

Parks Maintenance Audit

Background

1. Parks Maintenance, a unit within the Parks Maintenance & Forestry Division under Community Services, maintains all parks, sports fields, and boulevards, including:
 - a) grass cutting (parks, sports fields, boulevards),
 - b) sports field maintenance,
 - c) turf maintenance,
 - d) recreation trail maintenance,
 - e) emptying garbage bins,
 - f) park inspections
 - g) responding to internal or external (311) service requests.

2. Financials: 2022 operating budget: \$10.8M; total value for park assets: \$518M

3. The audit focused on parks maintenance activity from January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022.

Audit Objectives and Scope

This engagement aimed to determine whether proper oversight and controls were in place for Park Maintenance activities and to assess if current processes were designed to optimize service delivery. We assessed whether:

- Standard Operating Procedures are in place and current for all park maintenance activities
- Maintenance activities comply with City By-laws and legislative requirements
- Park asset inventory records are accurate and properly maintained
- Park Maintenance activities (in-house and contracted services) are appropriately scheduled, performed, and tracked
- Contracts with outside vendors are in place and monitored for compliance
- Systems are fully utilized to enhance the efficiency and transparency of park maintenance operations
- Park Maintenance activities align with the City's strategic direction such as the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Eco Park Strategy.

Finding #1: Standard Operating Procedures are not in place or outdated for some processes

1. Lack of standard operating procedures for some core activities, including grass-cutting, garbage pick-up, sports field maintenance, and playground inspections
2. Some existing SOPs have not been updated for over 10 years

Recommendations:

1. Create and update necessary SOPs
2. Ensure input from internal staff, interfacing departments, and other municipalities to ensure that SOPs reflect best practices

Finding #2: Inspections for contracted out grass cutting are not always performed promptly

1. Parks Maintenance guidelines requires staff to inspect 100% of contracted out grass cutting activities within the day after the cut
2. We reviewed the records of grass-cutting inspections for May 2022 and noted:
 - City staff inspected 1,266, or 81% of 1,560 grass-cutting areas
 - Excessive delays (on average 7.7 days, including weekends) between when the grass was cut and when it was inspected, with the delays ranging from 1 to 15 days

Recommendations:

1. Prioritize grass cutting inspections based on pre-determined factors such as size, use, condition, and visibility and ensure the consistent and timely inspections of these areas
2. Ensure that grass inspections are not missed for the same area in consecutive cuts to ensure no areas are being neglected by the contractor

Finding #3: Need to improve how staff tracks new grass areas added to existing contracts

1. All grass areas cut by contractors are tracked in the "Assignment sheet" and all additions of grass areas are approved and recorded in the "Added hectares" document before being added to the Assignment sheet. Contractors are paid based off of grass area in the assignment sheet.
2. We compared the Assignment sheet and Added Hectares document for one of the areas (Area 2) and noted:

Since 2020, 11 new grass areas were added to the added hectares document, however, 12 new grass areas were added to the assignment sheet. The unrecorded grass area was found to be valid and approved for payment.

Recommendations:

1. Reconciliations between the "Added hectares" spreadsheet and the respective "Assignment sheet" should be performed at least annually to ensure that all additions have been captured in the "Added hectares" document and thus approved.
2. Reconciliations will also allow staff to detect input errors and avoid overpayment.

Finding #4: Inaccurate records of park assets

We reviewed the lifecycle tracker as well as physical counts of park equipment at 10 parks and noted the following:

1. City's records (lifecycle tracker) on player benches, park benches, and bleachers are inaccurate. 8 out of the 10 parks we conducted physical inventory counts at showed discrepancies between actual equipment and equipment on books.
2. Listing of flower beds is not broken down by park. All flower beds in the City are classified as non-irrigated (Approximately 980 beds at \$2K/bed) and irrigated (Approximately 220 beds at \$8K/bed), but are not listed by park making it difficult to confirm the existence of flower beds.

Finding #4: Inaccurate records of park assets

Recommendations:

1. Staff should perform physical counts of assets at all parks periodically. It is important to have an accurate inventory of park assets, including small assets. Staff report the values of park assets such as bleachers in the Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) and these values are used for budgeting purposes.
2. High dollar value assets such as flower beds (\$3.72M) should be itemized by park to increase visibility and make it easier to perform inventory counts.

Finding #5: Tracking of park maintenance equipment needs strengthening

We randomly selected 10 fleet assets and 10 small engine assets for a physical count. Although we were able to locate all items, we found that asset information is not always accurate.

1. Inaccurate manufacturer information included in asset information
2. Master spreadsheet showed two different assets with the same unit #813 (Soil pulverizer and Gator)
3. We physically located one of the assets that was shown as "Missing" on the master spreadsheet (Unit 1013-Honda Generator).
4. Inconsistent tracking of items over \$1500. Some are tracked in M5 and the master spreadsheet, while others are only tracked in M5.

Finding #5: Tracking of park maintenance equipment needs strengthening

Recommendations:

1. Parks Maintenance should use the M5 system to track all fleet and small engine assets.
2. Prior to importing asset information into M5, a physical count should be performed on all assets to ensure asset quantities, condition and attributes are up to date.
3. Using M5 will reduce the risk of entry errors, centralizes asset information, provides system controls, and makes it easier to track asset history.

Finding #6: Status of service requests is not always up to date

1. Park issues or deficiencies observed by employees or residents can be reported to the City through 3-1-1 (Service Brampton).
2. A "Service Request" is created for all reported issues and tracked via the software system used by Parks Maintenance (Cityworks).
3. Our review of open service requests noted that:
 - Service requests that have been resolved were still showing as outstanding ("Assigned" or "In Progress") in Cityworks.
 - Periodic reviews of open service requests were not always performed.

Finding #7: Vendor Performance Evaluations have not been completed

SOP requires vendor performance evaluations to be filled out for all service contracts over \$100K after August 1, 2021.

We identified all vendors with contracts over \$100K and found:

Staff had not conducted evaluations for any of the four grass cutting vendors with contract values ranging from \$535K to \$1.3M annually as of September 2022.

Recommendations:

1. Staff should complete the vendor performance evaluations for each vendor per the required frequencies outlined in the Vendor Performance Evaluation SOP.
2. Staff should forward these evaluations (Interim and Final) to Purchasing for review and consideration in future tenders.

Thank you!

