

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT



2018

Parks

YEAR-END REPORT





# WELCOME

Welcome to the 2018 Year-End Report for the Parks Division. The 2018 Report is intended to provide an overview on the year past and information about the programs and services offered by the Parks Division, highlight various initiatives, and look ahead to 2019.

### Who We Are

Parks plays a lead role in developing, preserving, and enhancing the City of Saskatoon’s investment of its parks system and civic open spaces. The division accomplishes this through policy development, horizontal collaboration and communication with internal and external stakeholders, and the provision of maintenance and design services.

# WHAT'S INSIDE

- Division Highlights 2018 ..... 3
- Park and Open Space Maintenance ..... 4
- Naturalized Park Maintenance ..... 5
- Woodlawn Cemetery ..... 5
- Urban Biological Services ..... 6
- Urban Forestry ..... 6
- Sport Fields ..... 7
- Irrigation ..... 8
- Greenhouse/Conservatory Program ..... 8
- Park and Open Space Design Program ..... 9
- Looking Ahead to 2019 ..... 10

- ▶ Constructed community gardens in the Rosewood (Swick Park), Greystone Heights (Albert Milne Park), as well as expanded the community gardens in the (Wildwood) Lakewood Park and Emmanuel Village Garden sites.
- ▶ 2018 Citizen Satisfaction survey indicated that citizen's satisfaction with park maintenance was an average of 7.7/10 and 7.3 for tree maintenance. This level of satisfaction was consistent with levels of satisfaction in previous surveys.
- ▶ Provided of a variety of educational and training opportunities for staff to build competencies and knowledge while supporting ongoing succession strategies within the Parks Division.
- ▶ Continued collaboration and communication with Meewasin and other corporate divisions to manage and maintain green space in the community as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- ▶ Continued partnership with Saskatoon Trades and Skills Centre providing an opportunity to gain quality applicants for the seasonal labourer positions each year. This program trains applicants on landscaping skills needed for labourer position and provides a four-week work placement in Parks.
- ▶ Specific recruitment efforts resulted in a significant increase in the Indigenous workforce in Parks, increasing it to 14.6% of the Parks total employees.
- ▶ Establishment of an Urban Forest and Pest Management Capital Reserve to address current and future large scale tree insect and disease threats.
- ▶ Developed a new cost recovered Expedited Tree Removal service to further support the removal of Cottony Ash Psyllid impacted trees.
- ▶ Internal audit of Parks Service Levels and Asset Management was conducted with improvement recommendations in the areas of Service Level application and Asset Management presented to City Council and Committees of City Council.
- ▶ Additional staff engagement events were conducted where corporate and division direction could be communicated and feedback from staff collected for use in work plan processes.
- ▶ Provided ongoing representation on the following committees/initiatives: Green Infrastructure Strategy, updates to the Official Community Plan, Storm Pond Design Review, Planning and Development Review Process, CPTED, Meewasin Design Review Process and the Natural Areas Strategy.
- ▶ Continued development of the Parks Health and Safety Management System by completing a critical task inventory.



# OUR BUSINESS

Meeting the needs of a growing community continues to be the Parks Division'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. On average, new communities have added approximately 24 hectares of parks and another 12 hectares of open spaces to maintenance inventories each year over the last ten years.

The Parks Division prides itself on meeting this challenge through the provision of a variety of efficient and effective maintenance and design services that directly contribute to citizen's quality of life. We continuously improve our service delivery while also identifying the needs of our changing community and striving 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 in over 2,000 hectares of parks and open space throughout 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 2018

- Maintenance Operations from four newly constructed satellite maintenance yards commenced in April, providing approximately 48 staff with safe and efficient access to parks. The satellite maintenance yards are located in the Rosewood, Lakewood, Evergreen, and Stonebridge neighbourhoods.
- Park and Open Space service levels were successfully applied to an additional 29 hectares of park and 7 hectares of open space inventory.
- Undertook a 3-month turf renovation project in W.E. Graham Park to rest and rejuvenate the neighbourhood sport field.

## 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 2018

- Continued FireSmart vegetation management along naturalized area perimeters in Heritage and Lakewood Parks.
- Started a program to control woody plant encroachment over the historic Moose Jaw Trail in Mark Thompson Park.
- Collaborated with Meewasin in prescribed burns at Cranberry Flats and the NE Swale.
- Collaborated with Meewasin on the installation of interpretive signage at the NE Swale.

## WOODLAWN CEMETERY

Woodlawn cemetery has been operated by the City of Saskatoon since 1906. The 94 acre, landscaped property is centrally located on a well-forested site. A variety of options are available at the cemetery for both casket interments and cremated remains, as well as memorialization services and pre-purchases. Woodlawn Cemetery also maintains Nutana Pioneer Cemetery, a heritage site that has been closed since 1911.



### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2018

- 537 interments were performed in 2018.
- Landscape enhancement and new irrigation projects completed by Woodlawn staff members were highlighted in Canadian Funeral News publication (see picture above).
- An additional 8,835 sq/m of roadway asphaltting was completed for Woodlawn in 2018. This completes the four-year capital roadway asphaltting upgrade with a total of 37,106 sq/m of roadway completed since 2015. Lower asphalt prices over the four-year capital project allowed Woodlawn to upgrade an additional 13% of the roadways.

## URBAN BIOLOGICAL SERVICES

The Urban Biological Services Program provides control and inspection services to manage invasive pest populations through the following activities:

- Monitoring mosquito population by managing collection programs and collaborating with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health for West Nile virus testing.
- Monitor the urban forest for harmful insects and diseases, including Dutch elm disease (DED), dothiorella wilt, cottony ash psyllid, ash bark beetles, and emerald ash borer.
- Control populations of Richardson ground squirrels on public property (treated 41 sites).
- Provides solutions for conflicts with urban wildlife, including informational and trapping services.
- Enforce the *Weed Control Act and Dutch Elm Disease Regulations* through inspection and issuance of orders and agreements.
- Provision of scheduled and reactive weed control service levels on hard surfaces, such as roadway medians, city wide.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2018

- Treated 558 hectares of mosquito habitat to reduce populations of nuisance mosquitoes and mosquitoes that can transmit the West Nile virus.
- DED response program followed up on 448 violations of the Dutch Elm Disease Act with no DED positive trees being identified.
- Completed 140 weed investigations and issued 73 weed control orders.
- Responded to 380 calls regarding wildlife resulting in 162 field responses (102 skunk calls with the remaining calls mostly coyote and psyllid responses).

## URBAN FORESTRY

The Urban Forestry Program operates in order to protect, preserve, and perpetuate the health, beauty, and safety of the City of Saskatoon's urban forest for the enjoyment of its citizens and future generations.

The components of this program include; a comprehensive tree inventory, production of nursery stock in the nursery, establishment of sustainable planting programs, and providing maintenance operations. Maintenance operations include multiple functions, such as a 1 in 7 year pruning cycle for boulevard trees and a 1 in 13 year pruning cyclical for park trees, responding to adverse weather events, as well as responding to both internal and citizen service requests.



## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2018

- 906 service requests were responded to through the Urban Forestry tree inquiry service.
- 7,774 trees pruned as part of cyclical tree maintenance schedules.
- 1,259 trees pruned in response to service requests and other reactive work.
- Number of trees removed: 628.
- Number of stumps removed: 358.
- Number of trees planted: 441.
- Number of liners planted in Civic Nursery: 707.
- Number of sites inspected and monitored for tree protection: 185.
- City-wide canopy assessment was completed in 2018 and as a result 2,900 trees met the criteria for removal. Assessment information was used to develop a Cottony Ash Psyllid response plan capital project and report to City Council.
- 1,661 trees removed, 1,175 stumps ground, and 385 trees planted as part of the 2018 cottony ash psyllid capital project.
- Shelter belt pruning maintenance was provided to the following areas:
  - 1) Circle Drive East – 14th Street East to the pedestrian overpass on College Drive East;
  - 2) Richmond Heights – 1640 Warman Road to Rupert Drive;
  - 3) Lakeview - 455 Delaronde Road to Taylor Street East; and
  - 4) Mayfair – Avenue C North to Avenue P North.

## SPORT FIELDS

The Sport Fields Program provides the required staffing and equipment resources to maintain 270 city-wide Sport Fields. Included within this inventory are approximately 150 hectares of Class 1, 2, and 3 Sport Fields. Class Sport Fields receive above basic service levels that support higher levels of sporting competition. The above basic service level is funded by the various user groups that utilize the Class Sport Fields. Additional maintenance activities coordinated by the Sport Fields Program include:

- Provision of fee for service landscaping services for internal and external stakeholders.
- Management of Freeway/Expressway contracted mowing services on over 430 hectares of Road Rights of Way.
- Winter snow removal services to various City-owned parking lots, park roadways, and arenas.

## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2018

- Continued collaboration with Recreation and Community Development and sport fields user groups to enhance quality of play and safety on all charge sport fields.
- Provided tournament ready fields for Soccer Canada National Championships. Received feedback from tournament organizers that field conditions were of superior quality and supported the high level of play.

