

Calgary Environment Strategy

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Standing Policy Committee on Utilities and Corporate Services recommends that Council approve the *Calgary Environment Strategy* (Attachment 2).

HIGHLIGHTS

- The *Calgary Environment Strategy* (the Strategy) is our roadmap to protect and steward the natural environment (air, land, water and biodiversity) for all Calgarians over the next decade and beyond. It provides a unifying, city-wide guiding document for environmental issues, opportunities and priorities with one overarching strategic focus for a healthy and green city.
- *What does this mean to Calgarians?* Calgarians care and are concerned about the environment. Healthy natural areas and systems, clean air and water, and access to nature are important values to the quality of life of Calgarians. The Strategy will facilitate an increased understanding of Calgary's natural environment and provides visibility to citizens that The City is making well-informed, collaborative and transparent decisions to protect the environment.
- *Why does it matter?* Negative impacts on the environment are increasing around the globe from a decline in species to declining air quality. Cities and specifically Calgary, can play a significant role in protecting the environment. The natural environment should be viewed in a holistic manner to understand cumulative impacts and make integrated decisions that will protect the natural environment.
- As acknowledged in Council's Notice of Motion C2019-0285, The City has a number of specific environmentally themed strategies, policies, and plans, but lacks a unifying environment strategy that defines the environmental direction for The City as a whole. The proposed Strategy is designed to bring interrelated strategic focus to environmental work across The City, concentrate efforts on key focus areas and facilitate environmental policy and program implementation that is more synergistic and effective
- Administration is collaborating across business units and with key stakeholders and decision-makers to protect land, transform or restore urban natural areas and assets to be more resilient, improve air and water quality and protect ecological health to maintain biodiversity.
- The conceptual framework and actions of the Strategy align with The City's Municipal Development Plan and Calgary Transportation Plan to make Calgary a sustainable, connected city of great neighbourhoods.
- The Strategy defines how The City can improve how it measures, reports, communicates and educates on the environment through the proposed action plan work.
- The Strategy aligns with Council's Citizen Priority of a healthy and green city.
- Background and previous Council direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

Emerging global and local issues of environmental concern require that all cities, including Calgary, establish clear, comprehensive and integrated approaches to addressing environmental challenges. Fortunately, The City of Calgary has had a long-standing commitment to environmental stewardship and protection reinforced by an extensive range of environmental programs, plans, guidelines and strategies. The Strategy was designed to bring

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this work together, help build corporate momentum and concentrate efforts on key focus areas, as well as facilitate implementation that is more collaborative and effective. The Strategy consolidates and supplements this city-wide direction with actions to provide an integrated view of Council and community supported environmental priorities.

Purpose

The Strategy:

- Provides The City a unifying environment strategy with defined environmental direction.
- Identifies connections between environmental subject areas.
- Defined ways to implement environmental policies and strategies.
- Measures, monitors and reports on the environment holistically.
- Facilitates consolidated knowledge sharing on environmental information and stewardship within the corporation and community.

Calgarians have communicated the importance of protecting and stewarding the environment (Attachment 4). Highlights Calgary's environmental progress, areas of success and leadership, both within the community and at The City, to help advance partnerships and access future funding opportunities for environmentally related work and programs. It also supports focused efforts and opportunities to create a city where all people benefit from our environmental achievement.

Key components of the Strategy include:

- i. An overarching mission, principles and core values statements for environmental protection and stewardship.
- ii. Defined broad environmental goals, outcomes and measures.
- iii. A consolidation and summary of key corporate environmental initiatives and actions underway.
- iv. Recommendation for the development of an action plan to provide ongoing implementation mechanisms with practical tools to improve environmental monitoring, reporting, communication and education.

Research and Evaluation

A background study was also completed to identify environmental challenges and opportunities facing Calgary (Attachment 2 – *Calgary Today: Environment Background Study*). Informed by and created collaboratively with inputs from cross-corporate working groups, this report presents a summary of key issues, opportunities, and trends, organized under key focus areas (water, air, biodiversity and ecosystems, climate change mitigation and adaptation and waste) that the City can influence and take action on. This study is intended to help advance ongoing stakeholder collaboration and future state environmental progress reporting for improving accountability and environmental outcomes.

