

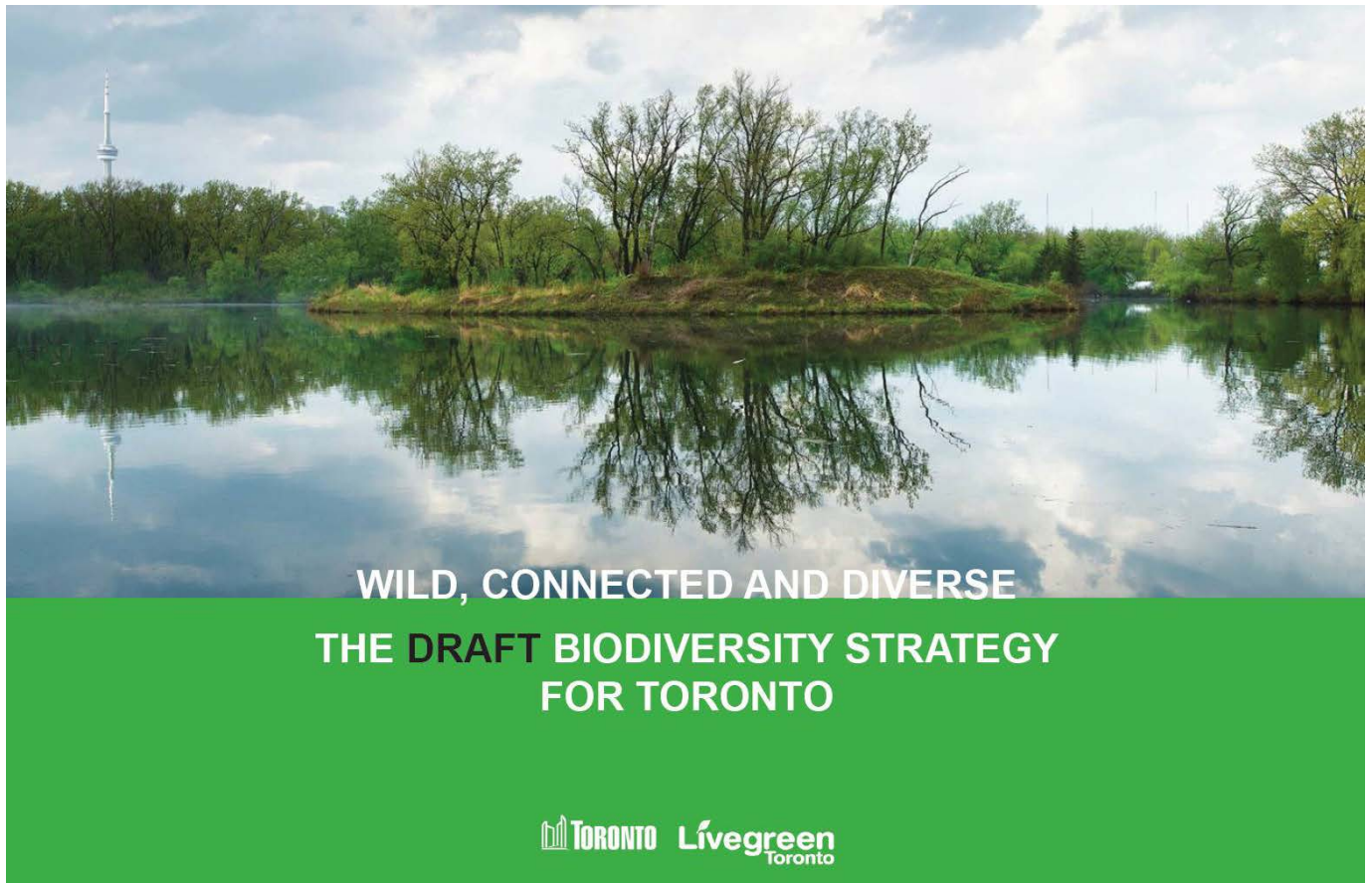
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Attachment #2: Summary of Public Consultation

