

# Urban Forestry

Led by: Director of Parks & Open Spaces

## Service Description

This service manages public trees and promotes tree stewardship to Calgarians. Trees increase climate resiliency by improving air quality, reducing storm water runoff, and providing shade, cooling and wildlife habitat. Trees increase property values and create attractive, stress-reducing environments. The City plants public trees to replace those lost from construction and natural decline and grows the urban canopy to benefit future generations. The City also receives public trees from the development industry. The City waters newly planted trees for healthy establishment, and inspects and prunes trees to increase their lifespans. Urban Forestry reviews development projects to protect trees.

## Service Updates

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### Highlights

The Branching Out private tree giveaway was extremely well received by Calgarians. Due to high public demand in past years, the number of trees provided in 2023 was increased by 400 per cent. In 2023, all 2,000 trees were claimed within hours during registration. In collaboration with Parks & Open Spaces, we offer guided tree walks, volunteer tree planting opportunities and in-person presentations to increase and support tree-related public education.

Canopy Expansion planting program was completed in mid-June with 91,000 seedlings being planted this year in various communities. This initiative is above and beyond Urban Forestry's regular planting program of 5,400 caliper (large) trees. Seedlings take longer to establish (and to contribute to the urban canopy growth) than the caliper trees. This initiative focuses on mass planting of smaller trees (whips and plugs) that, when planted in optimal areas, can establish and provide increased canopy cover and biodiversity.

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### Challenges

Risks include severe weather events (snow, winds, drought, hail, etc.) and tree pests and diseases. As of June, drought is a concern with the hot spring weather.

The City is at risk of not meeting the Municipal Development Plan's long-term urban canopy target at our current planting levels. Planting 3,500 trees per year will maintain the current urban canopy level. Planting another 4,000 trees per year will get us to the MDP target by 2060. Current Capital funding supports planting 5,600 trees annually through 2026.

The increasing number of mature trees lost to developments is also a risk without improved policies, planning and planting standards. The aging of large canopy trees could result in more canopy loss. A process for succession planning with other city infrastructure is needed.



# Measuring Our Performance

## Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

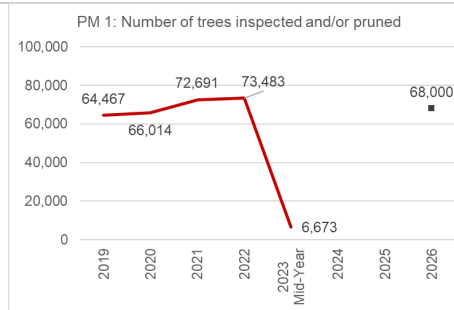
➔ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

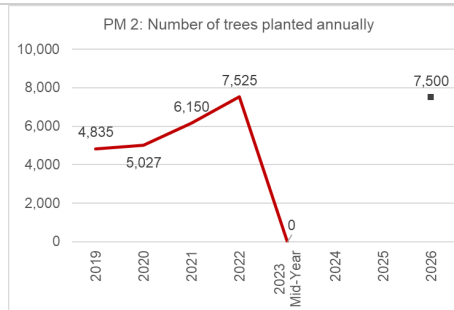
## Performance Measures

## Story behind the numbers

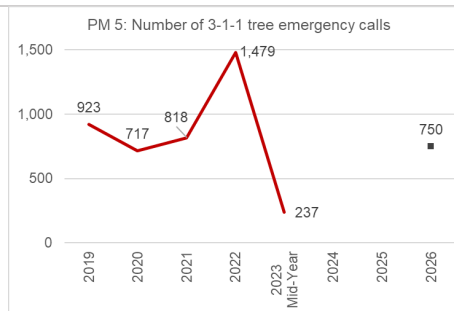
## Status



Risk-based tree inspections and pruning continue to be a service priority. This proactive work increases the resilience of the urban forest and leads to improved lifespans for trees and less damages from severe weather, such as extreme winds or late/early seasonal snowfalls. The City also completes regular tree assessments to ensure asset management data is accurate, enabling informed decision making and the efficient use of available funds. Risk based assessments of 50,000 trees along with the majority of our tree pruning will be implemented in Q3 and Q4 this year.



Tree planting for 2023 had not started at the time of this report but will be completed in October. Tree planting is funded through capital funding. Urban Forestry will replace about 3,500 trees per year that are at the end of their natural lifecycles. This will maintain Calgary's urban canopy level (currently about 50 per cent towards the long-term Municipal Development Plan target). To improve progress towards this target, Urban Forestry must plant another 4,000 new trees per year (7,500 in total). However, due to funding constraints, approximately 2,100 new trees will be planted per year.



Tree emergency calls increased sharply in 2022 due to two severe storms. After the 2014 September tree disaster, Urban Forestry implemented a proactive strategy to prioritize the pruning of existing public trees. As a result, despite increased severe weather events, the service typically expects fewer 3-1-1 tree emergency calls (such as calls to remove fallen trees or heavy branches blocking roads). So far, in 2023 we have received a small number of emergency calls due to the seasonal nature of the events. Typical storm activity is mid-June to September.



