# Environmental Advisory Committee
# Annual Report - 2010
# to
# St. Albert City Council

## 1. RECOMMENDATION

That the Environmental Advisory Committee's 2010 Annual Report be accepted as information and that the Environmental Advisory Committee continue to operate through 2011.

## 2. OVERVIEW

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) was established through Bylaw 29/2005 to advise Council on issues related to the environment. The purpose of the Committee is to assist City Administration and advise Council with respect to environmental policies, strategies and initiatives, especially where a public perspective is desirable. The Committee membership was adjusted through an amendment to Bylaw 29/2005 and currently includes six citizens at large and one member of council as voting members, and a representative of Alberta Environment, a representative of the Alberta Health Services and one representative from a post secondary institution as non-voting participants.

Direction and assistance to the EAC were obtained through involvement of the City's Office of the Environment (OE).

Council provided the EAC with six priorities for 2010:

i. Sturgeon River Report – Terms of Reference, Watershed Based Information
ii. Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Target Setting
iii. Solid Waste Management Improvements – Automation/Toters/Organics
iv. Wildlife Guidelines
v. SmartGrowth – Revised Plan
vi. Sturgeon River Sedimentation Review – Sediment Control, Beautification

## 3. MEMBERSHIP

Citizen Members - January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| • Wes Brodhead[§] | Citizen-at-large | Last of two year term |
| • Jason Cooke[*] | Citizen-at-large | Last of two year term |
| • Carole Newton[**] | Citizen-at-large | Last of two year term |
| • Merv Rogan | Citizen-at-large | First of two year term |
| • Neill Thompson | Citizen-at-large | First of two year term |
| • Bryan Watson | Citizen-at-large | First of two year term |

[*] continued as Chair
[**] served as Vice-Chair from January 28
[§] resigned from the committee due to election as Councillor for the City of St. Albert, November 1, 2010; no immediate replacement was sought to fill the vacancy

Non-Voting Participants - January 1, 2010 through December 31, 2010

- Rasel Hossain — Alberta Environment
- Ludmilla Rodriguez — Alberta Health Services
- Wendy Vanderwel — Post-Secondary

Council Representation

Carol Watamaniuk continued as the Council representative, and Len Bracko continued as the alternate through October, 2010. Beginning November 8, 2010, Cathy Heron served as the Council representative and Malcolm Parker served as the alternate.

City Administration Representation

Committee assistance was obtained from Leah Jackson and Meghan Myers of the Office of the Environment. Rachel Vincent and Linda Kuprys of Legislative Services recorded the minutes of the meetings and provided advice on legislative matters and protocol.

## 4. ACTIVITIES DURING 2010

The Environmental Advisory Committee met eight times during 2010, meeting monthly except in July, August and December. Due to problems establishing quorum, the February meeting was rescheduled to March 4, 2010 and the June meeting was cancelled by the Chair. A sub-committee of the EAC met with Council at the City's annual board meetings in September. No other meetings of the full committee with Council or the Senior Leadership Team were deemed necessary. The Chair (J. Cooke) met with the Mayor, Council's EAC representative (Councillor Watamaniuk) and members of City Administration to establish Council's six priorities for the EAC in 2010. Various sub-committees of the EAC met with City Administration during the year to work on specific issues.

Progress Made on Council's Six Priorities for the EAC in 2010

i) Sturgeon River Report – Terms of Reference, Watershed Based Information

A sub-committee of the EAC (B. Watson (chair), C. Newton and N. Thompson) met with representatives from City Administration to discuss various issues relating to the Terms of Reference for the Sturgeon River Report.

The sub-committee recommended a statement to be included with Administration's agenda report to Council; the statement was ratified at the EAC's March 25 meeting. A copy is provided in Appendix I and was received by Council at its April 26, 2010 meeting.

*Relevant Motions:*

(EAC12-2010) Moved by B. Watson

That the position statement prepared by the Sturgeon River Sub-committee be approved for inclusion in the agenda report when the final draft of the Terms of Reference for a State of the Sturgeon River Watershed Report returns to Council on April 26, 2010.

CARRIED

ii) Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Target Setting

The full committee participated in a workshop to provide input to the consultants who were preparing the *Greenhouse Gas Inventory Forecast and Targets Project* report for the City. Review and discussion of the draft report followed.

The Chair agreed to draft a statement capturing the EAC's opinions and advice on the report's contents. The statement was ratified at the EAC's October 28 meeting. A copy is provided in Appendix II and was received by Council at its November 15, 2010 meeting. The Chair attended the Council meeting and provided an oral statement that mirrored the written submission.

*Relevant Motions:*

(EAC27-2010) Moved by B. Watson

That the draft EAC advisory document entitled Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Forecast and Targets dated October 28, 2010 be approved for presentation to Council on November 15.

