

Branch — Parks

Introduction

Healthy by nature, parks breathe life into a vibrant Edmonton

The river valley and our extensive system of parks and natural areas are tremendous assets to the citizens of Edmonton. Parks and open spaces offer an incredibly diverse range of recreational opportunities, from playgrounds and sports fields to ornamental parks and trails. Parks bring beauty, grace and tranquility to our busy lives and urban areas. Parks offer the young and old alike opportunities to exercise, relax, play or just enjoy being outside and communing with nature. Contributions to the health and wellness of both the natural environment and Edmonton's communities are significant. Creating and maintaining parks as vital places to meet, walk, sit, play and enjoy is made possible through a comprehensive stewardship and management program to maintain these valued assets in a safe, aesthetically pleasing and functional manner.

Parks Branch's mission is to manage and preserve parks. The scale and scope of this mandate is considerable and includes: a large seasonal staff complement; specialized vehicles and equipment; as well as a focus on partnerships, community relations and neighbourhood connections.



Hectares of Managed Natural Areas	2,120
Ornamental Trees	289,000
Kilometres of Maintained Trails and Walkways	231
Hectares of Turf	4,208
Square Metres of Shrub and Flower Beds	1,373,683
Sports Fields	1,669
Playspaces and water features	370
Kilometres of Spring Roadway Sweeping	1,425
Square Metres of Outdoor Ice	111,700

The inventory maintained by parks includes:

MAJOR SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Park Servicing	Park Access & Circulation	Turf Management	Horticulture	Sport Field Maintenance
Site Servicing, Garbage Collection, Amenity Building Caretaking, Fence, Bollard, Furniture and Stair Repairs, Toboggan Hill and Outdoor Ice Maintenance, Ranger Services	Winter and Summer Parking Lots, Roadways, Trails and Walkways Maintenance	Mowing and Trimming, Minor Turf Rehabilitation, Spring Sweeping, Major Sanitation	Shrub Bed Maintenance, Naturalization, Annual Flower Maintenance	Field Lining and Marking, Fixture Repairs, Track, Tennis Court and Diamond Maintenance

Vegetation Management	Playspace Maintenance	Pest Management	Forestry/Nursery	Community Project Planning
Chemical Trimming, Mechanical Weed Control, Herbiciding, Weed Control	Inspections, Minor Servicing, Program Support	Roadside and Aerial Mosquito Larviciding, Tree Pest Monitoring, Structural Pest Control, Technical Laboratory Services	Tree Maintenance, Planting, Pruning, Removal, Watering, Development Inspection	Support Community Development Projects on Parkland, Planning and Project coordination

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Branch Opportunities and Challenges

Parks play a prominent role in City Council's vision for Edmonton. The City's parks, trails, river valley and natural areas connect Edmontonians to their communities, to the environment and to each other. The overall mission is to develop, manage and preserve parks and open space. The program balances efforts regarding sustainable parks maintenance and operations, environmental integrity and the creation of an attractive city for residents and visitors.

The city's parks and natural areas offer many benefits to our community. From a livability perspective, a well planned, well-maintained park system provides places to play; to exercise; to relax and unwind; to learn about and enjoy nature; and ultimately to build a strong and vibrant community. From an environmental perspective, green infrastructure provides a range of ecological services (production of energy and water); regulatory services (control of climate and waste); supporting services (nutrient cycles and crop pollination); cultural services (research, education, recreation and spiritual); and preserving services (guarding against uncertainty), all of which improve the health of the community and mitigate the affects of climate change. From an economic perspective, parks contribute to economic sustainability through higher property values (5%-15%) proximate to parks.

By performing regular maintenance of turf, trees, flowers and shrubs (horticulture), sports fields, playgrounds and the urban forest, Parks Branch provides functional, safe and aesthetically pleasing parks and facilities year-round. Maintenance is performed on all civic parks, boulevards, school sites, natural areas, roadway landscapes and utility corridors. Winter maintenance activities include snow removal in parking lots and on river valley trails, grooming ski trails, outdoor ice maintenance and inspection of tobogganing hills.

Innovation, Creativity and Best Practices

Parks is implementing the following innovations to address operational and service delivery efficiencies:

- Implementation of audit recommendations – Reallocation of Forestry resources to pruning tasks from watering to maintain tree health. Change tendering practices to allow for better pricing on capital development and tree planting contracts. Improve key reporting for projects out of SAP Project Systems.
- Task Standards Review – reduce and streamline the number and complexity of operational tasks to reduce data entry requirements, improve reporting and develop better performance measures.

Impact of Capital Projects

Continued physical growth of the city leads to increased parks inventory that must be maintained. The total impact of capital on the operating budget is derived from two sources: Parks' own capital projects, and parks inventory assets contributed by developers, other departments, and partnership projects. Capital impacts are focused primarily in the areas of turf, horticulture, trees, playgrounds, parks servicing, sports fields and traffic systems. In addition, the package includes funding for the RVA Project Office to address Council approved RVA Projects. The operating impact of capital for 2012 is \$1,172.