## IRRIGATION

At an average annual total precipitation of 350mm, the City of 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/perennial plants. Irrigation staff are trained, certified, and legislated to maintain these systems to ensure the safe, efficient application of water can continue throughout the growing season. Examples of the services provided include performing spring system start up, regular system checks (including backflow prevention testing), line locating, automated controller scheduling, and system winterization.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2018

- Implemented scheduling and service level adjustments to reduce overtime expenditure within the program.
- Improved range of central control communication capabilities by installing additional radio towers at Woodlawn Cemetery.
- Added new, higher communications hub antenna on the tower at Saskatoon Light and Power to improve communication with field controllers in Stonebridge and Exhibition areas.
- Added new weather station at Woodlawn Cemetery to improve accuracy of weather data.
- Total potable water used in 2018 decreased by 992,690 cubic feet, a decrease of 2.6% from the previous year.
- 2018 irrigation season experienced 11% less rainfall compared to 2017, according to the Vic Rempel weather station.



## GREENHOUSE/CONSERVATORY PROGRAM

The Greenhouse and Conservatory Program is responsible for providing and maintaining floral displays for public viewing and/or landscape enhancement at the Civic Conservatory, City Hall, and other civic facilities, as well as major public roadways, parks, and public open spaces. The Civic Conservatory was closed in 2018 due to construction of the adjoining Children's Discovery Museum. A report will be presented to City Council in 2019 outlining the potential programming ideas and renewal of the Conservatory.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN 2018

- Greenhouse staff produced annual flowers for 734 flower pots in the Business Improvement Districts.
- 292 flower pots 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. The core area of responsibilities include: planning, estimating and administration of 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, development and implementation of landscape construction standards, and the collection and maintenance of “as-built” data.



## HIGHLIGHTS IN 2018

- New parks were turned over to the City in the following neighbourhoods:
  - Stonebridge: Walterwood
  - Evergreen: Funk, Evergreen Bridge, Lacoursiere, Richards Park, Misaskawatomina
  - Kensington: George H Clair
  - Hampton Village: Paul Mostoway
  - Parkridge: Linear and Pocket Park
- Construction completion of new park development in the following neighbourhoods:
  - Stonebridge: Alfred Bence, William Anderson
  - Rosewood: MacKay, Glen H. Penner, Struthers
  - Aspen Ridge: MR2, 3, and D1 (yet to be named)
  - Kensington: Kensington Village Streetscape
- Completed a major review and revision of the Standard Construction Specifications.
- Completed pathway, drainage, and irrigation remediation projects for:
  - Irrigation and drainage: Donna Birkmeier, Kate Waygood, Nutana Kiwanis, Lakewood Swale, Broadway Bridge, and Prebble Park;
  - Asphalt repairs: John Avant, Wilson, Briarwood, WJL Harvey, Peter Zakreski, and Draggins Car Club.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

- Adjust fertilization and aeration programs on neighbourhood sport fields to increase field quality.
- In-house grassland assessment of Hyde Park in preparation for Hyde Park Land Development Phase II capital project.
- Continued introduction of wild flowers into naturalized parks to enhance forage and habitat for pollinators within the urban environment.
- Naturalized program will begin to assume some of the maintenance activities in the NE Swale Recreation Zone and will collaborate with Meewasin in resource management activities there.
- Next stages in the development of an Urban Forestry Management Plan are in progress, including a canopy assessment, review of best practices in tree protection, and community engagement with a draft plan expected in early 2020.
- Implementation of a psyllid response capital project that will remove approximately 2,000 of 2,900 trees assessed for removal due to the effects associated with the psyllid insect. In 2019, 300 trees will be replaced.
- Continuing with the service review of the Urban Biological Services programs.
- Initiate development of Master Plan to explore future of City of Saskatoon cemetery operations.
- Development and implementation of a walking tour for Woodlawn to promote history and elevate public profile of Woodlawn and Nutana Pioneer Cemeteries.
- Define Parks Winter Program Service Levels.
- Implementation of a pilot project to demonstrate reduced water usage through deep and less frequent irrigation applications.
- Parks equipment training documentation audit to be performed with improvement recommendations identified.
- Establishment of a downtown satellite maintenance yard location.
- Improving mental health awareness through training and ongoing health and wellness communication initiatives.
- Identify opportunities for improving Parks Equipment processes and procedures that include inventory control, preventative maintenance practices, and safe working procedures.
- New park construction will proceed (or continue) in the following neighbourhoods:
  - o Kensington: Storm pond landscape development, Village Square
  - o Elk Point: Wetlands/Storm pond (District Park 1)
  - o Aspen Ridge: Municipal Reserves (Parks) 2 and 3, Municipal Reserves 16, 17, and Drainage Parcel 9
  - o Blairmore: Blairmore Wet Pond
  - o Brighton: Municipal Reserve 1 and 10 (Pocket Park)





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