

COUNCIL REPORT

M&C No.	2019-154
Report Date	June 10, 2019
Meeting Date	June 17, 2019
Service Area	Growth and Community Development Services

His Worship Mayor Don Darling and Members of Common Council

SUBJECT: Central Peninsula Plan and Associated Capital Projects Update

OPEN OR CLOSED SESSION

This matter is to be discussed in open session of Common Council.

AUTHORIZATION

Primary Author	Commissioner/Dept. Head	City Manager
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RECOMMENDATION

That Common Council:

1. Receive and file the attached report and project update for the Central Peninsula Plan.
2. Approve the allocation of the \$500,000 Neighborhood Plan Capital Fund as outlined in this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Central Peninsula is experiencing a renaissance. There is increasing excitement around living, working, and investing in the City's core. Capturing this momentum is pivotal to the growth and prosperity of the City. The upcoming Central Peninsula Plan is a mechanism to harness that potential and create long term, sustainable growth and improved quality of life for the residents of Saint John.

The Central Peninsula Plan (the Plan) has undergone a refresh and is being prepared for adoption. The Plan is a very important milestone in the implementation of the City's municipal plan, Plan SJ, and is positioned to unlock substantial growth potential in the City's core. The Plan will be accompanied by amendments to the Municipal Plan, and Zoning and Heritage Bylaws and will guide development, improve quality of life, and spur growth in the City's core over the next 30 years. The document will remove barriers for infill development and enable focus on the neighbourhoods and important corridors of the Central Peninsula. It is expected the Plan package will be adopted prior to the end of 2019 with the adoption process initiated in the fall.

There are several opportunities for public and Council input throughout the remaining project timeline. Public and stakeholder engagement is planned for the summer months previous to the initiation of the legislative adoption process which provides three separate opportunities for public input.

Council allocated \$500,000 in the 2018 capital budget to fund projects related to the Plan. The intent was to fund high impact projects which supported the implementation of the Plan. City Staff, with support from the Neighbourhood Action Team, formulated a plan to use the funds in impactful ways throughout the Central Peninsula, focusing on projects that would improve the quality of life for residents and spur economic development and growth. The funds are recommended to be allocated to the following four initiatives:

- Rainbow Park improvements,
- City Market upgrades and improvements,
- Fundy Quay design work, and
- Community beautification improvements which include quick wins to respond to some of the issues most frequently heard through community engagement.

PREVIOUS RESOLUTION

On August 20, 2018, Common Council resolved to:

1. Receive and file a report outlining the adoption timeline for the Central Peninsula Plan.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

As a priority related to a Vibrant, Safe City and Growth and Prosperity, focusing strategic investment in the City's core will accelerate urban growth, reduced urban sprawl, and encourage a more compact, livable, and fiscally sustainable community.

REPORT

The Central Peninsula Plan (the Plan) was initiated by Council in 2017 in response to Plan SJ's smart growth strategy. The smart growth strategy emphasizes a planned approach toward community and economic development that seeks to reduce urban sprawl and encourages more compact, complete, attractive, and financially sustainable communities. The Plan has been drafted through the lens of smart growth and is expected to unlock growth potential in the City's centre. This report provides an update on the Plan project and delivers recommendations to Council on high impact capital spending to implement the Plan.

Plan Project

Adoption of the Plan was originally intended to be initiated in 2018. The adoption was to be phased with amendments to the Municipal Plan, Zoning By-law, and Heritage By-law to be considered over several months with final adoption of the plan documents to occur by early 2019 and Heritage By-law amendments to be finalized by mid-year 2019.

Growth and Community Development Services experienced substantial challenges with respect to capacity throughout 2018 which affected the initial project timelines. As a result of staff vacancies coupled with a busier than typical development season, the Department reduced support to the Plan to enable delivery of core customer service functions. During this time efforts continued to embed the Plan within the corporation and advance key implementation projects as early wins for the Central Peninsula.