Parks also has a funded service package for Mosquito Abatement for 2012 of \$299.

Service and Budget Review

To meet the City's 2012 tax levy target, the Parks Branch looked at which areas of service would minimize citizen impacts while remaining on course to achieve the long term goals of the Corporation. In addition, consideration needed to be given to addressing and mitigating the impacts of the challenges facing the Branch. The branch has identified the following:

- Increased revenues from picnic sites and sports fields (rate increases).
- Opportunities for reduction are primarily focused on less major sanitation (litter) clean up and reducing the Park Ranger staff complement to support events and festivals.

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Approved 2012 Budget – Branch Summary (\$000)

	2010 Actual	2011 Budget	\$ Change '11-'12	2012 Budget	% Change '11-'12
Revenue & Transfers					
User Fees, Fines, Permits, etc.	\$ 1,424	\$ 990	\$ 151	\$ 1,141	15.2
Grants	194	-	-	-	-
Transfer from Reserves	-	-	-	-	-
Total Revenue & Transfers	1,618	990	151	1,141	15.2
Expenditure & Transfers					
Persomel	24,691	27,910	1,312	29,222	4.7
Materials, Goods & Supplies	4,730	4,933	228	5,161	4.6
External Services	1,954	2,064	319	2,383	15.5
Fleet Services	6,049	6,184	988	7,172	16.0
Intra-municipal Services	216	367	(21)	346	(5.7)
Utilities & Other Charges	1,598	2,114	(44)	2,070	(2.1)
Transfer to Reserves	2,529	-	-	-	-
Subtotal	41,767	43,572	2,782	46,354	6.4
Intra-municipal Recoveries	(2,030)	(1,545)	(467)	(2,012)	30.2
Total Expenditure & Transfers	39,737	42,027	2,315	44,342	5.5
Net Operating Requirement	\$ 38,119	\$ 41,037	\$ 2,164	\$ 43,201	5.3
Full-time Equivalents	432.6	460.3	16.4	476.7	

Budget Changes for 2012 (\$000)

Revenue & Transfers - Changes

User Fees, Fines, Permits, etc. \$151

Picnic and sports field rentals are increasing in volume \$100 as part of the Service & Budget Review and rates are increasing \$24. Forestry revenues are increasing \$24 as part of the CPP Impact of Operating service package.

Budget Changes for 2012 (\$000)

Expenditures & Transfers - Changes

Personnel \$1,312

An increase of \$1,086 in personnel is as a result of operating impacts of capital. The rest of the increase \$301 is a result of movement within salary ranges, changes in benefits and the last year of a 3-year 1% LAPP contribution. The Service & Budget Review reductions account for (\$75).

Material, Goods & Supplies \$228

Materials, goods & supplies are being increased \$416 for operating impacts of capital and \$151 for general inflation. These increases are offset by reductions for the Service & Budget Review (\$133) as well as (\$206) for vehicle lease buy backs.

External Services \$319

External services are being increased \$279 for operating impacts of capital and \$54 for general inflation. Offsetting these increases is (\$14) for the Service & Budget Review reductions.

Fleet Services \$988

An increase of \$245 in Fleet Services is attributed to fuel cost increases. An increase of \$481 is attributed to rate increases and changes in volume is \$198 due to greater number of kilometers driven. Increases as a result of operating impacts of capital are \$139. The Service & Budget Review reductions account for (\$75).

Intra-municipal Services (\$21)

Reduction is related to adjustments

Utilities & Other Charges (\$44)

The Service & Budget Review reductions account for (\$57). Offsetting the reductions are increases related to inflation of \$13.

Intra-Municipal Recoveries (\$467)

Recoveries are increasing by general inflation \$42 and CPP Impacts of operating \$425.

Full-time Equivalents - Changes

The Service & Budget Review reductions account for (1.6) temporary FTE's. FTE's are increasing by 18.0 as a result of CPP Impacts of Capital of which 6.0 are permanent and 12.0 are temporary positions.

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Service Package - Impact of Capital

Funded

Description

The impact of capital on the operating budget is derived from two sources: Parks capital projects and parks inventory contributed by developers, other departments and partnership projects. The cost impacts are focussed primarily in the areas of turf, horticulture, trees, playgrounds, parks servicing, sports fields and traffic systems. The corporate capital operating impacts are identified on the capital project profiles for Parks projects. The difference between total impacts and the impacts from the capital budget are contributed assets (i.e. from developers or community partners).

Adding incremental inventory requires additional operations and technical support staff to address both the growth in inventory and the growth in capital projects to be planned and managed. The volume and cost of the maintenance activities is based on costing provided through the Plant Maintenance module of SAP.

