

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION



2020

Parks

# YEAR-END REPORT









# WELCOME

Welcome to the 2020 Parks Department Year-End Report. The 2020 Report is intended to provide an overview on the past year and information about the programs and services offered by the Parks Department, highlight various initiatives, and look ahead to 2021.

## Who We Are

Parks plays a lead role in developing, preserving, and enhancing the City of Saskatoon's investment in its parks system and civic open spaces. The Department accomplishes this through operational efficiency, policy development, collaboration and communication with internal and external stakeholders, and the provision of maintenance and design services. From broad ranging city-wide initiatives, such as the Urban Forest Management Plan to ensuring that residents' local park and open space areas are well maintained, this Department has a significant impact on Saskatoon and its residents. The Parks Department's work primarily supports the Strategic Goals of Quality of Life and Environmental Leadership.



## WHAT'S INSIDE

Division Highlights 2020 .....	4
Park and Open Space Maintenance .....	6
Naturalized Park Maintenance .....	7
Woodlawn Cemetery .....	8
Urban Biological Services .....	9
Urban Forestry .....	10
Sport Fields .....	11
Irrigation .....	12
Greenhouse/Conservatory Program .....	12
Park and Open Space Design Program .....	13
Looking Ahead to 2021 .....	14

who we are, what we do

**OUR MISSION:**  
A Safe, Dynamic Team  
that Connects all  
Citizens to Nature

what we aspire to be

**OUR VISION:**  
To Make Green  
Space Experiences  
Exceptional



## COVID-19 Response

**Service Levels** – Modified service levels were necessary to safely operate programs while ensuring that the Saskatchewan Health Authority's safe physical distancing and gathering requirements were met throughout Parks' operational areas. Service level activities focused on safety and asset preservation and were provided by a staffing level of approximately 77% of historical levels

**Staff Safety** – Return to Work Safety Plans were developed for all of Parks' operational program work sites and provided the necessary safety protocol for supervisory teams and staff to follow. No virus outbreaks occurred in Parks' workplaces

- ▶ **Parks Department Business Plan** – In 2020, our Department finalized a new Business Plan, including a new mission and vision outlining our purpose and direction. Through this plan, Parks will:
  - Be more specific and clearer in our objectives
  - Ensure all staff at all levels are engaged and aware of our Plan and objectives
  - Begin to develop Performance Measures to better quantify progress against Plan goals
- ▶ **Citizen Expectations** – Seven park development projects that upgraded and developed several park and open spaces were successfully delivered
- ▶ **Asset Management** – Continued to refine the Parks Asset Management Plan with direction and assistance from the Corporate Asset Management Coordinator
- ▶ **Service Level Options for City Council** – Options for berm mowing, berm tree planting, one-time secondary path snow removal, and nuisance tree removal were brought forward to City Council for review
- ▶ **Community Gardens** – No new community gardens were established in 2020 because of COVID-19 restrictions
- ▶ **Community Support and Engagement** – Parks provided services and support to several community groups, including:
  - SOS Trees – Arbor Day planning and tree protection investigation
  - Briarwood Community Association – Briarwood Park Rink improvements
  - BIDs – Cottony ash psyllid tree removal and the supply of flower pots
  - Montgomery Place Community Association – Communicating positive DED cases and ongoing response activities
  - Support various community and volunteer organizations by helping to coordinate and approve clean-up activities and special events in various park and open space areas throughout the city
  - Friends of the Richard St. Barb Baker Afforestation Areas – Barrier and signage installation at the afforestation sites
  - Provision of Irrigation services to Community Gardens located in park areas
  - Coordination of Decoration Day with the Saskatoon Legions – offering an opportunity to pay tribute to those brave individuals who lost their lives in the service of our country
  - Provision of over 30km of Cross Country ski trails for community associations around the city, in addition to the regular trails listed on our website