Next Steps - *Building a Better and Shared Understanding about the Natural Environment*

Going forward, Administration will deliver an action plan with the following items: *Citizen Environmental Dashboard, Environmental Progress Report and Community Outreach Program*. This work will support a unified voice at The City for the consideration and inclusion of environmental outcomes in plans, programs and processes.

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Furthermore, Administration will continue to look to local and international cities for best practices, and for innovative solutions that can be imported and adapted to the Calgary context.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION (EXTERNAL)

- Public Engagement was undertaken
- Public Communication or Engagement was not required
- Public/Stakeholders were informed
- Stakeholder dialogue/relations were undertaken

The Environment Strategy engagement was focused on understanding perspectives about what it means for Calgary to be *a healthy and green city*. In total, the online engagement process in 2021, including broad public participants and targeted stakeholder organizations, interacted with over 5,648 people, with contributions from over 908 Calgarians and 33 local organizations. Administration also consulted with the Social Well-being Committee.

Community members, businesses, and organizations will play a critical role in the success of this Strategy. Administration will continue to engage and work together with key City staff, partner organisations and the community to refine the solution areas, performance measures and determine how best to achieve the goals, while building support for necessary actions. More information on the engagement process and outcomes can be found in Attachment 4.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

The Strategy establishes a framework for accommodating more equitable decision-making that supports environmental benefits to all Calgarians. There is a strong correlation between people's health and wellbeing and the proposed environment strategies. The Strategy work will align environmental and urban human health initiatives and priorities, as well as apply a strong social lens to all of the goal areas. This will include directing the application of an equity and affordability analysis.

Due to the constraints of COVID, particularly on stakeholder engagement, and recognizing that more work is needed and critical to the successful implementation of the Strategy and action plan, Administration will engage a more diverse audience, including youth and First Nations communities in ongoing public outreach and environmental stewardship programs.

Environmental

The Strategy includes broad direction to protect the health of natural areas and assets, including our rivers, ecologically significant areas and urban forest. The development and implementation of an action plan to achieve set goals, outcomes and established targets will make a significant contribution to City-wide environmental performance on key issues like air and water quality, the conservation and resilience of biodiversity and healthy, functioning ecosystems. The Strategy supports the integration of natural infrastructure and assets within developments and communities that are complete compact, walkable and transit friendly.

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Economic

Environmental leadership is closely associated with economic leadership and attracting talent and investment. Having a clear environmental mission and program could support Calgary's ability to access large economic recovery investments from higher levels of government and other means, for example the Canadian government's recent allocation of funding for natural infrastructure projects and stronger environmental stewardship. Investing in environmental protection is considered best practice from a municipal finance perspective. What happens to the environment has a direct impact on our economy.

Service and Financial Implications

Existing operating funding – base

All actions currently underway have had the financial implications integrated into ongoing operational and capital budgets.

RISK

Growth and development decisions are complex and involve a multitude of City stakeholders, all with varying needs. The potential future costs of not adequately protecting natural environment today are significant. Administration will take an iterative approach to build the data-driven content summaries that will further support informed environmental decision-making.

There is a reputational benefit for cities that embrace environmental protection, performance and stewardship practices. Calgary's future success relies on achieving the vision of a healthy and green city- a place where people want to live, stay, set up business and visit. Without a unified mission and strategic focus for the environment, decisions around programs, policies and investment may be reactive and less focused. Not having a unified corporate environmental direction could also impede Calgary's ability to access potential funding and attract innovation.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Attach 1 - Previous Council Direction
2. Attach 2 - Calgary Environment Strategy
3. Attach 3 - Background Study - *Calgary Today: Environment Background Study*
4. Attach 4 - What We Heard Reports
5. Attach 5 - Calgary Environment Strategy- Presentation

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Department Circulation

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Executive Leadership Team	ELT	Approve