

Rideau Heights

Community Renewal Plan

Background Information Report

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City of Kingston
Housing Department

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The City of Kingston's Housing Department acts as Service Manager for the administration of social housing programming within the City of Kingston and the County of Frontenac. As Service Manager, the Housing Department is legislatively responsible for maintaining 2,003 rent geared-to-income dwellings within the service area for the occupancy of individuals and households meeting the eligibility requirements as established by the Province. There are 16 non-profit housing providers who own and operate the service area's rent-geared-to-income housing stock in addition to maintaining other affordable housing units.

While the various housing providers work hard to maintain appropriate health and safety conditions and property aesthetics, building age and the limited revenue generated from low levels of rental income impose particular property maintenance challenges. In addition, social housing providers manage a variety of unique circumstances arising from the concentration of individuals facing challenging socio-economic situations. The Rideau Heights neighbourhood includes a concentration of social housing stock and is a community that is statistically disadvantaged in terms of education, employment, health, and income levels as reflected through census data and other reporting. This geographic concentration of social housing and the related socio-economic disparities is not unique to Kingston and the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. Numerous Canadian cities are currently reconsidering their concentrations of social housing stock which tends to be a product of previous senior level governmental initiatives which created large standardized housing projects. Since the 1990's, the redevelopment of social housing has transitioned from renovation and changes in site design to more intensive reconstruction efforts to address deteriorated physical building conditions and designs/layouts, existing social conditions, and the changing needs of tenants and/or households on the waiting list.¹

Recognizing the apparent neighbourhood challenges, the Municipal Housing Strategy adopted by Council in 2011 includes a recommendation that the Rideau Heights neighbourhood be used as a pilot project for asset renewal with the intent of applying the lessons learned to other social housing sites throughout the City. To implement this initiative, the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan for the City acknowledges one of Council's priorities is to develop proactive community plans. Within this priority area Council has

¹ 2011, CMHC: Social Housing Redevelopment and Regeneration in Canada: Eight Case Studies

provided direction to develop a community renewal plan for Rideau Heights within the 2013-2014 timeframe. As a significant landowner within the study area, the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation (KFHC) has established a commitment to the project within their 2012-2014 Strategic Plan which provides direction to partner with the City to pursue asset renewal and community development innovations. Given this direction from multiple key stakeholders, a community planning process is now being proposed which will bring together various City departments, community organizations, local households, and professional consulting expertise to develop a financially viable community renewal plan for the Rideau Heights neighbourhood.

1.2 The Rideau Heights Community

Rideau Heights is a formally defined area within the City's neighbourhood structure and encompasses a large geographic area extending from Highway 401 to the north, the Cataraqui River to the east, Joseph Street to the south, and Division Street to the west. The neighbourhood boundary as delineated by the City reflects census dissemination areas which are generally defined by major roads and topographical features. From a historical and community perspective, the Rideau Heights neighbourhood comprises a smaller subset of this area generally consistent with the lands between the railway tracks to the south and Highway 401 to the north and between Division Street and Montreal Street. At the centre of this area is a concentration of social housing stock and lower market rental apartment units located within the vicinity of Shannon and Headway Parks.

The residential building forms within this core area typically include row house and low-rise apartment development. The apartment buildings and row houses are typically surrounded by common green spaces and parking areas. Some of the homes front onto public streets with other units fronting onto internal walkways and parking areas. To the north and south of the social housing core area are typically lower density residential neighbourhoods comprised of single and semi-detached homes. The neighbourhoods surrounding the social housing core area are generally comprised of well maintained single and semi-detached homes which serve to contrast the social housing properties where building condition and property maintenance issues are apparent.

Despite the relative close proximity of Rideau Heights to Kingston's core urban area, the neighbourhood is physically separated from the remainder of the City by railway tracks which traverse the southern extent of the community in an east-west manner. To cross the railway tracks, elevated roadway crossings are provided at Division Street and Montreal Street. In the past the physical isolation of Rideau Heights has imposed particular challenges related to meeting day-to-day commercial and service needs due to limited commercial opportunities available within the immediate community. With the recent and ongoing development of commercial uses within the vicinity of the Highway

401 and Division Street interchange, local goods and service retailing is contributing to the convenience and amenity of the neighbourhood. Most notably, the opening of a major grocery store in recent years has addressed the challenge of residents accessing a healthy retail food source.