With a full staff complement, renewed focus was afforded to the Plan. This included re-engaging the Neighbourhood Action Team, re-scoping of the project and associated deliverables, and reconsidering the phasing of the Heritage By-law amendments. Due to the robust engagement undertaken at the beginning of the planning process, there has been continued and substantial support for the project from within the City departments as well as key community partners. This has allowed a connection back to the community's vision as Staff collaborate and implement projects in the Central Peninsula. The Neighbourhood Action Team has been re-engaged and their role expanded to utilize the members as conduits to the community; ensuring the Plan project continues to be representative and intentional.

Prior to adoption, Staff will re-engage with the community and stakeholders to ensure the final documents are in keeping with the community's vision and priorities for the Central Peninsula. The final package of documents that will be considered for Council adoption will include:

1. The Central Peninsula Plan;
2. Amendments to the Municipal Plan, and Zoning and Heritage Bylaws; and
3. The Central Peninsula Action Strategy

The Plan and associated amendments will remove barriers for infill development and provide guidelines for the public realm. The objective is to have the Plan and all associated amendments, including the Heritage Bylaw amendments pertaining to infill development adopted before the end of 2019. This timeline considers inclusion of necessary steps to ensure the documents are fully operational by adoption; facilitating a seamless transition to implementation.

The public and stakeholders will be re-engaged throughout the summer months. Additionally, the Council adoption process contains multiple opportunities for public comment and Council input. There are currently four remaining decision points in addition to engagement with the Planning Advisory Committee and Heritage Development Board. These milestones are summarized below:

- **Council Decision Point #1 – Initiate Adoption** – Council will be asked to consider initiating the adoption process for the Plan and associated Municipal Plan and Zoning By-law amendments. This will initiate a 30 day public comment period as required under the *Community Planning Act*. This will be the first of three opportunities within the legislative adoption process for the public to provide commentary in an official capacity. It is expected the initiation of the adoption process will occur in September.
- **Council Decision Point #2 – Referral to Planning Advisory Committee** – Council will review the feedback received from the 30 day comment period. Should they choose to, Council will be given the opportunity to refer the Plan and associated Municipal Plan and Zoning By-law amendments to the Planning Advisory Committee and schedule the Public Hearing. A Public Hearing date will also be set for the Heritage Bylaw Amendments as required under the *Heritage Conservation Act*.
- **Planning Advisory Committee Meeting** — At a special meeting date, the Planning Advisory Committee will consider the Plan and associated Municipal Plan and Zoning By-Law amendments, and make a recommendation to Council. This will be the second of three opportunities within the legislative adoption process for the public to provide commentary in an official capacity. It is expected the Planning Advisory Committee Meeting will occur in October.
- **Council Decision Point #3 – Public Hearing, First and Second Reading** – Council will hold the Public Hearing and, following the public feedback process, will proceed with first and second reading of the Plan, and Municipal Plan, Zoning and Heritage By-law amendments. This will be the third and final opportunity within the legislative adoption process for the public to provide commentary on the Plan's adoption. It is anticipated the Public Hearing will occur in November.
- **Council Decision Point #4 – Third Reading** – Concluding the adoption process, Council will consider Third Reading of the Plan. Once Third Reading is complete, the Plan will be registered and become legally binding. It is anticipated Third Reading will occur in December.

The Plan continues to generate substantial excitement throughout the Central Peninsula. Staff and stakeholders have taken ownership of the action

components of the Plan, equating to tangible results. Some of these tangible improvements that are linked to this broader momentum include:

- Review and revision of the Urban Development Incentives Program to support delivery of the Plan;
- Completion of a Residential Market Study, an important tool for investors;
- Alignment of the City's capital budget, Long Term Financial Plan and external funding applications to support delivery of the City's growth objectives, and key priorities of this Plan;
- Fundy Quay site preparations, seawall funding and Call for Expressions of Interest for a major redevelopment;
- Major street re-constructing in key corridors;
- Improved investor confidence with notable gains in residential and commercial development in key corridors identified in the Plan;
- Upgrades to the Saint John City Market;
- An augmentation of festival and events;
- The introduction of a night market along South Market Street;
- Continued effort towards major catalytic projects, including the proposal for a new school and development of Fundy Quay.

