

Ward-Based Maintenance Team Pilot - Response to Council Direction

Date: July 16, 2026
To: City Council
From: City Manager
Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report responds to Council direction to establish a ward-based maintenance team pilot. The report outlines the City's current approach, recent improvements to related processes and key considerations to inform further analysis and the potential development of a ward-based approach, including the work required to define the model and assess feasibility prior to any pilot.

The City currently delivers public realm maintenance through an established interdivisional model. Services are delivered based on geographic operating areas that vary by division, as opposed to ward-based areas. As a result, proactive maintenance, 311 service requests, and planning coordination are all organized and managed according to these geographic areas. Within this structure, staff, equipment, contractors, and operational resources are deployed based on service demand, operational priorities, and local conditions, rather than being permanently assigned to small, fixed areas. This approach is intended to enable efficiency and the flexible deployment of staff, equipment, and specialized resources to areas of greatest need while maintaining consistent service levels across the city. 311 data complements proactive divisional planning by providing insight into customer-initiated service requests, supporting data-informed decision-making as well as longer-term workplans. As part of this report, staff have outlined how the City's existing processes address many of the objectives of [MM40.30](#).

Recent enhancements, including the Keep Toronto Beautiful initiative, support coordinated, city-wide maintenance by bringing multiple divisions together to deliver targeted clean-up efforts in high-need areas. Using data from staff patrols and 311 service requests, these focused “blitzes” concentrate resources to achieve visible, timely improvements, particularly in underserved communities.

Key operational, service delivery and labour-related considerations related to exploring a ward-based model are outlined in this report. For example, collective agreement

considerations would be a key early factor for review. The City would also need to assess whether assigning crews and equipment to fixed ward boundaries would reduce the City's operational flexibility to respond to changing needs across districts, such as weather events, construction impacts, seasonal spikes, and other uneven service pressures. These, taken together with other considerations, suggest that exploring a ward-based model would require further analysis to define how such a model would function in practice and to assess potential impacts and implications to the delivery of City services, including how it would compare to the current approach in terms of service outcomes, operational efficiency, coordination, or equity.

This report was developed through a partnership across City divisions, including Environment, Climate and Forestry, Solid Waste Management Services, Transportation Services, Customer Experience, People & Equity and Financial Planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts arising from the adoption of this report.

However, the development and potential implementation of a ward-based maintenance approach, including any future pilot, could result in additional operating costs related to staffing alignment, supervision, route optimization, equipment allocation, specialized training, collective agreements, and reduced operational agility. Any resulting financial impacts would be assessed through further operational review and reported to City Council prior to implementation.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 6, 2026, the Service Excellence Committee considered item SE13.2 Using 311 and Other Data to Identify Trends and Improve Service Delivery in Solid Waste Management Services and received the report from the General Manager, Solid Waste Management Services, for information.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.SE13.2>

At its meeting on July 6, 2026, the Service Excellence Committee considered item SE13.4 Using 311 and Other Data to Drive Service Excellence in Urban Forestry and

received the report from the Executive Director, Environment, Climate and Forestry, for information.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.SE13.4>

At its meeting on May 14, 2026, the Service Excellence Committee considered item SE12.2 Using 311 and Other Data to Identify Trends and Improve Service Delivery in Parks and Recreation, Transportation Services and Municipal Licensing and Standards and received the report from the General Manager, Parks and Recreation, the General Manager, Transportation Services, and the Interim Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards, for information.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.SE12.2>

At its meeting on April 22 and 23, 2026, City Council considered item MM40.30 Ward-Based Maintenance Teams Pilot and directed the City Manager to report to City Council on a pilot program to establish a ward-based maintenance team.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.MM40.30>

At its meeting on March 25 and 26, 2026, City Council considered item EX29.4 Pothole Blitz and Local Road Repair Strategy and directed the General Manager of Transportation Services to implement an ongoing pothole blitz strategy informed by local road conditions, 311 data and the planned enhanced road work.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.EX29.4>

At its meeting on March 10, 2026, the Executive Committee considered item EX29.15 Keep Toronto Beautiful 2026 and directed the City Manager to accelerate the timeline for the 2026 Keep Toronto Beautiful initiative.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.EX29.15>

COMMENTS

Current State and Alignment with Existing Processes

The City currently has established processes in place that address the objectives of [MM40.30](#) with the functions identified in the motion currently delivered by the Transportation Services, Solid Waste Management Services and Environment, Climate and Forestry divisions. Public realm maintenance is delivered through an interdivisional model with responsibilities assigned based on asset ownership, location, budget, service levels, risk, technical requirements and available resources. Across divisions, service delivery is generally organized using broader geographic operating areas rather than ward boundaries enabling divisions to maintain geographic accountability while operating at a scale that supports efficiency and coordination.