- ▶ **Training** – Adjusted training programs to include additional self-study options to comply with gathering and social distancing requirements
- ▶ **Sustainability** – Continued efforts to reduce water use by adjusting water schedules, researching alternative water sources, and planning for a 2021 evapotranspiration pilot project
- ▶ **Collaboration** – Continued collaboration and communication with other corporate departments to plan, manage, and maintain green space in the community as effectively and efficiently as possible. For 2020, collaborative efforts resulted in improvements in the following areas:
  - Fleet Services - improved equipment procurement processes
  - Construction and Design – tree protection support to roadway and sidewalk renewal programs
  - Saskatoon Water – provided landscape project management support to the W.W. Ashley storm water project
  - Technical Services – provided information on Parks’ operational sites to the Civic Operations Long Term Committee to determine future civic operations at populations of 375K and 500K
  - IT – upgraded computer terminals and connectivity in operational areas in preparation for Fusion
  - Community Standards and Saskatoon Fire – development of a Foxtail mitigation strategy
  - Sustainability – Boulevard gardening updates and water conservation initiatives
  - Participation as a founding member in the Canadian Prairie Prescribed Fire Exchange, an inter-agency collective established to increase capacity for knowledge sharing and training surrounding the use of prescribed fire as a management tool in the Canadian prairie and parkland ecosystems; a \$1 million grant from the Weston Foundation was awarded to the group
  - Recreation and Community Development – Festival site plan development
  - Saskatoon Public Library – assistance of Park Story Walks
- ▶ **Skills Development** – Developed and implemented a formalized procedure to better support staff training and development requests
- ▶ **Employee Engagement** – Developed socially distant employee recognition events to ensure that dedicated service continued to be recognized during the pandemic
- ▶ **Partnerships** – Provided ongoing representation on the following committees/initiatives: Green Infrastructure Strategy, updates to the Official Community Plan, GPS Project, Planning and Development Review Process, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Meewasin Master Agreement, and the Natural Areas Strategy
- ▶ **Health & Safety** – Continued development and adjustment of the Return to Work plans and work procedures as Saskatchewan Health Authority’s COVID-19 health orders were imposed
- ▶ **Reducing our Carbon Footprint** – adding and monitoring the effectiveness of electrically powered hand-held equipment and utility vehicles



# OUR BUSINESS

Meeting the needs of a growing community continues to be the Parks Department's biggest challenge. As Saskatoon grows in population, so does the amount of green infrastructure within our park and open space areas. New subdivisions include new community parks, playgrounds, pathways, sport fields, community gardens, landscaped medians, traffic circles, and buffers/berms adjacent to roadways. In 2020, Parks added 5.51 hectares (13.62 acres) to our maintenance inventory.

The Parks Department prides itself on meeting this challenge through the provision of a variety of efficient and effective maintenance and design services that directly contribute to our citizen's quality of life. We take initiative to continuously improve our service delivery while also identifying the needs of our changing community and strive to align our programs and services to meet these needs. Our key programs and services include:

## PARK AND OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE

Parks Maintenance employees are responsible for maintaining all turf grass and horticultural displays over 2,000 hectares of parks and open space in the city. Services provided include:

- Mowing, trimming, and fertilizing, as well as other turf maintenance for regular park areas, community sport fields, and non-park green space, including medians, boulevards, rights of way, buffer strips, and berms.
- Care for shrub beds and herbaceous perennial and annual flower plantings.
- Maintenance of playground surfaces.
- Litter picking and garbage removal.
- Maintenance and repair for asphalt and aggregate pathways within parks.
- Winter snow removal on over 140km of asphalt pathways and sidewalk park frontages.
- Provide support services to over 400 special events, held annually, in various parks and open spaces throughout the city.



## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- Successfully adjusted maintenance schedules of approximately 200 staff to provide safe, socially distant work sites.
- Additional maintenance services provided to newly constructed paths and landscapes from Meewasin along the Traffic Bridge and Weir to the Nutrien Wonderhub.
- Collaborated with Roadways to provide staff to sweep road salt and sand off park turf.



## NATURALIZED PARK MAINTENANCE

Approximately 12% of the Parks inventory is maintained as naturalized park area, representing various habitat types in Saskatoon, from native prairie to wetlands, and aspen parkland. Natural areas provide key habitat for wildlife, support local and regional biodiversity, and provide citizens with opportunities for nature appreciation.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- Continued with annual planting of wildflowers in Heritage Park and Lakewood Park to increase biodiversity and forage for pollinators.
- Continued control of woody plants in Mark Thompson Park to enhance visibility of the historic Moose Jaw trail.
- Together with the University of Saskatchewan and Meewasin, partnered with the Urban Wildlife Information Network to monitor and understand urban wildlife populations and their movements.
- Assistance with a prescribed burn at the NE Swale Rec Zone in the fall of 2020 with Meewasin.





