

City of Saskatoon Natural Area Policy Framework: Tools Summary

Tools and Process Overview

Based on Administration's review of policies, bylaws, regulations and tools from other Canadian municipalities, the following list of eight tools were determined as appropriate for use in Saskatchewan and warranted further exploration in the context of Saskatoon:

Tool / Process	Development Process Stage	Intent
Natural Area Policy	All	To provide specific direction for how natural areas are considered in Saskatoon. It would refine current direction on what processes are required, who they apply to, the authority in which those processes are reviewed and approved as well as the timing for which those processes take place.
Natural Area Screening Improvements	Sector Plan, Concept Plan, Building & Development Permits	To formalize the existing natural area screening process into an administrative procedure and review opportunities for collecting additional field data earlier in the development process, in order to better understand the ecological services and condition, prior to making significant design decisions for the area.
Natural Areas Mapping and Prioritization Tool	Sector Plan, Concept Plan	Using existing inventories and studies, a natural area mapping and prioritization tool would formalize a process for consolidating information, from previous studies and future Natural Area Screenings, into a single resource for internal and external stakeholders to use in identifying priority natural areas and their implications early in the development process. This would not be a map deciding where all final natural areas will be after development; rather, it would be a map showing which significant natural areas the natural area policy and subsequent decision-making process and evaluation tools would apply to and prioritize.
Administrative Procedures	All	For the tools outlined in the framework, an administrative procedure may be required to provide a consistent approach for reviewing, updating and managing these documents; how to circulate plans and applications to the appropriate subject matter experts; as well as expectations for documenting work and updating our inventories, mapping and databases.
Heritage Property Designation	Sector, Concept and Building & Development Permits	Council Policy C10-020, the Civic Heritage Policy , under Section 4.5, allows for the designation of natural heritage, paleontological and archaeological sites. While the policy allows the City of Saskatoon (City) to pursue municipal heritage designation for areas of significant natural heritage, the Heritage Program is currently focused on built heritage. Program updates could be made to provide more support to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee and City Administration in consideration of natural areas as heritage properties.

Tool / Processes	Development Process Stage	Intent
Design and Development Standards	Concept Plan, Detailed Design and Subdivision, Building & Development Permits	To develop specific, technical standards for design and development of natural areas and development adjacent to those natural areas, standards can be established as a minimum requirement for various development applications to adhere to.
Zoning Tools	Building & Development Permits	Zoning tools regulate development on private property and, where appropriate, can potentially be used to support natural areas and conservation zones. More information is needed to determine what kinds of regulations would create development that is more complementary to, and supportive of, adjacent natural areas. Once these objectives are identified and it is determined they can be supported through development regulations, then the appropriate zoning tools can be identified.
Natural Areas Acquisition Fund	Outside of typical development process, exercise when development is not imminent.	When development is not imminent, but a significant natural area has been identified and determined to be at risk without intervention, a natural area acquisition fund could be a tool which exists outside of the typical development process. This tool requires establishment of a fund, specific for the purchasing of significant natural areas, as well as supporting criteria to guide purchases.

Identified Gaps

During engagements conducted by Administration, consistent themes emerged as gaps or opportunities for improvement. See Appendix 1 for a full list of the summary themes. The tools above have been identified with the intention of working to address the gaps brought forward by residents and stakeholders.

It is important to note the list of potential natural area tools for Saskatoon, provided in this appendix, is not an all-encompassing list of available tools to guide the identification, prioritization, conservation and management of natural areas. As the Natural Areas Policy Framework project continues, more tools may be identified, while others may be further refined. It is also important to note this summary did not focus on the management of natural areas. Management of natural areas is being addressed through an ongoing Natural Areas Management Plan Pilot Project, led by the Sustainability Department in the Utilities and Environment Division. Ongoing management, operational impacts and enforcement are vital components to ensuring the success of a Natural Areas Program.