

City Cemeteries

Led by: Director of Parks & Open Spaces

Service Description

The City has two active operating cemeteries that offer a wide range of interment products and services: Prairie Sky Cemetery and Queen's Park (although the land supply for casket interments at Queen's Park will likely end in 2023). The City also has a new regional park and cemetery being planned (in central north Calgary) and four historic cemeteries (Union, Burnsland, Chinese and St. Mary's). The Government of Alberta's Cemetery Act states that only municipalities and faith-based organizations can provide new cemeteries. There is a provincial obligation to maintain cemetery sites in perpetuity.

Service Updates

Key Service Results

As a result of public demand, there is no longer casket plot inventory available at Queen's Park Cemetery. Land supply for casket interments at Queen's Park ended in December 2022. Columbarium, mausoleum, and cremation interment space and services are still available at Queen's Park.

Prairie Sky Cemetery (opened in 2021), located in the southeast, is now the only cemetery that offers casket burial and a wide selection of alternative interment products, including cremation interment alternatives (e.g., cremation plot, columbarium, scattering garden) and green burials. City Cemeteries Initiative 1, a priority capital project at Prairie Sky Cemetery, is progressing as planned.

Green burials support corporate climate change initiatives and are designed to reduce environmental impacts. City Cemeteries Initiative 9 was successful, as green burials slowly trended upward in 2023 since becoming available in 2021 at Prairie Sky Cemetery.

Service Challenges

There was a decrease in overall interments sales, although there was an increased trend towards cremation alternatives. This may have been directly influenced by a lack of casket plot inventory in the Queen's Park cemetery and slow inventory uptake of the Prairie Sky cemetery location. Slow inventory uptake of the Prairie Sky Cemetery continues, and as a result there is a decline in advance planning for casket and cremation plot purchases.

Capital work at Prairie Sky Cemetery progressed and includes the design and development of a new customer service and administration building and supporting landscape work on site. Although capital funding was acquired, a capital funding shortfall has been determined, and additional funding will be required to fully fund the project. A project charter has been completed and a prime consultant has been acquired. Completion of this facility is now expected in 2026.

Trends & Potential Uncertainties

The Perpetual Care Fund (PCF), which consists of 40 per cent of previous year's burial plot and memorialization revenues, is being reinvested into sustaining operations in perpetuity. The PCF will likely decline in 2020-30 to help support establishing the new Prairie Sky Cemetery and currently unfunded new north regional park and cemetery.

Other risks include the exploration into a long-term potable water source at Prairie Sky Cemetery and severe weather impacting maintenance. Revenues may also decline with the transition of operations to Prairie Sky Cemetery, as this new cemetery builds customer awareness and clientele. City Cemeteries management continues to work with internal and external partners to mitigate these risks.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

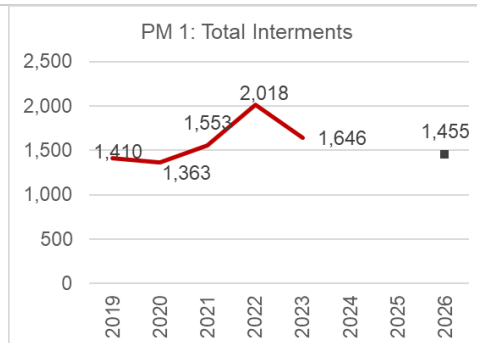
→ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

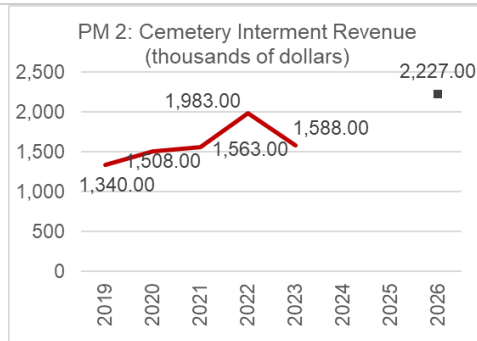
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