Consultation Report

City of Toronto Biodiversity Strategy

June 3, 2019



Prepared for the City of Toronto by



OVERVIEW

City Planning, in collaboration with the Parks, Forestry & Recreation Division, the Environment & Energy Division and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, drafted the City's first Biodiversity Strategy, which was received by the Parks and Environment Committee for information on July 12, 2018. The draft Strategy builds on the work previously done through the preparation of a series of Toronto Biodiversity Booklets, a Chief Planner Roundtable on Biodiversity, and the Toronto Ravine Strategy, and was developed with input from environmental groups and biodiversity experts. The draft Strategy included 21 Actions organized under four themes: Protect, Restore, Design, and Engage. Following Committee direction, City Planning embarked on an engagement process to involve a broad range of stakeholders and the public to present and seek feedback on the draft Strategy.

The City began its three-stage consultation process on the fall of 2018. The first stage focused on seeking feedback on the original draft Vision, Principles, Themes, and Actions in the Strategy (along with how to approach the concept of ecological integrity in the Strategy); the second sought feedback on revisions to those same topics; and the third focused on seeking feedback on the final proposed Actions. The consultation involved a number of audiences, including external subject matter experts from a range of disciplines, an Advisory Group, and the broader public.

This report is a comprehensive summary of the consultation process and feedback received. It includes: the objectives and principles of the consultation; overall consultation process, mechanisms, and timeline; key messages and detailed feedback shared by participants; and next steps.

OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF CONSULTATION

The objectives of the consultation on the draft Biodiversity strategy were to:

- to ensure that the City engaged with, received comments from, and considered the feedback and insights of a broad range of stakeholder groups and residents;
- raise awareness of and create buy-in around the City's first Biodiversity Strategy.

The principles guiding the consultation were:

Accountability. Accountability to participants will be maintained by providing accurate, timely information throughout the consultation process, and by demonstrating how participants' views and perspectives have been considered in the final Strategy (and, where they haven't, why not).