CARRIED

iii) Solid Waste Management Improvements – Automation/Toters/Organics

Throughout 2010, the standing sub-committee (J. Cooke and M. Rogan) reviewed the City's ongoing changes to its Solid Waste Management Plan and provided input through meetings with representatives from City Administration.

The sub-committee recommended a statement to be included with Administration's agenda report to Council; the statement is provided in Appendix III and was received by Council at its June 28, 2010 meeting. The Chair attended the Council meeting and provided an oral statement on the subject. (As the regularly scheduled EAC June meeting was cancelled, consensus was reached by electronic communication).

iv) Wildlife Guidelines

A sub-committee of the EAC (W. Vanderwel (Chair), W. Brodhead, M. Rogan) met with representatives from City Administration; also at the meeting was past EAC member C. De La Mare who had been invited given that such guidelines fall well within his area of expertise.

The sub-committee presented a statement that was endorsed by the full committee at the EAC's April 22 meeting. The report was included in an agenda report for Council at its June 7 meeting, and is summarized in Appendix IV.

*Relevant Motions:*

(EAC16-2010) Moved by M. Rogan

That the draft of the Human-Wildlife Conflict Management Guidelines, and the position statement prepared by the Wildlife Guidelines Sub-committee, be ratified, subject to some minor potential revisions pending further review.

CARRIED

v) SmartGrowth – Revised Plan

After receiving two presentations on Smart Growth from City Administration in 2009 and receiving information on the revised Smart Growth hybrid, the sub-committee (C. Newton (Chair), M. Rogan) was tasked with formulating a statement to capture the EAC's position on the Smart Growth initiative. Given the complexities of the issue, the sub-committee elected to focus on the how Smart Growth relates to sustainable communities and meets the goals of the Environmental Master Plan; additionally, focus was placed on identifying the committee's concerns with the proposal to build a light industrial park immediately adjacent to the environmentally sensitive Carrot Creek area.

The sub-committee drafted a statement and prepared a PowerPoint presentation for Council; both were ratified at the EAC's March 25 meeting. The statement (provided in Appendix V) and presentation (provided in Appendix VI) by Vice-Chair C. Newton were received by Council at Council's April 6, 2010 meeting.

*Relevant Motions:*

(EAC11-2010) Moved by M. Rogan

That the position statement and PowerPoint presentation prepared by the Smart Growth Subcommittee be approved, subject to minor revisions as discussed, for submission to Council on April 6, 2010.

CARRIED

vi) Sturgeon River Sedimentation Review – Sediment Control, Beautification

A sub-committee of the EAC (C. Newton (Chair), N. Thompson, B. Watson) met with City Administration to discuss the Hydrocarbon Grit Interceptor (HCGI) Retrofit Analysis, which was to go before Council on April 26.

The sub-committee drafted a statement that was endorsed by the full committee at the EAC's April 22, 2010 meeting. The statement was included in the agenda report for Council, and is summarized in Appendix VII.

Environmental Initiatives Grant Program

In addition to the six priorities identified by Council for 2010, the EAC continued with its other major function, namely reviewing applications submitted under the City's Environmental Initiatives Grant Program (EIGP) and providing funding recommendations to Council. One intake of applications were received for the EIGP in in accordance with existing Council policy.

*Relevant Motions:*

(EAC30-2010) Moved by C. Newton

That the Environmental Advisory Committee recommend to Council that the following Environmental Initiatives Grants be awarded:

| | |
|---|---|
| River Edge Enhancement Project (REEP) – to assist with program evaluation, updating the REEP Report and purchase of trees and shrubs for 2011 planting | $5,000.00 |
| St. Albert United Church – to assist with installation of a solar panel system on the church building | $12,500.00 |
| Albert Lacombe School - From Seed to Salad or Soup program | $683.25 |
| Big Lake Environment Support Society (BLESS) – support for Clean Up the Sturgeon event, including biodegradable garbage bags and advertising | $1,500.00 |
| Bellerose Composite High School EcoAction Club – to purchase 150 native plants for a naturalization project to commemorate St. Albert's 150th Anniversary | $925.00 |
| St. Albert Christmas Bird Count Committee – for 2010 Bird Count | $350.00 |
| St. Albert Catholic Church – St. Albert Parish – to support the initiation of a community garden on church property | $4,998.00 |
| TOTAL | **$25,956.25** |

CARRIED

EAC Sub-Committees During 2010 (Other Than Council Priorities)

The following sub-committees were either struck during 2010 or continued work that began in 2009 on subjects other than the priorities set by Council

Solid Waste Management Communications Plan (J. Cooke, M. Rogan)
Three-Spined Stickleback Issue (W. Brodhead, C. Newton, M. Rogan)

Following the announcement in 2009 of the City's intention to treat the Riel ponds with rotenone to eliminate the invasive, non-indigenous three-spined stickleback fish species, a sub-committee was formed to further investigate the issue and to address concerns that had been voiced by EAC committee members. The sub-committee met with representatives of City Administration in January, 2010 and drafted a letter to Council (provided in Appendix VII). The content of the letter was ratified by the EAC at its March 4, 2010 meeting and was delivered to the Mayor (to distribute to Council) shortly thereafter.