## WOODLAWN CEMETERY

Woodlawn Cemetery is a 94-acre National Historic Site that has been operated by the City of Saskatoon since 1906. Woodlawn Cemetery also maintains Nutana Pioneer Cemetery, a heritage site that has been closed since 1911. Services include:

- Administrative services in booking and processing funeral requests, customer inquiries, and financial aspects.
- Interment opening/closing services for funerals in both casket and cremations.
- Landscaping and monitoring turf establishment for completed interments.
- Monument services, such as installing foundations, flat markers, and other memorialization services.
- Mowing, trimming, and fertilizing of turf areas.
- Preparing, planting, and maintaining flower and shrub beds.
- Planting and ensuring establishment of new trees.
- Snow clearing of cemetery roadways and pathways.



## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- Maintained essential services during pandemic to ensure funeral services could continue. In 2020, 480 interments were performed, with 232 being traditional burials and 248 cremation burials.
- Planted 25 new trees at Woodlawn. As well, partnered with Tree Canada with 60 new trees planted and established in the Cemetery. Tree species were selected to provide winter interest and reduce current monoculture.
- Partnered with a local historian Kathleen Morrell to develop a virtual walking tour to be released in 2021 with the theme: Saskatoon – The First Fifty Years.
- Worked closely with Lees & Associates to develop a Cemetery Master Plan that completed an in-depth analysis of Cemetery operations and will guide the Cemetery Program into the future. The Cemetery Master Plan will be presented to City Council in 2021.



## URBAN BIOLOGICAL SERVICES

The Urban Biological Services Program (UBS) provides control and inspection services to manage invasive plant and animal populations through the following activities:

- Monitoring and testing mosquitoes for West Nile virus.
- Monitoring and treating mosquito habitat across approximately 945 square kilometers is regularly monitored and treated with larvicide application, as required.
- Monitoring the urban forest for pests and diseases, such as Dutch elm disease, cottony ash psyllid, and emerald ash borer.
- Controlling populations of Richardson ground squirrels on City-owned property (treated 41 sites).
- Providing solutions for conflicts with urban wildlife, including informational and trapping services.
- Enforcing the Weed Control Act and Forest Resources Management Act (Dutch elm disease) through inspection and issuance of orders and agreements.
- Provisioning scheduled and reactive weed control service levels on hard surfaces, such as roadway medians, city wide.



### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- One positive case of Dutch elm disease (DED) was identified near the Montgomery neighbourhood. DED response included a risk assessment/mitigation and communication to residents and property owners. Activities included:
  - Removal and disposal of the infected tree
  - Approximately 25 additional elm trees in proximity removed
  - Sampling and testing of 20 trees
  - Ordering remedy of 71 DED regulation infractions
- Mosquito populations were down last year due to aggressive treatment procedures and a diminishing habitat due to dry weather.
- Richardson Ground Squirrel program continued to support our sport field programs to maintain a safe and consistent playing environment for user groups.
- UBS technicians played a key role in dealing with wildlife complaints/inquiries in a timely matter to protect our residents, as well as the animals.
- UBS will continue to take a systematic approach to weed inspection for the 2020 year and will continue to move in a proactive direction.
- Cottony ash psyllid populations were low during the 2020 season





## URBAN FORESTRY

The Urban Forestry Program protects, preserves, and perpetuates the health, beauty, and safety of the City of Saskatoon's urban forest for the enjoyment of residents and citizens.

The components of this program include maintaining a tree inventory, civic nursery, planting programs, and providing ongoing maintenance operations. Ongoing maintenance operations include a 1 in 7-year pruning cycle for boulevard trees, a 1 in 13-year pruning cyclical for park trees, responding to weather events, as well as internal and citizen service requests.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- 2,000+ Urban Forestry service requests
- 7,600 trees pruned as part of cyclical tree maintenance schedules
- 1,214 trees pruned in response to service requests and other reactive work

- 340 trees removed
- 365 stumps removed
- 368 non-park trees planted
- 680 new trees planted in the civic nursery
- 183 sites inspected and monitored for tree protection
- Cottony ash psyllid Response Program:
  - Park Trees assessed in 2018 and 2019 were removed in 2020. No boulevard trees were removed in 2020.
  - 600 trees removed
  - 880 stumps ground
  - 375 trees planted
- Shelter belt pruning maintenance was provided to the following areas:
  - Lenore Drive (south side between Warman Road and Cree Crescent)
  - Wildwood Golf Course (south-east corner near Boychuk Drive)
  - Lakeview (north side of Highway 16)
  - McOrmond Drive (west side from Cowley to Highway 5)
  - McClocklin Road (south side from Hampton Gate to Densham Place)
  - Westview (west side of Circle Drive)
  - Melrose Avenue (west side from Cascade to Glasgow Street)
- Urban Forestry Master Plan development continued in 2020, including content finalization and revision.

