

**Purpose**

The purpose of the Sandy Point Road Planning Study is to identify the optimum future use of City-owned property located south of Sandy Point Road and adjacent to Rockwood Park.

Rockwood Park, one of Saint John's most important public amenities, remains in a largely natural state. One of the unique characteristics of Rockwood Park is that for the majority of its periphery it is difficult to discern the actual park boundary. The heavily wooded nature of most of Sandy Point Road and Foster Thurston Drive include but a single public trail head to access the park interior. The sporadic residential development lining the park boundary typically fronts directly on the Sandy Point Road and only serves to further separate the public from the park's amenity. Common Council's awareness of the public's concern is such that they now desire development along the park edge be well-planned growth balancing the Park values with economic, environmental, and infrastructure considerations.

The purpose of the Sandy Point Road Planning Study is prepare a report and recommendation to Common Council towards the creation of public policy regarding the optimum future use of City-owned property located south of Sandy Point Road and adjacent to Rockwood Park. The Planning Study will engage those with a stake in the future use of land in this area in a public process leading to a Planning Staff recommendation on potential amendments to the Municipal Plan and the Zoning Bylaw.

**Project Work Plan**

Staff has recently completed Stages 1 and 2 of the Work Plan for the Study, being the preparation of the technical background report and the appointment of the independent consultant, ADI of Saint John, who will provide a Statement of Professional Opinion and lead the public consultation process. The next stage in the process is Stage 3 (Public Consultation), and this report provides details of ADI's preferred approach.

Stage 4 (Consultant reporting) and Stage 5 (Staff's Final Report presented to Council) will follow completion of the Consultation.

**Stage 3 – Consultation**

ADI has developed the following consultation approach with Planning staff.

**Consultation Approach**

Citizens of Saint John view Rockwood Park as one of the most important public trusts. Debate on the future deposition and development of lands in and around Rockwood Park must be framed as to demonstrate clear respect for the values of Rockwood Park. A key element in delivering the consultation program is the project

principle. The project principle is a declaration of the core values that guide our service as professional planners in the public's interest. The Project Principle that will guide the consultation process is;

***“To develop public policy that will result in a safe, healthy and sustainable community by promoting and designing a vibrant urban form well integrated with the natural values of Rockwood Park”.***

*Consistent messages with the appropriate tone and content will facilitate understanding and encourage support for the Sandy Point Road Planning Project. The message statements listed below are built on an understanding of the expected audiences, constraints and opportunities of this project.*

- *The City of Saint John will be sensitive to the unique nature of Rockwood Park and will pay particular attention to the concerns of residents and representative groups;*
- *The public consultation process surrounding the Sandy Point Road Planning Project will be inclusive and transparent, and comment received will be reviewed in developing the final preliminary and independent consultants report;*
- *The public consultation process will be undertaken with the active participation of all stakeholders (i.e. residents, community groups, business groups, and other government bodies); and*
- *The public consultation process will use various consultation tools to reach the public including Public Open Houses, City website, informal meetings and direct liaison with the consultants.*

*It is also important to draw upon the statement of public values such as those expressed in the 1988 Rockwood Park Master Plan. The 1988 Master Plan developed 8 park planning principles as follows:*

- *Protection and Perseveration of the Natural and Historical Character of the Park*
- *Public Enjoyment*
- *Market Compatibility*
- *Retention of Aesthetic Values*
- *Cost Effectiveness*
- *Provision of Economic and Tourism Benefits*

- *Consideration of Competing Opportunities*
- *Increased Operational Efficiency*

**Consultation Process**

*The consultation process will involve participation on a broad level to help formulate public policy regarding the vision for the Rockwood Park / Sandy Point Road community. The process draws upon a range of participation techniques (e.g., pre-circulated consultation documents, written responses, structured public meetings) and intends on developing consensus about a vision or plan. The formal outcome is a community plan with emphasis on a common understanding of the issues and proposed methods to address those issues.*

A number of consultation activities are recommended to achieve the objectives of this plan. The recommended activities are:

**Informal Meetings/Focus Groups**

The Project Team will meet with key associations and community groups in less-formal settings to better understand the local and topical concerns as they relate to land use issues in potential conflict with Rockwood Park's values. These meetings can be initiated by either the Project Team or the community, and should provide excellent opportunities to obtain further feedback on the public policy concerns and site specific issues. Meeting minutes will be recorded and included in staff's report.

