

Community Services Report to
SPC on Community and Protective Services
2018 December 05

ISC: UNRESTRICTED
CPS2018-1354

2018 BiodiverCity Advisory Committee Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The BiodiverCity Advisory Committee (the Committee) was established by Council in October 2015. As guided by its Terms of Reference, the Committee advances the commitments and procedures identified within the Council-adopted Biodiversity Policy (CSPS037). The Committee last reported to Council in May 2017. This report presents the Committee's 2018 work plan (Attachment 1) and an overview of work conducted from 2017 to present (Attachment 2). The Committee has pursued three categories of work: engaging stakeholders, communications, and reviewing City policies related to biodiversity. The outcome of this work has been to advance biodiversity awareness within the Corporation and to support Calgarians fostering more resilient, biologically diverse communities. Highlights include meetings with City of Calgary councillors, providing expert advice on biodiversity-related documents, and having biodiversity introduced as a survey question in the Calgary Foundation's Vital Signs report.

ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:

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

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SPC ON COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES, DATED 2018 DECEMBER 05:

That the Administration Recommendation contained in Report CPS2018-1354 be adopted.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY

On 2017 May 29, Council received the 2016 BiodiverCity Advisory Committee Annual Report for information (CPS2017-0421).

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.

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In the fall of 2016, Mayor Nenshi signed the Durban Commitment. 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 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 Committee has been pursuing three categories of work: engaging stakeholders, communications, and reviewing City policies related to biodiversity. The outcome of this work has been to advance biodiversity awareness within the Corporation and to support Calgary communities in fostering more resilient, biologically diverse open space. The Committee last reported to Council in May 2017. The 2017 work plan was presented at that meeting.

2018 work plan

The Committee is actively engaged in advancing its role as an Advisory Committee to Council. Since its formation in 2015, the Committee has been engaged in working with Administration and learning as much as possible about City policies, processes and procedures and how environmental matters such as biodiversity are integrated into City business. This work will continue to evolve in 2019, in particular with the learnings acquired from the meetings with members of Council. The 2018 Committee work plan is included as Attachment 1.

Highlights of the work plan include meetings with City of Calgary councillors, providing expert input on biodiversity-related documents, and having biodiversity introduced as a survey question in the Calgary Foundation’s Vital Signs report. A complete summary of the work and outcomes is included as Attachment 2.

Councillor meetings

The committee held meetings with members of Council to gain insight into the needs for biodiversity identified by councillors and their constituents. The objective was for the Committee to better understand what is required to support biodiversity awareness and conservation to inform future actions in the Committee’s work plan.

The Committee recognised that it should continue a dialogue with members to Council to best understand how it could assist in building awareness and understanding some of the issues pertaining to biodiversity. Councillors provided key actions for Committee members to consider, which informed future work.

Expert advice

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The Committee was involved in two key areas of work intended to advance the BiodiverCity Strategy and increase biodiversity in Calgary. The BiodiverCity Action Plan provides a structure for work planning to meet the commitment of The City of Calgary's BiodiverCity Strategic Plan. It outlines how The City is to achieve biodiversity conservation outcomes through the execution of biodiversity programs and initiatives. It establishes program targets, work plans, decision-making tools, and a method to monitor implementation progress using indicators. The Committee drove elements of the project to ensure appropriate performance measures are in place for the biodiversity program.

The other key area of work was reviewing The City's restoration target. One of the three performance measures identified in the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan is to restore 20 percent of Calgary's current open space to increase biodiversity. Habitat restoration is a type of land management activity intending to recover a degraded habitat to initiate or accelerate its succession towards a habitat with increased biodiversity such as replacing turf grass with native grasses and wildflowers. Restoration is considered cost-effective recognizing that the initial cost to restore land will be recouped via decreased ongoing management costs. The Committee has been pushing for increased restoration projects in Calgary.

Vital Signs report

The Calgary Foundation produces an annual Vital Signs report on the qualities of life important to Calgarians. The Committee worked with the Foundation to add a biodiversity measure to this report. As a component of the Environment section, a question on biodiversity was added: Are you familiar with the term "biodiversity"? The result were:

- 67% were familiar with the term (25% very familiar; 42% familiar)
- 33% had never heard of or were unsure of the term (24% heard of but unsure what it is; 9% never heard of it)

The survey identified there could be a language barrier to understanding the term biodiversity. Additionally, almost three quarters (72%) of Calgarians under 35 are familiar with the term versus 63% of Calgarians that are 35 years or older. Eighty-five per cent of students are familiar with the term biodiversity.

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 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. The Committee's work is aligned with One Calgary and fits within the *Healthy and Green City* Citizen Priority. Committee work also aligns with the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan.

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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 contributes to a collective sense of history and improving social inclusion for citizens. 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. 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. This report outlines the Committee's 2018 work.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Attachment 1 – 2018 BiodiverCity Advisory Committee work plan
2. Attachment 2 – BiodiverCity Advisory Committee – Overview of Activities and Outcomes