

Parks & Open Spaces

Led by: Director of Parks & Open Spaces

Service Description

Calgary's parks and open spaces are cherished places that connect Calgarians with nature, our heritage and each other. The citywide parks system provides Calgarians with safe, inclusive, active-living opportunities. The system includes regional and neighbourhood parks, natural areas and the river valleys. The service maintains and stewards almost 8,700 hectares of public spaces (the equivalent of 11,000 football fields spread out citywide over 5,200 parcels of land). Parks and Open Spaces conserves and promotes biodiverse ecosystems and cultural landscapes. It supports park stewardship among Calgarians through volunteer and education programs.

Service Updates

Highlights

Parks and Open Spaces saw several highlights so far in 2023, including:

- A Washroom Attendant Pilot Project launched at Olympic Plaza and Century Gardens. The City is partnering with Alberta Alliance Who Educate and Advocate Responsibly with the goal to improve public safety in two busy downtown parks. The pilot is funded in part by the Province of Alberta.
 - The City's inclusive playgrounds won Calgary Child's a 2023 Parents' Choice Award in Q1 as the Best Accessible/Inclusive Experience for Kids. Inclusive playgrounds are meant to be engaging, fun spaces where everyone can play regardless of their abilities.
 - Parks and Open Spaces initiated a Tipi Project this year with partners at the Tsuut'ina, Blackfoot, Stoney and Metis Nations. Tipis from these Signatories of Treaty 7 partners will be in City parks this summer for all to enjoy. This cultural learning opportunity for Calgarians is one small step in the journey toward reconciliation and celebrating unique traditions and practices.
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Challenges

In recent years, there has been an increase in real and perceived safety concerns in downtown parks for the public and City staff. In response, the service is working closely with a Downtown Park Safety Committee whose mandate is to optimize public safety through investigating and implementing strategies. Various initiatives have been launched: e.g., park activations (free events) to encourage more Calgarians into the parks, enhanced communication between partner organizations, increased staff training and awareness and a Washroom Attendant Pilot Project.

The service is working towards full implementation of a new Parks Asset Reporting and Information System (PARIS 2.0) for greater insight and accuracy on parks data for sustainable improvement for operations. Technical challenges include integration with the 3-1-1 system and large-scale staff training requirements. The service has added more resources to this project and collaborating with Information Technologies and Human Resources.



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

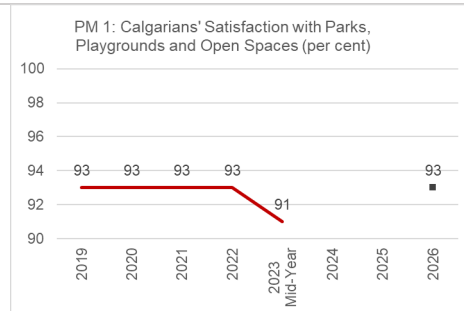
➡ Progressing as planned

⚠ Not progressing as planned

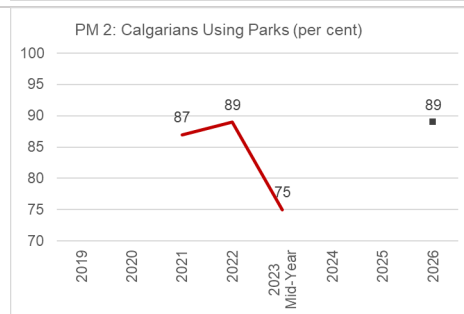
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

Status



Calgary's parks have consistently scored high since the introduction of the annual Calgarian satisfaction survey. The 91% score is from the 2023 Spring Survey of Calgarians Report. The slight decline may reflect the lower usage of parks in the winter months by Calgarians and the stress the system absorbed during high usage during the pandemic. For 2023-26, Parks and Open Spaces aims to maintain high public satisfaction with requested funding to maintain current service levels (with annual growth funding) and lifecycle capital funding for repairs and replacements of aging park amenities.



This Pulse on Parks survey result for the mid-year report reveals the percentage of Calgarians who reported using parks in months with snow (October to March). The year-end score should be higher with more Calgarians using parks in the warmer months (April to September). For example, in 2022, park usage peaked at 89 per cent in the months without snow, while in months with snow usage was still strong at 75 per cent. The service aims to increase the use of parks in winter months with the continuation of cold-weather park attractions (such as skating, cross-country ski trails, firepits, etc.).