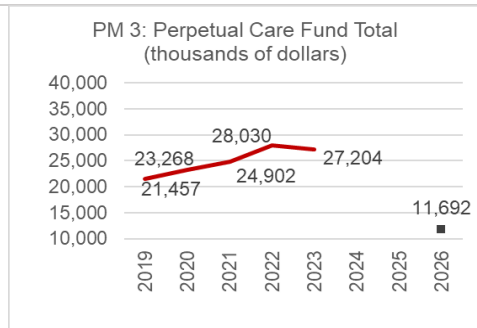
Status



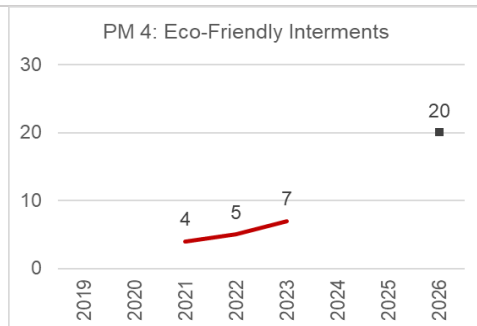
This measure represents annual burial plot, cremation, and mausoleum interments. In 2021 and 2022, there was an overall increase with the lifting of restrictions for public gatherings due to the pandemic. In 2023, total interments declined as predicted due to the end of the service's casket burial land supply at Queen's Park Cemetery.



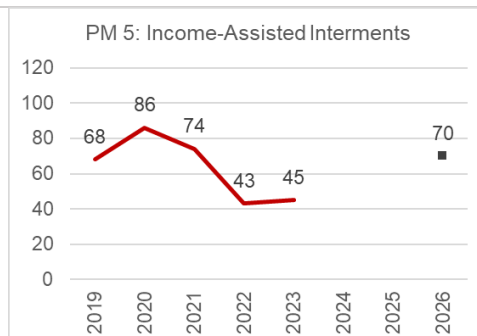
This measure captures annual burial plot, cremation, and mausoleum interment revenues. Revenue surpassed projections in 2022. In 2023, there was a decrease in overall interments sales, although there was an increased trend towards cremation alternatives. The decreased value for 2023 may have been directly influenced by a lack of casket plot inventory in the Queen's Park cemetery and slow inventory uptake of the Prairie Sky cemetery location.



City Cemeteries transfers 40 per cent of annual revenue to a Perpetual Care Fund (PCF). This fund supports provincial legislation to pay for cemetery maintenance in perpetuity (i.e., once a cemetery runs out of land and no longer generates revenue). The 2023 PCF annual total declined as predicted. The PCF is expected to enter a period of decline in 2023-26 (before rebounding in 2030-on and growing again towards more self-sustainability) as the service 1) loses revenue from Queen's Park Cemetery 2) establishes Prairie Sky Cemetery amid capital funding constraints and 3) works towards establishing a future northern regional park and cemetery.



The design and opening of the Prairie Sky Cemetery introduced green burials as an interment option in 2021. In 2023, there was an increase in green burials, and demand for this new burial option has been trending slowly upward. Green burials offer a dignified option with minimal environmental impacts (e.g., reduction of carbon emissions and habitat preservation). Green burials feature the use of non-toxic and biodegradable materials, such as ecofriendly caskets and burial shrouds. In comparable markets, this option has not been popular to date. The four burials in 2021 represented some pent-up demand for this option.



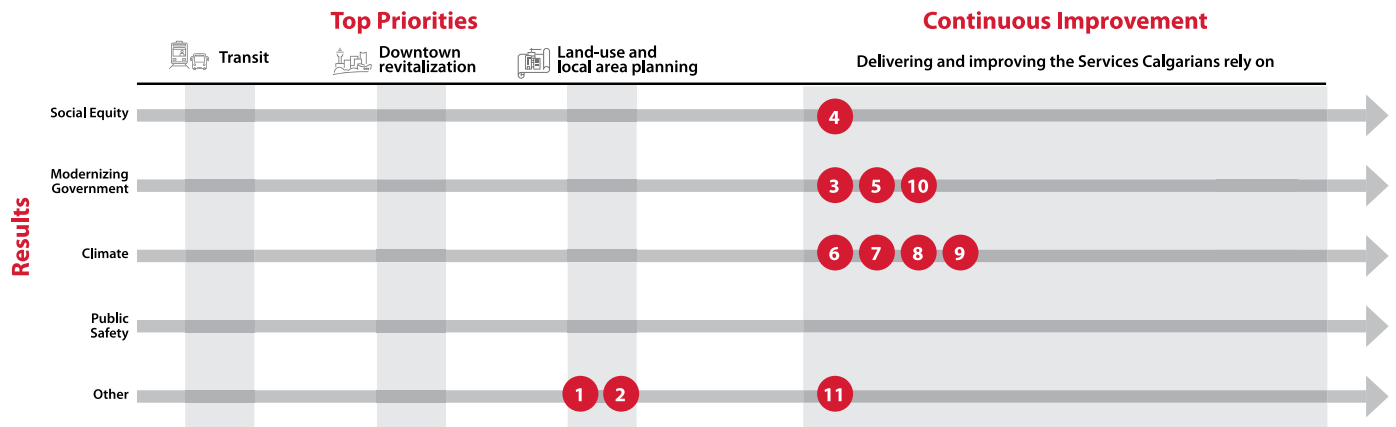
City Cemeteries operates under a not-for-profit business model. In addition to a wide variety of dignified, value-based services and pricing options for all Calgarians, City Cemeteries provide services to customers in financial constraints who would likely not be able to afford interment services provided by private cemetery providers. In 2023, there was a slight increase in customers who participated in Provincially sponsored Social Assistance Programs that The City provides interment space to at reduced rates.











