cannot proceed until an Individual Environmental Assessment is prepared by the proponent and approved by the Minister. If a Part II Order is not granted, or if no objections are submitted during the 30-day filing period, the project is approved under the Environmental Assessment Act and may proceed to construction.

Conclusions:

A Class EA study was undertaken to identify and evaluate the feasibility of constructing a new road connection between Keele Street and Wilson Avenue through the south-east quadrant of the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue intersection.

Five alternative solutions were developed and evaluated using a common set of criteria to determine their benefits and impacts. Based on the analyses undertaken and the public and agency input received during this Class EA process, it is recommended that a new road connection between Keele Street and Wilson Avenue be constructed. A preferred road alignment that includes an east-west road connecting to a north-south road via a four-leg intersection with all-way stop control was identified. These roads would also have sidewalks on both sides of the roads. The all-way stop intersection would also provide access to properties in the southeast quadrant of the Keele Street and Wilson Avenue intersection and would eliminate visibility concerns arising from a free-flow alignment.

A Notice of Study Completion and filing of the Project File in the public record must now be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment.

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List of Attachments:

Figure No. 1 Official Plan Amendment 318 – Map C.9.39
Figure No. 2 Study Area
Figure No. 3 Preferred Design Solution

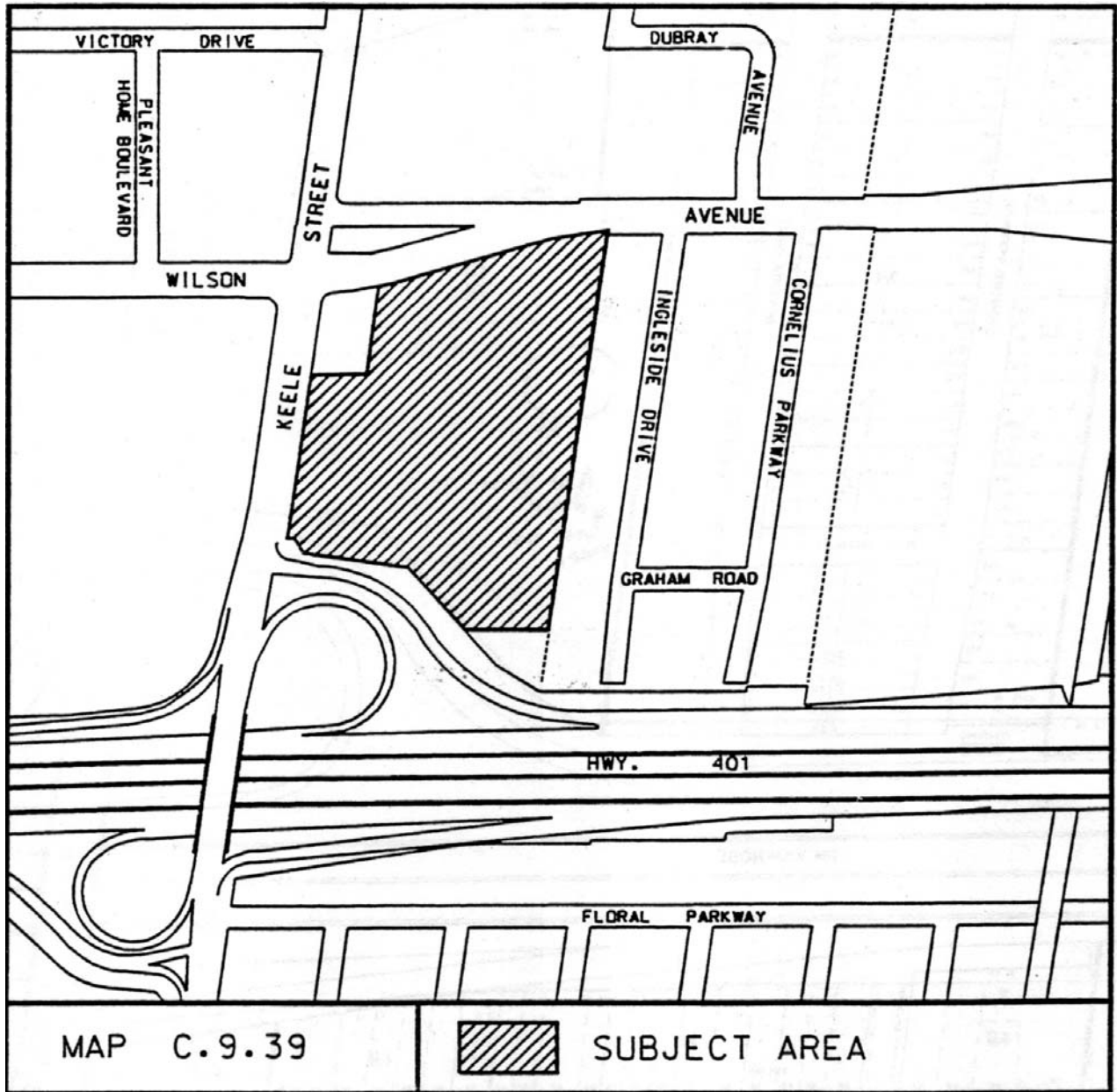


Figure No. 1

Study Area

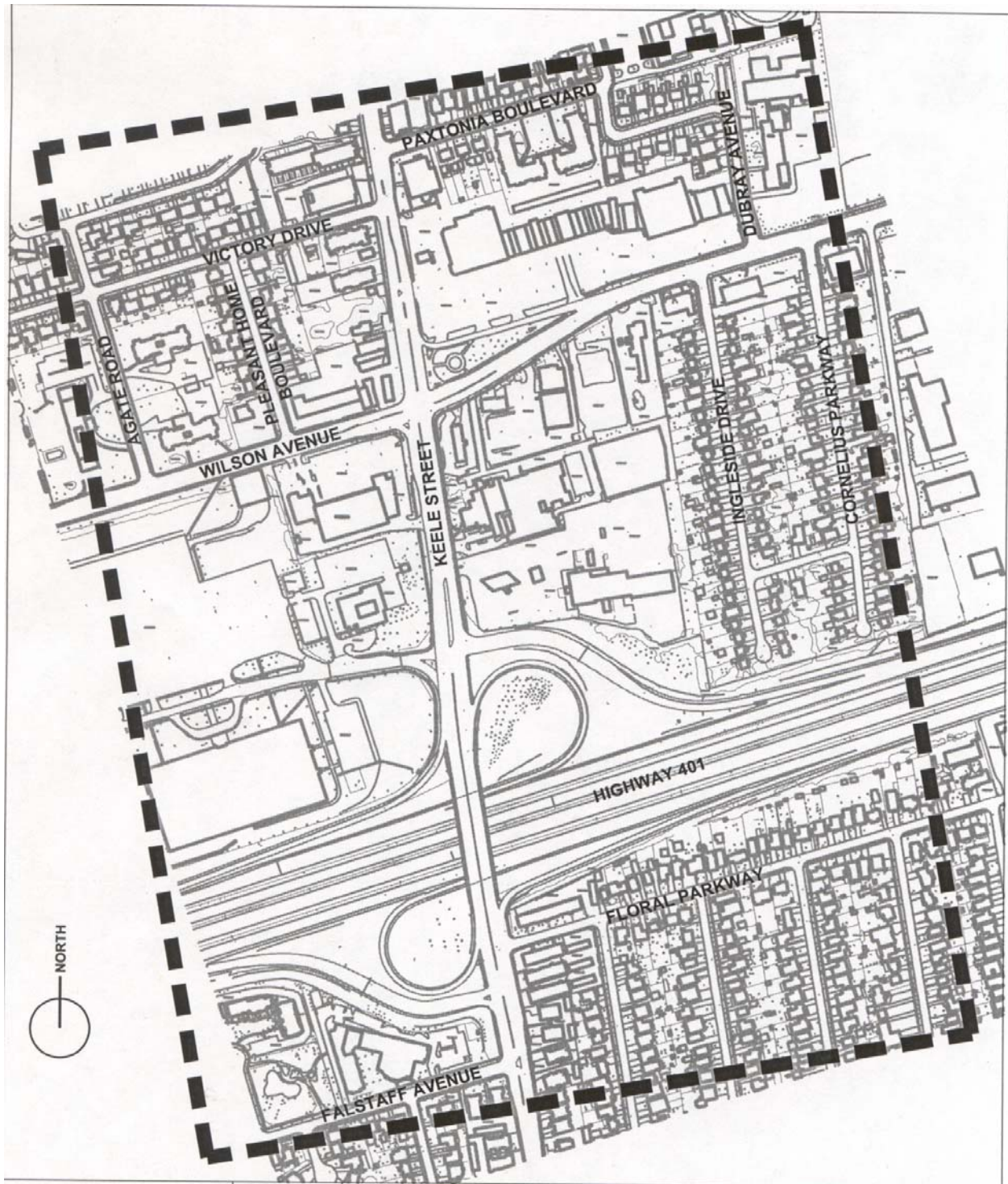


Figure No. 2

Preferred Solution

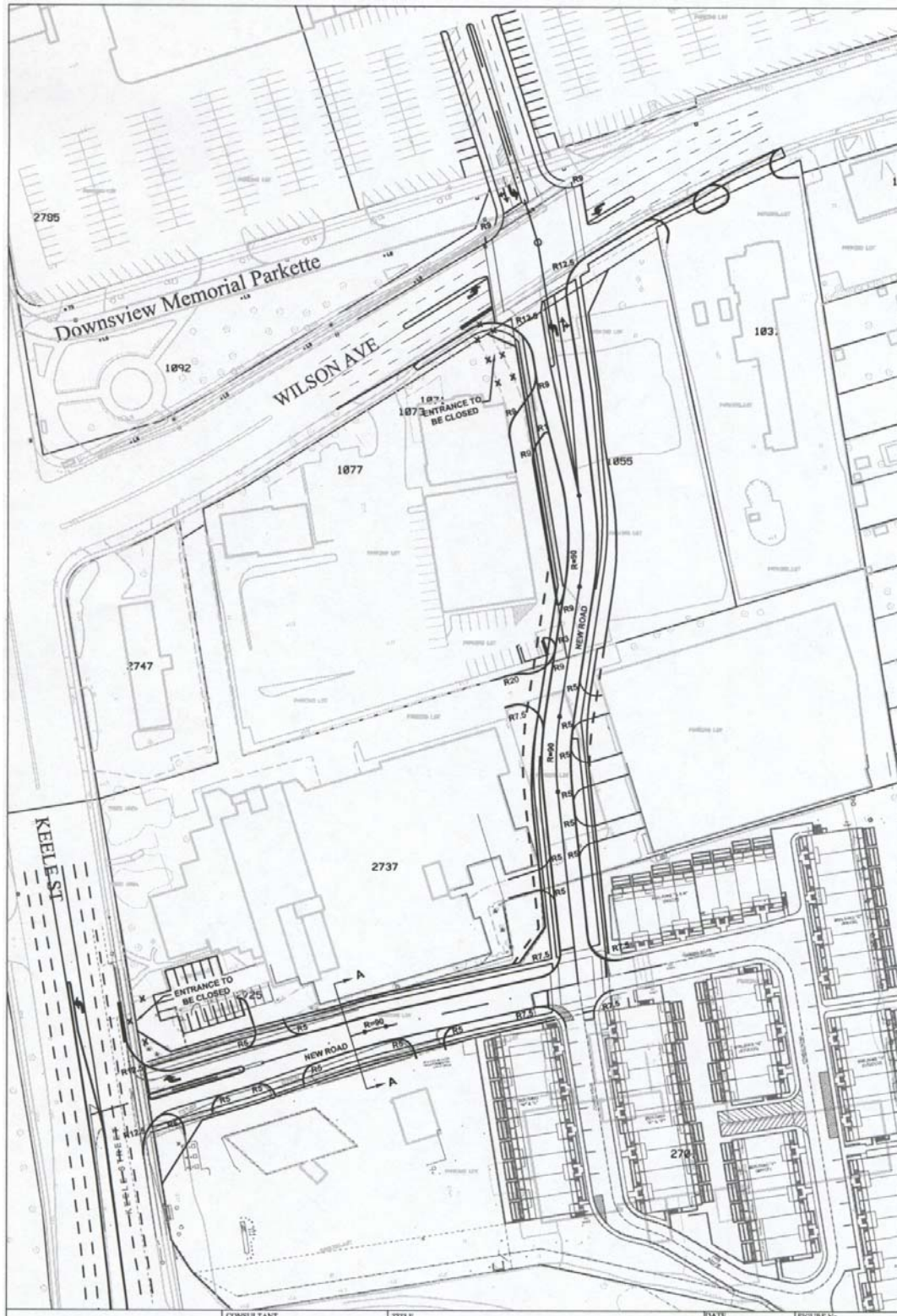


Figure No 3

The following persons appeared before the Works Committee:

- Barry Horosko, Bratty and Partners LLP; and
- Craig Hunter, Armstrong, Goldberg, Hunter.