## SPORTS FIELDS AND LANDSCAPE CONSTRUCTION

The Sports Fields and Landscape Construction Program maintains 277 city-wide sport fields (ball diamonds, soccer, lacrosse, and multi-purpose). Included within this inventory are 147 hectares of Class 1, 2, and 3 sports fields that support higher levels of sporting competition. Program maintenance activities include receiving above basic service levels that support higher levels of sporting competition. Higher service levels are funded by the various user groups that utilize the Class Sports Fields and includes:

- Mowing and trimming for Class 1 and 2 sports fields.
- Infield grooming for Class 1, 2, 3, and neighborhood ball diamonds
- Sports fields painting program involves lining 85 Class 1, 2, and 3 sports fields, as well as accommodating other requests throughout the year (i.e. cricket fields).
- Grading of parking lots associated with recreational facilities related to parks where sports fields maintenance is done by the crews.
- Deliver, place, and pickup of BID flowerpots and centre median flowerpots in spring and fall, in conjunction with Greenhouse Program.
- Other work from Parks' zones and different departments as needed (i.e. hauling topsoil/compost, bobcat work, replacing or new installation of bollards).
- The Sports Fields Program manages contracted Freeway/Expressway mowing services on over 490 hectares of Road Rights of Way.



### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- Continue to provide winter snow removal services to seven City-owned facilities to improve equipment usage efficiencies. As well, provided additional support to assist in mitigating challenges of the November snow event.
- Continued collaboration with Recreation and Community Development and sports fields user groups to mitigate COVID-19 impacts. Adjusted service levels in June to respond to the easing of restrictions that allowed for sports to continue; hence ensuring service levels were maintained.
- Refined Parks Department compost initiative to apply additional City Compost Depot compost into City Parks system.
- Ensure quality of play and safety initiatives, such as:
  - Removed edge and added additional torpedo sand on 20 neighborhood ball diamonds.
  - Repairs to the Peter Zakreski - Ball Diamond Nos. 1 and 2 warning tracks.
  - Major renovation of Bishop James Mahoney Park - Ball Diamond No. 3 included reducing infield size to regulations, adding infield irrigation, and converting infield from crusher dust to shale.
  - Completed pilot project of topdressing of 12 neighborhood soccer fields throughout Saskatoon to improve turf quality and safety to users.
- Other landscape projects completed include:
  - Cleared debris and landscaped field near Saskatoon Fire Station No. 7 on Wanuskewin Road.



## IRRIGATION

At an average annual total precipitation of 350mm, Saskatoon regularly experiences drier and more arid environmental conditions than other major Western Canadian cities. The Irrigation Program supports water delivery service levels on approximately 600 hectares of park, open space, and streetscape green infrastructure, which includes turf, trees, shrubs, and annual/perennials plants.

