

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: February 26, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Rosa Bustamante, Director, Planning and Housing Policy and City Planner, 519-741-2200 ext. 7319

PREPARED BY: Carrie Musselman, Senior Environmental Planner, 519-741-2200 ext. 7068 (on behalf of the Climate Change and Environment Committee)

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Ward(s)

DATE OF REPORT: February 8, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-081

SUBJECT: Kitchener Becoming a Bird Friendly City

RECOMMENDATION:

That staff be directed to investigate the benefits and feasibility of Kitchener becoming a 'Bird Friendly City' including any resource and budgetary considerations.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to advise City Council of a resolution of the Climate Change and Environment Committee that is seeking Council approval for staff to investigate the benefits and feasibility of Kitchener becoming a Bird Friendly City.
- This report outlines what the bird friendly city certification process entails.
- There are no financial implications to the recommendations in this report.
- Community engagement included the report posted online as part of the Committee agenda and consultation with the Climate Change and Environment Committee at its January 2024 meeting.
- This report supports Cultivating a Green City Together: Focuses a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city; enhancing & protecting parks & natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future; supporting businesses & residents to make climate-positive choices.

BACKGROUND:

At the January 18, 2024, Climate Change and Environment Committee (CCEC), a member of the committee, presented on the 'Bird Friendly Cities' Certification Program (Appendix A). Following the presentation, a recommendation was put forward by the committee and the committee resolved ... *That the Climate Change and Environment committee support bringing the exploration of Kitchener becoming a Bird City to council.*

REPORT:

The following information was shared with the CCEC and informed their resolution. North American bird populations are decreasing at alarming rates. There are three billion fewer birds in North America today than 50 years ago. Much of these losses are caused by human activities. Saving bird lives starts with local action.

Nature groups, municipal officials, and other community groups are teaming up with Nature Canada to ensure our urban environments are safe havens for birds rather than a source of threats.

Across Canada, people are coming together to make their cities a 'Bird Friendly City'. Nearby, London, Guelph, Burlington, and Hamilton have already received certification.

What is a 'Bird Friendly City'?

A Bird Friendly City is a community where:

- Key threats to birds are effectively mitigated.
- Nature is restored so native bird populations can thrive.
- Residents are actively engaged in admiring and monitoring local bird populations.
- Organizations are creating events to protect birds.
- Progressive municipal policies are created to protect urban bird populations; and
- A Bird Team has been created to oversee and lead these initiatives.

Bird Friendly City Certification

The goal of certification is to provide local partners with clear standards that reflect what a city needs to do to make it safe for birds. In this sense, certification can be considered a conservation framework that is delivered through the establishment of a 'Bird City Team' (representatives with different perspectives and has a liaison with the municipality) to drive the project forward.

The standards can also allow for an independent assessment of how bird friendly a particular city is at any moment in time, assessing performance on key issues, establishing benchmarks, and allowing for measurement of progress over time and comparison with other cities.

The standards consist of a series of criteria or actions; each assigned a weighted score based on Nature Canada's assessment of the relative importance of each criterion within the three major categories of criteria that reflect what they believe to be the most important elements of a Bird Friendly City:

- Reducing human-related threats to birds;
- Habitat protection, restoration, and climate resiliency;
- Community outreach/education.

In many cases, actions to meet a criterion are community-based (not government).

The CCEC is seeking Council's direction to have staff explore Kitchener becoming a 'Bird Friendly City'. Pending Council's direction, staff will report back on the requirements for Bird Friendly City Certification and any resourcing and financial implications.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports Cultivating a Green City Together: Focuses a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city; enhancing & protecting parks & natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future; supporting businesses & residents to make climate-positive choices.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget or Operating Budget.

Staff will investigate what financial implications may be related to City support of the initiative including: whether fees are required to obtain certification, whether staff resources will be required to join and/or liaise with the Bird Team, what staff resources will be required to support the completion of the application form and any ongoing requirements to fulfill the criteria.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the committee meeting.

CONSULT – At the January 18, 2024, CCEC meeting, a member of the CCEC, presented on the Bird Friendly Cities certification with Nature Canada.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

There are no previous reports related to this matter.

REVIEWED BY: Josh Shea, Manager, Forestry and Natural Areas Management
Natalie Goss, Manager, Policy and Research
Barbara Steiner, Senior Environmental Planner

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A – Presentation to CCEC
- Attachment B – Bird Friendly City Booklet
- Attachment C – Bird Friendly Application
- Attachment D – Article: Kitchener city councillors hear presentation on becoming ‘bird friendly.’