*Relevant Motions:*

(EAC7-2010) Moved by M. Rogan

That the letter prepared by the Three-Spined Stickleback Subcommittee be approved, with the addition of a request for a response, and submitted to Council.

Other Issues Before the EAC in 2010

- Worked with the Office of the Environment to establish a work-plan to schedule and manage the committee's activities in 2010;
- Received information on the City's progress towards achieving the goals set in the Environmental Master Plan (2010);

- Received quarterly reports from the Office of the Environment on e-mail correspondence from residents on topics of environmental relevance;
- Received presentations from the public relating to Environmental Initiatives Grant Program (EIGP) applications and additionally received a follow-up presentation made by St. Albert High School students reporting their findings on biodiversity of the Sturgeon River (using equipment obtained in part from EIGP funding);
- Received a presentation from Jim Hole on the environmental initiatives being undertaken in the construction of the new Holes' Enjoy Centre;
- Received a presentation from David Bromley of Rampart/Avenir Developments on the environmentally relevant aspects of the proposed Avenir development in the City's northwest;
- Discussed possible EAC priorities for 2011 with Council at the annual boards meeting in September; EAC proposed priorities were: Continued involvement in Solid Waste Management plan (targeting commercial/construction is the next step); continued involvement with river issues generally, coordination and discussion with SAEDAC specifically; prioritizing alternative commuter transportation options that may already exist within the Transportation Master Plan (e.g., dedicated bike, pedestrian routes between Edmonton and St. Albert; addressing commuter traffic into west Edmonton); continued input on sustainable urban development (whatever plan the City chooses to go forward with); involvement in natural areas plans (existing natural areas and remediating current parks).

## 5. YEAR 2011 EAC ACTIVITIES

In 2011, it is anticipated that the Environmental Advisory Committee will continue to provide input and advice as requested from Council especially related to issues where public consultation is necessary. The EAC anticipates that it will continue to work closely with the Office of the Environment in evaluating the City's progress towards achieving the stated targets and goals for the Environmental Master Plan (2009).

In addition to the above, issues, topics and other needs that may require specific involvement of the EAC could include, but are not limited to:

- Assessment of grant applications on behalf of Council for the Environmental Initiatives Grants Program;
- Work on the priorities that are identified by Council;
- Continued involvement in the City of St. Albert's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan;
- Continued participation in the communications plan for the revisions made to the City's Solid Waste Management Plan;
- Continued work on issues relating to the health of the Sturgeon River generally;
- Liaison with City departments on matters of environmental importance.

## 6. CONGRATULATIONS EXTENDED TO CITY

The Environment Advisory Committee wishes to congratulate the City on its innovative programs that encourage citizen participation in environmental responsibility as exemplified through implementation of the Environmental Initiatives Grant Program. Efforts to openly involve and encourage public input and involvement in improving our environment must be applauded.

## Appendix I – Written Advice Submitted to Council
## Sturgeon River Report – Terms of Reference

The EAC reviewed and provided input to the development of the Terms of Reference for a State of the Sturgeon River Watershed Report. As written, the Terms of Reference includes the key relevant objectives and critical baseline inventory topics outlined in the Handbook for State of the Watershed Reporting (2009). The Terms of Reference will provide an effective starting point to what will undoubtedly become a "living" document, to be referred to and enhanced upon as relevant watershed issues emerge over time. The EAC will continue to work closely with the Office of the Environment in developing the State of the Sturgeon River Watershed Report and encourages the facilitation of citizen involvement in both data collection and stewardship programs.

**Appendix II – Written Advice and Presentation Made to Council**
**Greenhouse Gas Inventory Forecast and Targets Project**

October 28, 2010

# Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory Forecast and Targets

Earlier this year, the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) received information and provided input to Stantec Engineering, who drafted the City of St. Albert Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory Forecast and Targets Project.

The EAC has reviewed the resulting report and has the following advice for Council:

- Overall, the EAC recommends that Council adopt the report and that it be used as a strategic vehicle to encourage energy conservation by the corporation of the City of St. Albert and by the community. This advice is consistent with the goals expressed within the Environmental Master Plan (EMP), and the connection described there between energy conservation and reducing GHG emissions.

- The report understandably contains a fair quantity of background information on the science and politics of climate change. The EAC does not consider itself to be in a position to comment on this aspect of the report, and recommends that future communication plans similarly decline to reference this material. Rather, the EAC encourages Council to instruct administration to focus on the more tangible subject of energy conservation, which is more directly relevant to residents' everyday lives. In brief terms, the message should be that the GHG inventory is a tool that is very useful in determining how well the City of St. Albert utilizes energy efficiency measures to reduce its reliance on fossil fuel-based energy sources.

