



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

City of Toronto’s Migratory Bird Policies – Bird-Friendly Development Rating System and Acknowledgement Program

Date:	August 17, 2007
To:	Planning and Growth Management
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	pg070061

SUMMARY

This report is a response to direction from Council to develop a means of rating and acknowledging new or existing developments on their efforts to implement the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” that were presented to Council in April 2007.

Over the past four months City staff along with interested community partners and stakeholders drafted a “Bird-Friendly Development Rating System and Acknowledgement Program” for Council’s consideration. This rating system complements the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” by outlining what design options in the guidelines need to be incorporated into a new or existing development for it to be acknowledged as ‘bird-friendly’ by the City.

The report also presents to Council the latest initiative of the Migratory Bird Policies working group – “Birds of Toronto: A Guide to the Amazing World of Urban Birds”. This booklet will offer residents and visitors a comprehensive and attractive guide to opportunities to experience the wide variety of bird species in the City. It also will serve as a means of reconnecting people with ‘nature’ and raise awareness of the threats posed to biodiversity in Toronto. The report also charts direction for future work in this area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommend that:

1. Council adopt the Bird-Friendly Development Rating System and Acknowledgement Program in order to encourage the implementation of the Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines and help reduce the number of migratory bird deaths in the City;
2. the Executive Director of Facilities and Real Estate investigate the possibilities for implementing Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines to make City Hall ‘bird-friendly’ in order to demonstrate City leadership and commitment in this area; and,
3. Council receive the “Birds of Toronto: A Guide to the Remarkable World of Urban Birds” as a means of showcasing to residents and tourists the many opportunities to observe, appreciate and help protect the wide variety of bird species found in Toronto.

Financial Impact

These recommendations have no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year’s budget.

DECISION HISTORY

In March a report 2006 went before the Planning and Growth Management Committee titled “City of Toronto’s Migratory Bird Policies – Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines”. This report presented the progress made on the City’s migratory bird policies in 2006 and introduced the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” for Council’s consideration.

Included in this report was a recommendation that “The Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning develop a method for rating a building that implements the City’s “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” along with a means of acknowledging such efforts”. The Committee amended this recommendation by adding “and report back to the Planning and Growth Management Committee in September 2007”. The amended report was adopted by Council April 23 & 24, 2007. This report responds to this request.

1. Report to Planning and Growth Management Committee, March 29, 2007:
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-2405.pdf>
2. Decision Document of the March 29, 2007 Planning and Growth Management Committee:
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pg/decisions/2007-03-29-pg03-dd.pdf>

3. Amended Report adopted by Council, April 23 & 24, 2007:
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/pg/reports/2007-03-29-pg03-cr.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Urban areas and buildings in particular pose serious dangers to migrating birds. The City of Toronto, along with key community stakeholders, compiled a comprehensive list of strategies and options for mitigating these dangers in the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines”. Council subsequently directed staff to determine a means of defining and acknowledging a ‘bird-friendly’ building based on implementation of bird-friendly development strategies and options. This report presents the progress made on this issue thus far and recommends further action.

COMMENTS

Bird-Friendly Development Rating System and Acknowledgement Program

In April 23 & 24, 2007, Council adopted a report that contained the following recommendation:

that “the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning prepare a “Bird-Friendly Rating and Acknowledgement System” that will rate participating buildings on efforts to implement the Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines and publicly recognize these efforts.”

The City of Toronto is working to help prevent the needless deaths of migratory birds, many species of which are threatened and endangered, and thereby reduce the impact our urban area has on our surrounding ecosystems. In order to provide ‘bird-friendly’ design options for developers and building owners and managers, the City of Toronto produced the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” that can be implemented in a new or existing development to make it ‘bird-friendly’. These development guidelines outline strategies for reducing bird deaths and provide design options for engineering these strategies.

The “Bird-Friendly Development Rating System and Acknowledgement Program” complements the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” and will act as a tool for developers and building owners and managers to assist them in making their new and existing developments bird-friendly. The rating system outlines what design options need to be incorporated into a new or existing development in order for it to be acknowledged by the City of Toronto as being bird-friendly. The rating system was developed by a working group made up of developers, building owners and managers, bird advocacy groups, architects, other levels of government and City staff.

The rating system sets out an easy-to-understand method of determining what is required for a “Minimum”, “Preferred” and “Excellent” bird-friendly development. The rating system is cumulative in the sense by incorporating additional strategies it is possible to

achieve a “Preferred” or “Excellent” rating. However, all ratings – “Minimum”, “Preferred” and “Excellent” - are bird-friendly and will all be acknowledged by the City as such. A draft of the “Bird-Friendly Development Rating System and Acknowledgement Program” is attached.