Service delivery across divisions is informed by a combination of service request data, proactive inspections, asset condition information, performance monitoring, and local operational knowledge. This supports a model that balances proactive, planned maintenance with the ability to respond to emerging issues, seasonal demands, and changing public realm conditions. A significant portion of work is identified and completed through proactive programs and routine operations, reducing reliance on

reactive service requests and enabling earlier intervention and more efficient use of resources. Divisions rely on specialized staff, equipment, technical expertise, and established operational practices. Many activities are delivered through programs or service streams that are organized at the district or area level to support consistent application of service standards, effective supervision, and efficient routing and scheduling. This includes the ability to group work geographically, optimize travel time, and deploy specialized resources where they are most needed.

Maintenance demands vary across the city due to factors such as weather events, infrastructure conditions, construction activity, and seasonal cycles. The current model enables divisions to reassign and scale resources across geographic areas in response to these fluctuations, supporting service level consistency and helping to avoid localized service gaps or inefficiencies. Divisions routinely coordinate with each other, as well as with Councillors' offices, to address complex or cross-cutting issues, respond to escalations, and support broader operational initiatives. Together, these elements illustrate a coordinated, flexible, and needs-based operating model designed to support consistent service levels efficiently and equitably across the city.

The Role of the Customer Experience Division and 311 Data

The proactive work and planning done by divisions is complemented by 311 data. 311 data provides visibility into customer-initiated requests and is considered by divisions in their planning efforts, alongside proactive work, equity considerations and longer-term workplans. Therefore, 311 service requests should not be solely relied on to plan work but are used as a complementary source of data to divisional operational dashboards and workplans.

A practical example of how 311 data supports service planning can be found in Solid Waste Management Services (SWMS). SWMS collects waste from approximately 12,700 bins in 1,250 parks and utilizes 311 service request (SR) data to develop geographic heat maps that visually represent concentrations of overflowing park bins across the city. The heat maps transform text-based SRs into actionable geographic density data and allow SWMS to identify park hot spots that have more than three service requests for overflowing bins per year. Once parks are identified, SWMS investigates the underlying causes for the overflowing bins and makes adjustments to address any issues. Adjustments can include adding more bins, relocating bins, educating collection operators on specific collection requirements for the park or increasing the frequency of collection. Making these adjustments has resulted in a reduction in the amount of overflowing park bin service requests from 2024 to 2025, with 559 SRs in 2024 and 450 in 2025, representing a reduction of 109 SRs or 19.5%. The amount of parks with three or more service requests also went down from 66 in 2024 to 32 in 2025.

311 intakes service requests from the public and the information collected is shared with the relevant divisions through their back-end systems. The Customer Experience Division is also working closely with divisions to share data through dashboards and analyze 311 data quarterly, in collaboration with partner divisions, to identify opportunities for improvement in service delivery.

Through Closing the Loop, by mid-2027 customers will have an opportunity to follow along on the progress of requests already in progress. This will reduce follow up and duplication of service requests and improve customer insights into how requests are being resolved.

Multi-Divisional Coordination and Keep Toronto Beautiful

The City delivers coordinated, city-wide maintenance through the Keep Toronto Beautiful initiative, a multi-divisional program focused on keeping public spaces clean, safe and well-maintained. Now in its second year, the initiative runs from May to October and brings together approximately 350 to 400 City staff to complete targeted “cleanliness blitzes” in high need areas across Toronto. These efforts build on existing service delivery by aligning work across divisions and concentrating resources in specific neighbourhoods to provide more visible, timely improvements. Through these coordinated blitzes, the City has delivered a broad range of maintenance activities, including the removal of litter, graffiti, weeds and debris; intensified clean-up and enforcement at illegal dumping hotspots; tree, turfgrass and landscaping maintenance; street sweeping and laneway clean-up; pothole and minor infrastructure repairs; repainting pavement markings to improve road safety; and the installation and maintenance of garbage and recycling bins. Areas for focused work are identified using data from daily staff patrols and 311 service requests, with an added emphasis on historically underserved, low-income and vulnerable communities to support a more equitable distribution of services.