- The EAC believes that the various reduction targets expressed within the report are reasonable and achievable. Furthermore, the EAC applauds the inclusion of visionary targets, as these should be viewed as goals to strive for once the more pragmatic reduction targets have been achieved. The EAC believes that the Corporate GHG reduction targets are aggressive, and will serve as an excellent example for the community to follow.

- The EAC believes that multiple approaches are necessary to meet the reduction targets described in the report. All means described in the report (regulation, financial incentive, non-financial incentive and outreach) should be contemplated and, providing they do not provide an unreasonable financial encumbrance to residents, publicly-funded operations or businesses, implemented as necessary to achieve the stated goals. Emphasis should be placed on seeking the maximum return in energy efficiency (and thereby greatest reduction in GHG emissions) for public money that is spent on the various programs that are foreseen in the report. Equally, any regulatory considerations should aim to maximize return in energy efficiency for the least financial obligation to the community.

- Despite the EAC's discomfort with the use of climate change as the primary motivation for encouraging GHG reductions when communicating with the public, we encourage the City's continued participation in programs such as Partners for

Climate Protection (PCP) and the use of appropriate language and justification that is necessary to obtain needed grant funding to achieve the goals described in the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory Forecast and Targets Project and the Environmental Master Plan.

June 23, 2010

# Solid Waste Automated Curb Side Collection & Organic and Yard Waste Automated Curb Side Collection

*Recommendation*

The EAC believes that **a fully automated garbage collection system complemented by curb side organic waste collection is the best method for the City to achieve the goals set by the Environmental Master Plan**, and recommends that Council approve the plans proposed by Administration to implement both systems concurrently. The EAC further recommends that **public education continue to be a priority**, and is willing to continue to work with City staff on developing its education/communication plan.

The EAC cautions that the public's perception of the proposed changes will depend in large part on finances, and recommends that communication plans be developed to address the cost/benefit issue, particularly in the context of services provided to other municipalities in the Capital region and how a "status quo" approach will end up costing more than it does now. The EAC also suggests that the communication plan specifically target how residents can potentially save money under the new system by embracing the diversion of organics in their households and thereby reduce their subscription level for the remaining landfill refuse. Finally, the EAC recommends that special attention be paid to the transition period, particularly educating residents on how unused garbage bag stickers will be treated or how they can continue to be used once the new automated cart system is in place.

*Background*

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) has been involved with the review of the City of St. Albert's Solid Waste Management System since January, 2008. The EAC has provided two prior written recommendations to Council on this subject:

- Overview of Solid Waste Management Systems Review and advice on the report's recommendations (received by Council January 5, 2009).
- Advice on the issue of whether to move immediately to biweekly garbage and/or blue bag recycling collection (received by Council October 26, 2009).

The City of St. Albert's Environmental Master Plan (EMP) contains a goal to reduce residential waste to 125 kg per person by 2020 and to improve solid waste diversion to 65% by 2020. In 2009, these numbers were 184 kg refuse per person and 41% waste diverted. While good progress is being made, each target requires significant action in the next decade. Environmentally, the City and its residents have an obligation to reduce the amount of waste that reaches the landfill and to recycle or reuse as much material as possible – separation and composting of organic waste is therefore a crucial element of responsible solid waste management.

**Appendix III – Written Advice Submitted to Council**
**Solid Waste Management Improvements – Automated/Toters/Organic**

The City of St. Albert's Solid Waste Management Systems Review (January, 2009) recommended that the City move to a fully automated waste collection program by 2011, and that organics be targeted as the priority material for curb side collection. In its original advice to Council (January 2009), the EAC agreed with the recommendation to proceed with plans to move to a fully automated waste collection program, but felt that the organics collection program should begin with the immediate curb side collection of yard waste and transition to full organics collection at a later date. In October 2009, the EAC reiterated that curb side collection of organic yard waste should be the next interim improvement made in the City's solid waste management system, and that a decision on biweekly collection of garbage should be deferred until a fully automated refuse collection system was implemented. To date, the suggested curb side yard waste collection program has not been introduced, and likely will not be put in place for the remainder of 2010.

The EAC understands that a decision to change to automated garbage collection needs to be taken at the same time as a decision to collect curb side organic waste – maximum efficiency will be achieved by biweekly garbage collection, but this can only be done if curb side organic collection is implemented at the same time. The EAC recognizes that its original advice given in 2009 must now be modified to reflect that the opportunity for an "interim curb side organic yard waste collection program" has passed, and that it is no longer a viable option to collect organic yard waste only.