**Consultation Sessions**

The recommended consultation approach for developing land use guidelines and policy is series of short public consultation sessions held over the course of a single day, February 17, 2010. The consultation sessions will be held at the Lily Lake Pavillion near the subject area. The public will be invited to attend 1 of 3 two hour workshop sessions where they will be given the opportunity to actively participate in the discussion and formulation of public policy regarding Sandy Point Road and Rockwood Park. Staff from ADI will make a short presentation to initiate the sessions and provide facilitators. Staff from the Planning Department will be on hand to observe and answer any questions.

The public consultation to address the potential land use conflicts will require moderation where residents, stakeholders and the public possess contrary expectations about the use of city owned land. ADI is responsible for moderation and ensuring that the public deliberation:

- Moves beyond the conversation of the costs and consequences of the land use options and discusses opportunities.
- Allow participants to frame issues on what is valuable to people and identify the conflicts among the approaches.
- Make sure the best case/positive side of all options are considered and understood.
- Recognize that public sessions seldom end in total agreement or total disagreement. Public consultation is a discovery of common ground and recognition of how interests are interconnected.

Furthermore the consultation will strive toward developing with the public's assistance a better understanding on how land use policy issues such as the following should be addressed:

- The degree of naturalness of the land along Sandy Point Road (from urban to park wilderness);
- The type of recreation outdoor experiences possible along the edge boundaries of Rockwood Park;
- Concerns regarding environmental sensitivity;
- The intensity of existing and proposed uses; and, the scale of uses.

#### *Public Notification*

ADI proposes to follow a similar notification process which is currently utilized by the Planning and Development Department for advertising other public consultation events. This should aim to reach the widest number of interested stakeholders and the general public.

ADI and Planning staff will prepare advertisements to be placed in the local paper (Telegraph Journal) approximately 2 weeks and again 3 days before the date of the event (copy of draft advertisement attached). We will also write to land owners within 100 metres of the Study Area to inform them of the date and venue for the consultation. Finally, details will also be provided on Planning and Development's homepage on the City's website.

The website will also contain background information, including a downloadable copy of staff's Background Report, to assist stakeholders prior to the consultation event.

For interested stakeholders who may not be able to attend the event, a copy of the questionnaire will be made available at the Planning and Development reception, as well as on the City's Planning and Development website, which may be submitted to ADI within 7 working days of the public consultation event.

#### **Internal Department Consultations**

The final round of consultation will take place between ADI and staff from other relevant departments within City Hall, which will be facilitated by Planning staff. The City Manager's Office (Corporate Strategy), Recreation and Leisure Services, and Municipal Operations and Engineering will be consulted at this stage.

#### **Consultation Schedule**

The proposed consultation event is proposed to take place during the second week of February. ADI and Planning staff will prepare consultation materials. The consultation sessions will be held from mid-afternoon into the evening, to enable all potential stakeholders to attend. Separate focus group meetings with developers and local residents will be scheduled for approximately 10 days following event to provide feedback on the results arising from the event. Following this, ADI and City staff will meet to discuss the outcome of the consultation and the consultant's Statement of Professional Opinion.

#### **Reporting**

ADI will prepare a summary of the public consultation process, its findings and resultant outcomes, and this will be included with ADI's Statement of Professional Opinion.

Planning Staff would review the consultant's report and prepare a report to Council which sets out staff's recommendation(s) on implementation of any proposed changes to the Municipal Plan and or Land Use By-law. Common Council will then be able to direct Planning Staff to initiate the process for implementing any proposed changes as necessary.