

ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE POLICIES PROGRESS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council directed Administration to develop and carry out a work program to review and clarify Environmental Open Space (EOS) policy, refine technical components for its implementation and provide clarity on defining and applying environmental reserve relative to the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA). The work program adheres to corporate requirements on project chartering and engagement, following the “Collaboration” approach to stakeholder engagement as defined in the *engage! Policy*. This report is a progress update outlining the scope of the work program and progress to date.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Direct 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.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON PLANNING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, DATED 2015 FEBRUARY 11:

That Council:

1. Receive this report for information;
2. Direct 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
3. **Further direct Administration to report back to Council through the SPC on Planning and Urban Development in 2015 October with a status update.**

Excerpt from the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the SPC on Planning and Urban Development Held 2015 February 11:

“CLERICAL CORRECTIONS

The Chair noted clerical corrections to Report PUD2015-0200, as follows:

- On Page 3 of 5, first paragraph, by deleting the word “the”, following the words “considered within the current”.
- On Page 3 of 5, paragraph 4, #3, by deleting the word “loss”, following the words “to protect, develop or” and by substituting the word “lose”.

ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE POLICIES PROGRESS REPORT

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.”

On 2014 November 17, Council adopted, as amended, the PUD2014-0864 recommendations as follows:

1. Receive for information this progress report on Administration’s initial steps to clarifying policies around Environmental Open Space;
2. Direct 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
3. Direct Administration, through the Environmental Open Space Work Plan, 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.

BACKGROUND

Environmental Open Space (EOS) was introduced as 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 lands of conservation value. These lands include the river valley system, the urban forest, environmentally significant areas and natural environment parks (including wetlands, natural water bodies, escarpments, riparian corridors, natural grasslands and native pasture and woodlots).

In 2014 February (PUD2014-0053), Council directed Administration, in consultation with stakeholders to clarify policies around environmental open space.

In 2014 November (PUD2014-0864), Council directed Administration to carry out a work program with stakeholders to review and clarify EOS policies and refine relevant technical components for its consistent implementation. Administration was also directed to seek clarity on understanding the application of environmental reserve (as per the *Municipal Government Act*).

ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE POLICIES PROGRESS REPORT

INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The EOS review work program has been scoped by using four problem statements:

1. What is the goal of EOS policy?
2. How are lands determined to have environmental significance/be of conservation value?
3. How is EOS policy implemented?
4. How can clarity, consistency and understanding of EOS policy direction be improved?

The EOS policy is meant to guide development planning at the Outline Plan stage of development. The EOS policy in the *Municipal Development Plan* (MDP) is given local area context when contained within an Area Structure Plan (ASP): the broad policies in the MDP are refined based on the specific ecological context of the lands contained within the ASP area. EOS policy in the ASP is meant to give policy guidance to conserving or developing lands that have conservation value. Determining conservation value for lands contained within an ASP area is completed based on technical guidelines. A subject matter expert such as a biologist or hydrologist follows the technical guidelines to determine which lands have conservation value. These lands are then identified on the land use map in the ASP. The current technical guidelines are contained within the document the *Biophysical Assessment Framework*. During the Outline Plan stage of development, areas of conservation value are further refined through the work carried out by the subject matter expert. At the Outline Plan stage of development it is determined which lands of conservation value should be:

1. Protected;
2. Integrated/modified to advance goals of the “green network” policies in the ASP; or
3. Lost to development.

As per the above process, the EOS work program is understood as an “umbrella” program of work, which will have three key project outcomes:

1. Amendment to EOS policy contained within *The New Community Planning Guidebook*;
2. Revision of the *Biophysical Assessment (BIA) Framework*; and
3. Technical guidelines for determining which lands that have been identified as having conservation value (completed using the BIA Framework), to protect, develop or **lose**.

Conservation planning outside of the ASP/Outline Plan processes is beyond the scope of EOS policy, and therefore not considered within the current work program. Each project will go through the project chartering process, as per The City’s project planning process.