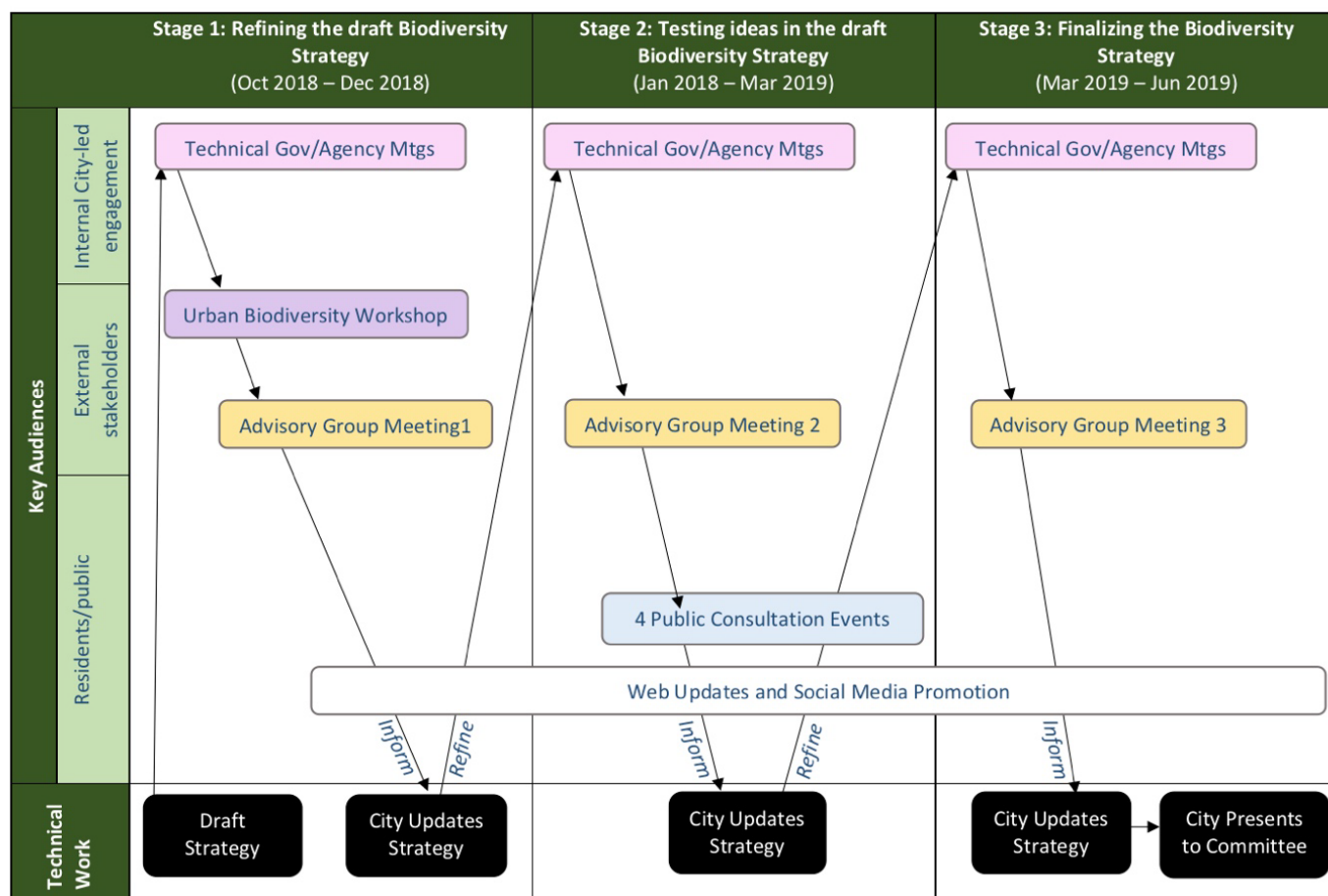
Clarity. Working closely with the City, the consultation team will strive to clarify the purpose and scope of the consultation process and which decisions are open for influence in the draft Strategy. The consultation team, in collaboration with the City, will also provide useful and educational information in accessible and easy-to-understand language to support participant understanding, the contribution of relevant and meaningful input, and ultimately support for the final Strategy.

Inclusivity. The consultation process will invite and encourage a broad cross-section of participation from resident and key stakeholder groups from across the City, encouraging participants to share their views and perspectives and hear from those of others.

Timeliness. Engagement will begin as early as possible in the process to allow the greatest range of opportunities and issues to emerge and to maximize opportunities for successful issue resolution and implementation.

Flexibility. The consultation process will strive to accommodate the needs of different stakeholder groups, taking into account their areas of expertise, geographic distribution, and availability.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS



The consultation approach followed a three-stage process

During *Stage 1: Refining the draft Biodiversity Strategy*, the City presented and sought feedback on the draft Biodiversity Strategy through an Urban Biodiversity Workshop and the first meeting with an Advisory Group.

During *Stage 2: Testing ideas in the draft Biodiversity Strategy*, the City reconvened the Advisory Group for a second meeting to discuss new ideas developed as a result of the feedback from Stage 1. Stage 2 also included four Public Consultation Events, one in each Community Planning District.

Stage 3: Finalizing the Biodiversity Strategy involved a third and final meeting with the Advisory Group to review a near final Biodiversity Strategy, was further updated based on ideas, comments, and input from the Stage 2 consultation.

For the Public Consultation events the City promoted the Strategy and engagement process on social media, including via advertisements on Facebook.