In addition to these targeted blitzes, the City continues to deliver extensive, proactive maintenance across the public realm, including daily park clean-ups supported by seasonal staff, expanded litter bin infrastructure and servicing, ongoing tree inspection and maintenance programs, graffiti removal, and enforcement of bylaws related to littering, illegal dumping, signage, clothing donation boxes and property standards. This work is supported by robust 311 reporting and response mechanisms, enabling residents to identify areas requiring attention and helping staff monitor trends and adjust service delivery. Together, these efforts have improved coordination across divisions, supported a more proactive approach to maintenance, reduced pressures on reactive service channels, and delivered more consistent and visible improvements in neighbourhood cleanliness, safety and overall infrastructure condition across the city.

Key Considerations to Inform a Potential Ward-Based Model

The City’s current approach reflects a coordinated and integrated model of public realm maintenance that supports flexible, demand-based service delivery across broader geographic areas. While a ward-based model may appear to offer a more localized service structure, there is currently limited evidence available to assess how such an approach would function within the City’s existing operating model or what changes would be required to support it effectively. The considerations outlined below identify key operational, labour-related and service delivery considerations related to a ward-based model. At this time, additional work would be required to define the model, assess feasibility and operational implications, and determine whether a pilot would be an appropriate next step.

Resource Allocation and Operational Flexibility

A key cross-cutting consideration would be the extent to which a ward-based structure would limit the City's ability to reassign crews and equipment across districts in real time in response to fluctuations in demand. Maintenance requirements vary across the city due to localized infrastructure conditions, weather impacts, construction activity, and seasonal cycles. As a result, some areas may experience higher volumes of work than others at different times. Under the current model, divisions can adjust staffing and equipment deployment across operating areas to respond accordingly. It is not yet known how constraining resources to fixed ward-based boundaries would affect this flexibility in practice. A ward-based approach could limit the City's ability to shift crews or equipment to areas experiencing short-term or seasonal pressures, depending on how the model is designed.

At this time, there is insufficient operational evidence to determine how a ward-based model would affect overall resource utilization, responsiveness, or the equitable distribution of services including how service would be maintained in adjacent areas and whether the remaining resource pool could continue to address fluctuating city-wide demand efficiently.

Labour Relations and Collective Agreement Considerations

As an employer, the City retains broad rights to schedule, direct, control, introduce new technology, reorganize and otherwise control the work performed by any employees covered by a collective agreement. However, the ability to reorganize work as contemplated in this report could be impacted by collective agreement provisions regarding scheduling, seniority, transfers and other language. Division-specific or local practices and policies may also influence or limit the ability to make certain changes to effect ward-based maintenance teams. These considerations would need to be assessed early to determine what would be feasible within existing agreements.

If ward-based maintenance teams were to be developed or piloted, the proposed changes to schedules, work location, work processes etc. would need to be reviewed with Employee Relations against the relevant collective agreement provisions. Additionally, even if such changes are determined to be exclusively within the control of the employer, Employee Relations recommends that, in the interest of positive labour relations, the City should have on-going discussions and consultation with the elected union representatives of the impacted staff. This would likely aid in achieving a smoother transition to a new way of organizing work and allow the parties to address disputes or concerns as early as possible.

Service Planning and Delivery

Adopting a ward-based service delivery model would require changes to how services are planned and delivered. This may include redesigning routes, service areas, staffing assignments, specialized training, supervisory responsibilities, and equipment deployment to align with ward boundaries. Many maintenance activities also rely on specialized staff, equipment, technical expertise, and operational procedures that are deployed across districts based on need rather than fixed local assignment.

Further analysis would be required to assess how a ward-based model might affect routing efficiency, travel time, service overlap and supervisory requirements. Consideration would also be needed for how a ward-based model would manage maintenance activities or operational issues that span multiple wards and are currently addressed through district-based deployment.

Another consideration would be the potential impact on meeting the expected delivery of service request timeframes. A transition to ward-based service delivery could reduce each division's operational flexibility to reallocate resources based on operational priorities to deliver services efficiently. It is also not yet known whether achieving equivalent service levels across wards under a ward-based structure would require additional resources or changes to current service standards.

Taken together, the considerations outlined above indicate that further analysis and design work would be required to define a feasible ward-based model. The scale of impact would depend on how a ward-based model is defined, the services included, the wards selected, the approach to resource allocation, the degree of operational flexibility retained as well as the design of any future pilot.

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SIGNATURE

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