

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

Key service results

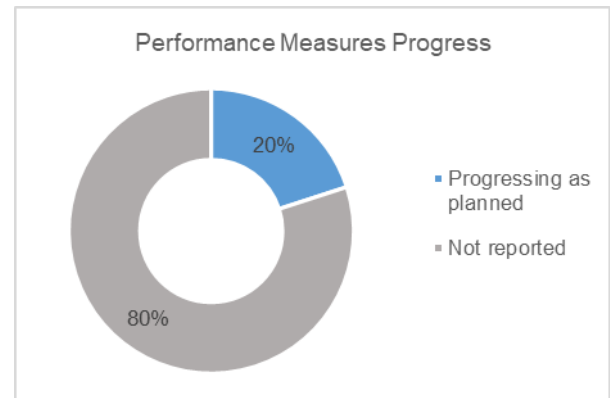
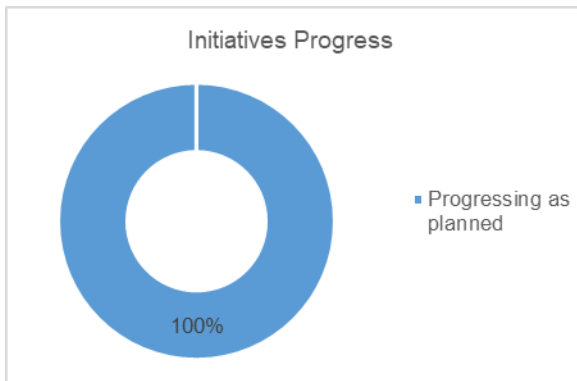
We progressed on capital projects, including preliminary work on the Parks and Playgrounds Amenities Program (PAPA), as part of our initiative to provide safe, inclusive, vibrant and accessible parks and open spaces [Parks & Open Spaces (P&OS) Initiative 1]. The Canadian Society of Landscape Architects honoured Bow to Bluff Park with the 2024 National Award for Small-Scale Public Landscape.

Shaganappi Point Golf Course won the 2024 Consumer Choice Award under the Golf Course – Public category. P&OS and Recreation Opportunities have expanded the Youth on Course program to all City golf courses this year due to popularity (P&OS Initiative 6).

We worked with the University of Calgary Archaeological Field Skills program to host a class and archaeological dig at Nose Hill Park. Over 100 partakers learnt about the site's Indigenous history during the excavation of a stone circle (P&OS Initiative 7).

Wading pools and spray parks signs were updated with scannable QR codes so users may translate information into Calgary's top five languages. This project will help Calgarians whose first language is not English to gain wider access to our parks' resources (P&OS Initiative 9).

Progress summary



Risk(s) impacting the progress

Limited Funding Reducing The City's Environmental Resilience Efforts
Service Delivery Delays and Disruptions (due to limited resources and training)
Low Workforce Capacity



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

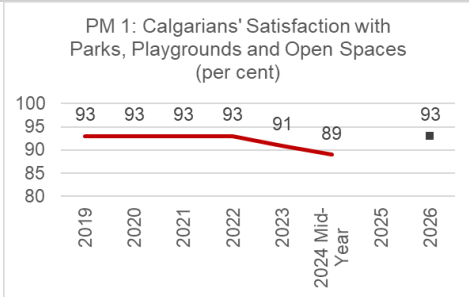
➡ Progressing as planned

⊖ 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 89 per cent score is from the 2024 Spring Survey of Calgarians Report. The service remains a primary strength of The City. The slight drop in score from Spring 2023, while not statistically significant, may also reflect decreased service levels in response to low workforce capacity, low contractor availability and unforeseen cost escalations. For 2023-26, P&OS aims to maintain high public satisfaction through service delivery and lifecycle capital funding for repairs and replacements of aging park amenities.