Overall, the EAC agrees with Administration's analysis suggesting that the best approach is a City-operated biweekly refuse collection system and a contracted curb side organic waste collection system that operates weekly mid-April to mid-October and biweekly for the remainder of the year. As different sizes of carts will be available at different subscription levels, the plan remains faithful to the City's successful Pay-As-You-Throw philosophy, and offers an incentive for residents to reduce overall waste production.

May 5, 2010

# Human-Wildlife Conflict Management Guidelines for St. Albert

The City of St. Albert is blessed with over 900 hectares of parks and natural areas within its boundaries, as well as being "embraced" by Lois Hole Centennial Park and Big Lake on the west and River Lot 56 Natural area to the east. Intrinsic to these natural areas are resident wildlife populations that offer many aesthetic, educational and ecological benefits to residents of St. Albert. Occasionally, however, conflicts can develop between residents and wildlife which need to be addressed.

Following problems with crows and magpies experienced by St. Albert residents during the summer of 2009, Council passed a motion on September 8, 2009 mandating Administration to prepare guidelines relative to "matters of wildlife within the City limits." These guidelines were to be prepared with input from the Environmental Advisory Committee, and were to include specific reference to crows and magpies. Simultaneously, the existing beaver policy and any other existing wildlife policies were to be reviewed and revised as deemed appropriate.

In response to this motion, Administration has drafted *Human-Wildlife Conflict Management Guidelines for St. Albert*, which have now been reviewed and revised by a subcommittee of the Environmental Advisory Committee and an Environmental Consultant. This document is to be incorporated into the *Integrated Pest Management Plan* (IPM) for the City, which was originally intended to include management of weeds and insects only. Both the *Environmental Master Plan* and the *Parks and Open Spaces Management Plan* have identified the need for an IPM for St. Albert. With the incorporation of this new document therefore, the IPM will now oversee management of problem weeds, insects, and wildlife.

These *Human-Wildlife Conflict Management Guidelines* apply only to wild urban species of animals and birds, and not domesticated animals. The intent is to manage conflicts between human and wildlife populations while still allowing native fauna to flourish within the city's urban wildlife habitats. To address every wild species within St. Albert would be an overwhelming task: therefore these guidelines focus on species that historically have caused problems for city residents. Thus, in addition to provincially declared "pests" and "nuisances", the guidelines also address potential problems caused by Crows, Red Foxes, Porcupines, Beavers, Moose, Deer, and Canada Geese.

In 2007 the City developed Beaver Management Guidelines, and these have been reviewed and approved by the subcommittee in the preparation of this document, together with the addendum covering Beaver Management in the Carrot Creek area.

It is important to note that public education and scientific integrity will be important components of the implementation of these guidelines, and that they will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as new issues arise and management techniques become available.

Our federal and provincial governments already have strong legislation in place that regulates the management of wildlife, but there is still more to be done at the municipal level. These guidelines are an important first step in this process. **The Environmental Advisory Committee therefore recommends that Council approve and endorse the guidelines as received.**

March 31, 2010

# Hybrid Smart Growth Plan

Urban development impacts the environment through loss of productive agricultural land, increases in traffic congestion and its affect on water & air quality. To address future urban impacts in the Northwest Lands, the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), in principle, supports most of the seven Essential Elements of St. Albert's Hybrid Smart Growth plan.

St. Albert's ecological footprint, at ~11.7 ha/person, is almost 40% higher than Canada's average of 7.8 ha. Continued growth in the manner of the past few decades will only worsen this situation. Conversely, implementing Smart Growth principles will reduce the amount of land and natural resources required for development, thereby reducing our ecological footprint.

The proposed modified grid street system utilizes better connectivity for improved traffic movement, using streets as corridors for a range of transportation options, building residential neighbourhoods with a smaller footprint and implementing transit oriented development (TOD). By establishing pedestrian facilities, both the street oriented and large format commercial developments lend themselves to improved walkability, lower energy consumption, through reduced vehicular traffic, and more efficient land use. These elements also endorse the Environmental Master Plan's goal of preserving the quality of land, air & water with a corresponding reduction in non-renewable energy consumption and green house gas emissions.

The EAC supports the location and philosophy of TOD. While not indicated at this stage, the EAC strongly encourages that allowances be made for increased commuter vehicle parking to enhance the convenience of transit use. Existing TOD locations have a parking deficiency with the consequence that commuters either park in non-designated areas or commute to work in their vehicle, defeating the intent of the TOD.

Despite the potential positive results that the Hybrid Smart Growth concept may have for achieving goals under the Environmental Master Plan, the EAC is categorically opposed to the designation of the lands immediately to the east of Carrot Creek for a light industrial park.

