

Urban Forestry

Led by: Director of Parks & Open Spaces

Service Description

This service manages public trees and promotes tree stewardship to Calgarians. Trees increase climate resiliency by improving air quality, reducing storm water runoff, and providing shade, cooling and wildlife habitat. Trees increase property values and create attractive, stress-reducing environments. The City plants public trees to replace those lost from construction and natural decline and grows the urban canopy to benefit future generations. The City also receives public trees from the development industry. The City waters newly planted trees for healthy establishment, and inspects and prunes trees to increase their lifespans. Urban Forestry reviews development projects to protect trees.

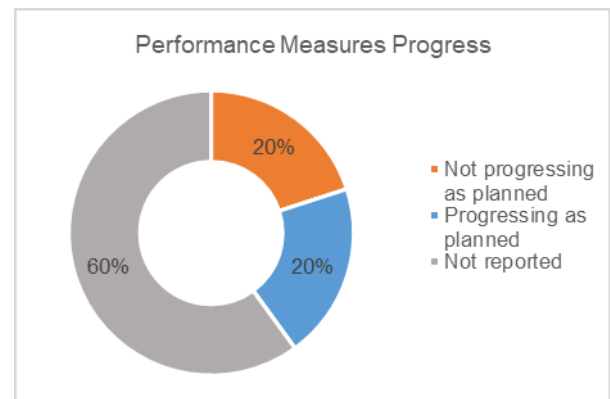
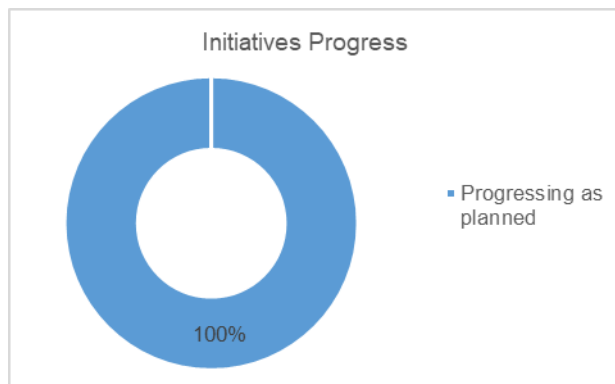
Service Updates

Key service results

The Branching Out private tree giveaway was extremely well received by Calgarians [Urban Forestry (UF) Initiative 8]. Due to high public demand, the number of trees provided in 2024 increased by 250 per cent. All 5,000 trees were claimed, with a greater amount given to areas with lower tree canopy to enhance equity. Registration was open citywide for two weeks or until all the trees were gone. In collaboration with Parks and Open Spaces, we offer guided tree walks, volunteer tree planting opportunities and in-person presentations to increase and support tree-related public education.

Canopy Expansion planting program was completed in mid-June with 80,000 seedlings being planted in various communities (UF Initiative 9). This initiative is above and beyond Urban Forestry's regular planting program, of which 1127 caliper (large) trees have been planted in 2024 so far. Seedlings take longer to establish (and to contribute to the urban canopy growth) than caliper trees. The program focuses on mass planting of smaller trees (whips and plugs) that, when planted in optimal areas, can establish and provide increased canopy cover and biodiversity.

