

Project Charter

Natural Connections Solutions Working Group

Office of Natural Areas
February 2007

Project Summary

The Office of Natural Areas is seeking departmental representation for a Solutions Working Group which will be responsible for advising the Office of Natural Areas on the development of strategic actions for *Natural Connections*, an integrated natural areas conservation plan for the City. Goals and outcomes have already been identified for the Conservation Plan by both the Office and key stakeholders, through a public engagement process held in the fall of 2006. The Office feels that this next phase of the project is best articulated by those departments and branches that will be responsible for aspects of the Plan's implementation – Parks, Drainage Services, Planning and Development, Transportation, the Office of the Environment and Emergency Services. The Working Group will meet once a month for the next three months (February, March and April), with a target project completion date of May 1, 2007. The focus will be on articulating in the form of "strategic actions" the best way for the City to achieve identified Plan outcomes. The reason for the aggressive timeline is that we are aiming to have the Conservation Plan approved prior to election time this fall.

Project Background

Until recently, Edmonton's natural areas have been addressed under two separate City of Edmonton guiding documents: the River Valley and Ravine System natural areas under the *River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan* (ARP) and the Table Land natural areas under Policy C467, *Conservation in Edmonton's Table Lands*. The Office of Natural Areas is currently coordinating the development of an integrated natural areas conservation plan, entitled *Natural Connections*, that will see Edmonton's natural area network considered under a common framework. The development of the Conservation Plan involves three steps:

1. the completion of a **State of Natural Areas Report**, which updated the Office's natural area inventory map and identified a natural area network for Edmonton (completed in Nov. 2006);
2. the articulation of a **Conservation Vision**, developed through a public consultation process held in the fall of 2006 (almost complete); and
3. the development of an **Implementation Plan**, which will outline desired outcomes, strategic actions, roles, responsibilities and timelines for moving forward on the protection of Edmonton's natural areas (to be developed in 2007).

With the first two stages nearly complete, we are moving into the development of the Implementation Plan. We have identified three high-level goals for the City of Edmonton as concerns natural area protection:

- ENGAGE the Community.
- SECURE a Functioning Ecological Network.
- MANAGE Edmonton's Ecological Network.

Based on input we obtained from internal and external stakeholders through the public consultation process, as well as feedback we will be seeking from the Natural Areas Advisory Committee in the coming months, we are in the process of compiling a number of outcomes we and others would like to see achieved through the implementation of *Natural Connections*. The next step is to bring together the City of Edmonton departments that deal with natural areas in some way – Drainage, Parks, Planning, Office of Environment and Transportation – to formulate the strategic actions required to meet those outcomes. This Project Charter has been developed as a working framework for that project, and the project was endorsed by the Natural Areas Policy Implementation Committee in January of this year.

We would like to see the Implementation Plan complete by May 1, 2007. We recognize the aggressiveness of this timeline, but it is critical that the Conservation Plan be completed by early May so that it can be circulated to management and go to Council early in the summer, prior to election time this fall. If we do not meet this deadline, the Plan is not likely to be in place before early 2008. Given the unprecedented development pressures we are experiencing, the subsequent rapid loss of natural areas and rising land prices, we do not feel the City can afford the delay.

Project Purpose

To obtain the support of all civic departments for a City of Edmonton Natural Areas Conservation Plan that...

- provides clear direction;
- addresses departmental needs; and

- of which implementation is feasible given departmental capacities
... by May 1, 2007.

Project Goals

The primary goals of this project are to:

- Bring together representatives of key City of Edmonton departments to participate in a discussion about how best to secure, protect and manage a natural areas network for Edmonton, how to educate Edmontonians about the value of such a system, and how to engage them in its protection;
- Use representatives' time effectively, ensuring that discussion stays on-topic and that all have an equal opportunity to contribute; and
- Remain focused on solutions rather than dwell on past approaches that have not been effective.

Project Description

The project will involve:

- The establishment of a Solutions Working Group, including representation of each department (in some cases 2 representatives will be identified for each department – planning/operations; see Org. Chart for detail), to be facilitated by an independent consultant and managed by the Office of Natural Areas
- 3 or 4 *solution-oriented* Working Group meetings, ongoing discussion and the sharing of information and concerns related to the development of the Natural Areas Conservation Plan
- Review of Conservation Plan documents prior to Working Group meetings
- Working collaboratively and supportively as a group to ensure that any department-specific concerns are addressed in the Plan
- Achieving inter-departmental alignment on Conservation Plan structure and content, including the articulation of roles, responsibilities, timelines and budgetary estimates

Benefits to Departments and Branches

Our goal in inviting departmental representatives to assist us in this work is to see that *Natural Connections* is not simply a product of the Office of Natural Areas, which has limited capacity to see conservation goals achieved, but of the City as a whole. We hope that project participants will take ownership for the development of the Conservation Plan, and will work hard to see that their departments' needs and concerns are addressed.