The EOS work program will:

- a) Develop and implement an engagement plan with broad stakeholder representation in support of providing policy clarity, building common language and understanding, refining a technical framework for its implementation and seeking clarity from the Province of Alberta on the interpretation and application of environmental reserve;
- b) Review the legislative and policy basis for EOS policy direction in open space planning;
- c) Develop a high-level process map for identifying, planning and conserving lands of conservation value within the development process;
- d) Amend the current EOS policy (as per the *Municipal Development Plan Volume 2, Part 1, The New Community Planning Guidebook*); and

ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE POLICIES PROGRESS REPORT

- e) Revise the current technical guidelines that are used for analysing lands of conservation value/environmental significance, including defining technical terms within its glossary. Clarity gained from the Province of Alberta on environmental reserve will be incorporated into these guidelines.

The EOS Review Work Program (Attachment) provides a clear process to act on Council direction, as outlined in, "Previous Council Direction/Policy." The work program will be carried out throughout the course of 2015 into 2016.

It is anticipated that the outputs of the work program will contain three deliverables as identified above:

1. Amendment to EOS policy contained within the MDP, including clarification from the Province on the application of environmental reserve (Council direction #3);
2. Revision of the *Biophysical Assessment (BIA) Framework*, including a glossary of technical terminology; and
3. Technical guidelines for determining which lands that have been identified as having conservation value (completed using the BIA Framework), to protect, develop or **lose**.

Determining the project charter requirements – scope, stakeholders, milestones, etc. – of these three projects will be identified through the aforementioned engagement plan.

Work Progress to date

The following list reviews the work relative to EOS review work program that has been accomplished to date:

1. Further to Council's recommendation # 3 on 2014 November 17, Parks has been working to seek clarification on the definition and application of environmental reserve through consultation with the Law Department. In addition, Parks has been working with Corporate Strategy on the MGA Review process. It is anticipated that the Province will address terminology and application of environmental reserve through the review process.
2. Review of alignment and direction from Council priorities for EOS policy, e.g. MDP, *Action Plan*, etc; and
3. Revision of the Biophysical Assessment Framework. This project was launched through the project chartering process last year. An outline of the framework will be completed by 2015 Q1.

Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication

The focus of engagement on the EOS work program to date has been on project scope. The Urban Development Institute - Calgary has been actively involved in scoping the work program, ensuring common language is used, the appropriate development scale (ASP/Outline Plan) of EOS policy application and the process that will be undertaken for the EOS work program review. To date, Parks has committed to biweekly meetings with UDI - Calgary to ensure the work program is on track, both in project execution and schedule. Engagement has been constructive, beneficial and aided in developing the overall direction of the work program.

ENVIRONMENTAL OPEN SPACE POLICIES PROGRESS REPORT

For each project outcome of the EOS review work program, Parks will engage and solicit feedback on EOS policies and technical guidelines with stakeholders across The City, industry, community associations, non-government organizations, academia and other government agencies. Parks will follow corporate requirements on project chartering and engagement, following the “Collaboration” approach as defined in the *Engage! Policy*.

The collaboration approach requires that:

“Stakeholders are considered partners in the decision making process, including collaboration on analyzing issues, building alternatives, identifying a preferred solution, and making recommendations. (CS009)”

Further, for each project, alignment with the appropriate Council priorities (e.g. legislation, *Action Plan*, etc.) will be identified, key results will be scoped and deliverables will be outlined.

Strategic Alignment

The revision to EOS policy direction will align with federal, provincial and municipal legislative requirements, and Council priorities.

Social, Environmental, Economic (External)

Parks will adhere to Council policies to align with adopted triple bottom line policies, incorporating the social, environmental and economic aspects of identifying and conserving lands of conservation value.

Financial Capacity

Current and Future Operating Budget:

The EOS work program will be part of Parks operating budget and completed through internal resources.

Current and Future Capital Budget:

While conserving land will affect areas for which The City will typically take future ownership, the work program will not have direct impacts to The City’s capital budget.

Risk Assessment

A lack of policy clarity and implementation strategies could pose serious risks in the successful implementation of the *Municipal Development Plan* and Council priorities. The Environmental Open Space Review Work Program is designed to alleviate such risks. More specifically, risk is mitigated by open and transparent engagement strategies that are aligned with corporate guidelines.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):

This update adheres to Council’s direction for Administration to develop and carry out a work program with stakeholders to review and clarify Environmental Open Space policies, refine its relevant technical components for its implementation and to seek clarity on the understanding and application of environmental reserve.

ATTACHMENT(S)

Environmental Open Space Review Work Program