Despite the socio-economic challenges of the neighbourhood, Rideau Heights is known to be an engaged community both in terms of formal community organizations and informal neighbourhood networks.² Combined with the efforts of social service providers acting in the neighbourhood, it is anticipated a community renewal planning process will benefit from the experience, knowledge, and networks of established community organizations and local social service agencies.

1.3 The Opportunity

In conjunction with other City departments, local housing providers, community members, and other representative organizations, the City is seeking to embark on a community planning process with the intent of revitalizing the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. Based on the array of stakeholders involved and the existing relationships with the social housing providers, the City's Housing Department is well positioned to coordinate the project and liaise between the various stakeholder groups. While the goals and objectives of the revitalization planning will be determined through the project's analysis and consultation processes, it is anticipated that a revitalized Rideau Heights will contribute to addressing the various socio-economic challenges that face the community today. A successful community renewal planning process will engage stakeholders and rely on professional expertise to identify opportunities to overcome existing challenges and facilitate the renewal of the Rideau Heights community.

At a broad level, it is anticipated the renewal plan will include at a minimum a community development plan identifying preferred land use arrangements, built form character, transportation connections, tenure recommendations, appropriate densities, and an assessment of servicing capacity and capital upgrade requirements. While it is not likely that the plan will result in the full-scale rebuilding of the community, recommendations for redevelopment should support the goals of community improvement as well as prove to be financially sound. To ensure a financially viable model is achieved and to assist in subsequent implementation, an essential component of the project will be a business and phasing plan assessing the financial viability of the

² 2007, City of Kingston – A Community Engagement Strategy for Rideau Heights and the Wally Elmer Centre Community Hub: prepared by Public Interest Strategy & Communications

suggested capital improvements and land development options which are to be pursued through a phased approach.

Of particular benefit to the renewal planning for the Rideau Heights neighbourhood is the fact that a large contiguous block of land comprised of various parcels is owned by the City and the KFHC. In terms of evaluating potential redevelopment options, the existing ownership arrangement provides benefits such as land assembly opportunities and phasing coordination. Of note, KFHC has recently completed a comprehensive Building Condition Assessment (BCA) evaluating the existing condition of the building stock including the identification of capital improvement requirements. This information will assist in evaluating the future course of action for each property being one of: maintain as is, renovate, or replace.

KFHC manages approximately 500 units within the study area as illustrated in Figure 1. The figure also highlights KFHC properties in relation to the configuration of the neighbourhood. Of note, the study area contains approximately one quarter of the social housing units that are required to be maintained within the City of Kingston and County of Frontenac. It is anticipated the revitalization planning efforts will focus on the neighbourhood core area which is generally comprised of the social housing and City park land at the core of the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. To facilitate the subsequent neighbourhood analysis, the study area has been divided into the *Core Study Area* and the *Transition Study Area*. The purpose of defining these two different study areas is to allow for the more detailed land use and design recommendations to be focussed on the *Core Study Area* while recognizing the importance of the neighbourhood's interfaces and connections to the broader community through the *Transition Study Area*.

