

Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 2: Supporting Vibrant Parks by Improving Park Asset Management and Repair Processes

Date: January 29, 2025

To: Audit Committee

From: Auditor General

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Parks and Recreation Division's mission is to improve the quality of life of Toronto's diverse communities by providing safe, clean, and beautiful parks; a healthy, expanding urban forest; and high quality, community-focused recreational experiences. The Parks Branch is responsible for on-going care and maintenance of City-operated parks, including various amenities found in each park.

The Auditor General's 2024 Work Plan included an operational review of how the Parks and Recreation Division manages and maintains over 1,500 parks in the City of Toronto. Our first phase of the operational review, presented at the October 15, 2024 Audit Committee meeting, focused on day-to-day maintenance and compliance with established service levels.

This report presents the second phase of the operational review, which focuses on the Parks Branch's processes related to park inspections, non-capital repairs and maintenance of various park assets and amenities, and public complaints. The audit aimed to address whether parks maintenance and non-capital repair needs were being identified, prioritized, and addressed in a timely manner.¹

Our audit identified opportunities for improvement in the following areas:

- A. Improving Park Maintenance Inspections and Monitoring of the Resolution of Deficiencies
- B. Implementing Consistent Practices for Repair-Related Service Requests and Work Order Tracking

¹ This audit focused on maintenance and non-capital repairs that fall within the mandate of Parks Branch's Technical Services group. The audit does not address repairs referred to groups outside of the Parks Branch or to other City divisions (e.g. Corporate Real Estate Management (CREM)).

C. Establishing a Comprehensive System for Monitoring Public Complaints from Intake to Resolution

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Auditor General recommends that:

1. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:
 - a. Review and analyze data from the park inspections system to ensure repair-related deficiencies identified in past inspections have been resolved and/or appropriate work orders have been created to track repairs where action is still pending to resolve the deficiency.
 - b. Establish a process and/or supporting systems for tracking, through to their resolution, deficiencies that have been transferred to other groups or divisions.
2. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop additional guidance and/or training to outline or clarify:
 - a. requirements for documenting inspection results, including noting of deficiencies and creating work orders for necessary maintenance; and
 - b. processes for monitoring and following-up of deficiencies.
3. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop and implement a service request and work order policy or procedure and provide training to staff. The guidance provided should include:
 - a. criteria for creating work orders, specifying any exceptions for cases where a work order may not be required and how resolution of service requests without work orders should be documented and tracked;
 - b. criteria for prioritizing work orders based on the urgency and impact (e.g. safety risk); and
 - c. data entry standards outlining specific information required for each work order (e.g. descriptions linking work to be completed and prioritization or risks, task detail, start and end dates) and expected timeframes for entering a service request and generating and closing a work order in the work order management system.
4. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, in consultation with the Chief Technology Officer, to modernize work order management practices to reduce inefficiencies arising from manual processes. In doing so, Parks Branch should consider the capability of enabling technologies to support the integration of work order management, work assignments and time

tracking. Consideration should also be given to integrating the tracking of work transferred to other groups or divisions.

5. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:
 - a. implement management reviews of open, in-progress, and completed work orders to monitor compliance, identify backlogs, and to assess productivity, efficiency, and workload; and
 - b. establish and implement guidelines for supervisors to conduct site visits to monitor the completion and quality of work performed by Parks Branch - Technical Services staff. Site visits should be documented, and feedback be provided to staff for training and process improvements.
6. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to:
 - a. establish benchmarks for work order completion timeframes starting from the receipt of the service request to the time of work order completion, considering different priority and complexity levels; and
 - b. develop key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure and report the achievement of the established service standards, taking into consideration resource and funding constraints, and ensure the reasons for any delays impacting achievement of KPIs are tracked, analyzed, and addressed.
7. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division, to develop and implement procedures for documenting and tracking daily activities of Parks Branch - Technical Services staff and provide training on these procedures. The procedures should set expectations for:
 - a. using a standard template for logging daily activities to ensure consistency across the districts;
 - b. the types of activities staff must record, including tasks completed and time spent on each task (as well as linkages to work orders and information required for work orders, where applicable);
 - c. supervisory review of activity logs for accuracy and completeness, leveraging GPS where applicable; and
 - d. reviewing and analyzing data from activity records to support accountability and workload management.
8. City Council request the General Manager, Parks, and Recreation Division, in collaboration with Customer Experience Division and Technology Services Division, to:

- a. implement a centralized system for tracking all public complaints (regardless of the method or mechanism by which it was submitted) and recording key data on any related service requests through to their resolution; and
 - b. create reports and dashboards for management to monitor complaints/service request types, volumes, aging, and trends.
9. City Council request the General Manager, Parks and Recreation Division to review and revise the Division's current complaints policy and processes, provide training to staff on their responsibilities and expectations, and monitor compliance with the policy, including targeted timeframes for responding to complaints.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Addressing the recommendations in this report will support vibrant parks by improving park asset management and repair processes.

The resulting financial implications of improved processes, productivity, and any anticipated efficiencies and/or resources needed, could not be determined at the time of this report.

DECISION HISTORY

The Auditor General's [2024 Work Plan](#) included an operational review of how the Parks and Recreation Division manages and maintains over 1,500 parks in the City of Toronto.

The Auditor General presented the results of the first phase of the operational review in the report "[Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 1: Improving Oversight of Day-to-Day Maintenance Helps to Ensure City Parks are Beautiful, Clean and Safe](#)". The audit focused on the efficiency of daily park maintenance activities, compliance with the established service level standards, and identified opportunities for improving how the Parks Branch performs day-to-day maintenance to help keep parks beautiful, clean, and safe.

The Audit Committee adopted the report with amendments on October 15, 2024, and City Council adopted the report with amendments on November 13, 2024.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.AU6.1>

This report presents the second phase of the operational review, which focuses on the Parks Branch's processes related to parks inspections, non-capital repairs and maintenance of various park assets and amenities and public complaints.

COMMENTS

A high-level summary of key audit findings is provided in the Audit at a Glance.

The attached audit report provides the Audit Committee and members of Council with the detailed audit results and recommendations together with management's response. Management has agreed to all nine recommendations.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Tara Anderson
Auditor General

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Audit of Parks Branch Operations – Phase 2: Supporting Vibrant Parks by Improving Park Asset Management and Repair Processes