

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION



2022

Parks

YEAR-END REPORT



City of
Saskatoon



WELCOME

Welcome to the 2022 Parks Department Year-End Report. The 2022 Report is intended to provide an overview on the past year and information about the programs and services offered by the Parks Department, highlight various initiatives, and look ahead to 2023.

Who We Are

Parks plays a lead role in developing, preserving, and enhancing the City of Saskatoon's investment in its parks system and civic open spaces. The Department accomplishes this through operational efficiency, policy development, collaboration and communication with internal and external stakeholders, and the provision of maintenance and design services. From broad ranging city-wide initiatives, such as the Urban Forest Management Plan to ensuring that residents' local park and open space areas are well maintained, this Department has a significant impact on Saskatoon and its residents. The Parks Department's work primarily supports the Strategic Goals of Quality of Life and Environmental Leadership.

who we are, what we do

OUR MISSION:
A Safe, Dynamic Team
that Connects all
Residents to Nature

what we aspire to be

OUR VISION:
To Make Green
Space Experiences
Exceptional



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- ▶ **Asset Management** – The Parks Department reallocated resources toward the maturation of its asset management practices, including refinement of data in the asset registry, the identification of asset growth, and process documentation of maintenance activities.

The Department also developed processes for its implementation of the City's SAP Enterprise Asset Management System (EAM). The department underwent a pilot of the use EAM, tracking hours for the Winter Works snow clearing, waste collection and ski trail programs. Going forward, data from EAM will be used to inform the department on required resourcing to meet service levels across its programs.

- ▶ **Community Expectations** – The Parks Customer Service & Support team received 2,195 email inquiries in 2022, including 188 Councillor inquiries. The team works with the various programs in the Parks Department to provide appropriate follow-up and responses to inquiries regarding the assets Parks maintains and upgrades.

- ▶ **Community Gardens** – No new community gardens were established in 2022.

- ▶ **Community Support and Engagement**– Parks provided services and support to several community groups, including:
 - BIDs – Cottony Ash Psyllid tree removal/replacement and the supply of flowerpots
 - Support various community and volunteer organizations by helping to coordinate and approve clean-up activities and special events in various park and open space areas throughout the city.
 - Provision of Irrigation services to Community Gardens located in park areas.

- ▶ **Employee Training**– successful recruitment of a new Training & Development Coordinator.

WINTER CITY STRATEGY

Maintained four main cross country ski trails throughout the City: Diefenbaker, Forest Park, Kinsmen and Meewasin. Parks worked with Recreation and Community Development to accommodate additional ski trail requests for Community Associations.

- Purchased a new UTV with snow tracks to better service ski trails going forward. The UTV was received and updated safety and training was developed for the coming 2023 season.

- ▶ **Collaboration** – Continued collaboration and communication with other corporate departments to plan, manage, and maintain green space in the community as effectively and efficiently as possible. For 2022, collaborative efforts resulted in improvements in the following areas:
 - Construction and Design – tree protection support to roadway and sidewalk renewal programs
 - Saskatoon Water – provided landscape project management support to the Churchill Park storm water project.
 - IT – continued collaboration in improving IT systems and enhancing services to further increase use of Fusion.
 - Saskatoon Fire – collaboration and teamwork to support those living in unsafe outdoor park and open space locations.
 - Sustainability – Boulevard gardening updates and water conservation initiatives
 - Finance and Facilities – developed information and business case associated with the restoration of the Civic Conservatory to apply for federal funding.

- ▶ **Skills Development** – Provided 8 employees with support to increase their horticultural and forestry skills and levels of education.
- ▶ **Employee Engagement** – Organized employee recognition events with appropriate social distancing and virtual options to ensure that dedicated service continued to be recognized during the pandemic.
- ▶ **Partnerships** – Provided ongoing representation on the following committees/initiatives: Green Infrastructure Strategy, GPS Project, Planning and Development Review Process, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), and the Natural Areas Strategy.
 - Partnered with the Friends of the Richard St. Barbe Baker Afforestation Area on the design and establishment of a fence on the west perimeter to further limit vehicle access and dumping activities.
- ▶ **Health & Safety** – Threatening and Aggressive Interaction Standard Operating Procedure was developed to provide employees awareness of the potential of these interactions and process to follow if they do encounter members of the public who are interacting in an aggressive or threatening way. In addition, training on the City's updated Alcohol and Drug Policy program was provided to the Department management team.
- ▶ **Reducing our Carbon Footprint** – adding and monitoring the effectiveness of electrically powered hand-held equipment and utility vehicles.