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:

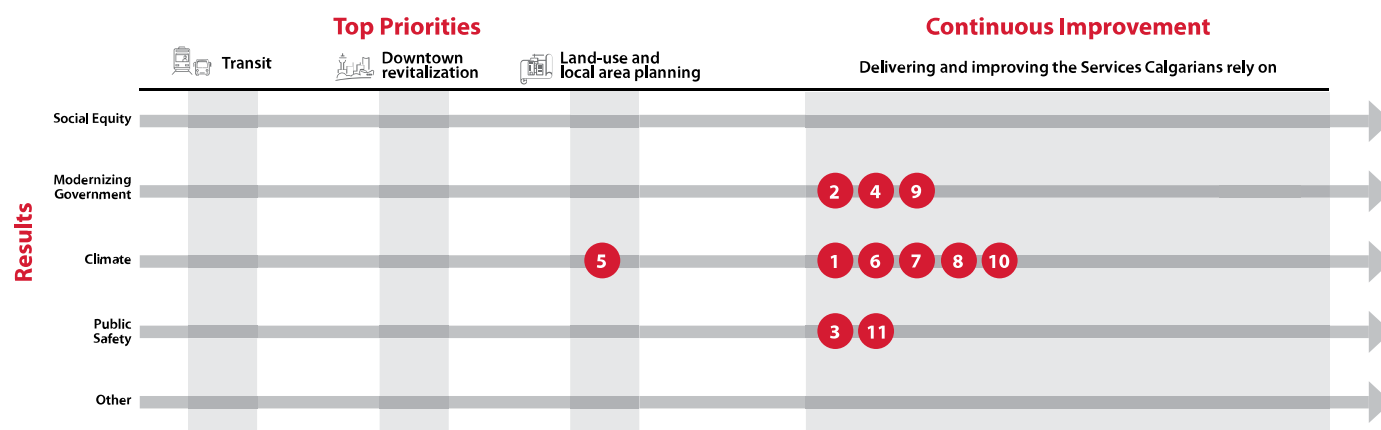
PM 3: Calgary's urban canopy percentage (per cent)

PM 4: Public Tree Maintenance Cost Per Calgarian (dollars)



## Progress on Service Delivery

### Alignment with Council Refined Priorities and Result Areas



#### Legend



Completed



Progressing  
as planned







Not progressing  
as planned



Initiative  
number

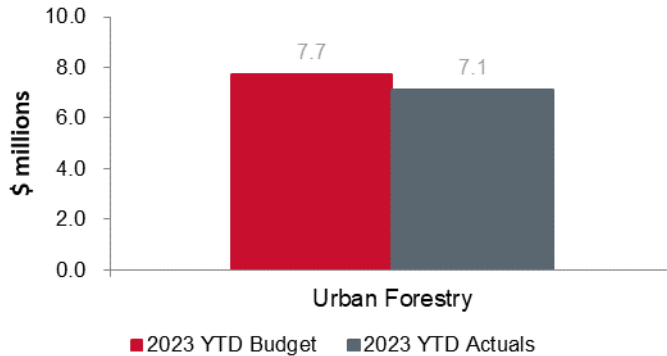
Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
1 Increase tree resilience to severe weather, invasive pests and diseases and expand tree lifespans by continuing to prioritize risk-based pruning of public trees.	This priority work is ongoing in 2023. As of June 14, 6673 City trees have been assessed and pruned. Due to a later than anticipated start up, Urban Forestry will complete most of this work in Q3 & Q4 this year.	
2 Protect mature trees and sustain the urban forest by continuing to responding to Calgarian (3-1-1) and developer requests for tree health, protection and hazard mitigation.	To date, the number of 3-1-1 service requests are reflective of a typical year. However, as was the case in 2014 and 2022, the number can escalate sharply with severe weather events that impact Calgary's trees.	
3 Enhance public safety and mitigate damages to property by removing dead trees and select stumps.	Removal of dead trees and stumps is ongoing. As of June 14, 1,601 dead trees have been removed. Our stump removal initiative is very seasonal in nature and starts at the end of Q2.	
4 Continually improve asset management and effectiveness by annually updating Urban Forestry's digital inventory of public trees.	This ongoing initiative is progressing well. As of April 10, over 78 per cent of our public tree assets have been inventoried within the past five years. In 2023, Urban Forestry established a target of inventorying a minimum 20 per cent of our public trees. This will ensure accuracy and promote data informed decision making, via a continuous five-year inventory cycle.	
5 Encourage sustainable tree planting in development and construction activities through tree inspections by aligning with land use bylaws, specifications and best practices.	Tree inspections are ongoing as part of various development streams including infill, capital and subdivision development inspections. The Urban Forestry Service Governance (UFSG) team is collaborating to increase role clarity and improved quality of tree planting. The UFSG team is also working towards improved protection of existing trees during construction activities.	
6 Sustain the urban forest by assessing the risk of, and treating public trees for, invasive pests and diseases.	In collaboration with Parks & Open Spaces, an Invasive Pest and Disease Crisis Response Plan is being developed. This response plan will guide decision making in the event (high likelihood) that our urban canopy is negatively impacted. An integrated pest management program for elm scale has been developed with implementation half completed as of Q2 2023. Various pest and disease monitoring traps (200+) have been installed and monitoring will be ongoing from June to October.	
7 Adapt trees to Calgary's harsh environment and trial new tree species in Calgary's climate by managing a civic nursery.	Tree work at the civic nursery is ongoing and on track for this time of year. Trees have been harvested (dug and wrapped) in preparation for planting throughout the City. New tree stock has been procured and planted, these trees will grow in the nursery for three to six years and support future planting.	

