

## ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE WORK PROGRAM UPDATE

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a final update on the Environmental Open Space (EOS) work program as per Council direction in PUD2014-0053. There are four interrelated projects directed by the program: 1) amend EOS policy in the Municipal Development Plan; 2) develop a technical framework that identifies lands to be directed by EOS policy; 3) clarify terminology relevant to Environmental Reserve; and 4) standardize how to map Environmentally Significant Areas in Area Structure Plans. These projects are now complete. The program was carried out in consultation with industry stakeholders and internal partners throughout the process. Attachment 1 of this report contains letters of support from the Urban Development Institute and other industry stakeholders for the recently completed technical framework (Ecological Inventory Framework). An executive summary of the Ecological Inventory Framework and a link to the full document on calgary.ca is included as Attachment 2.

### ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development recommends that Council receive this report for information.

### RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2016 MARCH 09:

That the Administration Recommendation contained in Report PUD2016-0221 be approved.

Excerpt from the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the SPC on Planning and Urban Development Held 2016 March 09:

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**“2. That the distributions received with respect to Report PUD2016-0221 and the document referred to in Attachment 2, ‘Ecological Inventory Framework: Area Structure Plans’, be attached to the report prior to being forwarded to Council.**

CARRIED”

### PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2014 February 10, Council approved PUD2014-0053 with the following recommendations: “6. Direct Administration, in consultation with stakeholders, to bring forward through the SPC on Planning and Urban Development to Council, amendments to the New Community Planning Guidebook on an ongoing basis, as required, in accordance with the Land Use Planning and Policy recommendation; Such Amendments to include, but not be limited to: ...(b) Clarifying policies around environmental open space; and 7. Direct Administration, to bring forward through the SPC on Planning and Urban Development to Council, amendments to the New Community Planning Guidebook through the developer-funded ASP’s in conjunction with reporting on that process no later than 2014 October 31.”

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On 2014 November 17, Council received PUD2014-0864 for information and directed Administration “to develop and carry out a work program with stakeholders to review and clarify Environmental Open Space policies and refine relevant technical components and report back on scope and progress by 2015 February; and to seek clarification from the Province on the definition and application of terminology relative to Environmental Reserve through the Provincial *Municipal Government Act* review process.”

On 2015 February 23, Council received PUD2015-0200 for information and directed Administration to “report back on the Environmental Open Spaces work program no later than 2016 March through the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development, and to report back to the SPC on Planning and Urban Development in 2015 October with a status update.”

2015 November 09, Council received PUD2015-0809 for a status update on the EOS work program and directed Administration to report back to Council no later than 2016 March on the work program.

2015 December 7, Council adopted CPC2015-219 – policy amendment to the Municipal Development Plan (The New Community Planning Guidebook), including the EOS policy revision.

### **BACKGROUND**

Environmental Open Space (EOS) was introduced as a policy in the Council approved Open Space Plan (CPS2002-42). It was later adopted in the Municipal Development Plan: Volume 2, Part 1, The New Community Planning Guidebook (2014).

EOS policy guides planning decisions for Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs). ESAs are lands that have been identified as having conservation value because of their environmental and/or cultural characteristics. These lands include the river valley system, the urban forest, archaeological sites, historically significant cultural landscapes, and natural environment parks (including wetlands, natural water bodies, escarpments, riparian corridors, natural grasslands and native pasture and woodlots).

This report provides a final status update on the Council directed Environmental Open Space work program. The program directed the completion of four interrelated projects:

1. Amend EOS policy contained within the Municipal Development Plan, New Community Planning Guidebook (CPC2015-219);
2. Develop a document that provides a technical framework for determining what lands qualify for direction under the EOS policy at the Area Structure Plan stage;
3. Clarify the terminology relevant to Environmental Reserve in the Municipal Government Act; and
4. Standardize how ESAs are depicted on Area Structure Plan maps.

The initial direction from Council that led to this work program was to simply clarify EOS policies in the New Community Guidebook (PUD2014-0053). The approach taken by Administration was to also ensure that the technical foundation for determining EOS was clear and consistent.

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Together these initiatives represent significant progress in providing more clarity and standardizing EOS for community planning.

### **INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS**

The following section summarizes the work that has been done to complete the four project elements of the Environmental Open Space work program:

1. Amend EOS policy in the New Community Planning Guidebook

*(February 2015 - December 2015)*

EOS policy directs lands acquired by The City, through dedication or otherwise, to preserve Environmentally Significant Areas such as wetlands, watercourses, riparian areas and escarpments. The EOS policy amendments within the Municipal Development Plan, New Community Planning Guidebook were approved by Council in 2015 December (CPC2015-219). As part of this process, extensive stakeholder consultation was done to ensure alignment with existing policy and Council direction. Engagement with industry stakeholders for the EOS policy amendment began in 2015 February with Administration partnering with the Urban Development Institute (UDI). A letter of support for this work was submitted on behalf of UDI and other stakeholders as part of CPC2015-219.