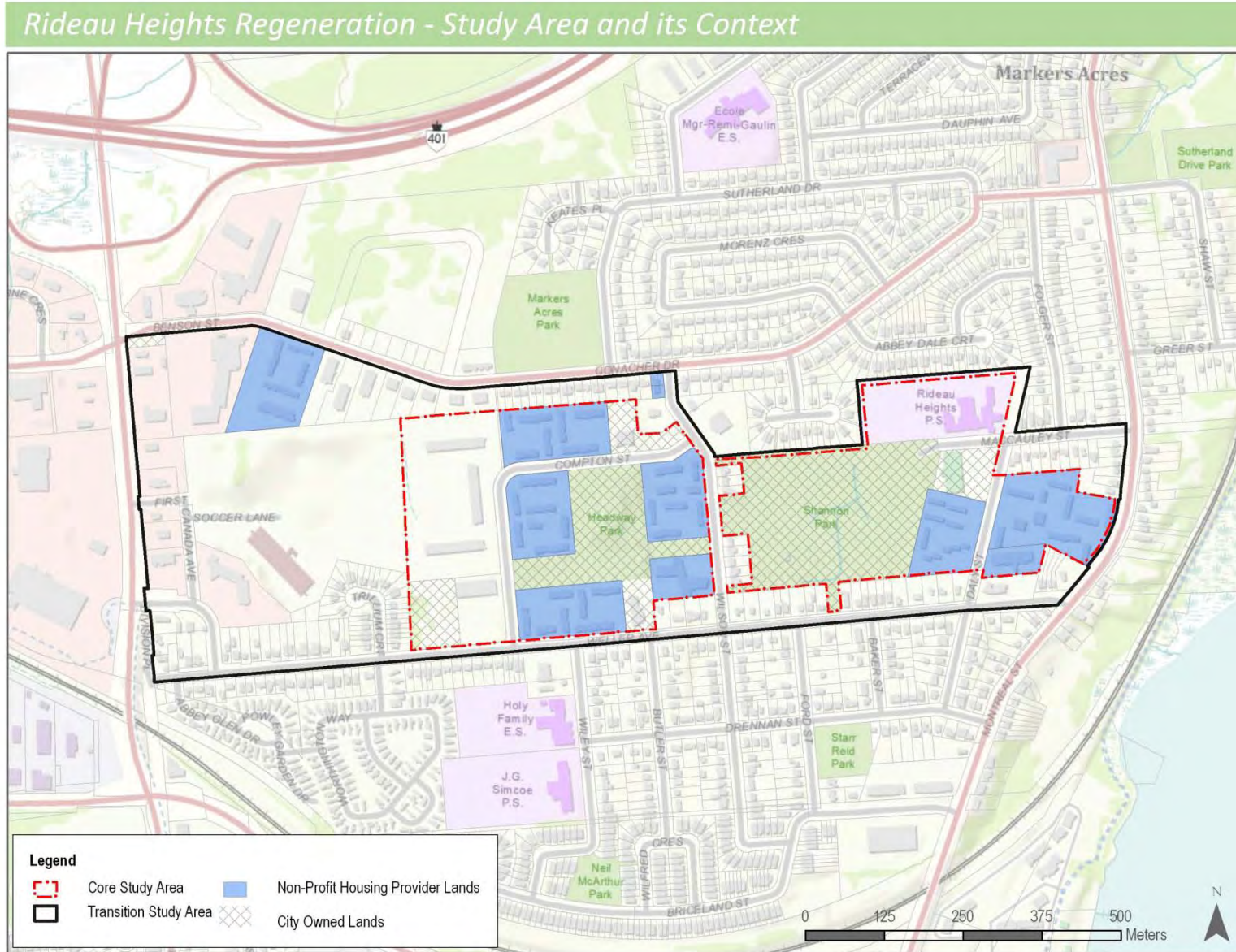


Figure 1: Study Area and Context
City of Kingston – Housing Department

The renewal planning process should consider the relationship of the Core Study Area to the surrounding community and seek to facilitate connections by way of the Neighbourhood Transition Area.

Figure 2 provides a more detailed view of the Core Study Area illustrating the arrangement of the existing social housing lands in relation to the roadway network and other neighbourhood amenities including parkland, a local public school, and the Wally Elmer Neighbourhood Centre.



Figure 2: Core Study Area

1.4 Recent Community Initiatives

The City of Kingston is currently undertaking a planning and redevelopment process for the rejuvenation of the Wally Elmer site and Shannon Park, both public amenities which are important facilities to the Rideau Heights community from a local recreational, community/skills development, and programming perspective. The redevelopment on these facilities has undergone significant consultation exercises which will support the design of capital improvements and future programming. In addition, the City is in discussions with the Limestone District School Board to create synergies through the coordination of shared programming spaces and facilities. Also of note, through previous facilities planning efforts, the Kingston Frontenac Public Library has identified the need to open a library branch in the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. The combination of these coordinated community development projects will lead to the creation of a recreational and social neighbourhood hub which will assist in defining the neighbourhood.

Another neighbourhood initiative proposed by KFL&A Public Health will address existing barriers and future opportunities regarding physical activity as it relates to the built environment and the health of the Rideau Heights neighbourhood. It has been noted that lower-income households in Kingston experience poorer health and are more susceptible to experiencing chronic health conditions in relation to higher-income households.³ Recent and historic census data and anecdotal evidence indicates Rideau Heights is an economically disadvantaged neighbourhood in relation to other areas of the City. KFL&A Public Health anticipates being awarded a grant which will fund the preparation of the Rideau Heights Physical Activity Policy Mobilization Plan. The Plan will include a community based audit of existing physical barriers to identify built environment recommendations and public policy approaches to address community health. The recommendations of the plan will support the renewal planning for the Rideau Heights neighbourhood as opportunities to include physical activity through neighbourhood design can be included within neighbourhood renewal options.