Progress summary



Risk(s) impacting the progress

Loss of Tree Canopy to Large-Scale Development

Tree Survivability in Extreme Drought

Tree Root Access to Healthy Soils, Adequate Water and Below Surface Drainage



Measuring Our Performance

Legend

— Actuals

■ Expected Future Performance

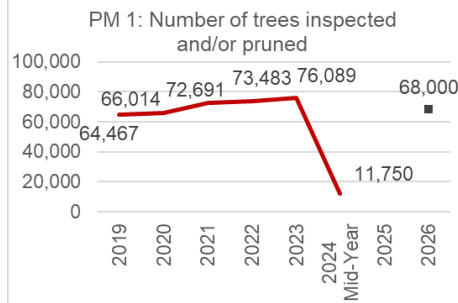
➡ Progressing as planned

⊖ Not progressing as planned

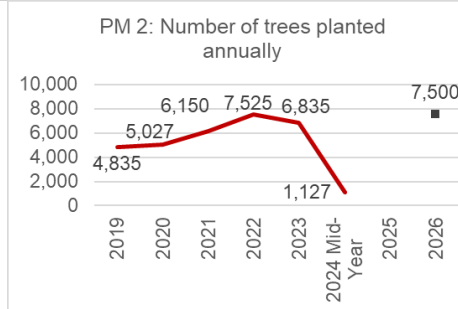
Performance Measures

Story behind the numbers

Status

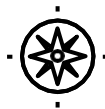


Risk-based tree inspections and pruning continue to be a service priority. This proactive work increases the resilience of the urban forest and leads to improved lifespans for trees and less damage from severe weather, such as extreme winds or late/early seasonal snowfalls. The City also completes regular tree assessments to ensure asset management data is accurate, enabling informed decision making and the efficient use of available funds. Risk-based assessments of 50,000 trees begin in the fall of 2024. As of mid-June, over 11,750 trees have been pruned.



In 2024, the service plans to plant 8,000 trees, 6,000 of which were lifecycle replacements. To improve progress towards the Municipal Development Plan target (we're currently at about 50 per cent of the target), Urban Forestry will plant another 2,000 trees (8,000 in total). To fund the budget shortfall in caliper trees, we applied to a federal grant program. Due to water restrictions, a 4-week hold was put on planting operations. At mid-year, 1127 trees were planted, and we forecast that our annual goal will be reached.





Progress on Service Delivery

PROGRESS STATUS



Completed



Progressing as planned



Not progressing as planned



Not started

FUNDING TYPE



Capital



Operating

Initiative 1		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type: 
Increase tree resilience to severe weather, invasive pests and diseases and expand tree lifespans by continuing to prioritize risk-based pruning of public trees.			
UPDATE 	This priority work is ongoing: assessments will begin in the fall of 2024 via a risk-based model. Over 11,750 trees have been pruned already to mitigate risk and promote tree health.		
Initiative 2		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type: 
Protect mature trees and sustain the urban forest by continuing to respond to Calgarians (3-1-1) and developer requests for tree health, protection and hazard mitigation.			
UPDATE 	In 2024, there have been 333 Tree Emergency calls received from 311. During the first half of the year, the service continued to respond to 3-1-1 requests such as wind weather events.		
Initiative 3		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type: 
Enhance public safety and mitigate damages to property by removing dead trees and select stumps.			
UPDATE 	The service completed 1,951 tree removals and ground out 590 stumps in 2024 by mid-year. This work enhances public safety by removing hazardous trees and stumps that can be tripping hazards.		
Initiative 4		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type: 
Continually improve asset management and effectiveness by annually updating Urban Forestry's digital inventory of public trees.			
UPDATE 	This ongoing initiative is progressing well, with 41,628 trees inventoried in 2024 by mid-year. Urban Forestry is on track to complete its inventory of 20 per cent of the assets this year. Facility Management sites are also being surveyed for the first time to identify additional public trees that were not previously inventoried.		
Initiative 5		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type: 
Encourage sustainable tree planting in development and construction activities through tree inspections by aligning with land use bylaws, specifications and best practices.			
UPDATE 	Tree inspections are ongoing as part of various development streams including infill, capital and subdivision development inspections. The Urban Forestry Service Governance (UFSG) team, a cross-departmental team, is collaborating to increase role clarity and to improve quality of tree planting. The UFSG team is also working towards improved collaboration initiatives across departments to identify planting sites and enhance tree maintenance efficiency.		

