

Review of City Policy C542, Development Setbacks From River Valley/Ravine Crests

One Year Review

Recommendation:

That the May 25, 2011, Planning and Development Department report 2011PPP115 be received for information.

Report Summary

This report reviews the implementation of Policy C542 Development Setbacks from River Valley/Ravine Crests in the time since its adoption 15 months earlier.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the May 25, 2011, Transportation and Public Works Committee meeting, the May 25, 2011, Planning and Development report 2011PPP115 was postponed to the June 13, 2011, Special Transportation and Public Works Committee meeting.

Report

Policy C542 Development Setbacks from River Valley/Ravine Crests was adopted by City Council on February 17, 2010, and was subsequently accompanied by a minor text amendment to the North Saskatchewan River Valley Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw 7188 as well as a new information requirement within the Zoning Bylaw.

Administration committed to report on the implementation of Policy C542

approximately one year after its adoption.

This report is being advanced concurrent with two related reports being 2011PPP007 - North Saskatchewan River Valley System (L. Sloan) and 2011PCP002 - Top-of-Bank Encroachment Follow-up.

Attachment 1 assesses the implementation of Policy C542 through the design and allocation of private and public lands along the top-of-bank within four approved and three draft residential Neighbourhood Structure Plans.

As per Policy C542, a continuous minimum 10 metre wide setback must be provided along 100 percent of the top-of-bank and a public roadway must be provided along no less than 30 percent of the top-of-bank. There is no similar requirement for other forms of public land (e.g., parkland, school sites and stormwater management facilities).

Based on the development concepts for the above noted plans there appears to be a reasonable balance between future private and public lands along the top-of-bank. Nonetheless, the review has revealed:

- top-of-bank roadway is often proposed in combination with small parcels of parkland
- small park parcels by their nature will be ornamental and passive and may foster the perception (particularly when located at the end of cul-de-sac) that they are for the exclusive use of nearby local residents
- small segments of top-of-bank roadway will provide minimal curbside parking and less visual and physical access to the river valley and ravine system

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- there is an absence of longer stretches of continuous top-of-bank roadway to provide for uninterrupted public access as well as broad vistas into the river valley and ravine system
- debate exists between Administration and industry as to the boundary of the river valley and ravine system and where the top-of-bank is located in areas with gentle slopes and terraces. The debate is significant relative to preventing encroachment by urban development into the River Valley

Factors that influence proposed small parks and short road segments along the top-of-bank include:

- the desire of multiple owners (within a Plan area) to equally apportion their obligation to provide Municipal Reserve and top-of-bank road based on their individual holdings
- a method of measuring the top-of-bank road which actually minimizes the road relative to length of top-of-bank.

The potential for encroachments by urban development into the river valley and ravine system is in part due to the definitions of “crest” in Policy C542 and of Environmental Reserve in the *Municipal Government Act*.

Next Steps

Administration is prepared to negotiate with developers on a case by case basis to ensure the size, configuration and location of parkland and roadway dedicated along the top-of-bank is fair and reasonable to both industry and to the City. However, Administration sees value in Policy C542 being amended to:

- adjust the method of measuring top-of-bank road
- include direction to provide longer continuous segments of top-of-bank roadway
- adjust the definition of “crest” to “upper most crest” - to better prevent encroachment of urban development onto terraces and reinforce the concept that the top-of-bank is generally at the same contour (elevation) for the plan area

Administration also supports that the definition of “Environmental Reserve” be clarified with the next review of the *Municipal Government Act* relative to better delineating non-developable areas in the river valley.

Policy

City Policy C542 – Development Setbacks From River Valley/Ravine Crests.

The Way We Grow, Edmonton’s Municipal Development Plan:

- Policy section 7.3.1 – “Protect, preserve and enhance the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System as Edmonton’s greatest natural asset.”
- Policy section 7.3.2 – “Protect, preserve, promote and improve the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System as an accessible year round place for recreation and activity for people of all ages.
- Policy section 7.3.3 – “Mitigate the impact of development upon the natural function and character of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System.”

Corporate Outcomes

The Way Ahead, Edmonton's Strategic Plan 2009-2018:

- Preserve and Sustain Edmonton's Environment:
"Natural environment is protected, enhanced and restored."

Attachments

1. Review of Policy C542 Development Setbacks from River Valley/Ravine Crests

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Koziol, Acting General Manager, Asset Management and Public Works Department
- R. Boutilier, General Manager, Transportation Department
- D. H. Edey, General Manager, Corporate Services Department