Given these ongoing efforts, the Rideau Heights neighbourhood revitalization process is a timely project as it aligns well with other ongoing projects which seek to enhance the quality of the community in terms of access to recreational and service amenities and opportunities to improve levels of physical activity and health.

³ 2011 Deprivation Index, prepared by Kingston Community Roundtable on Poverty Reduction

2.0 REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS

2.1 Scope of Work

In order to achieve the community renewal objectives which will be defined through the project's consultation and analysis processes, it is anticipated that the project will unfold through the following three key components:

- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement** – to define the goals and objectives for community renewal while gathering local experience and knowledge to be incorporated in the development options; consultations to include local residents, local housing providers, community organizations, social service providers, City departmental staff, and other organizations that operate in the neighbourhood.
- **The Development Plan** – an analysis of existing conditions and the incorporation of information from consultation processes and best practices to address:
 - preferred options for existing housing sites (replace, renovate, retain as existing)
 - options for including a mix of market (ownership) and rental units; preferred tenure proportions to be achieved on a site-by-site and neighbourhood basis; unit sizes, special needs accommodation, and aging in place/seniors accommodations
 - incorporation of sustainable neighbourhood design elements including stormwater attenuation, energy, transportation, water and wastewater servicing, pedestrian and bicycle connections (perhaps within the LEED Neighbourhood Development or equivalent framework)
 - improvements to public realm including streetscapes and sidewalks, parklands, access to public amenities and services
 - preferred built form and development densities
 - potentials for incorporating mixed uses
 - required infrastructure improvements to support preferred development option (e.g. stormwater, water and sewer, new roadways, etc.)
 - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)
- **The Business and Phasing Plan** – identifying the financial viability and phased implementation for the preferred development option addressing:
 - opportunities to capture value from land and/or leveraging existing assets to fund renewal;

- development of pro forma and financial cash flow analysis evaluating financial feasibility for implementing the preferred development option
- analysis of phasing to address financial realities while maintaining required unit counts
- strategy to maintain required level of service (i.e. required number of units) either on-site or through the distribution to other areas of the City
- tenant relocation/temporary accommodation strategy

In preparing this background report, Housing Department staff have reviewed supporting materials and corresponded with other municipalities and organizations that have undertaken similar social housing renewal planning processes. The anticipated project components are generally consistent with the successful experiences of these other organizations. Of note, a project of this scope is somewhat unique for a City of Kingston's size. While neighbourhood renewal models in larger urban areas have benefited from central locations and associated high land values, a viable renewal model for Rideau Heights will have to address the realities of the local land economics in a medium sized City.

2.2 Project Schedule

The following table provides a preliminary schedule for the delivery of the project. The schedule assumes a 10 month project timeline from initial consultations, analysis, and refinement to final presentation of the preferred Development Plan and supporting Business Plan. It is noted this timeline is preliminary and flexible to accommodate the specific needs of the project as appropriate.

Coordination with City departments to assist in establishing project scope (i.e. identify specific issues to be addressed through the project)	October – November, 2012
Prepare and submit report to Council requesting authorization to officially commence project	January, 2013
Release Request for Proposals to provide professional consulting expertise	March, 2013
Award project to selected consultant team	April, 2013
Commence project analysis and background review	April, 2013
Conduct initial community/stakeholder consultations	April – June, 2013

Preparation of preliminary development options and preliminary business/financial plan	June – August, 2013
Presentation of preliminary development options and consultations	September - November, 2013
Refinement of preferred development option and business/financial plan	December – January, 2013-2014
Presentation of refined development plan	February, 2014
Finalization of development and business/financial plan	March, 2014
Presentation of recommended development plan and delivery of business/financial plan	April, 2014