Progress on Service Delivery

Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



- Legend**
- Completed
 - Progressing as planned
 - Not progressing as planned
 - Not started
 - Initiative number

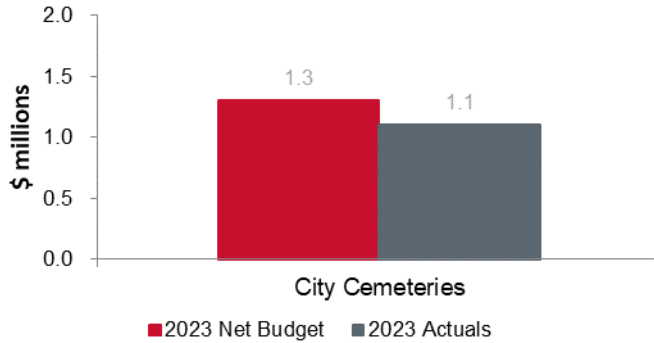
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Complete Phase One of development at Prairie Sky Cemetery by 2026 to continue providing this provincially legislated service for the coming decades of Calgarians.	This priority capital project is progressing as planned. Completion of this phase is expected in 2026.	
2 Meet Calgarian's needs and expectations for cemetery services by designing and constructing a customer service and administrative building at Prairie Sky Cemetery by 2024 (the service is currently working out of the nearby Ralph Klein Park building).	This priority capital project is progressing but not as planned. A project charter has been completed and a prime consultant has been acquired. A capital funding shortfall has been determined additional funding will be required to prevent descoping of the project. Completion of this facility is now expected in 2026.	
3 Manage Calgarians' expectations by implementing a closing strategy for Queen's Park Cemetery once casket interment space land supply ends in 2023.	The City of Calgary sold the last casket burial plot for Queen's Park Cemetery in December 2022 (cemetery opened in 1940). In 2024, the site will still have columbarium, mausoleum, and cremation burial sites available for purchase. Cemetery sales information has been updated, proactive communications underway, including media stories.	
4 Provide a diverse range of affordable and value-based cemetery products and service options by conducting an annual cemeteries price benchmark analysis.	Customer service and product option price lists were updated as part of the 2023-26 budget process. Prices will continue to be reviewed annually to respond to market and industry trends.	
5 Connect with Calgarians by re-establishing interactive community events (i.e., Mother's and Father's Day flowers, historic cemetery tours, etc.) and exploring new opportunities.	This initiative is progressing as planned. Events in 2023 included providing cemetery visitors with free flowers on Mother's and Father's Day in Q1/2. The service line continued to offer historic Cemetery Tours for the public and supporting Remembrance Day ceremonies for military and veteran groups. The Chinese Garden Project at Prairie Sky Cemetery was an enhancement to the burial section, allowing Calgarians to engage in a space to cherish their loved ones. It included a paving stone, retaining wall, gardens, ceremonial burning ovens, a ceremonial alter, statuary (Foo Dog) and a moon gate.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
6 Support climate resilience by implementing climate-friendly initiatives through the strategic design, development and operations of the Prairie Sky Cemetery and new north cemetery-regional park (i.e. tree planting, seeding vs. sodding, natural landscapes, etc.).	A proactive, eco-sensitive maintenance program has been implemented at Prairie Sky Cemetery. With additional programming put in place in 2023, graves were cleaned on a more frequent basis to prevent artificial flowers or other materials being blown off graves and into the surrounding wetlands and farmlands.	
7 Reduce water use by implementing innovative, alternative products and strategic cemetery design (i.e., monument rain shadowing, drip irrigation, open green space).	This work is progressing as planned. For example, exploration of different arid condition grass seeds reducing water needs that are tolerant throughout the dry summer months. Progressive cemetery design, creating greater areas with reduced upright monument, reducing rain shadowing allowing for better overall irrigation.	
8 Support The City's climate strategies by introducing more natural landscape spaces within current cemetery spaces (i.e., reduced mowing cycles, less irrigation, native grasses, support wildlife and biodiversity, etc.).	This work is progressing as planned. For example, the green burial site, a natural area within the cemetery planted with prairie grasses minimizes maintenance and supporting the biodiversity of the site.	
9 Continually improve service and mitigate environmental impacts by exploring actionable and effective emerging interment trend opportunities (i.e., green burial, scattering gardens, cremation alternative interment options, etc.).	The addition of a scattering garden provides a valued alternative to families choosing cremation as their final disposition. In 2023, there was an increase in green burials, and demand for this new burial option has been trending slowly upward.	
10 Ensure service sustainability in the coming decades by continuing to allocate 40 per cent of annual interment and memorialization product sales to The City of Calgary's Perpetual Care Fund.	The City continued to transfer 40 per cent of annual interment and memorialization product revenue (based on the Cemetery Business Plan and industry best practice) to a Perpetual Care Fund (PCF) in 2023. This fund helps support and pay for cemetery maintenance (e.g., turf care, monument rehabilitation). The PCF will likely decline in 2020-30 to help support establishing the new Prairie Sky Cemetery and currently unfunded new north regional park and cemetery.	
11 Provide a safe and healthy environment for cemetery visitors, employees, contractors and volunteers by strengthening the commitment to safety and well-being.	Initiatives in 2023 included: additional onsite signage with respect to speed limits and support for the eco-sensitive programs within the Prairie Sky cemetery. Continued tailgate talks and participation in corporate Health and Safety programs, including increased onsite inspections supporting the City's safety initiatives and programs.	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of December 31, 2023