Carrot Creek and the immediately adjacent lands are among the most environmentally significant in the recently annexed area and is the prime natural feature of the Northwest Lands. Consequently, any development of the Carrot Creek area should be carried out in a way to cherish and protect this natural heritage – something that is not achieved by a light industrial park, no matter how well designed. In addition, the industrial park's presence discourages appropriate development opportunities that would preserve the natural area along the west side of Carrot Creek. Given the above, the EAC cannot fully endorse the Hybrid Smart Growth until a more prudent plan is developed for this area.

The EAC is keenly aware of the need for light industrial development somewhere within the annexed lands in order to help St. Albert achieve its business and economic development goals. Our opposition is not meant to cast a negative light on business owners and operators, as the vast majority are progressively minded and environmentally conscious. Indeed, the EAC is supportive of the business community and the City's other master plans, but strongly believes that a light industrial park should be situated more appropriately. For example, a smaller light industrial park could be situated immediately adjacent to Ray Gibbon Drive but with a protective corridor, possibly of residential-zoned land complemented by enhanced environmental reserve, between it and Carrot Creek. Additionally, a light industrial park could be considered for the northeast part of the Northwest Lands, adjacent to land zoned for large format commercial, to maintain a sufficient industrial land base to achieve the desired 80/20 tax split goal.

St. Albert's green spaces and parks system continue to contribute to a high quality of life and are a key part of the City's character. The Northwest Lands contain many sensitive and natural features that perform important ecological and hydrological functions. Smart Growth ensures that natural landscape features are preserved, with park space separated by streets rather than buildings, to provide the public with better access and enjoyment. It is recommended that set back areas around the Villeneuve Road storm water pond, landfills and dormant pit be incorporated in plans as park and outdoor recreation locations.

Overall, the EAC agrees the Hybrid Smart Growth plan achieves most of the intended goals to lessen the impact of urban growth and encourages these comments be considered during planning. However, the EAC is unable to fully endorse the Hybrid Smart Growth concept until the existing plans for a light industrial park, immediately adjacent to Carrot Creek, are appropriately revised.

**Appendix VI – Environmental Advisory Committee Presentation**
**Input to Council - Hybrid Smart Growth Initiative**

# The City of St. Albert Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)

Input to Council
Hybrid Smart Growth Initiative

April 6th, 2010

1

## It's Our City, Let's Build it Together

- Encouraging input from community stakeholders through a public consultation process is an effective strategy when planning urban development.
- The EAC would like to thank the City of St. Albert for the opportunity to share its perspective on Smart Growth.
- Complex environmental, social and economic considerations arise when analyzing Smart Growth principles, making this a complex discussion.
- As such, the input provided by the EAC will focus on the challenges and opportunities related to achieving sustainable urban growth while minimizing the negative impacts of growth and development on our

2

## Sustainable Urban Development

- Many cities are recognizing the implication of unchecked growth and see the need for a more sustainable way of developing and managing urban areas.
- As St. Albert continues to grow, our aim is to achieve a city that is environmentally responsible, healthy, economically viable, and well-designed for people and Smart Growth can be used to achieve this aim.
- Regional direction from the Capital Region Board (CRB) promotes sustainable urban growth and the CRB's *Land Use Plan* has incorporated Smart Growth principles as a strategy to "manage growth and minimize footprint".

3

## Environmental Master Plan (EMP)

- As a strategic document, the EMP is an action plan which sets out specific goals and objectives to address key environmental issues and serves as the basis for future environmental plans and initiatives that will improve the City of St. Albert's overall environmental performance.
- Smart Growth addresses many of the Air, Land and Water goals identified in the EMP.
  - Promote Sustainable Urban Development
  - Preserve and Manage Trees, Parks and Natural Areas
  - Reduce Non-Renewable Energy Consumption and Greenhouse Gas Emissions
  - Maintain Air Quality
  - Protect and Maintain the Sturgeon River Watershed

4

## Support for Elements of Smart Growth

- The EAC, in principle, supports most of the seven Essential Elements of St. Albert's Hybrid Smart Growth plan, for the Northwest Lands.
- Implementing Smart Growth principles will reduce the amount of land and natural resources required for development, thereby reducing the ecological footprint of St. Albert residents.
  - St. Albert's ecological footprint is approximately 11.7 hectares/person, which is almost 40% higher than Canada's average ecological footprint (7.8 hectares).

5

## Element 1: Modified Grid Street System

- Designing neighbourhoods that are more connected provides opportunities for more direct, and therefore more efficient, travel for vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and transit.
- Shorter and more direct walking and cycling distances, encourages people to use these other forms of transportation, thus reducing our dependency on personal vehicles and reducing our carbon footprint.
- With shorter travel times, and more route options there is a reduction in congestion and pollution.
- This is linked to EMP Goal of reducing non-renewable energy consumption & greenhouse gas emissions.