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

Event	Date	Time	Location
Urban Biodiversity Workshop	October 2 2018	9:00am – 4:00pm	East York Civic Centre 850 Coxwell Ave
Advisory Group Meeting #1	November 28 2018	9:30am – 12:00pm	Metro Hall 55 John St
Advisory Group Meeting #2	January 30 2019	9:30 am– 12:00pm	Metro Hall 55 John St
Public Meeting #1	February 20 2019	6:00 – 8:30pm	North York Civic Centre 5100 Yonge St
Public Meeting #2	February 26 2019	6:00 – 8:30pm	Scarborough Civic Centre 50 Borough Dr
Public Meeting #3	February 28 2019	6:00 – 8:30pm	Humber Arboretum 209 Humber College Blvd
Public Meeting #4	March 2 2019	1:00 – 3:00pm	Royal Ontario Museum 100 Queen's Park Cr
Advisory Group Meeting #3	April 4 2019	9:30am – 12:00pm	Metro Hall 55 John St
Meeting with Toronto Ravines Revitalization Study Team	May 27 2019	2:30 – 4:00pm	Centre for Social Innovation 720 Bathurst St

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES



SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

The consultation process involved three types of consultation activity, each of which followed a different process.

Urban Biodiversity Workshop. The Urban Biodiversity Workshop was a two-day event the City co-hosted with the University of Toronto Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design. The first day included a panel discussion with invited experts, while the second — which was part of the formal consultation process — was a day-long workshop that asked a range of community advocates, stakeholders, subject matter experts, and students to learn about and share advice on the Draft Biodiversity Strategy. The workshop included presentations from subject matter experts, plenary discussions, and small group discussions. About 40 people from 20 organizations participated in the Urban Biodiversity Workshop.

Advisory Group Meetings. The City hosted three Advisory Group Meetings over the course of the project. Each Advisory Group Meeting followed the same format, which was: an overview presentation from the City, facilitated plenary questions and answers, and small group and plenary discussions and feedback. On average, 20 – 25 individuals representing a range of organizations participated in each Advisory Group Meeting.

Public Meetings. The City hosted four public meetings in Stage 2 of the consultation. Three of those Public Meetings — North York, Etobicoke, and Scarborough — consisted of an overview presentation, questions of clarification, and small group and full room discussions. The fourth Public Meeting — at the Royal Ontario Museum — included overview presentations, plenary discussions, and an interactive open house. Over 100 people participated across the four public meetings.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations participated in at least one of the consultations activities:

Ashbridge's Bay Park	North American Native Plant Society	Toronto Region Conservation Authority
Canadians for Furbearing Animals	Ontario Association of Landscape Architects	Toronto Field Naturalists
Deer Park Residents Group	Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters	Toronto Ornithological Club
EcoSpark	Ontario Invasive Plant Council	Toronto Ravine Revitalization Study Team
Electromagnetic Pollution Illness Canada Foundation	Parks Canada	Toronto Zoo
Fatal Light Awareness Program	Protect Nature TO	University of Toronto (Forestry)
Food Share	Royal Ontario Museum	University of Toronto (Scarborough)
High Park Natural Environment Committee	Ryerson University (Ecological Design Lab)	Waterfront Toronto
High Park Residents Association	South Rosedale Residents Association	York University (Environmental Studies)
Landscape Ontario (Horticultural Trades Association)	Planning Partnership	
Mycological Society of Toronto	Todmorden Mills Wildflower Preserve	

KEY MESSAGES

The following key messages emerged over the course of the consultation. They are meant to be read in concert with the more detailed summary of feedback below.

Lots of support for the Biodiversity Strategy. Participants were generally very happy the City was developing a Biodiversity Strategy and aspiring to be a world leader. Many said this kind of Strategy is both important and needed in Toronto.

Need to carefully consider if/how to approach the concept of ecological integrity. Some said it was very important to include this concept, saying it provides a scientific framework to guide measurement, evaluation and implementation, of the Strategy. A few were concerned that the concept could be confusing and challenging to apply since it's often applied to large protected natural landscapes like national parks.

Importance of public education. Many said public education around biodiversity is crucial. They appreciated Actions that focused on public education and suggested the Strategy do more by focusing on engaging with school boards and other educators.

More citizen stewardship and partnership opportunities. Participants generally felt that citizen stewardship could make a big difference in achieving the Strategy's Vision. Residents and citizen scientists have interest, time, and energy to support protection and restoration efforts, and the Biodiversity Strategy should support these people (while ensuring volunteer-based activities follow best practices).