There are many benefits to departments and branches working together in this way. Not only will a Conservation Plan built collaboratively better serve the needs of all involved in the protection and management of natural areas – it is an opportunity to address past concerns and improve the City's approach to planning for, acquiring, protecting, managing and educating the community about Edmonton's natural areas. It will strengthen working relationships between departments, help to clarify current roles and responsibilities, and determine whether an alternate approach might be more effective. Finally, it will ensure the completion of a *shared* conservation framework that outlines each department's contribution to the protection of a functional ecological network.

Points of Contact

Project Sponsor: Bill Burn, AMPW General Manager
Project Manager: Grant Pearsell, Natural Areas Coordinator
Project Facilitator: Mike Evans, Teleologic Strategic Communications Inc.

Project Scope

- Discussion will be limited to the Conservation Plan and related documents, with a focus on articulating an intent and direction that is acceptable to all civic departments
- Meeting outcomes to be identified at project outset, and a facilitator will ensure group stays on-task at each meeting
- Department representatives will be asked to commit 4 hours per month to the project (2 hours for meeting; 2 hours for preparation, coordination of departmental communication, etc.)

Project Timeline/Outcomes

- Project duration: Feb. 5 – Apr. 30 , 2007

Feb. 5 Week – project initiation: circulation of existing Conservation Plan documents for review

Feb. 12 Week – Working Group (WG) Meeting #1:

- Review of circulated *Framework Document* and key outcomes
- List of department concerns to be addressed (based on Internal Stakeholder Workshop minutes)

Mar. 5 Week – facilitator circulates Meeting #1 outcomes to WG Members, WG Members circulate to department contacts, coordinate feedback and send responses to Facilitator

Mar. 12 Week – Working Group Meeting #2

- Articulation of Plan Objectives (based on ONA Strategic Direction documents) and Outcomes

Apr. 9 Week – facilitator circulates Meeting #2 outcomes to WG Members, WG Members circulate to department contacts, coordinate feedback and send responses to Facilitator

Apr. 16 Week – Working Group Meeting #3

- Articulation of Roles/Responsibilities, Timelines and Budgetary Estimates

Apr. 30 Week – facilitator circulates Meeting #3 outcomes to WG Members, WG Members circulate to department contacts, coordinate feedback and send responses to Facilitator

May 1 – project end date: Conservation Plan complete and supported by all departments

Product

A completed Natural Areas Conservation Plan, including a Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, Goals, Strategic Actions, Outcomes, Roles & Responsibilities, Timelines and Budgetary Estimates, that is supported by relevant civic departments.

Team Members

Facilitator: Mike Evans Teleologic Strategic Communications

Grant Pearsell	Office of Natural Areas
Doug Kirchner	Parks Operations
Rob Marchak	Parks Planning
Tim Ford	Planning & Development
Garth Clyburn	Environmental Planning
Gary Woloshniuk	Office of the Environment
Don Pilling	Community Services (Fire Rescue)
Douwe Vanderwel	Drainage Services (Planning)
Wendy Brockbank	Drainage Services (Operations)
TBD	Transportation Planning
TBD	Transportation (Operations)

Roles and Responsibilities

Project Manager

- Initiates contact with Working Group members, ensures fair representation of all departments on Working Group
- Calls meetings, prepares and circulates agendas and minutes

Project Facilitator

- Facilitates Working Group meetings
- Keeps Working Group on task and adhering to proposed timeline
- Assembles and circulates products after each meeting
- Coordinates communication with Working Group members and compiles department feedback for discussion at meetings

Working Group Members

- Attend meetings prepared and ready to participate
- Represent their respective departments, ensuring that those they are representing (Department Contacts) have had an opportunity to review and provide feedback on documents, to the extent that this is reasonable and appropriate

Department Contacts

- Review documents circulated to them by Working Group Member, discuss with colleagues as appropriate, and respond to Working Group Member with feedback in a timely manner

Project Organizational Chart