6

## Element 2: Street Corridors

- Streets do more than move traffic, they should work with the adjacent buildings and the activities in them and along the street corridor, to shape the character, function and livability of areas.
- Form-based zoning considers a range of different street corridors and matches building types to appropriate streetscapes to help create a logical and effective public realm for a diverse group of users.
- A range of different street corridors, will move traffic efficiently but also allow for a variety of other activities and modes of transportation.

7

## Element 3: Residential Neighbourhoods

- Maximizing the use of land used for development helps provide environmental benefits.
- Smart Growth principles increase residential densities and provide guidance through form-based zoning regulations to ensure design and density are combined to create vibrant and accessible neighbourhoods with increased walkability and improved safety.
- Increased densities can reduce infrastructure duplication by sharing and spreading costs and environmental impact across more households.

8

## Element 4: Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) & Neighbourhood Centres

- Smart Growth is fundamentally linked to key strategies outlined in the City's Transportation Master Plan through TOD & neighbourhood centers that promote transit use.
- Integrating TOD into urban design will support higher densities and mixed land use in designated areas, particularly in proximity to transit facilities and services.
- Decreasing the number of vehicle trips and distances travelled while making biking, walking and transit easier to use, at least some of the time, reduces non-renewable energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

9

## Element 5: Commercial (Large-format & Street Oriented)

- Smart Growth planning should serve to create a vibrant system of public spaces which include plazas, markets, parks, transit and civic spaces which can be catalysts for business development.
- These commercial/business zones will naturally integrate with high and medium density residential development and should be within walking distance of low density residential areas.
- A common misconception is that Smart Growth does not seek to eliminate traditional low density residential dwellings nor to mix low density residential with commercial/business areas.

10

## Element 6: Industrial Park

- The EAC is aware of the need for light industrial development somewhere within the annexed lands in order to help St. Albert achieve its business and economic development goals.
- However, the EAC is **categorically opposed** to the designation of the lands immediately to the east of Carrot Creek for a light industrial park.
- Carrot Creek and the immediately adjacent lands are among the most environmentally significant in the recently annexed area and is the prime natural feature of the Northwest Lands.

11

## Loss of natural areas due to urbanization

- The annexed lands contain many natural features, including tree stands, shelterbelts, wetlands, ravines, and riverine systems which provide essential habitat for native plants and animals.
- These areas perform many important ecological and hydrological functions, particularly wetlands and riparian areas which provide flood attenuation and increase water quality in the Sturgeon River Watershed.
- Preserving natural areas also provides aesthetic and educational attractions in addition to increased property values.

12

## Element 7: Parks

- St. Albert's green spaces continue to be the most frequently mentioned factor contributing to a high quality of life in St. Albert.
- One of the main principles of Smart Growth is that natural landscape features are preserved and enhanced.
- Smart Growth strategies of increased densities reduce land consumption, allowing greater protection of open space, farmland and natural areas.

13

## Summary

- The EAC agrees that the Hybrid Smart Growth approach to planning and development can help to address many of the impacts of increased urban growth facing municipalities today through its policies of higher-density and mixed-use developments, improved transit systems, reduced dependence on vehicles and the preservation of natural areas.
- However, the EAC will not be able to fully endorse the proposed Hybrid Smart Growth plan until plans to build a light industrial park adjacent to Carrot Creek are appropriately revised.

14

April 26, 2010

# Hydrocarbon Grit Interceptor Retrofit Analysis Recommendation

**The EAC has reviewed the Hydrocarbon Grit Interceptor Retrofit Analysis and endorses these measures as integral to assisting St. Albert in meeting its' Environmental Master Plan goal to protect and maintain the Sturgeon River Watershed.**

In order to reduce further sedimentation in the river, the design and construction of sediment control structures such as Hydrocarbon Grit Interceptors (HCGI's) will need to be a multi-year process requiring secure funding. In addition to long term capital expenditures for HCGI's there needs to be adequate operational and maintenance budgets in order to ensure the viability of the strategy. Likewise, both the Storm Water Master Plan (2004) and the Erosion and Sediment Control Study (update 2010), should be aligned with the State of the Sturgeon River Watershed Report as part of the long term goal to protect and maintain the ecological health of the Sturgeon River.

As part of this endorsement, the EAC would like to offer further rationale to support both at-source and end-of-pipe control measures that could benefit the health of the Sturgeon River. Although HCGI's are considered a key strategy, end-of-pipe concepts will not accomplish complete control measures and reduce all contaminants in the river. This has to be complemented with at-source controls to be most effective. Unless the City employs at-source initiatives, in combination with HCGI's, it will be difficult to effectively address the long term aquatic health of the river.

Besides grit/sediment, which can be physically removed, there are other contaminants of concern in storm water that cannot be effectively treated by a grit interceptor structure (i.e. nutrients and bacteria). These types of contaminants originate from many non-point sources, both within and outside the City, and need to be dealt with differently. It is important to seek public involvement and increase awareness among residents, commercial and industrial sectors in order to change behaviours and reduce the discharge of non-point source contaminants (i.e. dog feces, lawn fertilizers and pesticides).