Innovation is encouraged in the application and implementation of the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines”. Possibilities exist for developments to successfully address some objectives of City Planning’s Public Art Program through incorporating the Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines into a project at the design stage. Also, incorporating the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” may qualify a development for LEED ‘innovation’ credits. Finally, the Guidelines are a component of the City of Toronto’s Green Development Standard, which requires the “Minimum” of the “Bird-Friendly Development Rating System”.

Once a development has been verified by City staff as bird-friendly, building owners and managers may market their building as such. A letter from the City will be given to the property owner and building manager acknowledging the City’s appreciation for the steps taken to improve the environment for all who visit, work and live in Toronto. A bird-friendly designation may give these buildings a competitive advantage by identifying these features to a growing environmentally concerned and aware marketplace.

During the process of developing the “Bird-Friendly Development Rating and Acknowledgement Program”, it was pointed out by several members of the working group that to achieve broad buy-in from the development and building management community demonstration projects will likely be needed. If a new and an existing development were to implement the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” in a creative, attractive and reasonably affordable manner, then other developments would be sure to follow suit. With this in mind, it is recommended that the Director of Facilities and Real Estate investigate the possibilities for implementing “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” in City Hall, making it ‘bird-friendly’ to demonstrate City leadership and commitment in this area. To help achieve this, members of the working groups of outside experts who worked on the development of the “Bird-Friendly Development Guidelines” and the “Bird-Friendly Rating and Acknowledgement System” will offer support in this effort.

“Birds of Toronto: A Guide to the Remarkable World of Urban Birds”

City Planning and the Lights Out Toronto! (LOT!) stakeholders recently produced “Birds of Toronto – A Guide to the Remarkable World of Urban Birds”. The target audience are tourists and residents who are interested in birds but are not necessarily ‘birders’. As bird-watching is now the second most popular hobby in North America after gardening, “Birds of Toronto” will be a timely and useful tool for residents and tourists alike. The guide is designed to raise awareness of several issues: the diversity of birds that live and / or migrate through the city and GTA; the serious threats urbanized areas pose to migrating birds; the ongoing decline of the region’s migratory bird populations; how birds add to the overall biodiversity of the city and GTA; what one can do to improve

Toronto's environment for birds; where to see them and how to get there; and, present informative resources for parents, educators, students and policy-makers. The booklet will be distributed at civic centres, libraries, community centres, tourist kiosks, and the Toronto Zoo. Funding for this project is coming from Environment Canada. The cost of producing 40,000 copies of "Birds of Toronto" is approximately \$15k. A draft of "Birds of Toronto" is attached.

Biodiversity Strategy

One key issue that the "Birds of Toronto" guide makes clear is the need for City-led local research and policy concerning 'biodiversity'. Biodiversity is understood as the 'web of life' through which all species on earth are connected in complex and intricate ways. Ecological health has a correlation with biodiversity, the greater the biodiversity of a defined geographic area, the greater the ecological health of that area and more 'immune' it is to environmental crises.

The "Birds of Toronto" booklet could be viewed as the first in a "Biodiversity Series" that will serve as one way of re-connecting people of Toronto with 'nature' and raise awareness of the wide variety of life existing in the city. It will also inform the public of how serious the issue of biodiversity loss is, how it affects them directly and what they can do to help prevent it. The series could include: "Wildlife of Toronto", "Butterflies of Toronto", "Bees and Insects of Toronto", "Reptiles and Amphibians of Toronto", "Fish of Toronto", "Trees of Toronto", and "Wildflowers of Toronto". Funding will be sought from external sources and City staff will coordinate working groups for each booklet.

Local governments play a very significant role in developing and implementing policies that serve to counter the negative ecological impact of their urban areas and several cities around the world have already begun developing local strategies and policies for addressing biodiversity loss. These cities include: Barcelona, Spain; Bonn, Germany; Cape Town, South Africa; Johannesburg, South Africa; Durban, South Africa; Edmonton, Canada; Paris, France; Joondalup, Australia; King County, U.S.A; Leicester, England; London, England; Nagoya, Japan; São Paulo, Brazil; Seoul, South Korea; Tilburg, The Netherlands; Waitakere, New Zealand; Walvis Bay, Namibia; and, Zagreb Croatia.

Over the next 18 months a draft of a “Biodiversity Strategy for Toronto” will be prepared for Council’s consideration, which will involve concerned community stakeholders and appropriate City staff. It is anticipated that the strategy would be presented to Council in the spring of 2009, which would coincide well with the “2010 Biodiversity Target” adopted as part of the “Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity” in 2003 by Canada and the signatories of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. The goal of the 2010 Target is: to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level. The “Biodiversity Strategy for Toronto” will reflect the specific context of Toronto, set out the goal and objectives of the City’s biodiversity strategy and offer implementation options for such a strategy while taking into consideration the interests of all concerned stakeholders.

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Final draft of the Bird-Friendly Rating System and Acknowledgment Program

Attachment 2: Final draft of “Birds of Toronto: A Guide to the Remarkable World of Urban Birds”

* Attachments will be forwarded to Clerk’s directly.