

# Parks Asset Management Update

## ISSUE

This report provides an update on the Parks Department's asset management practices, park asset inventories and related asset management initiatives. The Parks Asset Management Plan (AMP) focuses on ensuring park assets are inventoried, maintained and upgraded or replaced as required.

## BACKGROUND

As per the City of Saskatoon's (City) Corporate Asset Management Policy, the Parks Department will ensure park assets are managed by utilizing the following principles: Holistic, Service-Focused, Risk-Based, Innovative, Value-Based/Affordable, Sustainable, Regulatory and Legal Requirements. Aligning the Parks asset management goals and governance with the corporate policy and strategy, reporting and understanding of the whole lifecycle of park assets will mature over time.

The AMP is a comprehensive document that outlines the maintenance, renewal and replacement of park assets over their lifecycle. A key element of the plan includes an asset registry that identifies the condition, maintenance and renewal funding requirements of each asset. The Parks AMP enables the City to manage its assets effectively. It is essential to ensure the City's parks remain in an asset performance rating of "Good" condition and meet the needs of its residents.

The Parks Department presented an update to the Parks AMP to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services at its [meeting](#) on September 13, 2021, where an annual funding gap of \$4.85 million to achieve an average asset performance rating of "Good" was disclosed. The report did not include the asset registry growth in comparison to prior reporting in 2016. Beginning in 2022 the Parks Department reallocated resources toward the maturation of its asset management practices, including the identification of asset growth. See Appendix 1 for a summary of the asset growth from 2016 to 2022.

## CURRENT STATUS

The Parks Department brings forward park upgrade plans, through capital project (P901) Park Upgrades, Enhancements and Repairs, for City Council approval during the Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget deliberations. The Parks Infrastructure Reserve funds the capital project work at an amount of \$1.9 million annually. Current levels of funding support the planning, design and construction work to upgrade and enhance the landscaping, pathways, amenities, play structures and playgrounds at existing parks. On average, three park upgrades can be completed per year, depending on size and scope of the upgrades. In addition, the P901 addresses the replacement and enhancement of individual assets, such as play structures and irrigation systems that are in poor condition and have reached the end of their life expectancy.

Park Enhancements are prioritized through a scoring matrix. The program makes improvements to established parks to address deficiencies and bring parks up to current standards. Parks are scored based on the following criteria: condition, safety and function pertaining to its assets such as asphalt pathways, lighting, irrigation, drainage and site furniture. The program also prioritizes and funds the replacement of play structures based on condition assessments completed by an external consultant.

The Park asset registry, as defined in the Parks AMP, has grown by 10.4% since 2016. This figure has been calculated based on the total replacement value of all assets as of 2022 (Appendix 1). Funding allocations for park growth have been provided, to the Parks and Facilities Management Departments operating budgets, to support the annual additional maintenance activities such as routine litter control, mowing, play structure maintenance, cyclical tree maintenance, etc.; however, funding increases to further reduce the funding gap have been limited, which over time will have the effect of extending park upgrade and asset replacement cycles. For example, given current levels of funding Parks can replace, on average, three play structures per year from the City's inventory of 197 play structures. As the city expands over time, additional play structures will increase the replacement backlog, resulting in more play structures moving below a performance rating of, Good condition.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

Maturation of the Parks AMP has progressed since 2021, with many improvement activities being undertaken and summarized in Appendix 2. Activities such as updating inventories and condition ratings, tracking compliance of service levels, and prioritization for regular replacement of park assets, all contribute to the ongoing maturation of the Parks AMP and identify the funding level required to achieve an optimal average performance rating of, Good condition.

The Parks Department has allocated resources to a dedicated asset management role, with the goal of alignment between Parks Department and the City's corporate asset management initiatives. Parks will refine its asset mix and continue to mature its asset preservation practices, ensuring assets are kept to their best condition and meeting service levels given the current levels of funding.

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance the park asset registry, the Parks Department will begin to develop and collect condition and valuation data on its green assets, such as trees and turf. Adding green infrastructure and its value to the Parks asset registry could further increase the Parks AMP's identified \$4.85 million funding gap.

The Parks Department has applied for a one-time external funding opportunity from the Federal Natural Infrastructure Fund. The application proposes leveraging existing funds to receive up to \$4.97 million for park upgrades, tree planting, irrigation, and water-conservation initiatives in 2023 and 2024. The external funding facilitates acceleration and expansion of the Park Upgrade program to include amenities such as new site furniture, additional naturalized plantings and trees, and enhancements to drainage

capacities of parks to help respond to an increasing amount of wetter and wilder weather associated with climate change.

Parks will continue to seek external funding sources to ensure as much parks infrastructure as possible can be upgraded and/or replaced when needed most, with existing resources. Addressing the Parks asset management gap with stable base funding is recommended to achieve and maintain a park asset performance rating of Good condition, in the long term.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

While details associated with the value of additional park assets registry has been indicated within Appendix 1, more analysis is required to further refine and update the funding gap and the associated funding plan. The Parks AMP's funding gap remains significant and will remain as last noted in the 2021 report until this additional work can be completed. Upon approval for the Capital Project P901 during the 2024/25 Business Plan and Budget Process, Parks will further refine and update the funding gap and associated funding plan and provide future reporting.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Closing the Parks Asset Management Plan's funding gap represents a significant opportunity to support the well-being and satisfaction of residents by providing modern opportunities for play and recreation. In the absence of additional funds to reduce the funding gap, the gap will continue to grow as inflationary pressures and inventories increase, thus extending the park enhancement and upgrade cycles currently in place.

Environmental implications are addressed by further funding Parks' asset management. As climate change and extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, green infrastructure faces increased vulnerability. Green assets play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of climate change and maintaining biodiversity. Insufficient funding hampers Parks Department's ability to replace aging infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, and maintain appropriate staffing levels for maintenance, which are vital for maintaining healthy landscapes. This increases the vulnerability of the City's parks to climate-related damages and compromises their long-term sustainability.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Parks Department will continue the maturation of its asset management practices and improvements to the data quality of its asset registry. Through ongoing asset management practices, comprehensive data updates and asset preservation activities, Parks will ensure the sustainability and longevity of the City's park assets. By proactively addressing maintenance needs, we can create a resilient and well-maintained park system that continues to provide exceptional recreational opportunities for the community.

Parks will continue to report maturation of its asset management activities.

**APPENDICES**

1. Parks Asset Growth
2. Parks Asset Management Initiatives

**REPORT APPROVAL**

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