It is exceptional that the community is living the Plan prior to it being adopted by Council. This can be attributed to the robust and ongoing engagement throughout the planning process and also the action-focus of the Plan. This signifies the important legacy of the Plan and the connection to the community it serves. Confidence is building in the Central Peninsula and the Plan will continue to support and build upon the vibrancy and momentum generated by the community.

Capital Projects

Common Council allocated \$500,000 in the 2018 capital budget to fund projects related to the Plan. The intent was to fund high impact projects which supported the implementation of the Plan. The two year timeframe of the plan process resulted in the funds held over to 2019. As capital funds may only be carried forward once and associated capital projects started by the end of the second year after approval, the \$500,000 must be allocated and work started within the 2019 fiscal year.

Working with the Neighbourhood Action Team (the NAT), the City's Finance team, and City departments, a list of prioritized capital expenditures was drafted. Projects were considered under specific criteria:

- Alignment with the Central Peninsula Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles;
- Corporate and operational priorities;
- The ability to implement including the potential to leverage an existing project; and
- The potential to positively contribute to the quality of life of residents and spur growth.

Consensus was formed around the preference to invest the funds in several impactful projects rather than having a singular focus. This supports Council's intention of directing expenditure towards impactful projects while also respecting what was heard from the community throughout the planning process. It is recommended that the Plan's capital funds be allocated as follows:

- *Rainbow Park Improvements – approximately \$150,000*

The upcoming installation of the Jumpstart Playground presents an opportunity to look at implementing the larger vision for Rainbow Park.. It is recommended that a portion of the Plan capital budget be allocated to basic improvements and investments in lighting, planting, improved fencing, defined entrances, and wayfinding. This will enable a concerted effort to implement the Master Plan for Rainbow Park.

- *Community Beautification - approximately \$125,000*

This would include the smaller scale improvements brought to the City's attention throughout the community engagement phase of the planning process. The purchase of more garbage cans, leveraging existing funding for greening and planting, public realm improvements like tree grates and planters provide quick wins for the community and would be impactful and visible improvements. These smaller scale but important investments are recommended to be distributed throughout the Central Peninsula.

- *City Market Upgrades and Improvements - approximately \$175,000*

The Plan's strategic growth concepts call for South Market Street to be transitioned to permanent, public space through a pedestrian street. The public was clear in articulating their need for new and unique public space offerings. Upgrades to the Germain Street entrance public realm, atrium furniture and lighting upgrades, and support of the South Alley Night Market would be considered in this capital investment.

- *Fundy Quay Seawall Design Work – approximately \$50,000*

There is engineered design work required to leverage a major development on Fundy Quay. As this would facilitate a major catalytic project supported by the Plan's strategic growth concepts for the Uptown Waterfront, these funds would enable DevelopSJ to advance strategic site preparation work related to the recent seawall funding announcement.

SERVICE AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

Neighbourhood planning provides a framework for enhanced service, building community capacity, and encouraging re-investment in targeted neighbourhoods. Capital funding has been allocated to the implementation of

the Central Peninsula Plan which will be used to leverage private investment in key areas as directed by the plan.

INPUT FROM OTHER SERVICE AREAS AND STAKEHOLDERS

The Central Peninsula Plan is reflective of substantial input from the community and stakeholders. The Neighbourhood Action Team has been pivotal in the development and vetting of the Plan. Their insight and connection to the community will inform the ongoing engagement and carry the suite of documents through to implementation. Members of the Neighborhood Action Team include:

- Kay Gillis (Chair)
- Melissa Wakefield (Co-Chair);
- Anne McShane;
- Ben Appleby;
- Councillor Donna Reardon;
- Councillor David Hickey;
- Jeff Roach;
- Nancy Tissington;
- Lauchlan Ough; and
- Milad Pirayegar.

Representatives from Transportation and Environment Services, Parks and Recreation, Finance, Risk Management, Develop SJ, and Growth and Community Development Services were consulted on the capital projects budget allocation. The Neighbourhood Action Team led the formulation of a recommendation for the capital funds allocation and the final recommendation was vetted and recommended for approval through the group.

ATTACHMENTS

None.