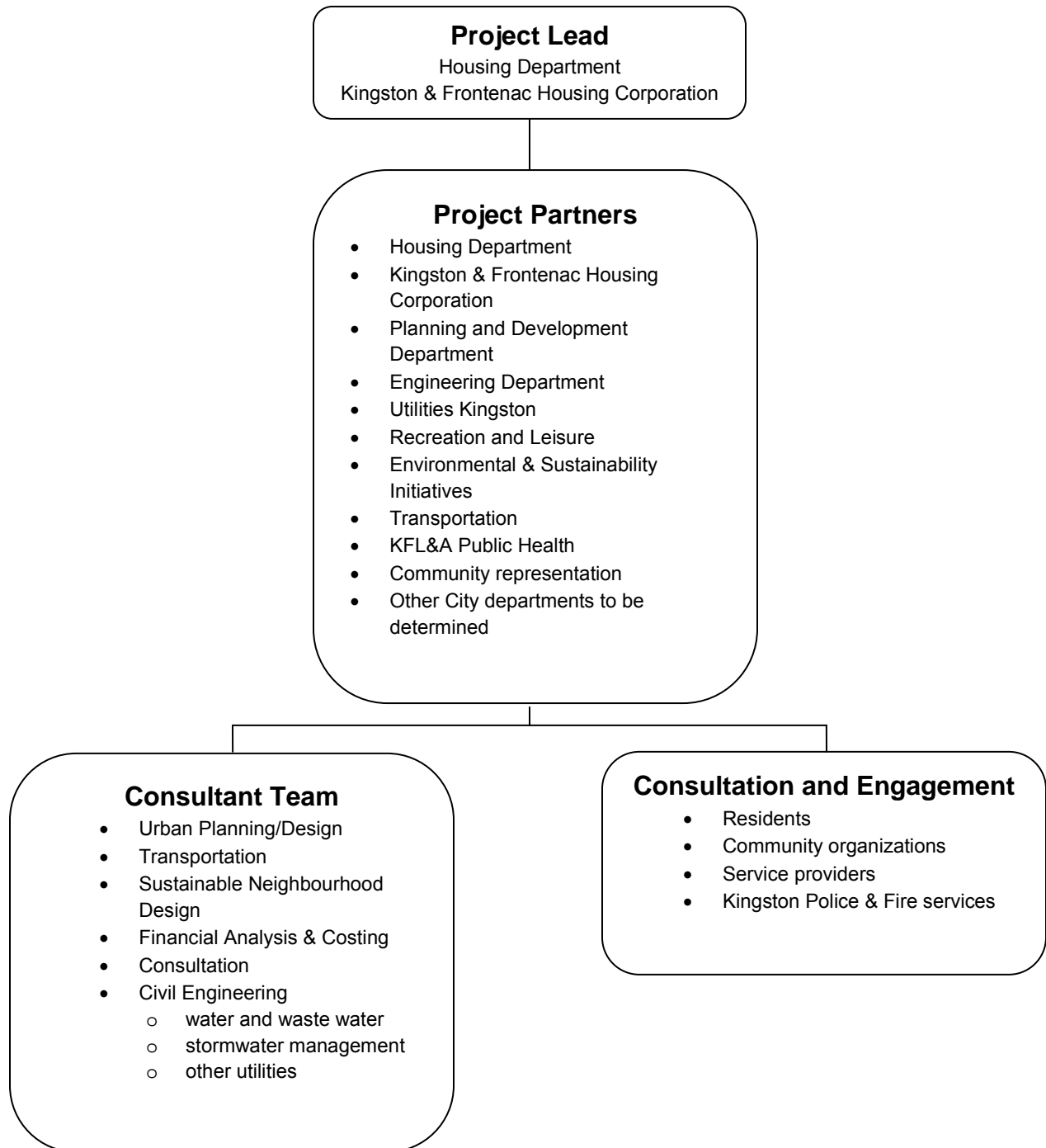
2.3 Project Administration

The project will be led by City of Kingston Housing Department staff. KFHC will provide a significant supporting role in the project due to the large amount of land and the number of units maintained within the study area. A project steering committee will be created and comprised of City departmental staff, KFHC staff, and select representatives from other key stakeholder groups.

Through a Request for Proposals process, a consultant team will be selected to provide professional expertise related to the key component areas of the project. It is anticipated the successful consulting team will consist of professionals with expertise in urban planning/design, civil engineering, sustainable neighbourhood design, transportation, financial analysis and costing, and community consultation.

The following graphic illustrates the arrangement of project's working structure.

Project Organization Chart



2.4 Implementation

Should the Development Plan and Business Plan propose a financially viable development option that meets the goals and objectives of the project, the next step would be to pursue the required municipal planning approvals to establish the required land use policy and regulatory framework. Subsequent implementation phases would likely include coordinating City funded capital improvements and pursuing construction/renovation work to be conducted by KFHC and/or in partnership with a private developer(s).