2. Develop a technical framework

*(March 2015 - January 2016)*

This project developed a document that provides clear, detailed requirements for conducting ecological inventories for the Area Structure Plan (ASP) stage of community planning: the Ecological Inventory Framework: Area Structure Plans. An executive summary of this work and a list of stakeholders that participated in this project is included as Attachment 2. The inventory guides the identification of Environmentally Significant Areas during the development of an Area Structure Plan. It also informs the development of the Environmental Open Space map contained within each ASP. The framework was completed in consultation with numerous external and internal subject matter experts.

Letters of support from the Urban Development Institute and other stakeholders involved in this piece of work are included as Attachment 1. The document was released in January 2016 and the full version can be found on The City's website at:

<http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Parks/Pages/Construction/Park-development-guidelines.aspx>.

3. Clarify Environmental Reserve (ER) terminology

*(April 2015 - present)*

The approved EOS policy is neutral with respect to the presence of ER. The policy applies to lands that have been identified as an Environmentally Significant Area through an inventory process (the Ecological Inventory Framework). The inventory and mapping process is done consistently regardless of the tools available to acquire or protect the ESA (Municipal Reserve, Environmental Reserve, purchase, etc.).

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The definition of Environmental Reserve (ER) in the Municipal Government Act is provincially mandated. The City will have formal input into the City Charter and Municipal Government Act review process, but does not control the timing or the outcome. The EOS policy will align with any new tools used to protect or dedicate lands through the subdivision process.

Further, the Ecological Inventory Framework has consolidated City and Provincial definitions of relevant terminology (water course, wetland, etc.) This will allow the identification of Environmentally Significant Areas at the Area Structure Plan stage of development to occur more consistently and clearly.

### 4. Area Structure Plan (ASP) mapping standards

*(Delivered with completion of developer funded ASPs in Q4 2015)*

Since the inception of EOS policy in Area Structure Plans, six developer funded ASPs have been completed. Through collaboration with industry stakeholders and other City business units, Calgary Parks has developed a mapping standard to identify an Environmental Open Space Study Area on relevant ASP maps. The standard will be captured in a template format to ensure ongoing clarity and consistency for producing the relevant maps in future ASPs.

The four projects under the Council directed EOS work program are complete, with the separate program of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) review process ongoing, which is outside of the scope of this program. Administration is committed to ensuring successful implementation of EOS policy and its technical components. Through monitoring, issues will be identified and addressed through ongoing stakeholder involvement.

### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

For the EOS policy amendment, a Terms of Reference was developed and approved by Calgary Parks and UDI collectively to mitigate identified risks around policy comprehension and clarity. The document outlined agreed upon deliverables, including approval of all meeting minutes, roles and responsibilities, and a review and circulation period to keep the project on track. Open and transparent engagement strategies were aligned with Corporate guidelines to mitigate risks.

The Ecological Inventory Framework was developed in consultation and collaboration with internal and external subject matter experts. External stakeholder groups included: Urban Development Institute, Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Society of Professional Biologists, planning, engineering and environmental firms, Calgary River Valleys, Alberta Invasive Species Council, etc. Internal stakeholder groups included: Water Resources, Calgary Neighbourhoods, Environmental and Safety Management, Local Area Planning and Implementation, Roads, Transportation Planning and Transportation Infrastructure. Feedback was positive and spoke to the project outcome of achieving clarity and certainty in inventorying lands at the ASP stage of development.

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### **Strategic Alignment**

The revisions to the EOS policy and the creation of the Ecological Inventory Framework technical guidelines align with Legislative requirements and Council priorities.

### **Social, Environmental, Economic (External)**

#### **Social**

The EOS policy work encompasses recreational, cultural, and environmental park space which will allow for future outdoor recreation benefits, will contribute to a collective sense of history, and will improve social inclusion for Calgarians.

#### **Environmental**

Conservation of environmentally significant areas adds to the environmental health and biodiversity of Calgary.

#### **Economic**

The conservation of environmentally significant areas adds important sites to Calgary's park system which economically benefit The City through desirable neighbourhoods and enhanced property taxes.

### **Financial Capacity**

#### **Current and Future Operating Budget:**

The EOS work program is part of Calgary Parks operating budget and was completed through internal resources. There was no impact to current or future operating budget.

#### **Current and Future Capital Budget:**

The completion of the EOS work program will not have an impact on current or future capital budgets.

### **Risk Assessment**

Risk was assessed qualitatively and was mitigated through ongoing and open consultation and collaboration with stakeholders in executing the EOS work program. With the completion of the program, no threats or hazards to success were brought forward to the project team.

### **REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):**

This update responds to Council's direction for Administration to report back to the SPC on Planning and Urban Development in 2016 March with an update on the EOS policy work program.

### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Ecological Inventory Framework - Letters of Support
2. Ecological Inventory Framework- Executive Summary
3. **Ecological Inventory Framework: Area Structure Plans**
4. **Distributions**