



April 19, 2013

Dear Rossdale residents:

As many of you know, Fire Rescue Services is currently in the process of looking for a permanent river's edge facility to house its river rescue service, provide back-up rescue services to Edmonton's central core and to house select specialized equipment. I would like to take this opportunity to provide Rossdale residents with an update on our process to find the most suitable location for this facility.

As part of our commitment to your community, we met the Rossdale Community League on April 17<sup>th</sup> to provide them with the results of each stage of our process and to share our next steps. In our commitment to openness, I wanted to also provide this information to the community-at-large.

The first part of this process, which we have just completed, was an overview of five river's edge sites between the Dawson and High Level Bridges that were judged as workable locations to house a river rescue facility and rescue truck. A third-party consultant was hired to survey and rank each of these sites to determine which best suited our needs.

Based on the work of the consultant, the site at Station 21 ranked highest among the five sites and we have decided to move forward with the second phase of our process which involves an Environmental Impact Assessment and a Site Location Study on the Station 21 site. This review will give us an in-depth analysis of the site's suitability, as required by the River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan. These studies will provide detailed information on how a permanent, operational facility will affect the surrounding environment, the costs that may be involved in developing the facility and other practical considerations, such as the impact on traffic and social impacts.

Using the data from these studies, as well as our discussions with the community, Fire Rescue Services will determine if Station 21 should be recommended to City Council.

**No decisions on our recommendation will be made until all the data from this second phase is collected and fully analyzed.**

With the first portion of this process complete, we anticipate the general timeline for the remainder of the process to be:

<b>Early May</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study completed
<b>Mid May</b>	Analysis of all data and input
<b>Early June</b>	Meeting with Rossdale Community League to discuss the results of the Environmental Impact Assessment and Site Location Study

<b>Early June</b>	Open house for Rosssdale residents to discuss results of the Environmental Impact Assessment, Site Location Study and overall process
<b>June</b>	City Council non-statutory public hearing on River Rescue facility recommendation
<b>July 17<sup>th</sup></b>	Decision by City Council to accept or reject River Rescue facility recommendation

Fire Rescue values the input we have received from Rosssdale over the last year. We are committed to continuing to share information with the residents of Rosssdale throughout this process and know that ongoing communication is an important part of being a good neighbour.

We will continue to meet with the Rosssdale Community League and provide them with periodic updates as the process moves forward. Additional information for all residents including the consultants' report on the findings of the first phase of our process and frequently asked questions will also be made available on the City's website at: **[edmonton.ca/rossdale](http://edmonton.ca/rossdale)**.

I would like to thank the community of Rosssdale for their feedback and contributions to this process so far. If you have any comments, questions or further feedback you would like to share, please feel free to contact my office at 780-496-1520.

Sincerely,



Ken G. Block  
Fire Chief

*Attached: Further detail on the need for a river's edge river rescue facility.*

## **Fire Rescue Services Detailed Overview of the Need for a River's Edge River Rescue Facility**

### **1. Reducing response time for river rescue calls**

The most pressing concern for Fire Rescue Services is our river rescue response time. Fire Rescue does not have dedicated staff located at the boat launch site in south Rossdale. Crews from another station are required to travel to the boat launch, leaving their zone understaffed, to respond to river rescue calls. This creates a delay of 10 and 15 minutes for our response to each river rescue event which we believe is a public safety issue. Fire Rescue had 63 river rescue calls in 2012. We believe that this number is likely to increase in the coming years as the City continues to encourage access and recreation usage of the river valley and on the water.

### **2. Need for additional support in the downtown core**

Having a permanent fire crew located in at a river's edge fire station also gives us the opportunity to bolster support to the rapidly growing downtown core. The two downtown stations are the busiest in the City and often resources must be pulled from outside of the area. This results in increased response times to incidents downtown and the temporary removal of resources from the station where the backup units are dispatched. This new site will be used only to provide backup for situations where resources are exhausted and support is required.

### **3. Need to house specialty vehicles in a central location**

Fire Rescue Services has a small number of specialty vehicles and equipment that service the whole city and should be stored at a central location to provide greater flexibility and capacity for Fire Services' ability to serve a growing City.

## **River Rescue Facility Site Selection Process Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What process was used to identify the site location?**

In determining a site to place a Fire Rescue Services facility for river rescue, FRS identified five acceptable sites located within the area where the greatest concentration of river rescue events have taken place. This area is generally between the High Level and Dawson Bridges.

