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## Plan Identifies Ecological Hot Spots

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA – In preparation for the next steps of growth planning, City of Airdrie staff has begun research of the proposed growth area including an Ecological Inventory. A report on this Ecological Inventory, prepared by working closely with O2 Planning & Design Inc. (O2), was presented to Council on March 1.

This report will act as a guide for sustainable planning and will allow City staff to protect networks of natural features for their ecological value as well as the value of the services they can provide to enable Airdrie to manage its long-term growth. This report will guide both the annexation process and the development of AirdrieONE, the new community plan replacing the current Municipal Development Plan.

The Ecological Inventory took into consideration elements such as riparian corridors, natural / semi- natural grassland patches, steep slopes, trees and shrubs, wetlands, wildlife connectivity features and areas prone to flooding.

From this, ‘ecological hotspots’ were identified, representing areas where several disparate features were concentrated in a small area. Once identified, the hotspots were ranked based on the number of ecologically significant features within the hotspot and the ecological significance.

The report identified and ranked 12 hotspot sites within the study area with a weighted and non-weighted ranking (Figure 23, page 56 and Figure 24, page 57 – see attached). The report recommends that while efforts should be made to preserve existing ecological inventory in all 12 hotspot sites, prioritizing efforts in SW Site G, SW Site L, NW Site P and East Site C will have the greatest benefit in the short term due to the high ecological value of these sites and the connections they share with the existing open space network.

The report is just one layer of a multi-dimensional approach; it allows administration to reflect on what has been lost and what is known now and make better decisions for the City’s future. It will be used as a planning tool for future environmental systems and reports. These recommendations, along with the recommended best practices, will be considered in the policy development of AirdrieONE. The information will also be used to support annexation.

Once accepted by Council, the report will be made available to the public at [Airdrie.ca](http://Airdrie.ca)

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