Initiative 6		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type: 
Sustain the urban forest by assessing the risk of, and treating public trees for, invasive pests and diseases.			
UPDATE 	In collaboration with Parks & Open Spaces, an Invasive Pest and Disease Crisis Response Plan has been developed in 2024, specifically for Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). Ash trees are one of the top four species in Calgary, making EAB a top threat to our urban forest if it is introduced.		
Initiative 7		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type:  
Adapt trees to Calgary's harsh environment and trial new tree species in Calgary's climate by managing a civic nursery.			
UPDATE 	The civic nursery operated at full capacity in 2024. Trees were harvested (dug and wrapped) in preparation for planting throughout the City. Tree stock was procured, planted, and maintained to support future tree planting. New tree species have been trialed to determine viability in our changing climate.		
Initiative 8		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type:  
Educate and incentivize Calgarians to plant and care for private trees by continuing to participate in public education and partnership programs.			
UPDATE 	The Branching Out private tree giveaway was extremely well received by Calgarians. Due to high public demand in past years, the number of trees provided in 2024 was increased by 250 per cent. In 2024, all 5,000 trees were claimed, with a greater proportion allocated to the lower canopied areas of the city to enhance equity. Registration was open citywide for two weeks or until all the trees were gone. In collaboration with Parks and Open Spaces, we offer guided tree walks, volunteer tree planting opportunities and in-person presentations to increase and support tree-related public education.		
Initiative 9		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type:  
Grow the urban canopy by continuing to participate in collaborative programs and funding opportunities (e.g., canopy growth, food security and volunteer planting).			
UPDATE 	We have applied for a significant federal grant that is proceeding through the approvals process. The Branching Out program is being enhanced to engage with a greater audience and planting streams with external partners. Canopy Expansion planting program was completed in mid-June: 80,000 seedlings were planted in various communities. Its focus is on mass planting of smaller trees (whips and plugs) that, when established, provide increased canopy cover and biodiversity. It is above and beyond our regular planting program, of which 1127 caliper (large) trees were planted in 2024.		
Initiative 10		Impact Area: City-wide	Funding Type:  
Maintain Calgary's existing canopy through the development of a citywide program to systematically identify and replace older, larger trees when they are at the end of their natural lifecycles.			
UPDATE 	This initiative is ongoing as trees are currently being assessed. By Q3 2024, the service will remove 250 trees and grind out stumps. Sites will be prepared for replacement tree planting in 2025. Replacement planting for 200 trees removed last year, as part of this initiative, will be completed by Q3 2024.		
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	Promoting a positive safety culture is a key, ongoing priority in Urban Forestry. In 2024, emergency response tabletop exercises were completed (May) related to a mock EAB outbreak. This ensures staff preparedness and provides		

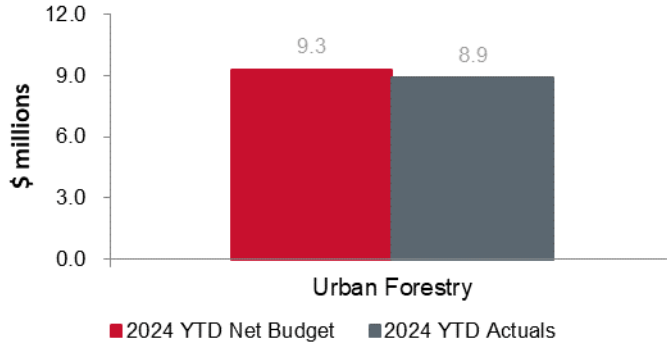


opportunity for continuous improvement. Safety culture is embedded into all tasks completed by staff and contractors including safety meetings, reporting of near misses and incidents, worksite inspections and Field Level Hazards assessment. Leadership and management have regularly been onsite to support and hear feedback directly from front facing staff.



Service Updates on Financial Performance

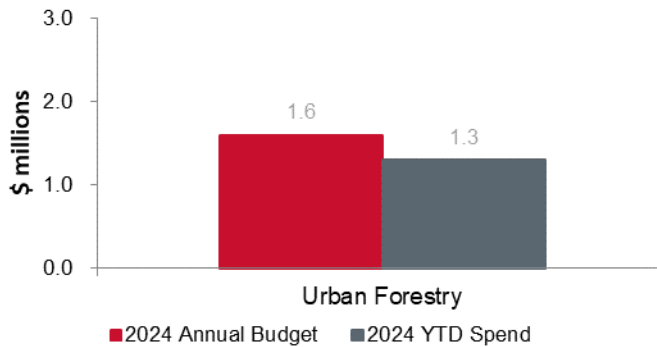
Net Operating Budget and Actuals as of June 30, 2024



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

Urban Forestry has a favourable operating variance of (\$0.4 million). The main reason that has contributed to the variance is water restrictions related to the Bearspaw South Feeder Main break. Tree procurement and watering was put on hold or scaled back significantly during this time. Operations have now resumed to full capacity and the service will be able to complete annual targets, utilizing remaining funds in Q3 and Q4.

Capital Budget and Spend as of June 30, 2024



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

Urban Forestry has spent 79.8 per cent of the 2024 approved capital budget. In 2024, the capital expenditures have been used to procure, plant and water trees. The investment has increased the tree canopy and increased the replacement of trees. It will improve progress towards the service's performance measures, PM2: Number of trees planted annually and PM3: Calgary's urban canopy percentage. At mid-year, 2024 spending is ahead of schedule.