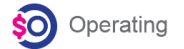


Progress on Service Delivery














PROGRESS STATUS



FUNDING TYPE



| | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Initiative 1 | | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type: |
| Enhance the quality of life of Calgarians, Parks and Open Spaces by providing safe, inclusive, vibrant and accessible parks and open spaces. | | | |
| UPDATE | The Parks and Playgrounds Amenities Program (PAPA) is progressing as planned: 2024 projects were assigned, and implementation is underway. Planning for 2025 projects has started. PAPA will focus on improving park spaces that need it the most. It will provide community park upgrades, replacements, and new infrastructure such as seating, shade structures, playground equipment (including accessible/inclusive playgrounds), parking and other amenities. In addition, the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects honoured Bow to Bluff Park with the 2024 National Award for Small-Scale Public Landscape. | | |
| Initiative 2 | | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type: |
| Support climate resilience, focusing on improving the health of the ecological network, through the development and implementation of Habitat Management Plans. | | | |
| UPDATE | The Ecological Network model was integrated into policy and open data layer, and it is being applied to policy planning and application review in new community development. The approved 2023-2026 capital budget for habitat restoration will help Parks & Open Spaces (P&OS) improve progress on this initiative. In 2024, work on Habitat Management Plans (HMP) continued. The Weaselhead-Glenmore HMP first draft is nearly complete, public engagement is underway for the Douglasdale HMP, the Edworthy and Haskayne HMPs were initiated, and the JH Woods HMP is on hold. | | |
| Initiative 3 | | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type: |
| 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. | | | |
| UPDATE | The Vendors in Parks program has been running for nearly 10 years now and provides enhanced experiences for our parks' users. The service continues to make this process more transparent and available to vendors. These vendors have provided access to recreational activities such as bike rentals or rafting down the river and may offer ice cream or other treats in the park. For the 2024 summer season we have 14 summer vendors, with one brand new location. This year, a youth entrepreneur will operate an ice cream cart in Bowness Park. | | |
| Initiative 4 | | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type: |
| 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. | | | |
| UPDATE | We worked with the Downtown Safety Leadership Table to develop 28 recommendations for consideration to improve downtown safety. Work began to activate Olympic Plaza throughout the summer. In addition to summer festivals, we have partnered with Sport Calgary to allow for sport demonstrations from June to September. When demonstrations are not occurring, sport equipment such as basketball or pickleball nets will be made available for public use. Work plans for winter activations have also begun. A new Washroom Attendant Pilot is being developed; learnings from the 2023 pilot will be included. | | |
| Initiative 5 | | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type: |
| 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. | | | |
| UPDATE | The Connect Parks Plan, a core policy document, is under final review; relevant material was incorporated into the Calgary Plan. Final public engagement is scheduled for the fall. P&OS is working closely with Planning & Development Services (PDS) to ensure consistency and alignment of these two important documents. They will jointly guide how The City will develop and manage an exceptional, inclusive and sustainable parks system into the coming decades. With the | | |

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| | integration of the plans, Connect project timelines will need to shift to accommodate and compliment the Calgary Plan's timeline. | |
| Initiative 6 | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type:   |
| Maintain community connections and Calgarians' wellness by providing year-round amenities and activities, including winter activities and new attractions as opportunities arise. | | |
| UPDATE  | We're working with Glenbow Ranch Provincial Park to activate Haskayne Legacy Park year-round. This will include school programs, weddings, other events and public talks. Funds were secured to add more seating and shade such as trees to some of our parks. Also, a new labyrinth and topiary bed will be installed in the Crescent Heights community for visitors to enjoy year-round. Shaganappi Point Golf Course won the 2024 Consumer Choice Award for Public Golf Course. In 2024, P&OS and Recreation Opportunities have expanded the Youth on Course program to all City golf courses due to popularity. | |
| Initiative 7 | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type:  |
| 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. | | |
| UPDATE  | We partnered with the University of Calgary Archaeological Field Skills program to host a class and an archaeological dig at Nose Hill Park. Indigenous artefacts were revealed, and over 100 partakers learnt about the thousands of years of Indigenous presence on the land during the excavation of a stone circle. We also worked with Blackfoot Nations on the sweetgrass project, which aims to transplant and conserve sweetgrass, an Indigenous sacred plant. Elder recordings were created with all 8 Nations and emerging artists to share stories of the landscape for park visitors to experience. | |
| Initiative 8 | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type:   |
| 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. | | |
| UPDATE  | P&OS has received approval from Council to enter into a 10-year Naming and Sponsorship agreement for Millennium Park. This agreement will include adding more events to this location and opportunities to enhance this park to create a true festivals and events location in the downtown. Additionally, the Parks Sponsorship Plan, which will look at identifying future opportunities for revenue generation and partnerships to support parks improvements, started in 2023 and will be finalized by the end of 2024. | |
| Initiative 9 | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type:  |
| 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. | | |
| UPDATE  | Going into 2024, our social media content reached 2.2 million viewers, with an 80% average growth in followers. In May, we updated the signage for our wading pools and spray parks. Users can scan the QR code on these signs to translate information into Calgary's top five languages. This project is part of ongoing work to help Calgarians whose first language is not English to gain wider access to our parks' resources. Additional information has also been provided on public washrooms in parks on a consolidated webpage, as well as additional promotions for a playground finder mobile application. | |
| Initiative 10 | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type:  |
| Support continuous improvement of the service by exploring more data and technology options to improve decision making, sustainability and service delivery. | | |
| UPDATE  | Our new Geographic Information System for work tracking went live in April 2024. The development of the data warehouse reporting portion of this system is continuing and expected to be complete by the end of the year. Once fully complete, this new system aims to help optimize processes, reporting and provide more databased decision making for the service. In 2024, Customer Level of Service (CLOS) scores continue to be gathered to inform and refine budgets and workplans. CLOS is a model being used to assess our service delivery standards to aid in optimizing resources and decision making. | |
| Initiative 11 | Impact Area: City-wide | Funding Type:  |
| Provide a safe and healthy environment for park users, employees, contractors and volunteers by strengthening commitments to safety and well being. | | |