Note: Not all performance measures were reported on for this report. To see the 2022 data for performance measures, please visit [Service plans and budgets \(calgary.ca\)](https://www.calgary.ca/service-plans-and-budgets). Additional measures that will be included in the 2023 year-end performance report include:

PM 3: Park Assets in Acceptable, Good or Excellent Condition (per cent)

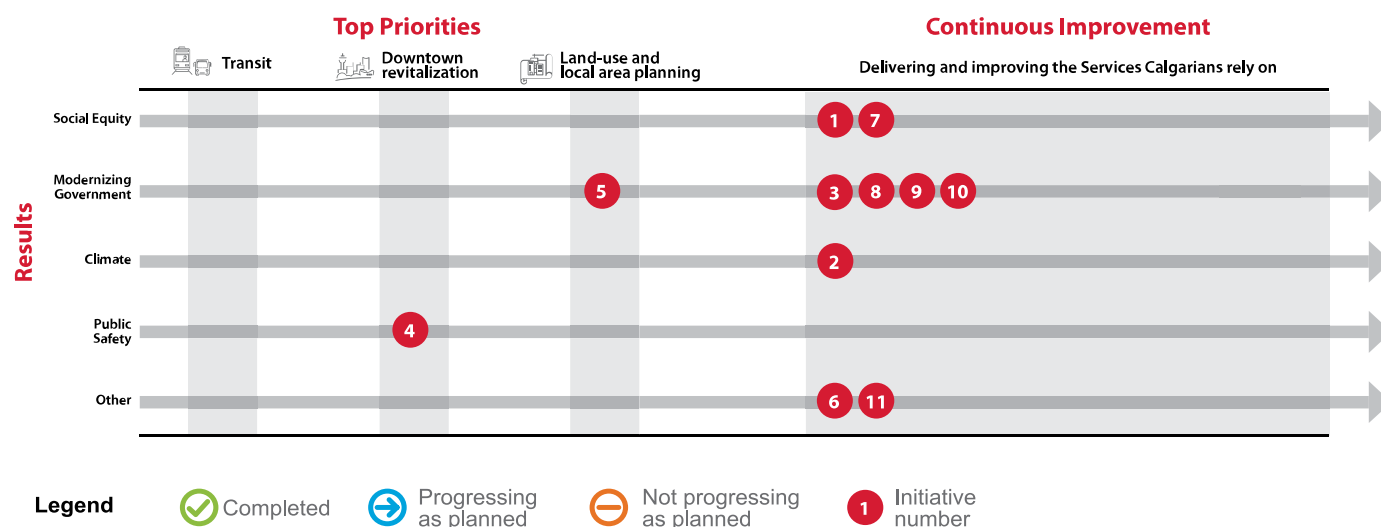
PM 4: Hectares of New Parkland Added (hectares)

PM 5: Hectares of Park Habitat Restoration (hectares)









Progress on Service Delivery

Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



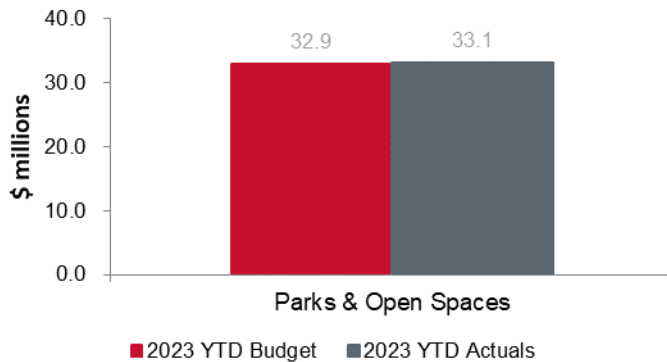
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Enhance the quality of life of Calgarians, Parks and Open Spaces by providing safe, inclusive, vibrant and accessible parks and open spaces.	Parks and Open Spaces is maintaining 2022 service levels with its available budget, including newer winter amenities introduced during the pandemic. Capital highlights so far include the Bow to Bluff Corridor that was completed in Q2. Bow to Bluff began as an independent, citizen-led initiative that borders the Northwest LRT line between the Bow River and McHugh Bluff. The reimagined corridor now includes an upgraded pathway connecting three separate public spaces – Bow Landing Park, Harvest Park and Play Park – each outfit with unique amenities bringing people together.	Progressing as planned
2 Support climate resilience, focusing on improving the health of the ecological network, through the development and implementation of Habitat Management Plans.	The Ecological Network (EN) model was integrated into policy and open data layer. Urban Conservation and Climate & Environment apply EN to park planning in new community development. Habitat management plans (HMP) for four City natural areas (Edworthy, Douglasdale, Weaselhead and JH Woods parks) are in planning stages and due by end of 2023 with major Capital restoration design & site preparation scheduled to begin at each site in Q3. The Weaselhead-Glenmore HMP has completed restoration feasibility study and public engagement; consultation with Tsuut'ina Nation on the plan has begun in Q2.	Progressing as planned
3 Assist and encourage commercial activities in City parks by continuing to improve processes for interested businesses and citizens who can enhance the park user experience.	In Q1, Parks and Open Spaces finalized our Vendors in Parks guidelines and shared them with previous vendors to further provide more transparency and structure around the program. Part of this work included expediting previous vendors applications in hopes to stagger applications and create a more efficient process. As of Q2, we have activated 12 vendors in parks with four more in the process and applications still arriving. This includes new vendors to the program.	Progressing as planned
4 Support downtown revitalization to increase community safety and enhance Calgarians' experiences in our downtown parks and open spaces by working with our partners, including public sector, private sector and non-government organizations.	A new Washroom Attendant Pilot Project launched at Olympic Plaza and Century Gardens in Q2. The City is partnering with Alberta Alliance Who Educate and Advocate Responsibly (AAWEAR) with the goal to improve public safety in two busy downtown parks. The pilot is funded in part by the Province. Other ongoing efforts include park activations (e.g., free events) and more collaboration with other organizations and City services.	Progressing as planned
5 Improve the sustainability and resiliency of Calgary's parks and open spaces system by updating the Parks Open Space Plan which is the overarching policy that governs use, provision and preservation of our municipal parks system.	Public engagement was completed for Connect: Calgary's Parks Plan in Q2 2023. Once finalized, this plan will be a new guiding document on how The City will develop and manage an exceptional, inclusive and sustainable parks system into the coming decades.	Progressing as planned