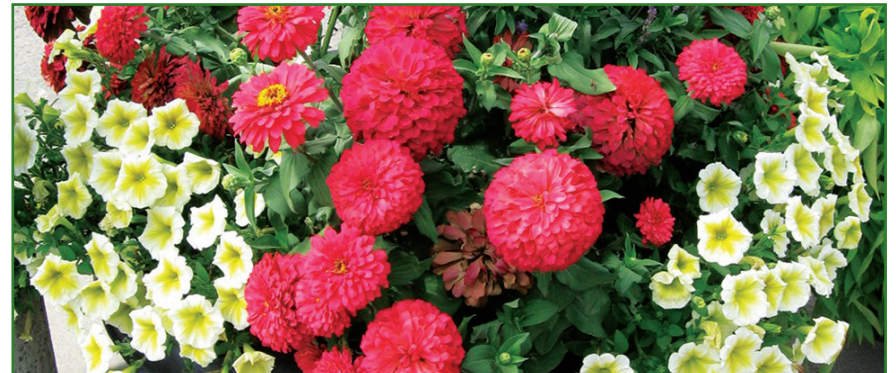
### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- Continued collaboration with DREAM Development to further investigate the potential of a storm pond irrigation system in the Brighton neighbourhood.
- Partnered with Sustainability to begin development of two water conservation initiatives to improve irrigation efficiency:
  - Examine feasibility of evapotranspiration-based scheduling technology within current irrigation infrastructure.
  - Within the next five years upgrade the remaining eight manual irrigation systems in parks to automated irrigation systems.
- Seven rain gauges are strategically placed throughout the city to measure rainfall. Rainfall estimates are as follows:
  - From April 1 to September 30, 2020, the city received 257 mm of rainfall; similarly to April 1 to September 30, 2019, which received 258 mm rainfall.
  - In 2020, we had above average rainfall amounts between April and June, receiving 174 mm compared to the average of 127 mm. However, we had a below average rainfall amount between July and September, receiving 83 mm compared to the average of 137 mm.

Irrigation staff are trained, certified, and legislated to maintain these systems to ensure the safe, efficient application of water throughout the growing season. Examples of the services provided include performing spring system start-up, regular system checks (including backflow prevention testing), line locating, and automated controller scheduling and system winterization.

## GREENHOUSE PROGRAM

The Greenhouse Program is responsible for providing and maintaining floral displays for public viewing and/or landscape enhancement at City Hall, and other civic facilities, as well as major public roadways, parks, and public open spaces.



### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- Greenhouse staff produced annual flowers for 734 flowerpots in the business improvement districts.
- 292 flowerpots were produced for center medians on major city corridors.
- Annual flowers were produced for 105 flower beds in parks.

## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DESIGN PROGRAM

The Design Section is involved in the planning, design, and construction development of public lands, which includes parks. Core responsibilities include:

- planning, estimating, and administrating capital budgets
- conceptual and detailed design
- project construction management
- internal and public consultation
- the review and approval of external design submissions for open space
- the construction inspection and approval of externally managed park construction projects



## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

- New parks were turned over to the City in the following neighbourhoods:
  - Brighton: MR 10 Pocket Park (0.60 ha)
  - Evergreen: Buffer and Roundabout (0.95 ha)
  - Queen Elisabeth: Aden Bowman Sportfield (1.37 ha)
  - Kensington: Kensington Village Square (0.40 ha), Kensington Village Centre Streetscape (0.57 ha)
- New and updated play structures at:
  - Parc Canada
  - Albert Milne Park
  - Dr. J Valens Park
  - D.L. Hamilton Park
  - Brighton MR 10 Pocket Park
  - Kensington Village Square – Pump Track
- Park upgrades at:
  - Lawson Heights: BJM Ball Diamond
  - Lakeridge: Crocus Park
  - Varsity View: Albert Rec Unit
- Park pathway paving:
  - 18 parks received either overlay or full pathway construction on 2.4 metre wide pathways
    - Overlay: 5,054 square meters
    - Full: 1,002 square meters



## PARKS DEPARTMENT – LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

- Construction of Aspen Ridge MR15 and MR19 (yet to be named)
- Construction of Rosewood Secondary Core Park
- Construction of Kensington Lions Century Park
- Construction of recreation amenity buildings in Hampton Village – Al Anderson Park (two buildings), and Rosewood – Glen Penner Park
- Upgrades in Anna McIntosh, AS Wright, WJL Harvey South, Forest Grove Linkage, Kistikan, Canon Smith, Massey, Parc Canada, and Meewasin Parks
- Revitalization of four play structures: Meadowlark, Canon Smith, Wilson, and WJL Harvey North
- Increased top dressing program for neighbourhood sportfields
- Implementation of new resource management plans for naturalized parks
- Management of naturalized areas through prescribed burning techniques in Gabriel Dumont Park and Hyde Park will be communicated and implemented, in collaboration with the Saskatoon Fire Department and Meewasin Valley Authority
- First phases of the Urban Forestry Management Plan implementation will be planned
- Landscape Development Standards will be reviewed and updated
- Establishment of specific parks business plan initiatives that will respond to Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
- Initial steps towards the implementation of a new tree protection policy and bylaw
- Bring forward opportunities for an Integrated Pest Management Plan





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