OUR BUSINESS

As Saskatoon grows in population, so does the amount of green infrastructure within park and open space areas. New subdivisions include new community parks, playgrounds, pathways, sport fields, community gardens, landscaped medians, traffic circles, and buffers/berms adjacent to roadways. In 2022, Parks added 0.25 hectares (0.62 acres) to the department's maintenance inventory.

The Parks Department prides itself on meeting this challenge through the provision of a variety of efficient and effective maintenance and design services that directly contribute to the resident's quality of life. We take initiative to identify and respond to the needs of a diverse community through the development of strategy and the continuous improvement of various Parks programs and the services they provide. Parks' key programs and services include:

PARK AND OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE

Parks Maintenance employees are responsible for maintaining all turf grass and horticultural displays in over 2,304.23 hectares of parks and open space in the city. Services provided include:

- Mowing, trimming, and fertilizing, as well as other turf maintenance for regular park areas, community sport fields, and non-park green space, including medians, boulevards, rights of way, buffer strips, and berms.
- Care for shrub beds and herbaceous perennial and annual flower plantings.
- Maintenance of playground surfaces.
- Litter picking and garbage removal.
- Maintenance and repair for asphalt and aggregate pathways within parks.
- Winter snow removal on over 140km of asphalt pathways and sidewalk park frontages.
- Provide support services to over 400 special events, held annually, in various parks and open spaces throughout the city.



HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- Successfully adjusted maintenance schedules of over 200 staff to provide safe, socially distant work sites.
- Collaborated with Roadways to provide staff to sweep road salt and sand off park turf.
- Topdressing of 24 neighborhood sports fields throughout Saskatoon, where a 50/50 mix of City compost and soil was applied to improve turf quality and safety to users. Compost for this initiative was sourced through the City's compost depots. The program was expanded from 12 neighbourhood sports fields in 2021.
- Partnered with the Corporate Security team to pilot implementation of wireless security camera equipment at Parks satellite facilities to protect our corporate assets.

NATURALIZED PARK MAINTENANCE

Approximately 12% of the Parks inventory is maintained as naturalized park area, representing various habitat types in Saskatoon, from native prairie to wetlands, and aspen parkland. Naturalized areas provide key habitats for wildlife, support local and regional biodiversity, and provide residents with opportunities for nature appreciation.

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- Planted 1000 wildflower plugs in Naturalized parks throughout Saskatoon.
- Participated in a Prescribed Fire Training Exchange event hosted by the Canadian Prairies Prescribed Fire Exchange (CPPFE) during which 7 prescribed fires were completed in the Saskatoon area in partnership with 11 different agencies.
- Took over maintenance of Tatanka Park.
- Co-ordinated with Meewasin and Saskatoon Fire Department to conduct one prescribed fire in Donna Birkmaier Park in October.
- Participated in the Urban Wildlife Information Network for monitoring wildlife populations and movements within Saskatoon.



WOODLAWN CEMETERY

Woodlawn Cemetery is a 42.45 ha National Historic Site that has been operated by the City of Saskatoon since 1906. Woodlawn Cemetery also maintains the 7.31 ha Nutana Pioneer Cemetery, a heritage site that has been closed since 1911.