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
6 Maintain community connections and Calgarians' wellness by providing year-round amenities and activities, including winter activities and new attractions as opportunities arise.	Parks and Open Spaces is maintaining its 2022 service levels in 2023, including maintain new cold-weather park programs and amenities introduced during the pandemic to provide the public with safe, fun and healthy activities during the winter (e.g., outdoor skating ponds, cross-country ski trails, firepits). This year, the service is planning to extend its popular skating paths where feasible.	
7 Celebrate Calgary's past and strengthen The City's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation by continuing to maintain and celebrate Calgary's historic and cultural landscapes.	Parks and Open Spaces initiated a Tipi Project this year with partners at the Tsuut'ina, Blackfoot, Stoney and Metis Nations. Tipis from these Nations of Treaty 7 partners will be in City parks this summer for all to enjoy. This cultural learning opportunity for Calgarians is one small step in the journey toward reconciliation and celebrating unique traditions and practices.	
8 To maintain Calgary's high quality parks and open space system, Parks and Open Spaces will continue exploring new funding mechanisms and partnerships that can provide value and benefits for Calgarians.	Parks and Open Spaces is working on a significant naming rights, sponsorship and capital improvement opportunity and submitting a proposal by the end of Q2. Additionally, we are seeing more naming, gifts-in-kind and smaller sponsorship opportunities present and are near completion on a project with Kal-Tire Foundation on enhancing safety and access in North Glenmore Park. Park volunteer programs also benefit our service, including the 56th Annual Pathway and River Cleanup that took part this Spring.	
9 Connect more Calgarians with their parks and open spaces system by developing and implementing a marketing and communications strategy to engage Calgarians on the value and benefits of using parks and accessing nature in the city.	Park and Open Spaces public communications, social media updates and park outreach activities are ongoing. Planning for a revamped public education campaign is slated for later this year.	
10 Support continuous improvement of the service by exploring more data and technology options to improve decision making, sustainability and service delivery.	A major and complex transition is underway for Parks and Open Spaces' Geographic Information System-based asset management and work tracking information system. This new system aims to help optimize processes, reporting and provide more data-based decision making for the service. Implementation and staff training for the new system is slated to be complete by the end of 2023.	
11 Provide a safe and healthy environment for park users, employees, contractors and volunteers by strengthening commitments to safety and well being.	The service is strongly focused on the continuous improvement of health, safety and environmental improvements for its staff, customers and partners. Initiatives this year include a Washroom Attendant pilot project for Calgarians in our downtown parks and expanding safety training for staff to deal with potentially challenging situations and environments.	



Service Updates on Financial Performance

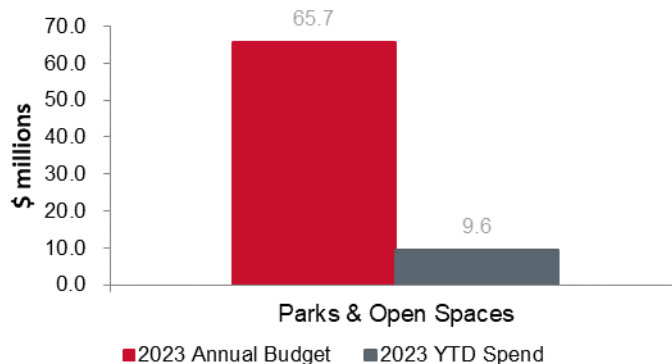
Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of June 30, 2023



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

Parks & Open Spaces is closely tracking with the budget and expect to be at zero at the end of the year. The small YTD variance showing in June will be covered by scheduled corporate allocations coming in July.

Capital Budget and Spend as of June 30, 2023



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

Parks & Open Spaces has spent 15% of its capital budget and is projecting that 55% of its 2023 capital budget will be spent by the end of the year. The lower spend is being driven by deferred/extended construction timelines, resulting from limited resource capacity and delays in procurement. The reduced spend is also being caused by delays in the execution of design/development plans for new park development and major park upgrades.