As the City of St. Albert continues to expand, a proactive approach will be needed to reduce future impacts on the Sturgeon River. This will require a change in thinking and re-evaluation of existing policies. Incorporating additional solutions such as Low Impact Development (reduction in impervious surfaces, encouraging green roofs and rain gardens) should be combined with sediment control measures. Our local climate is also changing and lower precipitation levels will likely further reduce river flows and require even more stringent at-source contaminant controls to maintain water quality.

# Appendix VIII – Written Advice Submitted to Council
# Three Spined Stickleback Issue

## Communication from the Environmental Advisory Committee

March 11, 2010

To Mayor Crouse & Councillors:

**RE: Three Spined Stickleback, Riel Pond Treatment**

**The Issue**

The City has made an application to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to treat Riel Pond with rotenone. The stated goal is to rid Riel Pond of the Three Spined Stickleback (3SSB) minnow, an invasive species that is not natural to the Sturgeon River and its surrounding waterways

The removal of 3SSB from Riel Pond has been mandated by the DFO in connection to approvals issued during the construction of Ray Gibbon Drive. The City's current solution, employing fine screens to prevent 3SSB from leaving Riel Pond, is considered to be an encumbrance on maintenance staff and is preventing Riel Pond from correctly functioning as a storm-water management facility.

**Basis for EAC Communication with Council**

The Bylaw governing the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) states, in part, that the EAC's purpose is to provide "a vehicle for the flow of strategic advice and expert information between and among the public, City administration and Council, with an ongoing focus on best practices" and to "facilitate the public perspective on how particular environmental issues impact the community and other City plans".

Following this mandate, **the EAC has concerns with the rationale for treating Riel Pond with rotenone**. The EAC has been briefed on this issue several times by the Office of the Environment (OE), and a sub-committee of the EAC has met with the OE to further discuss the issue.

**The EAC's Objection to the Planned Action**

Simply put, the EAC finds the DFO's stance on the presence of 3SSB in Riel Pond to be illogical and its requirement to control or eradicate the species within Riel Pond to be contradictory to the established presence of 3SSB in the Sturgeon River and other storm-water ponds in the greater Edmonton area. The EAC appreciates that Riel Pond needs to function correctly as a storm-water management facility, but considers the planned action to be disproportionate to achieving this result.

Additional specific concerns are:

- Rotenone will not selectively target 3SSB, but will rather eliminate all fish species from the pond and will additionally prove toxic to a substantial percentage of the remaining aquatic life;
- The DFO has not stated what will constitute effective removal of 3SSB from Riel Pond (*i.e.*, what type of measurement will be considered to be an acceptable result that would allow the City to remove the fine screens that are impeding the function of Riel Pond as a storm-water management facility);

## Communication from the Environmental Advisory Committee

- The OE plans to undertake a fish count in the spring, but it is not clear whether the fish count could be used as evidence that the purported 3SSB problem is not as large as it may appear (a recent fish count undertaken by a resident found only 0.2% of the fish in Riel Pond to be 3SSB);

- In communication with the OE, the DFO has apparently stated that once the City has demonstrated Riel Pond to be free of 3SSB, there would be no further requirement to reapply rotenone if 3SSB subsequently re-inhabited the pond – this is a clear inconsistency which begs the question of why the existing 3SSB need to be eradicated in the first place.

**Summary**

The planned application of rotenone to remove such a small quantity of 3SSB from Riel Pond is a drastic solution and may not achieve the desired outcome. It will result in the elimination of essentially all fish plus other aquatic life in Riel Pond, despite the fact that 3SSB already occur unimpeded in adjacent water bodies and presumably would re-inhabit Riel Pond at some point in the future.

St. Albert is well known for its tree lined streets, parks, green spaces and the largest Farmer's Market in Western Canada as well as its proximity to Lois Hole Provincial Park. St. Albert is currently pursuing a Botanical Brand theme with St. Albert's promise stating: "As Alberta's Botanic Arts City, St. Albert truly embodies a sustainable living philosophy" with "the meaningful theme of Cultivate Life". This laudable initiative is highly endorsed by you as well as the EAC and residents.

However, the harsh action described above contradicts the City's initiative to "Cultivate Life" and is contrary to the branding we are portraying to the public at large. The EAC respectively suggests that Council instruct City Administration to refrain from applying rotenone until the contradictory stance taken by the DFO has been clarified, specifically what would constitute acceptable 3SSB removal levels while keeping in context their unimpeded presence in other water bodies in the greater Edmonton area.

We appreciate Council's attention to this matter and look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

Jason Cooke, Chair

Carole Newton, Vice-Chair

for the Environmental Advisory Committee