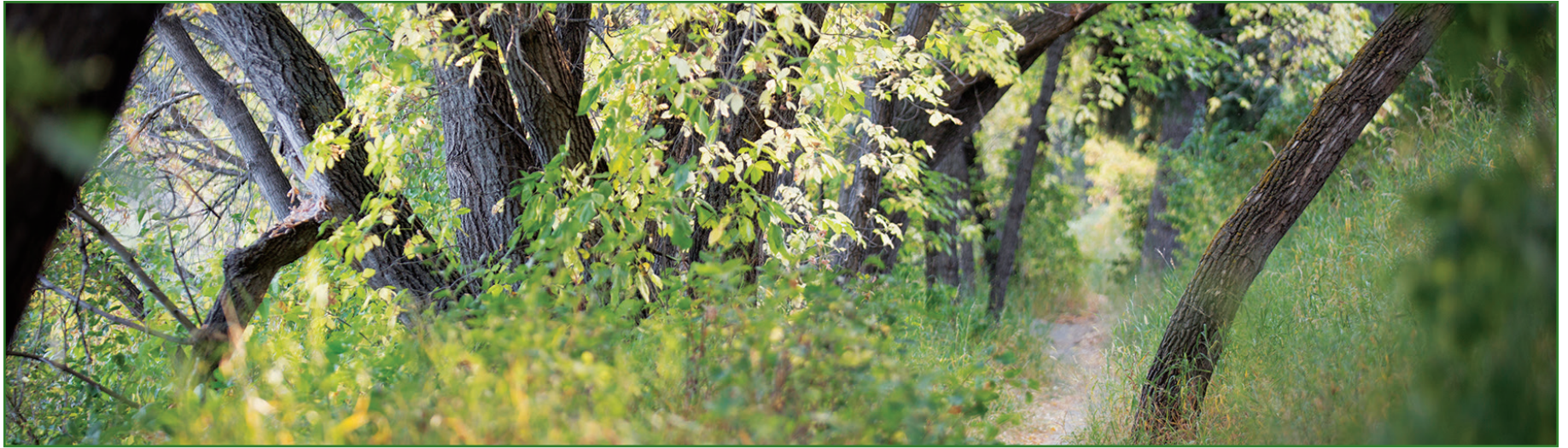
Services include:

- Administrative services in booking and processing funeral requests, customer complaints, and financial aspects.
- Interment opening/closing services for funerals in both casket and cremations.
- Landscaping and monitoring turf establishment for completed interments.
- Offer a variety of monument services, such as installing foundations, flat markers, and other memorialization services.
- Mowing, trimming, and fertilizing of turf areas.
- Preparing, planting, and maintaining flower and shrub beds.
- Planting and ensuring establishment of new trees.
- Snow clearing of cemetery roadways and pathways.

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- In 2022, there were 346 interments performed, with 159 being traditional burials and 187 cremation burials.
- 49 subsidized interments occurred at Woodlawn Cemetery
- Cemetery staff focused on turf restoration and topdressing in which 300 cubic yards of screened topsoil was applied.
- Staff refurbished 16 wooden benches with concrete sides.
- Installed a 72-niche columbarium in April 2022.





URBAN BIOLOGICAL SERVICES

The Urban Biological Services Program (UBS) provides control and inspection services to manage invasive plant and insect populations through the following activities:

- Monitoring and testing mosquitoes for West Nile virus.
- Mosquito habitat across approximately 945 square kilometers is monitored and treated with larvicide application.
- Monitoring the urban forest for pests and diseases, such as Dutch elm disease, cottony ash psyllid, dothiorella and emerald ash borer.
- Controlling populations of Richardson ground squirrels on City-owned property.
- Providing solutions for conflicts with urban wildlife, including informational, deterrent, and trapping services.
- Enforcing the *Weed Control Act* and *Forest Resources Management Act* (Dutch elm disease) through inspection and issuance of orders and agreements.
- Provision of scheduled and reactive weed control service levels on hard surfaces, such as roadway medians, city wide.

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- Municipal Weed Inspectors enforcement of *The Weed Control Act* included the administration of 193 weed agreements with landowners to address noxious and nuisance weed infestations (Appendix 2).
- Mosquito populations were down last year due to aggressive treatment procedures and a diminishing habitat due to dry weather.
- Under the Dutch Elm Disease Monitoring Program 79 elm samples were submitted for testing with no positive cases in 2022.



URBAN FORESTRY

The Urban Forestry Program protects, preserves, and perpetuates the health, beauty, and safety of the City of Saskatoon's urban forest for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. The Urban Forestry team is responsible for over 100,000 trees, with approximately 60% lining city streets and 40% located within civic park spaces.

The components of this program include maintaining a tree inventory, civic nursery, planting programs, and providing ongoing maintenance operations. Ongoing maintenance operations include a 1 in 7-year pruning cycle for boulevard trees, a 1 in 13-year pruning cyclical for park trees, responding to weather events, as well as internal and resident's service requests.