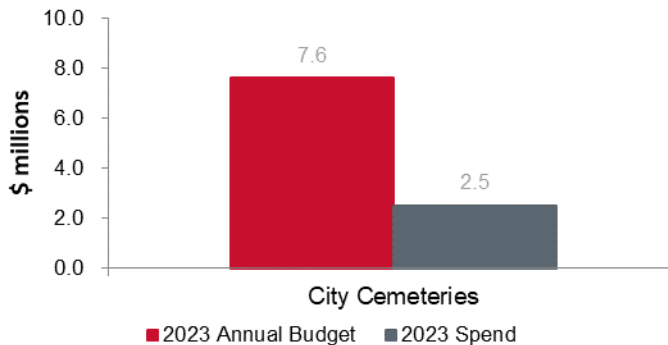


Operating Budget Updates - 2023 net operating budget vs actuals:

City Cemeteries had a favourable operating variance of \$0.2 million. The primary drivers of the variance were tied to indirect savings in the Parks & Open Spaces Business Unit. City Cemeteries direct impacts were on budget for 2023.

In 2023, City Cemeteries expenditures for the period were within targeted forecasts. Cemeteries continued to focus on activities within its corporate objectives. Overall, it continued to focus on enhancing customer service, operational improvements, engaging internal reorganizational initiatives, and business-to-business communications. With Prairie Sky Cemetery now the primary cemetery with a full range of available interment options and with slow inventory uptake, both interment numbers and revenues have fallen below projected targets. As a result, operational demands have impacted the growth of the cemeteries Perpetual Care Fund.

Capital Budget and Spend as of December 31, 2023



Capital Budget Updates - 2023 total capital budget vs 2023 spend:

City Cemeteries has spent 32.3 per cent of the 2023 approved capital budget. The underspend is mainly attributed to construction delays in the Prairie Sky Cemetery irrigation that was waiting on a pumphouse contract and water license. Bids came in much higher than anticipated and several rounds of contract negotiations were required to reduce the bid price.

In 2023, the capital expenditures have been primarily used to complete most of the Prairie Sky Cemetery irrigation design and Administration Building prime consultant procurement and pre-design validation.