A third-party consultant was contracted to evaluate the sites in two phases, the first phase designed to develop a shortlist from the original five sites and then, in Phase II, to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment and site location study on any shortlisted sites. Only at the conclusion of these two phases will Fire Rescue Services be prepared to provide a recommended site to house the river rescue crew and a rescue truck to support fire response in the downtown.

In Phase I, the five original sites were assessed according to criteria that primarily measured their suitability to house a boat launch and secondarily on their ability to meet the operational needs of a Rescue Truck. Criteria included the suitability of river and bank conditions for a launch site, ease of engineering, maneuverability on local roads, site size, socioeconomic factors and environmental concerns. Cost to build or restore facilities was not taken into account in this phase. In the assessment of Phase I, it was deemed that the only the Station 21 site in south Rosedale met the criteria sufficiently to justify more in-depth study in Phase II.

It is important to stress that the end of Phase I is not the final decision. Phase II will provide Fire Rescue Services and City with more of the information they require to determine if Station 21 should be use for a permanent river rescue site. Phase II may reveal factors that deem the site inappropriate for permanent use.

The consultant's report on the Phase I findings can be found at:  
**[edmonton.ca/rossdale](http://edmonton.ca/rossdale)**

### **What is an Environmental Impact Assessment?**

For any development in the River Valley, the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan requires that an Environmental Impact Assessment be conducted to ensure that the objectives and policies relating to environmental protection and land use planning in the River Valley are achieved. EIA's must be completed before any funds are distributed for development. EIA's will measure:

- The boundaries of the flood plane and runoff characteristics
- Stability, quality and rate of erosion of the river bank on the development
- The variety, quality and subsequent function of vegetation on the land in question
- Quality and characteristics of the soil
- Identification of wildlife habitats

- Identification of visual, auditory and olfactory impacts
- Identification of historic and archaeological resources
- Compatibility with surrounding land use

### **What is a Site Location Study?**

The North Saskatchewan River Valley ARP also requires that before funds for development of public land in the River Valley are approved by City Council, that a site location study be undertaken to outline:

- Total costs of developing that public land.
- The social, environmental and institutional constraints that requires that the development occur in the River Valley and the impacts on surrounding land uses.
- This includes the impacts of use on the surrounding properties and traffic.

### **Why a river rescue station is needed?**

The number of rescue calls on the river is increasing every year and is likely to continue to do so as Edmontonians make more extensive use of the water and the river valley. Fire Rescue Services believes that the current number of calls demonstrate a need to improve how we handle and respond to these emergency situations. In order to provide an efficient and effective emergency service, the river rescue crew will also operate the rescue truck on site. However, their expressed primary responsibility will be to respond to river rescue calls.

The current station configuration means river rescue calls experience a 10-15 minute response delay due to travel. Having a crew on-site significantly reduces the response time and will potentially save lives.

### **How will a river's edge river rescue fire station improve public safety?**

The first responsibility of the facility is to provide River Rescue services of which there were 63 events in 2012. The station would also provide back-up support to the current Fire Rescue capacity in the downtown via a rescue truck. Our estimate is that the rescue truck would be dispatched from the site approximately 250 to 300 times per year. For comparison, the seven stations in the city that currently house rescue trucks responded to an *average* of 1536 calls in 2012.

The routes in and out of Rosssdale would allow for a rescue truck from Station 21 to arrive on scene within four minutes to the vast majority of the downtown core in 80-100 per cent of cases. This is well within Fire Rescue Services' operating guidelines and adds service capacity to the entire city.

### **How this will impact the neighbourhood?**

Any emergency response service will cause some noise and light disruption in the neighborhood it is located in – however, of the downtown calls that required additional rescue truck support, 76 per cent occur within the hours of 8am and 10pm. Edmonton Fire Rescue Services is committed to being good neighbours

with all the communities we serve and will work with the community to address concerns in an on-going manner.

**How would traffic be affected?**

As with a number of other Fire Rescue stations, trucks will need to travel on local streets to get to arterial roadways. As part of the detailed Site Location Study the amount of traffic, parking provisions and size of local streets will be looked at in detail. The results of these studies and any mitigative measures will form part of the overall study and influence the final recommendation to Council.

Edmonton's firefighters are committed to the safety of everyone – including those who share the road with emergency vehicles. Firefighters are given extensive training in driving and operating our vehicles to ensure they can respond to emergencies quickly without compromising the safety of anyone else, particularly in the residential areas we service.

**What if the data does not support the selection of the Rossdale site?**

That is a possibility and other options would have to be explored. The next phase of the project will more definitively indicate the opportunities and constraints associated with Station 21 as a solution.