Importance of enforcement and strengthening existing protections. Protection is one of the most important parts of the Biodiversity Strategy; the City's existing by-laws and policies should be better enforced. Enforcing policies around Environmentally Significant Areas and hiring more by-law officers to enforce existing rules were some of the suggestions participants shared to strengthen existing protection.

Promote and prioritize native species and management of invasive species. The Biodiversity Strategy should encourage and/or require promotion, protection, and prioritization of native species wherever possible (including in its Principles and Actions) the Strategy should also emphasize removal of invasive species.

Authentic, meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities. The City should identify opportunities to engage and create authentic relationships with Indigenous communities through the implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy should reflect or promote a two-eyed way of seeing (bringing western and Indigenous knowledges together for the benefit of all) and an approach that thinks seven generations into the future.

Embed Biodiversity thinking into City processes, by-laws, and decision making. City Planning should make sure that City staff, politicians, and other decision makers (like the Committee of Adjustment) are informed about the consequences of their decisions on Biodiversity.

DETAILED FEEDBACK

The detailed feedback is organized into five topics that were the focus of consultation:

- General feedback about the Biodiversity Strategy
- Feedback about the Vision
- Feedback about the Principles
- Feedback about Ecological Integrity
- Feedback about the Actions
 - Protect
 - Restore
 - Design
 - Engage

This detailed feedback is a synthesis of feedback provided in the Urban Biodiversity Workshop, three Advisory Group meetings, and four Public Meetings. Detailed summaries of each meeting are available in a separate appendix.

GENERAL FEEDBACK ABOUT THE BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY

Focus on climate change and other challenges. Throughout the process, participants said a focus on climate change should be an essential part of the Strategy. They also said the Strategy should recognize current challenges facing biodiversity, including loss of habitat, loss of native species, invasive species, and stresses due to use by humans and pets.

A need for investment and implementation. Participants repeatedly said that it is important for the Strategy to recognize that, to have flourishing biodiversity, the City needs to make a commitment and invest in it. They also said there should be a clear framework and/or approach to implementing the Strategy.

Clear, measurable targets. Participants said that the Strategy should have clear, measurable targets built into it to support successful implementation and enforcement. Establishing a baseline or “current condition assessment” would be important to support these targets, too.

Support for the process. Participants said they were glad to see the City consulting on the Strategy. Some said they felt these conversations should happen more frequently. Some participants who came to multiple stages of the consultation said they appreciated seeing that the feedback shared had led to changes in the Strategy.

FEEDBACK ABOUT THE VISION

Participants generally liked the Vision in the Biodiversity Strategy, especially its clear, accessible language; its aspiration for Toronto to be a world leader in biodiversity; and references to citizens taking part and pride in biodiversity.

Participants' suggested revisions and additions to the Vision included: add reference to aquatic biodiversity (not just terrestrial); an acknowledgement of the unique urban context in which the Strategy is operating); references to the many different audiences and actors that will need to be engaged to make the Vision a reality (including both public and private actors); and references to the importance of native species.

FEEDBACK ABOUT THE PRINCIPLES

Participants particularly liked: principles that focused on long- and short-term monitoring and references to the intrinsic value of biodiversity

Participant suggested additions and revisions to the Principles included: more of a focus on protecting habitat (as opposed to species at risk); add a principle about the importance of investment / funding biodiversity protection; adding a principle about equity and diverse cultural communities (acknowledging that access to biodiversity and nature is not equitable across the city); adding a principle(s) that recognize the importance of native species; and demonstrate that human and natural ecosystems are interconnected (not distinct).

FEEDBACK ABOUT ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

Participants shared a range of perspectives about if/how to incorporate the concept of ecological integrity into the Strategy.

A few suggested the City carefully consider whether the concept was appropriate for the Strategy, saying the concept is most often applied in large protected natural areas such as national parks, not urban areas. They expressed concerns that the concept could be confusing or too broad to have any meaningful influence on the Strategy.