The requested 14.0 FTE's consist of 2 permanent and 12 temporary positions.

River Valley Capital Development Program Office - This request is to create a new Project Development office specifically to provide enhanced focus and priority for capital development associated with the River Valley Alliance (RVA) plan. A partnership has been established with the RVA, City of Edmonton and the Federal Government to construct approximately \$72 million worth of projects within the river valley by 2014. Building on a project management model developed specifically for this purpose, resourcing would include a Program Manager, Planner II, Landscape Architect and a Planning Technician in 2012. The following year a Community Liason position and a Project Support Administrator would be added. Their priority will be to build the detailed capital plan of Council approved projects complete with land acquisition, program development/refinement, river valley planning approvals, concept and detailed design, and construction completion.

The requested 4.0 FTE's consists of 4 permanent positions, which will be fully funded from the Capital Plan

Justification

Funding Parks inventory growth will:

- a) Avoid the erosion of existing park maintenance cycles and ensure park infrastructure is maintained to acceptable levels.
- b) Ensure timely park development to meet public expectations, ensure existing systems and processes are kept up to date and allow for continued and improved stewardship of the parks system in an efficient and effective manner.

Links to Strategic Goals, Departmental Outcomes & Performance Measures

Preserve & Sustain Edmonton's Environment - Corporate Outcome 1.2 & 1.3

Improve Edmonton's Livability - Corporate Outcome 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 & 2.4

Transform Edmonton's Urban Form - 3.1 & 3.2

Impact on Other Departments

Fleet Services may be impacted.

Incremental (\$000)	2012				2013				2014			
	Exp	Rev	Net	FTEs	Exp	Rev	Net	FTEs	Exp	Rev	Net	FTEs
New Budget Annualization	\$ 1,196	\$ 24	\$ 1,172	18.0	\$ 1,240	\$ -	\$ 1,240	15.0	\$ 955	\$ -	\$ 955	11.2
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 1,196	\$ 24	\$ 1,172	18.0	\$ 1,240	\$ -	\$ 1,240	15.0	\$ 955	\$ -	\$ 955	11.2

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Service Package - Mosquito Abatement

Funded

Description

The City of Edmonton's mosquito control program targets mosquitoes at the larval stage and has been in place for several decades. With weather patterns for the previous decade being drier than normal, resources associated with mosquito control were able to be re-assigned or reduced in recent years while still meeting expectations.

With anticipated precipitation levels rising (given 2011 experience) and pending legislative change with the expiration of the product label for Dursban (chlorpyrifos) in 2014, this service package is required to adequately resource the mosquito control program to continue to meet citizen and City Council expectations.

This package includes increased aerial contract support to a minimum of 400 hours, with a commitment of three helicopters and the option for additional helicopters \$200; and a further \$99 annually for chemical purchases. The \$1.2 million extra cost in 2013 includes purchase of a replacement pesticide product, Bti (Vectobac), and additional flying time required due to heavier payloads.

Justification

An increase in resources is required (staff, material and equipment) since the primary pesticide, Dursban (an effective low-cost product), will no longer be available for use once current supplies are depleted. The supply of Dursban in stock may be sufficient for one more year, possibly two, should only spring mosquito campaigns be required. Alternatives to this product are less effective and substantially more costly to purchase and apply.

Budget reductions have been made to this program in recent years due to drier than normal weather conditions. With the return to near normal precipitation levels (477mm/year average), increased staffing, materials and equipment are required to meet the needs of the program and to address the reduced effectiveness of future products.

Not funding this service package would increase the nuisance factor caused by Edmonton's mosquito population and potentially raise the probability of disease vector establishment.

Links to Strategic Goals, Departmental Outcomes & Performance Measures

Strategic Goal(s)

- Improve Edmonton's Livability
- Preserve and Sustain Edmonton's Environment

Corporate Outcome(s):

- Safe and clean city
- Complete collaborative communities that are accessible, strong and inclusive with access to a full range of services
- Edmonton strives to be a leader in environmental advocacy, stewardship, preservation and conservation
- The impact of city operations on air, land and water systems is minimized

Departmental Outcome(s)

- Natural assets are preserved and protected

Performance Measure(s):

- % of citizens using parks and green spaces
- % of citizens satisfied with parks and green spaces
- %hectares of natural areas sprayed

Impact on Other Departments

City employees will be able to work in a mosquito reduced environment

Incremental (\$000)	2012				2013				2014			
	Exp	Rev	Net	FTEs	Exp	Rev	Net	FTEs	Exp	Rev	Net	FTEs
New Budget	\$ 299	\$ -	\$ 299	-	\$ 1,200	\$ -	\$ 1,200	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-
Annualization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	\$ 299	\$ -	\$ 299	-	\$ 1,200	\$ -	\$ 1,200	-	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-