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- 1,947 Urban Forestry service requests
- 6,561 trees pruned as part of cyclical tree maintenance schedules
- 1,096 trees pruned in response to service requests and other reactive work
- 728 trees removed
- 578 stumps removed
- 819 trees planted as part of park and urban reforestation initiatives
- 193 sites inspected and monitored for tree protection
- Shelter belt pruning maintenance was provided to the following areas:
 - Circle Dr. shelterbelt west side from 33rd St W to Laurier Dr.
 - 22nd St W shelterbelt south side from Whitney Ave to 20th St W
 - 22nd St W shelterbelt north side from Whitney Ave to train bridge.
 - Attridge Dr. shelterbelt south side from Central Ave to Forest Dr.
 - Mendel Cr. shelterbelt
 - Robert Hunter West Park
- Coordinated hydrovac services to reduce tree replant times in business districts

SPORTS FIELDS AND LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION

The Sports Fields and Landscape Construction Program maintains 308 city-wide sport fields (Ball diamonds, soccer, lacrosse, and multi-purpose). Included within this inventory are 147 hectares of Class 1, 2, and 3 sport fields. Class sports fields receive above basic service levels that support higher levels of sporting competition. Higher service levels are funded by the various user groups that utilize the Class sports fields and includes:

- Mowing and trimming for Class 1 and 2 sports fields.
- Infield grooming for Class 1, 2, 3, and neighborhood ball diamonds
- Sports fields painting program involves lining 85 Class 1, 2, and 3 sports fields. As well, accommodating other requests throughout the year (e.g. cricket fields).
- Grading of parking lots associated with recreational facilities related to parks where sports fields maintenance is done by the crews.
- Deliver, place, and pickup of BID flowerpots and centre median flowerpots in Spring and Fall, in conjunction with Greenhouse Program.
- Other work from Parks' zones and different departments as needed (i.e. hauling topsoil/compost, bobcat work, replacing or new installation of bollards).



HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- Provided winter snow removal services to include 9 City Recreation Facilities and other locations such as Marr Residence and Access Transit.
- Parks used 2,045 cubic yards of compost and mulch from City compost depots.
- Ensure quality of play and safety of Sports Fields by:
 - Providing landscaping and grading services on 20 neighborhood ball diamonds.
 - Major renovation of Parc Canada ball diamonds included reducing infield size to regulations and converting infield from crusher dust to shale.



IRRIGATION

Saskatoon regularly experiences drier and more arid environmental conditions than other major Western Canadian cities. The Irrigation Program supports water delivery service levels on approximately 660 hectares of park, open space, and streetscape green infrastructure, which includes turf, trees, shrubs, and annual/perennials plants. Irrigation staff are trained, certified, and legislated to maintain these systems to ensure the safe, efficient application of water throughout the growing season. Examples of the services provided include performing spring system start-up, regular system checks (including backflow prevention testing), line locating, and automated controller scheduling and system winterization.



HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- In 2022, through the Water Conservation Strategy, Park Irrigation expanded and improved on the 2021 Evapotranspiration (ET)-based Irrigation Pilot to optimize park irrigation. The pilot project was expanded from 10 to 46 parks. The 2022 pilot saved 39.1 million litres of water, \$97,702 and 16.8 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Results from the pilot support the development of a business case to optimize the park irrigation network to be capable of operating ET-based irrigation programming at all irrigated sites.
- An electronic form was developed for Parks staff to report irrigation issues to the Parks Irrigation team. The form ensures consistent information required for work is provided to the team in a timely manner and assists in work tracking.
- Eight rain gauges are strategically placed throughout the city to measure rainfall. Rainfall estimates are as follows:
 - In 2022, 203 mm of rainfall accumulated, which was less than the historical average of 263 mm and the 25th lowest seasonal rainfall total out of 123 years since 1900.
 - Due to the dry year, Irrigation was increased in locations where severe drought impacted vegetation.

GREENHOUSE PROGRAM

The Greenhouse Program is responsible for providing and maintaining floral displays for public viewing and/or landscape enhancement at City Hall, and other civic facilities, as well as major public roadways, parks, and public open spaces.

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- Greenhouse staff produced 734 flowerpots in the business improvement districts.
- 295 flowerpots were produced for center medians on major city corridors.
- Annual flowers were produced for 103 flower beds in parks.
- 275 flowerpots in parks and other areas.
- In-house trials on different types of fertilizers and products that control plant growth were performed to continuously improve plant quality for the flowerpot and flowerbeds programs.
- Planting workstations were modified to improve employee ergonomics
- Rejuvenation of plants maintained and returned to the civic facilities throughout Saskatoon.



PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DESIGN PROGRAM

The Design Section is involved in the planning, design, and construction development of public lands, which includes parks. Core responsibilities include:

- planning, estimating, and administration of capital budgets
- conceptual and detailed design
- project construction management
- internal and public consultation
- the review and approval of external design submissions for open space
- the construction inspection and approval of externally managed park construction projects



HIGHLIGHTS IN 2022

- New parks were turned over to the City in the following neighbourhoods:
 - Aspen Ridge: Drainage Channel (MR16, 17 & D9), Tatanka Park
- Completed infrastructure upgrades to the following parks:
 - Parc Canada
 - Kensington North Entry
 - AS Wright Park
 - WW Ashley Dryland Pond (part of the Flood Control Strategy)
 - Hyde Park Interpretive Signage
- Playground Upgrades:
 - Canon Smith
 - Meadowlark
 - Wilson Park
 - WJL Harvey Park North
- Continued development of a portfolio management framework to prioritize business plan objectives and investments through the Building Better Parks capital allocation process.
- Park amenity buildings: RCD and Parks are working to bring washroom facilities, winter warmup areas, and summer play program buildings to parks across the city. Buildings were constructed in Funk and Alexander McGillivray Young Parks in 2022.



EXPRESSWAY TURF MAINTENANCE

- Manage contracted Freeway/Expressway mowing services on over 490 hectares of Road Rights of Way.
- The contract for 2022/2023 has reached its mid-way point, with the option to renew for an additional 2 years at the end of 2023.
- Improved Traffic Control Plans to ensure worker safety. This includes mandatory safety zones where City Sign Shop support is required on identified high-risk areas.
- The Park Access Coordinator role was reassigned to the Customer Service & Support team, allowing for cross-training of duties and expanded coverage for park access inquiries.
- Program to remove volunteer elm seedlings from expressway around fence lines and guardrails was completed.

PARKS DEPARTMENT – LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023

- Implementation of the Enterprise Asset Management (EAM) system across the Parks Departments' business lines.
 - EAM will track the work occurring in City green spaces and will be central to Parks' Asset Management of green infrastructure and playgrounds by providing data on work capacity and expenditures.
 - Parks will focus on implementing tracking for both regular maintenance and emergent work from requests.
 - Parks is working with its partners in IT to develop a robust and user-friendly solution for time entry into the EAM system that provides ease of use and the ability to review data before entry into SAP.
- A report will go to Council regarding Park Development Standards, focusing on key priorities to bring improvements to the planning, design, and construction and establishment of green spaces.
- In 2023 Parks will add the following parks to its maintenance inventory:
 - kiwetin - Aspen Ridge Greenway
 - kisikaciwan Park - Aspen Ridge MR15
 - Lamb Park -Aspen Ridge MR 19
 - Brighton MR1 (Core Park)
 - Brighton MR3
 - Brighton MR 11
 - Churchill Park Storm Pond
 - Rosewood Secondary Core
 - Lions Century Park Phase 1
- The Pathway to a Sustainable Urban Forest: Implementation of the Urban Forest Management Plan was presented at the October 31, 2022 City Council Regular Business Meeting. Work will continue in 2023 towards the implementation of new a new tree protection policy and bylaw.
- Preliminary design and cost estimating work on an accessible and inclusive ceremonial site for scattering remains in the South Saskatchewan River will be brought forward for City Council review.
- Work towards implementation of elements of the Cemetery Master Plan such as:
 - Development of a Cemetery Marketing Plan
 - Review and updating of the Cemetery Bylaw and Regulations
 - Reviewing Service Hours and extend by ½ hour
 - Refine designs of the West Cremation Garden and Northern Burial Areas.
 - Refine irrigation infrastructure replacement costs.
- Leading a committee to plan an event celebrating the centennial of the Next-of-Kin Memorial Avenue located on June 18, 2023.
- The City's Weed Inspector position will transition to the Community Standards Department where it will act under the Bylaw Enforcement area. Parks and Community Standards will leverage their strong relationship to assist in transition and collaborate on work in this area where appropriate.
- Playground condition and accessibility ratings will be completed.
- Accessible playground options will be developed and shared with City Council

- Implementation of Natural Infrastructure Projects
- The Landscape Development team will determine the 10 year park upgrade plan and apply for external funding via the federal Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation fund. The fund can provide up to 40% matching funds for qualified projects. Additional funding will help Parks enhance its park upgrades by providing more green plantings and park amenities, as well as improving infrastructure to reduce water consumption and associated emissions.
- Parks will implement a work culture initiative in association with the Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Department. The initiative will feature 14 topics aimed at improving work culture and employee experiences and allowing staff to provide feedback and learn more about ways to help one another and promote both mental and physical safety. Feedback will be compiled and a year-end summary and action plan will be developed with the feedback provided.





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