Others felt it was very important for the City to incorporate the concept of ecological integrity and suggested the City use a different approach to the concept than the one included in the draft Strategy. They said a revised approach would need to:

- Help attain a desirable and achievable ecological outcome over time
- Create a framework that is like a “building code” for protecting eco-systems
- Adopt an understanding of ecological integrity as a continuum of ecological function as opposed to binary state

- Provide specific metrics to help define, measure, monitor, and manage biodiversity

FEEDBACK ABOUT THE ACTIONS

Feedback about the Protect Actions

Many participants appreciated seeing that the City had developed a theme focusing on protecting biodiversity, with some saying it is the most important. Participants liked many of the Actions in the Protect theme. Examples of participants suggested refinements and additions to the Protect theme included adding actions that:

- Include practical strategies to protect biodiversity (such as hiring additional by-laws officers or park wardens) and strategies to strengthen existing protections (such as by-laws and policies).
- Focus on protecting habitat rather than species (since species protection is closely connected to habitat protection) and creating connections for wildlife.
- Encourage or create a culture of supporting and protecting biodiversity.
- Focus on the importance of investing in Biodiversity.
- Help control/manage invasive species and highlight protection of native species.
- Impose taxes on un-environmental activities, such as adding parking lots.
- Convene a group of staff to identify issues, challenges, and what is needed to better protect natural areas.
- Address co-existence of residents and wildlife, since, if the Strategy is successful, there could be more wildlife in the City.

Feedback about the Restore Actions

Participants liked that the Restore theme is comprehensive, well-informed, and touches on many important issues. Examples of additions or refinements participants suggested included actions to:

- Engage with citizen scientists and take advantage of the valuable resource that is the community, including citizen stewardship in restoration projects.
- Make sure terms like “healthy habitat” are defined and measurable.
- Remove the focus on restoring extirpated species and instead focus on enhancing habitats so that extirpated species may return on their own.
- Create Best Practices for Management and Restoration and Best Practices for Gardening guides.
- Encourage the restoration of habitat at the home owner scale.

- Discourage the public from buying and planting invasive species.
- Add more of a focus on restoration of aquatic environments (including Lake Ontario).
- Focus on the need to undertake (and fund) on-going maintenance and restoration into the City's budget.

Feedback about the Design Actions

Participants liked that the Design theme referred to existing good practices like Bird Friendly Guidelines and that this theme could help better weave together Toronto's built and natural environments. Examples of additions or refinements participants suggested included actions to:

- Develop Plant Design Guidelines that outline what and where to plant.
- Use park upgrades and infrastructure retrofit opportunities to further biodiversity objectives.
- Include retrofit policies to inform more than just new-build projects.
- Connect to other strategies and initiatives, like the Toronto Green Standard, Green Streets Technical Guidelines, and others.
- Update the zoning by-law to limit (rather than expand) impermeable spaces in landscaping and revisit the City's property standards to allow things like tall grass, which support biodiversity.
- Focus on the importance of native species in design.
- Include language around the importance of reflecting Indigenous perspectives in the Design Actions.
- Provide training for design practitioners like Landscape Architects.

Feedback about Engage Actions

Participants liked that the Engage theme includes new, innovative ways to engage people about Biodiversity, goes beyond adding interpretive signage, includes a focus on storytelling, and includes a role for property owners. Examples of additions or refinements participants suggested included actions to:

- Better clarify who will be responsible for engaging which audiences
- Educate children through partnerships with School Boards and embedding biodiversity into curricula.
- Develop tailored engagement strategies to different audiences, such as an interactive GIS map, augmented reality tours, and using that creates habitat.
- Add more of a focus on new and social media engagement tools, using a variety of art forms to connect with different audiences,

- Recognize, promote, and celebrate achievements in improving biodiversity.
- Help redefine the landscaping aesthetic so that people strive for an “eco aesthetic.” rather than manicured turf grass
- Carefully consider whether there is a role for a “gastronomical perspective” (while avoiding encouraging destructive behaviours like un-managed foraging.

NEXT STEPS

City Planning will be bringing a revised Biodiversity Strategy to the Parks and Infrastructure Committee in September 2019.