UPDATE

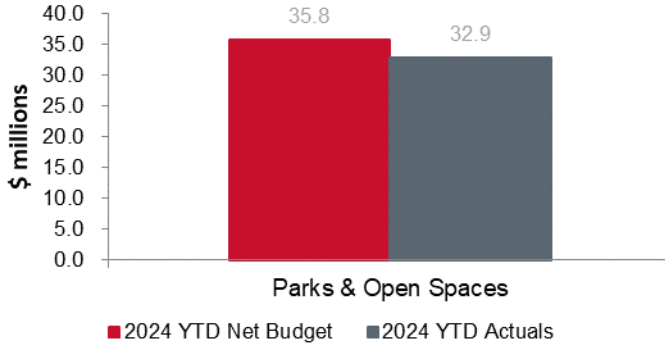


The service is strongly focused on the continuous improvement of health, safety and environmental improvements for its staff, customers and partners. This year, staff are particularly focused on reporting near misses and hazardous conditions to prevent safety incidents. Ongoing initiatives to address park safety include city-wide park activations (free events) to encourage more Calgarians into the parks, enhanced communication between partner organizations and increased staff training and awareness with a focus on mental health and wellbeing.



Service Updates on Financial Performance

**Net Operating Budget and Actuals
as of June 30, 2024**



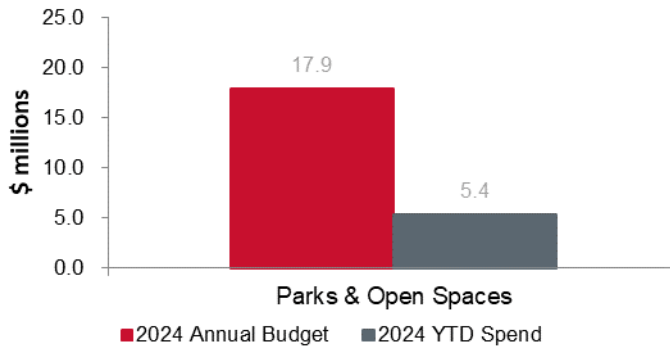
Operating Budget Updates - 2024 YTD net operating budget vs actuals:

Parks & Open Spaces (P&OS) has a favourable operating variance of \$2.9 million. The main reason that has contributed to the variance is water restrictions related to the Bears paw South Feeder Main break. Water restrictions have resulted in reduced irrigation, delays in openings of water parks and maintenance work. As restrictions are lifted, maintenance activities in general will increase/catch up, lowering the temporary favourable variance that was in place at the end of June.

P&OS staff effectively responded to the state of local emergency. The service was able to water natural infrastructure assets with non-potable water and assist with the set-up of non-potable residential and commercial water sites. However, the water event may have increased some of the top risks, such as service delivery and workforce capacity.

P&OS made progress on service initiatives in 2024. Examples include updated signage for wading pools and spray parks that may be translated into Calgary's top five languages, an archaeological dig and class hosted at Nose Hill Park in partnership with University of Calgary Archaeological Field Skills program and work to improve downtown safety.

**Capital Budget and Spend as of June 30,
2024**



Capital Budget Updates - 2024 total capital budget vs 2024 YTD spend:

Parks and Open Spaces has spent 30.2 per cent of the 2024 approved capital budget. In 2024, the capital expenditures have been used to deliver the following projects that are expected to open to the public later this year: Humpy Hollow Park, Buckmaster Park, and Parks and Playgrounds Amenities Program (PAPA) projects that include playgrounds, shade structures and various other park upgrades. Capital spending has also been used for park lifecycle projects including playgrounds, irrigation systems and signage.

Completion of these capital projects will result in increased community welfare and increased amenities in parks.

The capital spending for 2024 to date primarily aligns to P&OS Initiative 1: Enhance the quality of life of Calgarians, Parks and Open Spaces by providing safe, inclusive, vibrant, and accessible parks and open spaces.

At mid-year, 2024 spending is on track.