

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, Burnside, 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

Highlights

City Cemeteries continues the transition of most of its operations from Queen's Park Cemetery (opened in 1940) in central northwest to the Prairie Sky Cemetery (opened in 2021) in the southeast.

This transition was marked by the end of available casket burial space at Queen's Park Cemetery in December 2022. Columbarium, Mausoleum, and cremation interment space and services are still available at Queen's Park in the coming years.

Capital work at Prairie Sky Cemetery in 2023 includes the design and development of a new customer service and administration building and supporting landscape work on site. This project is underway and proceeding well on timeline, budget with a completion target of 2026.

Challenges

City Cemeteries continues to meet increased service demands again this year for interments. The increase is a result from families postponing interment services in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19- restrictions for public gatherings and funerals.

There is a risk in the coming years that revenues will decline with a transition of operations to the south Prairie Sky Cemetery as this new cemetery builds customer awareness and clientele. To mitigate potential revenue declines, City Cemeteries is supported by a Perpetual Care Fund, which consists of 40 per cent of previous year's burial plot and memorialization revenues being reinvested into sustaining operations in perpetuity.

Other risks include the exploration into a long-term potable water source at Prairie Sky Cemetery, severe weather impacting maintenance and unfunded capital for a new north regional park and cemetery. City Cemeteries management continues to work with internal and external partners to mitigate these risks.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

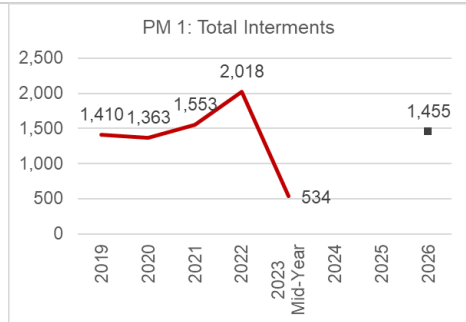
➡ Progressing as planned

⬅ Not progressing as planned

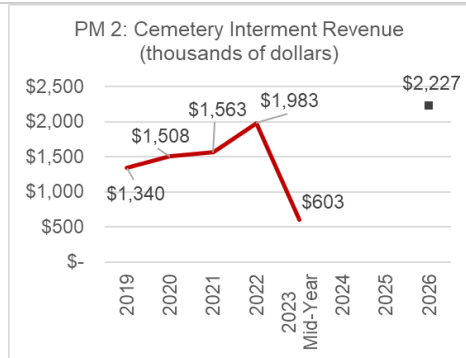
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

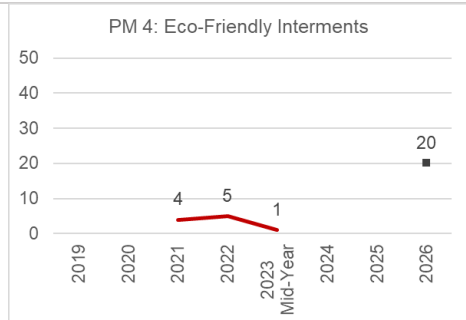
Status



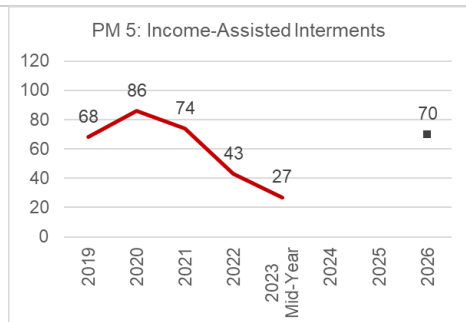
This measure represents annual burial plot, cremation, and mausoleum interments. Annual interment totals have been steady since 2019. In 2021 and 2022, there was an overall increase with the lifting of restrictions for public gatherings due to the pandemic. Looking towards 2026, a slight decline in total interments is expected due to the end of the service's land supply for casket burials at Queen's Park Cemetery.



This measure captures annual burial plot, cremation, and mausoleum interment revenues. Revenue surpassed projections in 2022 after negative pandemic and inflationary impacts in 2020 or 2021. Looking towards 2026, revenues are expected show a gradual increase. Current numbers are impacted by loss of inventory at Queen's Park Cemetery and the gradual growth through more advance planning and at-need plot purchases at Prairie Sky Cemetery. Revenues will continue increase due to incremental price increases to better reflect market levels and inflation.



The design and opening of the Prairie Sky Cemetery introduces green burials as an interment option. The City's first green burials occurred in Q3 2021. 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. Slower growth is expected in the coming years.



