

## **2016 BIODIVERCITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The BiodiverCity Advisory Committee (the Committee) was first established by Council on 2015 October 19 at their annual Organizational Meeting. As guided by its Terms of Reference, the Committee will advance the commitments and procedures identified within the Council-adopted Biodiversity Policy and The Durban Commitment: Local Governments for Biodiversity. Over the course of 2016, the Committee pursued three categories of work: corporate alignment; subject matter expert engagement; and development and execution of biodiversity awareness plans. The strategic outcome of this work is to advance biodiversity awareness within the Corporation and to support Calgary communities in fostering more resilient, biologically diverse open space. Project highlights in 2016 include reviewing the potential for a Bee City designation for The City of Calgary and providing feedback on The City's draft BiodiverCity Implementation Plan. Included with this report is a Committee Infographic (Attachment 1), Skills Matrix of current committee members (Attachment 2), and the 2017 Committee Work Plan (Attachment 3).

### **ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services recommends that Council receive this report for information.

### **PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY**

On 2016 October 24, Council made new appointments to the BiodiverCity Advisory Committee at the annual Organizational Meeting of Council.

On 2016 May 16, Council received the 2015 BiodiverCity Advisory Committee Annual Progress Report for information (CPS2016-0359).

On 2015 October 19, Council appointed the first members of the BiodiverCity Advisory Committee at the annual Organizational Meeting of Council.

On 2015 July 27, Council approved the proposed BiodiverCity Advisory Committee Terms of Reference (CPS2015-0608).

On 2015 March 30, Council adopted the Biodiversity Policy (CSPS037), and received for information Our BiodiverCity, Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan and directed Administration to "research the appropriate Terms of Reference and framework of a Biodiversity Advisory Committee [involving] broad representation across Calgary (CPS2015-0260)".

### **BACKGROUND**

Through its Terms of Reference, the Committee is mandated to provide Council and Administration with strategic advice on matters affecting urban biodiversity. The Committee advances the commitments and procedures identified within Our BiodiverCity, Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan and The Durban Commitment: Local Governments for Biodiversity.

In the fall of 2016, Mayor Nenshi signed the Durban Commitment (Attachment 4). Calgary became the third Canadian city to formally join the international program directed by Local Action for Biodiversity (along with the City of Edmonton and the City of Montreal). The program represents local governments from across the world to improve biodiversity planning and

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management. By signing this commitment, The City acknowledges “accountability and responsibility for the health and wellbeing of our communities through protecting, sustainably utilizing and managing biodiversity and recognizing its role as the foundation of our existence.”

In March 2015, Council approved Our BiodiverCity, Calgary’s 10-year biodiversity strategic plan and the accompanying Biodiversity Policy (CSPS037). The plan is based on principles for the protection, development and management of Calgary parks and ecosystems in support of biodiversity. Our BiodiverCity aims to provide a framework for The City to foster more resilient, biologically diverse open space and neighbourhoods that support positive outcomes for Calgarians, visitors, wildlife and plant communities.

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

The BiodiverCity Advisory Committee is mandated to advance the Council-commitments of biodiversity conservation and education (public and within The City). During the course of 2016, the Committee pursued touch-points within The City and the Calgary community to foster accountability and responsibility in biodiversity conservation. Meeting this outcome can be categorized into three areas of work:

1. Aligning with and engaging in City of Calgary work on biodiversity conservation;
2. Hosting subject matter expert presentations to expand the Committee awareness of biodiversity work in Calgary; and
3. Undertaking project work to promote biodiversity in the Corporation and citywide.

#### **1. Corporate alignment**

The Committee continued its commitment to learn about The City’s structure in order to identify and tie into corporate biodiversity conservation opportunities. Administration has worked collectively with members of Council to address The Committee on this initiative. Citizen advisory groups play an important role for test-bedding ideas to provide strategic insight into evolving The City’s approach to biodiversity conservation. In addition, the Committee received presentations from four City staff who sit on the Committee.

#### **2. Subject matter expert engagement**

The Committee engaged in biodiversity conservation sessions on topics including:

- Ecological planning for new community development
- Habitat Condition Rating and connectivity
- The Watershed+ City of Calgary artist in residence program
- Ecosystem services
- Soils and soil biodiversity
- The Calgary Urban Coyote Project

Administration requested that the Committee review the BiodiverCity Implementation Plan in December 2016. The draft BiodiverCity Implementation Plan organizes and prioritizes initiatives outlined in Our BiodiverCity, Calgary’s 10-year biodiversity strategic plan. The Implementation Plan will further establish key terms and definitions and will include new performance measures that complement existing measures and long-term targets outlined in the strategic plan. Both the Conservation and Eco-literacy sub-committees have reviewed the draft and their feedback will be incorporated into the final plan.

