

## Northeast Swale and Small Swale Boundary Delineation Process

### ISSUE

Administration is providing a report outlining a process for delineation for the boundaries of the Northeast Swale and the Small Swale.

### BACKGROUND

At the June 7, 2021 Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services (Committee), the following was resolved:

“That Administration report back as soon as possible to the appropriate Committee with a detailed process and timeline for the delineation of the NE swale north boundary and small swale boundary to provide more certainty in the concept planning process.”

Past reports related to this were provided to the March 13, 2017 meeting of the Committee, regarding the potential for Special Conservation Area designation (see Appendix 1) as well as a report to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee regarding heritage considerations related to the Swale (see Appendix 2). A third report at that same meeting provided a summary of responses and discussions related to a number of points identified by the Northeast Swale Watchers.

### CURRENT STATUS

With the exception of Petturson’s Ravine, the City of Saskatoon (City) is the sole landowner of the Swale lands within City limits. Within City limits, Meewasin’s Conservation Zone includes the majority of the Swale lands and over time, Meewasin intends to seek an expansion of their jurisdiction to include all of these lands. All improvements on lands within the Conservation Zone are subject to Meewasin’s Development Review process and, ultimately, require approval of the Meewasin Board. This ensures that all development is consistent with Meewasin’s conservation, education and development goals, as defined by its plans and guidelines.

All development in the area of the Northeast Swale and Small Swale must be consistent with the University Heights Sector Plan, as well as the Northeast Swale Development Guidelines, which were jointly adopted by the City and Meewasin. Both documents identify the Northeast Swale as a significant environmental feature.

As part of their work on a Concept Plan for the University Heights Neighbourhood #3 (UH3) area, Saskatoon Land had a Natural Area Screening completed for the UH3 area. The Screening includes the north boundary of the Northeast Swale and the entire Small Swale. This document was shared publicly at an open house event on June 21, 2021.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

### Development Framework

All developments in new greenfield areas in Saskatoon, including the area around the Northeast Swale and Small Swale, must be brought forward as part of a Concept Plan. Under existing processes, the following steps will be completed through the development and approval phases of the concept plan for the UH3 area:

1. **Analysis and Concept Plan Preparation (Current Phase)**  
Analysis that occurs as part of the Concept Plan includes land use, transportation, servicing, parks and open space, as well as existing conditions, including natural features. A Concept Plan provides an overall plan based on the analysis of each of these elements and outlines how they will be considered as part of the development of an area.

The analysis of natural features included within a Concept Plan area occurs through a Natural Area Screening. As part of a Concept Plan application, developers are required to submit a Natural Area Screening. This provides the analysis of existing conditions, including natural features (i.e. existing flora and fauna communities).

In the case of the UH3 area, the scope for the Natural Area Screening study was reviewed by a committee that included staff from Planning and Development, Sustainability and Meewasin, prior to the developer proceeding to hire a professional consultant to complete the Screening. The Screening was completed and is being reviewed by Administration and Meewasin. The information provided through the Screening will be reviewed to confirm if it is sufficient for City Administration to accept the Screening as completed and appropriate for inclusion as part of the Concept Plan submission.

The typical process has been for a Natural Area Screening to be submitted at the time of the Concept Plan application, but it may be submitted prior. Submitting it earlier provides the opportunity for Administration to confirm general boundaries or other parameters ahead of the Concept Plan itself being complete. This could result in more predictability through the Concept Plan design and approvals process, while also providing the opportunity to conserve natural areas or assets further ahead of development occurring.

2. **Concept Plan Approval**  
The process for approval of a Concept Plan includes public engagement through an open house (or other appropriate engagement), as well as presentations at the Municipal Planning Commission and the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services, followed by a public hearing at City Council.

In addition to approval through the City, as per Meewasin's Northeast Policy (2015), Concept Plans are also subject to approval by Meewasin prior to implementation. During this approval, Meewasin considers aspects that will impact the Conservation Zone such as transportation circulation and access,

impact on natural areas, infrastructure crossing, roadway interface, and drainage and slope stability.

### 3. Area Development

Following approval of the Concept Plan, subdivision of individual portions or phases of the Concept Plan area can occur. This includes both land for development (i.e. residential lots, roads and parks), as well as conservation areas and other areas that are not permitted to be developed. This process ensures that the detailed analysis and planning is completed and incorporated into the approved plan and occurs prior to delineation of sites and land development. The required dedication of specific lands, such as Municipal Reserve, Environmental Reserve, etc., occurs at this stage. It is important to note that when land is required to be dedicated, it is provided to the City at no cost.

This same process is used for any subdivision within a new development area, meaning that no subdivision or development can occur until the Concept Plan is approved. The process ensures that an appropriate review and analysis of any new development occurs, which acts to protect areas like the swales from ad hoc development.

In summary, under current practices, the north edge of the Northeast Swale, as well as the boundaries of the Small Swale, would be identified in the Concept Plan, based on the information in the Natural Area Screening; however, the formal delineation and creation of legal parcels for both swales would be completed at a later date as part of the phased subdivision for that area.

### Potential to Delineate the Swales in Advance of Development

Outside of the current Concept Plan process outlined above, a process for the delineation of natural areas ahead of development does not currently exist. In connection with work identified through the Green Infrastructure Strategy, a process for identification and recognition of priority natural areas ahead of development is intended to be undertaken. This is anticipated to occur through the Natural Areas Management – Pilots and Policy Development capital project which is proposed for 2022.

If delineation were to occur ahead of development, there may be a need for land acquisition or some other form of compensation or negotiations with landowners. In addition, there would be costs associated with the specific delineation through a formal survey and subdivision process.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Unless otherwise directed, Administration will follow the existing development process, which includes awaiting the submission of a Concept Plan for the UH3 area.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Meewasin Valley Authority Northeast Swale – Special Conservation Area Designation
2. Northeast Swale – Heritage Considerations

**REPORT APPROVAL**

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