Initiative	Initiative Update	Status
8 Educate and incentivize Calgarians to plant and care for private trees by continuing to participate in public education and partnership programs.	The Branching Out private tree giveaway was extremely well received by Calgarians. Due to high public demand in past years, the number of trees provided in 2023 was increased by 400 per cent. In 2023, all 2,000 trees were claimed within hours during registration. In collaboration with Parks and Open Spaces, we offer guided tree walks, volunteer tree planting opportunities and in-person presentations to increase and support tree-related public education.	
9 Grow the urban canopy by continuing to participate in collaborative programs and funding opportunities (e.g., canopy growth, food security and volunteer planting).	A pilot initiative was developed to support community associations with installing orchards. Collaboration between the Calgary Horticulture Society, community associations (CA) and Urban Forestry will result in fruit trees being provided, along with specific pruning training to any interested CA. The initiative has just started and we anticipate over 10 CAs will install trees during 2023. Volunteer tree planting is also scheduled for July, with over 1,000 trees being installed at various locations throughout the City.	
10 Maintain Calgary's existing canopy through the development of a citywide program to systematically identify and replace older, larger trees when they are at the end of their natural lifecycles.	The Large Tree Canopy Succession initiative received funding for 2023-26. Current funding will support the removal, stump grinding and replacement tree planting of 200 trees in 2023. This work is in the planning stage, with trees being assessed and identified for removal in May-June. Tree removal and stump grinding will be completed in the Fall and replacement tree planting will be implemented in 2024.	
11 Provide a safe and healthy environment for park users, employees, contractors and volunteers by strengthening commitments to safety and well-being.	Promoting a positive safety culture is a key, ongoing priority in Urban Forestry. Two emergency response tabletop exercises have been completed (March & June) related to storm events. This ensures staff preparedness and provides opportunity for continuous improvement. Safety culture is embedded into all tasks completed by staff and contractors including safety meetings, reporting of incidents, worksite inspections and Field Level Hazards assessment. Leadership and Management have regularly been onsite to support and hear feedback directly from front facing staff.	



## Service Updates on Financial Performance

### Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of June 30, 2023

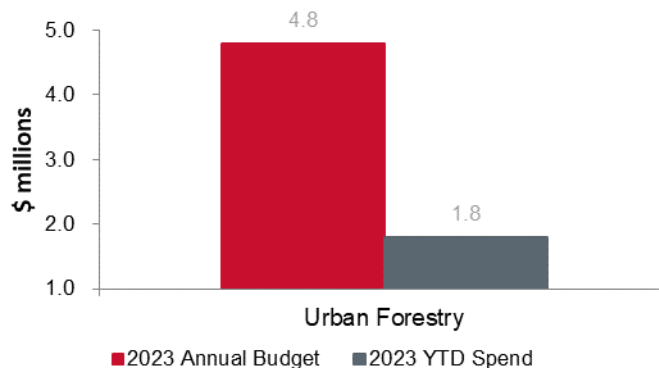


### Operating Budget Updates - 2023 YTD net operating budget vs actuals:

Urban Forestry has a favourable year-to-date operating variance of \$580k. The main reasons that have contributed to the variance are:

- Timing issues related to waiting for the Tree Pruning RFP to be awarded by Supply. Urban Forestry has been working with Supply since April 2022 to get this awarded. This is six months behind schedule with the expectation to achieve the annual goals and will bring the year end operating budget in at \$0.

### Capital Budget and Spend as of June 30, 2023



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

Urban Forestry has spent 27 per cent of the 2023 approved capital budget. Year-to-date, the capital expenditures have been used to deliver:

- Planting of new trees
- Planting of replacement trees

The spend is delayed for 2023 and the service has been working extensively with Supply to expedite the awarding of the Tree Planting Request For Proposal, but have seen significant delays. The service is two months behind schedule but we do anticipate completing our annual tree planting goals and will maximize the 2023 Capital Budget by year end.