

Legacy Lands

Date of Approval by Council: 02/20/07

Resolution No.: 105/2007

Lead Role: Chief Commissioner

Replaces: N/A

Last Review Date: August 25, 2011

Next Review Date: 08/2014

Administrative Responsibility: Planning and Development Services

Special Notes:

The Strategic Plan is Strathcona County's principal guiding document for governance, community development and service delivery. Based on the Strategic Plan, this policy affects the goals of two capstone policies. One goal of the Community Sustainability Capstone Policy is to minimize the impact of human activity and development on the natural environment through the identification, preservation and protection of natural features and through encouraging development initiatives that demonstrate the wise and best use of land. One goal of the Resource Management Capstone Policy is to maximize the sustainability of infrastructure through long range planning for open space development.

Policy Statement

Strathcona County shall have in place a framework for the identification and acquisition of land with the goal to use the best available conservation science to protect areas of essential biological diversity and to provide a network of linkages across Strathcona County. The conservation of natural resources will create a legacy of places of importance to Strathcona County for the benefit of its present and future generations.

Definitions

- D1 Conservation – the planning, management and implementation of an activity with the objective of protecting the essential physical, chemical and biological characteristics of the environment against degradation.
- D2 Legacy Lands – land purchased specifically for its natural resources to be conserved and managed for long term protection.
- D3 Legacy Lands Program Report – means the report, available from Planning and Development Services, that implements this policy and that may be refined as new information becomes available.
- D4 Natural Area – places in the natural environment.

Guidelines

- G1 The framework for assessment, acquisition and management of these lands is outlined in the most current Legacy Lands Program Report.

Procedures

P1 Purpose

The purpose of the Legacy Lands Program is to guide Strathcona County in the acquisition, development, management and programming of significant lands with natural value that will be added to the County's green infrastructure for conservation. Specific assessment criteria, management requirements and acquisition procedures are provided in the most current Legacy Lands Program Report for Strathcona County.

P2 Roles and Responsibilities

1. Strathcona County administration, typically representatives of Engineering & Environmental Planning, Planning & Development Services, and Recreation, Parks & Culture Departments are responsible for receiving and recommending potential Legacy Land acquisitions, based on the criteria set out in the Legacy Lands Program Report.
2. The Coordinators of Environmental & Open Space Planning and Land Management Services are responsible for assessing and presenting potential Legacy Land purchases to Executive Team and Council, as required.
3. The Coordinator of Land Management Services is responsible for negotiating the land purchase; budgeting for land acquisitions through the capital budgeting process; and maintaining accurate and complete records of all Legacy Lands that are acquired pursuant to this policy.
4. The Environmental & Open Space Planning Branch is responsible for identifying capital improvements required for Legacy Lands, specifically, trails, signage, etc.
5. In consultation with the Environmental & Open Space Planning Branch, the Coordinators of the Land Management Services, Outdoor Recreation Services and Agricultural Services Branches are responsible for management and programming of Legacy Lands, when required.

P3 Selecting and Prioritizing Legacy Land

1. Natural Areas are assessed by size, species, habitat, ecological function, biodiversity, landscape, connectivity, geology, scientific potential, aesthetics, location, development pressure, economic viability, and management requirements. Potential Legacy Lands are evaluated based on ecological content, biodiversity, special features, relative location and ecological function. Assessment and evaluation must be completed by a qualified professional (Professional Biologist, Professional Agrologist, etc.). A model to prioritize Natural Areas according to their ecological significance is available in the most current Legacy Lands Program Report. The goal is to expand existing conservation areas, particularly wildlife corridors, and buffers and linkages between municipally, provincially and federally protected lands.
2. Conservation tools are also available during the land development process. These tools are used to acquire natural resources as per the Municipal Government Act and Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act and include Municipal Reserve and Environmental Reserve dedication and Conservation Easement dedication.

P4 Legacy Land Acquisition

1. The process of purchasing a parcel of land as a Legacy Land site may be initiated by a request from a property owner, special interest group, the public, Council or Municipal Administration.
2. Once a request is on file, Strathcona County administration shall undertake a review of the merits of the site in question, examine the site, and research available historical data. Strathcona County shall liaise with the owner of the site from the outset, as the assessment of any potential Legacy Lands property is best accomplished with the full cooperation and agreement of the current property owner.

3. If Strathcona County administration is satisfied that a site is worthy of purchase, they shall forward a report to Council outlining the merits and the results of discussions or negotiations with the property owner and any other interested parties. The purchase process will be initiated by the Land Management Services Branch of the Planning and Development Services Department.

4. Funding is available under the Legacy Land Program for the acquisition of significant lands, as defined in the Legacy Lands Program Report. Lands are to be purchased and added to the inventory of public lands, to protect them for future generations and provide access and enjoyment for all.

P5 Legacy Land Development

The lands purchased through this process will be held in a natural state to the greatest extent possible. If the possibility arises for some type of recreational development, the need will be assessed. Since the primary objective is natural resource conservation, any development will be limited to trails and interpretive signage in order to provide or enhance programming opportunities. This type of development will also allow Strathcona County to control access by recreational users. Each Legacy Land site will be assessed on its own conservation merits. Development potential will be determined using the best available conservation science.

P6 Legacy Land Management

The lands purchased through this process will be held in a natural state to the greatest extent possible. Management will follow a site specific management plan, developed as per the most current Legacy Lands Program Report. In the event that previous land use consisted of agricultural activities, haying for example, the merit and sustainability of continued agricultural activities will be determined within a site specific management plan.

P7 Legacy Land Programming

If and when Legacy Lands are developed for recreational use, programming may be provided on a limited scale. Natural interpretation opportunities will be the focus, with all programming to be determined using the best available conservation science.