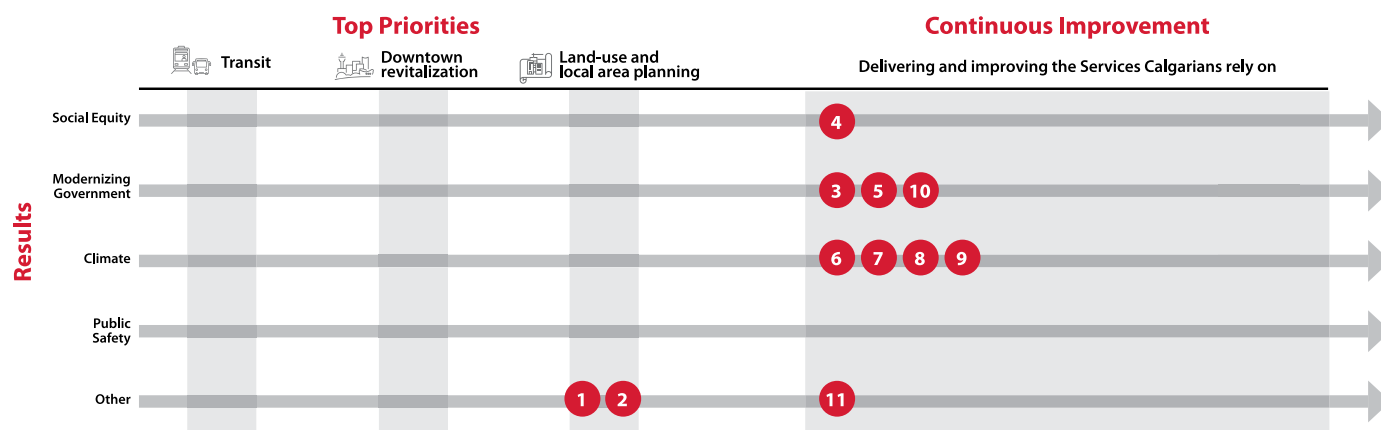
City Cemeteries operates under a not-for-profit business model. In addition to a wide variety of dignified, value-based services and pricing options for all Calgarians, City Cemeteries provide services to customers in financial constraints who would likely not be able to afford interment services provided by private cemetery providers. This measure shows the number of customers participating 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



Initiative number

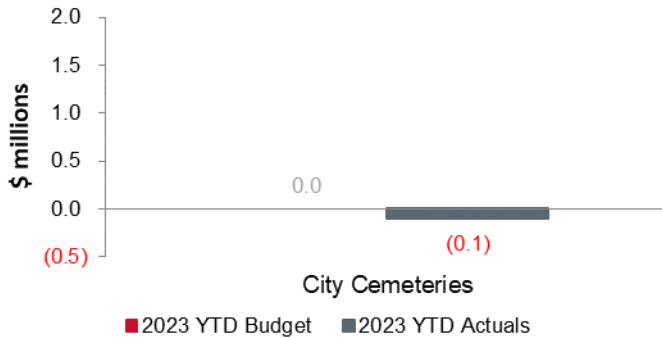
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Complete Phase One of development at Prairie Sky Cemetery by 2026 to continue providing this provincially legislated service for the coming decades of Calgarians.	This priority capital project is progressing as planned. Completion of this phase is expected in 2026.	
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 procurement for a prime consultant has been put into motion. 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). Looking towards 2023, 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 to date include providing cemetery visitors with free flowers on Mother's and Father's Day in Q1/2. Future events this year include historic Cemetery Tours for the public and supporting Remembrance Day ceremonies for military and veteran groups.	
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. As a result of this initiative, graves will be cleaned on a more frequent basis to prevent artificial flowers or other materials being blown off graves and into the surrounding wetlands and farmlands.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
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 minimizing 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.).	This work is progressing as planned. For example, the green burial site, a natural area within the cemetery planted with prairie grasses minimizing maintenance and supporting the biodiversity of the site. The addition of a scattering garden provides a valued alternative to families choosing cremation as their final disposition.	
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 transfers 40 per cent of annual interment and memorialization product revenue (based on an industry best practice) to a Perpetual Care Fund (PCF). 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 to date include: 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

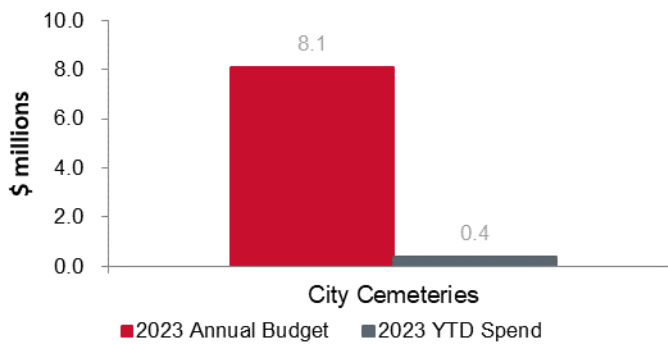
Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of June 30, 2023



Operating Budget Updates - 2023 YTD net operating budget vs actuals:

City Cemeteries has a minimal favourable variance as a result of the timing of procurement and supply, the work will be completed this year

Capital Budget and Spend as of June 30, 2023



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

City Cemeteries has spent 4 per cent of the 2023 approved capital budget. Year-to-date, the capital expenditures have been used to deliver the following:

- installing two Columbarium Wall Units at Prairie Sky;
- some of the budget funded by the Cemetery reserve, was setup for potential lifecycle needs. Currently no projects have been identified so budget is being pushed out until a need arises;
- spend is delayed as a result of supply issues and delayed.