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### **3. 2016 project work & 2017 work plan**

A summary of 2016 Committee project work and 2017 work plan (Attachment 3) is below:

- **Bee City Canada proposal**

The Committee prepared a letter to Calgary Parks regarding The City becoming a “Bee City.” The letter included an evaluation with three key points: 1) The Bee City Canada mandate aligns with Our BiodiverCity strategic plan; 2) The City may wish to pursue “Bee City” designation, depending on resource requirements and benefit/cost evaluation; and 3) If The City does pursue designation, The Committee recommends that the Bee City mandate and objectives are not confused with those of beekeepers.

- **Calgary Youth Science Fair Info**

Science fairs offer an opportunity to connect science awareness and experimentation with conservation. The Committee is developing a biodiversity award for youth science fairs.

- **Recognition program**

Recognition letter templates were developed and are sent to groups and/or individuals to acknowledge unique projects that increase awareness of or advance biodiversity conservation in Calgary.

- **Staff survey**

A staff survey was developed and issued to approximately 700 City staff in early 2017. The intent of the survey was to understand biodiversity touch points within The City and how these can be leveraged to advance The City's biodiversity goals. Respondents were asked about their area of work, familiarity of biodiversity, and what ties their work could have to biodiversity conservation. The Committee is currently reviewing the survey results; these will be included in the 2017 annual report.

Future work for the Committee includes:

- Providing advice on habitat restoration projects and prioritization of biodiversity conservation initiatives
- Providing advice on The City's biodiversity-based policies and frameworks (for example: BiodiverCity Implementation Plan, Integrated Pest Management Plan, Natural Area Management Plans, Urban Wildlife Strategy)
- Developing recommendations to improve The City's biodiversity communications, awareness and citizen science work
- Engaging City business units to identify ways to advance biodiversity awareness and positive actions
- Reviewing potential local partnerships to engage public in biodiversity, private property conservation measures and related research

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

Through its Terms of Reference, the specific responsibilities of the Committee include advising Council on integrating biodiversity objectives into policies and programs as part of The City's operations, citizen outreach and community development. It is also mandated to collaborate

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with researchers and institutions to advance innovation in conserving Calgary's biodiversity, as well as ensuring appropriate City of Calgary staff, Council, communities and local businesses have access to information to advance actions supported by the biodiversity strategic plan and The Durban Commitment: Local Governments for Biodiversity.

### **Strategic Alignment**

The Committee is mandated through its Terms of Reference to provide Council and Administration with strategic advice on the Council-adopted biodiversity policy.

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

The mandate of the Committee encompasses acting on the biodiversity strategic plan, which contains four principles that capture the social, environmental and economic accounting objectives expressed by Council. Biodiversity conservation has been connected to contributing to a collective sense of history and improving social inclusion for peoples. Conserving lands provides recreational opportunities for Calgarians, as well as contributing to environmental and human health. These areas also add important sites to Calgary's park system, which economically benefits The City through desirable neighbourhoods.

### **Financial Capacity**

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

The Committee's draft work plan does not impact current or future operating budgets.

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

The Committee's draft work plan does not impact current or future capital budgets.

### **Risk Assessment**

Risk is mitigated through the Committee's mandate to act on the Council-adopted 10-year biodiversity strategic plan. The Committee's first work plan has clarity based on an understanding of City of Calgary biodiversity planning and management and The City's organizational structure and processes. Risk is further mitigated by open and transparent dialogue between public and staff Committee members and the plan for members to have outreach sessions with City business units.

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

The BiodiverCity Advisory Committee reports to the SPC on Community and Protective Services, and provides an annual progress report. In conjunction with other civic partner and Community Services annual progress reports, this report outlines the Committee's progress to date along with its 2017 work program, which establishes a reference for future reporting.

### **ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Committee Infographic (prepared by the BiodiverCity Advisory Committee)
2. Committee Skills Matrix
3. 2017 Committee Preliminary Work Plan (prepared by the BiodiverCity Advisory Committee)
4. Signed Durban Commitment