



**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**  
**Planning Division**

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Planning Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	November 16, 2021
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Biodiversity Action Plan – Six-Month Update (PED21065(b)) (City Wide) <b>(Outstanding Business List Item)</b>
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Lauren Vraets (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2634
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Steve Robichaud Director, Planning and Chief Planner Planning and Economic Development Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That Report PED21065(a) Biodiversity Action Plan – Six-Month update, be received;
- (b) That Item 21(v) respecting a six-month update report on the progress of the Biodiversity Action Plan be considered complete and removed from the Planning Committee’s Outstanding Business List;
- (c) That Item 21(u) respecting the presentation of a draft funding Agreement between the City and the lead environmental organization be considered complete as per Report PED21065(a) presented in August of 2021 and be removed from the Planning Committee’s Outstanding Business List.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The term ‘biodiversity’ refers to the variety of life on earth. It includes all living things, such as bacteria, fungi, insects, plants, fish and wildlife, and humans. Biodiversity is the variety of living organisms that form an interconnected web of life that make up a healthy and resilient environment.

At a local and global scale biodiversity is in a state of decline. To protect and rehabilitate Hamilton’s unique biodiversity assets, a coordinated approach between the City of Hamilton and local community environmental partners has been adopted by the

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City of Hamilton. The Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) will assist in ensuring that there are clear goals and actionable strategies for protecting, enhancing and restoring biodiversity in Hamilton. Furthermore, the BAP will apply a forward-looking lens in terms of climate change implications for species in Hamilton and will seek to integrate actions through policies and programs across multiple City departments.

Report PED21065 – Feasibility Report for Biodiversity Action Plan was presented to the General Issues Committee (GIC) on April 7, 2021. Recommendation (f) from Report PED21065 directed Staff to provide an update to Committee/Council regarding the BAP in six months.

This Report (PED21065(b)) provides a project update of the BAP project as directed by Council.

**Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable**

**FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Financial: None

Staffing: None

Legal: None

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

An informal ad hoc working group consisting of representatives from Hamilton’s conservation community (Environment Hamilton, Hamilton Naturalists’ Club, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Bay Area Restoration Council, Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG)) met in the 2018-2021 time period to discuss the development of a biodiversity action plan to address the pressing concern of species and habitat biodiversity protection and enhancement.

On February 19, 2020, GIC passed a motion directing City staff to investigate the feasibility and resources required to develop a biodiversity action plan in collaboration with the conservation community.

The following is a brief summary of the progress of the BAP to date:

- April 7, 2021 – GIC approved Report PED21065 – Feasibility Report for a Biodiversity Action Plan;

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Actions:

- (1) Staff consulted with Legal staff to develop a draft Municipal Contribution Agreement for funding to the Hamilton Naturalists' Club;
  - (2) Planning Division and Communications Staff have provided in-kind resources towards graphic design and consultation for communications tools; and,
  - (3) Planning Division and Public Works staff continue to contribute to the BAP development through the inter-agency working group.
- June 9, 2021 – Council approved a motion from the GIC (Item 13.1.c) that all future reports regarding the BAP be referred to the Planning Committee; and,
  - August 10, 2021 – Planning Committee approved Report PED21065(a) – Biodiversity Action Plan – Execution of Agreement with the Hamilton Naturalists' Club;

Action:

- (1) Municipal Contribution Agreement is signed by all parties and funds have been disbursed to Hamilton Naturalists' Club for part-time BAP project coordinator position.

In accordance with the direction from recommendation (f) of Report PED21065, presented in April of 2021, Staff are now reporting back to Committee / Council with a six-month update on the progress of the BAP.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

N/A

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

The BAP working group is made up of staff from the City's Planning and Economic Development Department – Planning Division and Public Works Department - Environmental Services group, and staff from the following external organizations:

Hamilton Naturalists' Club, Environment Hamilton, RBG and Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Halton Region Conservation Authority, and the Bay Area Restoration Council. The Hamilton Naturalists' Club is the lead organization for the BAP development and houses the BAP Project Coordinator position.

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The following is a highlight of some of the key project elements for the development of the BAP that have occurred in the past six months (since April of 2021).

### **Project Charter**

After the presentation of the BAP Feasibility Report (PED21065) in April of 2021, the BAP working group has been meeting bi-weekly to establish the project charter. The project charter established by the BAP working group is attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED21065(b). The charter outlines the roles and responsibilities of the BAP working group partners and will help guide group decision making. At a high level, City staff roles and responsibilities will include assisting in developing virtual public engagement tools, communicating across City-departments to determine future actions, assisting with the final layout and design of the BAP, and reporting back to Planning Committee and Council on the draft and final BAP.

### **Funding Agreement**

While City Staff from Planning and Public Works have been involved in the BAP Working Group with local community partners, City staff do not have capacity in their workplans to manage the development of the BAP at this point in time. The Hamilton Naturalists’ Club (HNC) has agreed to be the lead partner for managing the BAP and hire a part-time staff person to develop the BAP. City Council, at its meeting of April 14, 2021, approved a recommendation that the City of Hamilton commit a total combined one-time financial contribution of \$40 K towards the BAP coordinator position at the HNC from the Planning Division and Hamilton Water Division budgets. The Municipal Contribution Agreement between the City and the Hamilton Naturalists’ Club was approved by the Planning Committee on August 10, 2021.

The Municipal Contribution Agreement has been signed by all parties, and disbursement of funds to the HNC is currently underway.

