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## BiodiverCity Advisory Committee

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### MANDATE

To provide Council and Administration with strategic advice on matters affecting urban biodiversity in The City of Calgary and advance the commitments and procedures identified within *Our BiodiverCity, Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan (2015-2025)*, The Durban Commitment: Local Governments for Biodiversity, and the Climate Strategy.

### COMPOSITION

15 Members:

- 10 Public Members (including 1 youth)
- 5 Administration

### ANNUAL UPDATE & KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Biodiversity is critical to Calgary's continued growth and resilience. Protecting and promoting biodiversity supports the City's recently approved Climate Strategy - Pathways to 2050 and associated targets, the new Connect: Calgary Parks Plan (coming in 2024) and the core indicators in the Municipal Development Plan.

This past year the BiodiverCity Advisory Committee updated our terms of reference, specifically around communication with Council, to better support the critical importance of biodiversity to the City in the face of climate change, local population growth, and global species extinction. We also added a youth representative to the committee to add focus to the future impacts of the City's current actions.

Our responsibilities include linking biodiversity to the City's related policies, such as:

- climate change
- sustainable development
- strong neighbourhoods
- community resilience
- human wellness

This year's report focuses on five themes: climate change, environmentally sensitive areas, open spaces restoration, ecoliteracy, and the 10-year BiodiverCity Strategic Plan. For more details see Attachment A: Key Areas of Concern and Accomplishments as well as Attachment B: The City of Calgary BiodiverCity Awards for the Calgary Youth Science Fair.

The BiodiverCity Advisory Committee applauds Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2021 and the adoption of the Climate and Environmental Management Plan and Budget for 2023 to 2026.



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Calgary is losing Environmentally Sensitive Areas at an alarming rate although the City appears to be gaining momentum in protecting these important areas. ESAs provide important ecosystem services such as flood and drought mitigation and biodiversity. Restoration of open areas through naturalization cannot totally replace natural areas once they have been developed.

Ambitious targets are in place to restore Calgary's open spaces. Habitat restoration is proceeding but these targets will not likely be met.

In 2022, the City acted on advice from the committee to proclaim the International Day of Biological Diversity in May and also to engage citizens in choosing a City Bird: the Black-capped Chickadee. Ecoliteracy leads to an engaged public who will support City efforts to increase biodiversity.

*Our BiodiverCity, Calgary's 10-year biodiversity strategic plan* continues to be relevant and the City has made great strides to meet its intent. However, the measures of success will need to be evaluated at the end of 2025, and unfortunately, we will be falling short of expectations in some areas. A new strategic plan will need to be developed soon.

### **CHALLENGES**

The BiodiverCity Advisory Committee aims to strengthen communication with City Council. Participation by Councillors and their assistants has been much appreciated as it provided an opportunity to discuss their specific questions and concerns and to hear their advice. Councillors are welcome to join our meetings and committee members would be happy to meet with them at other times.

Given that other city advisory committees have mandates that overlap with ours, e.g., climate change and strong neighbourhoods, we are planning to initiate collaboration.

### **WORKPLAN FOR THE NEXT YEAR**

See Attachment C: BiodiverCity Advisory Committee Work Plan 2023 – 2024.

### **OPERATIONS**

Number of Meetings: Eleven monthly meetings (no meeting in August) were held in 2022, including a work planning meeting in February and a tour of the Bioengineering Demonstration and Education Site along the Bow River in September.

Meeting Format: Our first post-COVID in-person hybrid meeting was held in November 2022. Meetings from 2020, 2021 and 2022 had been held in MS Teams. The public has been



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welcome to join meetings in person or on MS Teams and there was one member of the public who participated in several meetings. Committee alumni participated in the September meeting at the Bioengineering Demonstration and Education Site. Other than for this field trip there were no perceived barriers to participation. City councillors have joined some of our meetings as have some of their assistants.

Committee meetings consist of presentations by City administration staff, or by outside experts, on topics related to biodiversity and the City's progress in meeting the goals of the BiodiverCity Strategic Plan. The Committee discusses what the City could do to move forward with increasing biodiversity and has offered advice to Council in the form of information emails.

See Attachment D: Presentations to BiodiverCity Advisory Committee in 2022 and Committee Recommendations.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Key Areas of Concern and Accomplishments

Attachment B: The City of Calgary BiodiverCity Awards for the Calgary Youth Science Fair

Attachment C: BiodiverCity Advisory Committee Work Plan 2023 – 2024

Attachment D: Presentations to BiodiverCity Advisory Committee in 2022 and Committee Recommendations