

ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE POLICIES PROGRESS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council directed Administration to report back to the SPC on Planning and Urban Development in 2015 October with a status update on the Environmental Open Space (EOS) policy work program. To date, the EOS work program has been refining the EOS and its parent policies, and has also been reviewing the technical components that will establish a standard for identifying Area Structure Plan lands subject to EOS policy. Work with internal and industry stakeholders has been consistent, ongoing and milestones have been achieved. The work program is on track and expected to be completed by 2016 March.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

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 2015 OCTOBER 07:

That the Administration Recommendation contained in Report PUD2015-0809 be approved.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

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.”

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.”

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.”

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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, and natural environment parks (including wetlands, natural water bodies, escarpments, riparian corridors, natural grasslands and native pasture and woodlots).

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The EOS work program consists of three project outcomes:

1. Revise EOS policy in the New Community Planning Guidebook
Extensive stakeholder consultation has occurred to ensure alignment with existing policy and Council direction. Engagement with industry stakeholders began in 2015 February with Administration partnering with the Urban Development Institute (UDI). The policy amendments within the *New Community Planning Guidebook* are anticipated to go forward to Calgary Planning Commission in 2015 October and to Council in 2015 December.
2. Revise the Biophysical Impact Assessment (BIA) Framework
The revised BIA framework establishes standards to identify Environmentally Significant Areas, which, when protected, are directed by EOS policy. Stakeholder engagement has been positive and ongoing. The document is expected to be in final draft form for 2016 Q1.
3. Develop planning guidelines and specifications for EOS
This project will establish planning and mapping standards for EOS and will launch in 2016.

The EOS work program is on track and expected to be completed by March 2016; the program is outlined in the Attachment. As the EOS work program progresses, important milestones are tracked to ensure overall program continuity and adjustments are made to reflect the current state. For example, the creation of mapping standards has been deferred to allow Administration to focus on the *New Community Planning Guidebook* revision first.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

City staff, UDI and industry stakeholders have taken part in more than a dozen meetings throughout the EOS policy revision project. Collaborative workshop sessions have been held and Parks and UDI stakeholders have had extensive communication since 2015 February. To ensure the successful completion of the EOS work program, a collaborative stakeholder engagement process is a priority for both internal and industry stakeholders.

Strategic Alignment

The revisions to the EOS policy and BIA Framework, and the creation of new technical guidelines will align with Legislative requirements and Council priorities.

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Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Social

The EOS policy work encompasses both recreational and environmental park space which provides outdoor recreation benefits and 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 Parks operating budget and completed through internal resources. There is 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 budget.

Risk Assessment

A Terms of Reference was developed and approved by Parks and UDI to mitigate identified risks (policy comprehension and clarity) associated with the EOS work program. The Terms of Reference outlines agreed upon deliverables, including: approval of all meetings minutes, roles and responsibilities, and a review and circulation period to keep the project on track. Open and transparent engagement strategies that are aligned with corporate guidelines have been used with the Engage! team to mitigate risks.

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 2015 October with a status update on the EOS policy work program.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Environmental Open Space (EOS) Work Program Timelines