### **Working Group Membership**

The Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System project coordinator has joined as a BAP working group partner. The involvement of the EcoPark System coordinator will assist in the BAP project development, as the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System is also a multi-partner conservation initiative. There is overlap in many areas in terms of ecological goals between both projects, and the EcoPark System project also involves project stakeholders who may be interested in providing feedback on the BAP as it is being developed. RBG staff from the Natural Lands section will also be joining the working group to assist in the development of the BAP.

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The BAP working group partners will continue to meet virtually on a bi-weekly basis to update project progress and to discuss next steps.

**BAP Project Coordinator Position**

In July of 2021, the HNC hired a part-time staff person to be the lead BAP Coordinator. The BAP Coordinator will be responsible for leading the working group partners through the development of the BAP and will be the main contact person for BAP related inquiries. They will be the lead for organizing and facilitating engagement activities with key local environmental stakeholder groups and the public. The BAP Coordinator position duties and responsibilities were contained in Schedule “A” of Appendix “A” attached to Report PED21065(a) presented at the August 10, 2021 Planning Committee.

To date, the BAP Coordinator has conducted interviews with each of the project working group partners to understand their role in developing the BAP. Interviews were also conducted with staff from other municipalities (City of Guelph, City of Calgary, City of Toronto and City of Edmonton) by the BAP Coordinator, in order to understand the development and implementation of a BAP in other municipalities.

The BAP Coordinator has conducted a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and the preliminary results are as follows:

Strengths

- Working group has comprehensive background reports and data on local biodiversity trends;
- Conservation community leaders have already initiated work to improve biodiversity through organizations; and,
- Existing partnerships between working group participants.

Weaknesses

- Volume of background data requires prioritization of areas of focus; and,
- Working group member organizations may have different priorities, and limited staff resources.

Opportunities

- Coordinated communications and outreach planning between community organizations and City will reach a broader audience; and,
- Alignment with, and contribution to, the City’s Corporate Climate Change Goals.

Threats

- Need commitment for ongoing monitoring of actions after BAP is created; and,
- Actions may require long-term planning and may take time to see positive effects.

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## **Communications**

City Planning staff have begun working with City Communications staff to assist in the development of outreach and communications elements for the BAP and have assisted in developing the BAP project logo, and social media graphics to promote the project. Two samples of the BAP project logo are attached as Appendix “B” attached to Report PED21065(b).

Currently, Communications staff are assisting the BAP working group with the development of a project webpage, to be published on the City of Hamilton’s website. The BAP project webpage will provide project information, links to previous City staff reports, and links to the websites for working group partners.

## **Project Work Plan - Update**

A Draft Project Workplan was originally presented in April of 2021 to the General Issues Committee as Appendix “A” attached to Report PED21065. Table 1 outlines the tasks for Phase 1 of the BAP and their status:

<b>Task</b>	<b>Complete / In Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Develop Project Charter which includes roles and responsibilities of the tasks within the BAP and process for communication amongst the agencies.	Yes.	Project Charter attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED21065(b).
Develop goals and objectives of the BAP.	In Progress.	The goals and objectives of the BAP will be finalized as the BAP Coordinator identifies the key desired outcomes of the project by the working group partners.
Continue communication between the BAP Working Group.	Yes.	Bi-weekly meetings held virtually.
Summarize Biodiversity Action Plans by other municipalities.	In Progress.	This information is being collected and will be presented with the BAP either as a separate background/technical document or as a summary in the BAP itself.

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<b>Task</b>	<b>Complete / In Progress</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Summarize existing state of biodiversity in Hamilton based on existing data sets (including an inventory of existing monitoring activities).	In Progress.	The BAP Coordinator and working group technical experts continue to review the data on the state of Hamilton’s biodiversity. The data summary will form part of a separate background/technical report to the BAP or will be summarized in the BAP itself.
Summarize existing City and Community-led strategies that relate to BAP.	In Progress.	There are many existing Community level and City led initiatives that relate to the BAP. While there has been some work done with regard to all of the City initiatives that relate to the BAP, more time is required to create a comprehensive list that outlines all initiatives from all departments/divisions. This information will be provided as part of the supplementary background document to the BAP.
Summarize existing City policies that align with BAP and areas of improvement.	In Progress.	Policy review has been initiated with respect to planning policies. A full summary of City policies the align with the BAP will form part of a background document supplementary to the BAP.

While Phase 1 of the BAP was initially noted in the Project Workplan as anticipated to take 2 months, there remain items that need to be addressed by members of the working group and City Staff. The HNC’s hiring of the BAP Coordinator in late July of 2021, has assisted in moving the project forward to address outstanding items.

**Next Steps**

As actions from Phase 1 of the BAP progress towards completion, the project is entering the next phase of work, which will culminate in a draft BAP document for review and consideration by all project partners and the public. The draft BAP will also summarize the research and data that contributed to the development of the draft BAP. The approximate timing of the completion of the draft BAP is late winter to early spring of 2022. The draft BAP document will be presented to Planning Committee and the Boards of the respective working group partners prior to initiating a phase of public engagement on the draft recommended actions prior to finalization of the BAP.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

N/A

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**ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN**

**Clean and Green**

Hamilton is environmentally sustainable with a healthy balance of natural and urban spaces.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix “A” to Report PED21065(b) – Biodiversity Action Plan Project Charter

Appendix “B” to Report PED21065(b) – Biodiversity Action Plan Logo

SK:sd