



CITY OF ST. ALBERT ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUNDER

TITLE: Sturgeon River Valley and Natural Areas Protection Policy

On December 11, 2017 Councillor Hughes provided notice in accordance with Section 23 of Procedure Bylaw 22/2016 that she intended to bring forward the proposed motion below.

In order for Council to debate the motion, the motion must be formally moved.

PROPOSED MOTION(S):

..recommendation

That Administration develop a policy and conservation plan that protects the river valley area, other natural areas, and protects parkland by xx, 20xx.

BACKGROUND:

The City's Municipal Development Plan Bylaw contains policies related to the protection and conservation of the Sturgeon River Valley, Carrot Creek Greenway, natural areas and parks and open spaces. The Land Use Bylaw also contains regulations on approved uses within the Sturgeon River and Carrot Creek floodplains as well as public park spaces.

The protection of the river valley, natural areas and parkland is closely linked to the City's ability to acquire these lands during the development process. The City can claim environmental and municipal reserve lands at the area structure plan stage of development, but these lands are rarely sufficient to protect all environmental sensitive areas within the river valley or other natural areas. The City may also purchase or expropriate lands or impose restrictive development set back rules.

In addition to the policies within the City's Municipal Development Plan Bylaw, there are also several master or management reports that contain recommendations or guidance on the protection, conservation and management of the river valley, natural areas and parks including:

- Environmental Master Plan (2014)
- City of St. Albert Natural Areas Assessment (2015)
- City of St. Albert Natural Area Conservation and Management Plan (2015)
- State of the Sturgeon River Watershed Report (2012)
- River Edge Enhancement Plan Updated Report (2011)

- Red Willow Park Master Plan (1999)
- Red Willow Park West Master Plan (2003)
- Red Willow Park West Master Plan Update (currently being undertaken)
- Urban Forest Management Plan (2017)
- Grey Nuns White Spruce Forest Recommended Management Plan (2014)
- Guidelines for the Protection of Natural Areas in Timberlea Neighbourhood (2007)

To develop an overall strategy and accompanying policies that would protect the river valley area, other natural areas and parkland Administration would recommend that a 12 – 18-month process be undertaken that would include:

- A review of all existing City policies or guidelines
- A review of policies and best management practices from other Alberta and Canadian municipalities
- A draft report including recommendations for potential new policies, standards or guidelines
- Public Participation to gather input from the community and other stakeholders
- A final report with recommendations and an implementation plan

This report would require a cross-departmental team including Environment, Planning and Development, Public Works and Recreation and Parks and others. As the river valley and natural areas are utilized for a variety of activities, careful consideration in the integration of competing interests would be required.

Administration estimates that a study of this scope would cost approximately \$150,000 and could be submitted as a business case for the 2019-2021 budget process. If the business case was approved a final report would likely be completed in Q1 2020.

Alternatively, Administration could include an high-level overview of existing policies related to the conservation and protection of the river valley, other natural areas and parkland in the update of the Municipal Development Plan, if funded, in 2019 – 2020.

Ultimately, the policy recommendations of either study should be incorporated into the next update of the City's Municipal Development Plan.

Report Date: January 29, 2018
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 Committee/Department: Environment
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