

## PARKS FOUNDATION (THE), CALGARY

**Mission:** We exist so all Calgarians can enjoy a healthy lifestyle by providing easily accessible and unique, sport and green spaces.

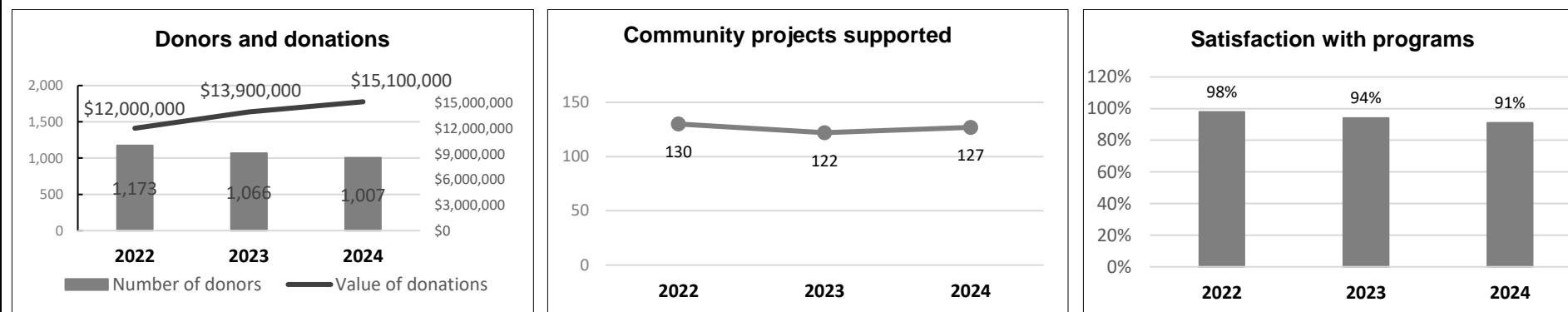
**Service Line:** *Parks and Open Spaces*

## 2024 City Investment

**Operating Grant:** \$208,000

**Operating Grant:** \$375,000 (one time)

## 2024 Results



## The story behind the numbers

- Contributions to The Parks Foundation in 2024 reached a record \$15.1 million donated by 1,007 donors. Funds were used for programs, park projects and sport amenities.
- The Parks Foundation supported over 100 new and ongoing community and sport organization-led projects.
- Satisfaction rates with The Parks Foundation's programs and services remains consistently high.

## Benchmarks

To support continuous improvement including upgrading programs, The Parks Foundation measures its performance in a number of areas including program satisfaction, number of new community project supported and value of contributions including donations and grants.

## Looking ahead: 2025 highlights

- The bicycle pump track and skatepark in George Moss Park will begin construction in 2025. The revitalization project will offer a gathering space for families and community members and feature a basketball court and playgrounds.
- Construction will begin on Canada's first public park designed for people with dementia and their caregivers in Dover. This park will serve as a valuable resource and support system with an estimated 20,000 Calgarians currently living with dementia.



**PARKS FOUNDATION (THE), CALGARY**  
**2024 Civic Partner Annual Report**

**Civic Partner Name:** Parks Foundation, Calgary

**Legal Structure:** Non-profit entity (Part 9 Companies Act). *Agent of The City and able to issue tax receipts*

**Fiscal Year End:** December 31

**Manage/operate a City-owned asset:** no

**Mission:** We exist so all Calgarians can enjoy a healthy lifestyle by providing easily accessible and unique, sport and green spaces.

**1. What 3-5 key results did your organization achieve in 2024 that contributed to:**

**a) One or more [Council Strategic Directions](#)- economic resilience, social resilience, climate resilience?**

In collaboration with The City of Calgary and local communities, the Parks Foundation completed park and sport projects with inclusivity in mind. This involved ensuring that park amenities and facilities were accessible to people of all abilities and backgrounds. By creating spaces where everyone feels welcome and valued, the Parks Foundation contributed to building a vibrant and inclusive city where people can come together to live, work, and play. In 2024, 127 community-led projects were supported through our Project Support Program, 58 sport and community organizations received grants to complete their work and 21 new community spaces were created in our city.

Inclusivity and social resilience were showcased at the **Forest Lawn Community Park**, where we partnered with the Forest Lawn Community Association (FLCA) to complete a sport court, gathering space and inclusive playground next to their community hall. The FLCA serves over 150 at-risk youth in the area who attend after school programs at the community centre and access services. The FLCA shared with us that they had no outdoor community space to gather and build a sense of pride in their community or encourage the youth to participate in physical activity and that this project effectively changed that story. This revitalized space not only provides a home away from home, but also provides access to free recreational amenities where youth and residents can develop their social resilience and well-being through being active and creating community connections.

Inclusivity and social resilience were also exemplified at the **Sunalta Community Hub** project, a project we supported in partnership with the Sunalta Community Association (SCA). This purpose-built facility includes a commercial kitchen, coffee shop and programming spaces designed to create community connections and build capacity for residents. The Hub is a social enterprise, with the income it generates going back into the community and allowing the SCA to facilitate meaningful events, programs and services for the community. Largely due in part to the success of this project, in 2026 the Parks Foundation is positioned to work with the SCA and other funding partners on a potential expansion of their outdoor community hub, the second phase of this project.

A notable project worth highlighting is the revitalization of **George Moss Park** in Ogden, which was completed in 2024. Situated in an equity-seeking area, we collaborated closely with local groups, such as the Youth Centres of Calgary (YCC), and the Millican-Ogden Community Association to develop an inclusive sport, play, and gathering area with artistic elements. The impact of this project

for the community created the momentum for a second phase of this project, which will include Calgary's first combined pump track and skatepark amenity, slated to open in 2025.

**b) Your own organization's strategy?**

The Parks Foundation's strategic focus is to play a key role in leveraging financial and volunteer resources to support the park and sport sectors. The organization channels its resources to bolster support for projects that are both innovative and inclusive and address social inequity. In 2024, notable progress was achieved in advancing projects and fundraising efforts, particularly focusing on equity-seeking communities, generating a noteworthy \$10M in donations for equity-seeking projects. Improving equity in the development of park and sport spaces is crucial for enhancing the overall quality of life for all Calgary residents. Our experience is that communities with lower socioeconomic status or fewer privileges often encounter significant challenges in fundraising and project completion and as such, the Parks Foundation focuses efforts to provide support to these communities and facilitate the successful completion of their projects.

Thanks to generous one-time funding from The City of Calgary, we've been able to allocate additional staff resources to support equity-seeking communities and provide enhanced services. Our emphasis lies in directing resources towards enhancing capacity in areas of Calgary that frequently face prolonged timelines or lack the necessary resources to manage or fundraise for projects effectively. We extended our support for these communities by offering fundraising assistance, including grant writing and budget development, and have dedicated extra project management services to underserved areas and target groups. In 2024 56 projects supported by the Parks Foundation aimed to address equity disparities.

**2. Performance measures help demonstrate the return on The City's investment in a partner's operations, and support continuous improvement. What performance measures reflect your organization's impact in 2024?**

	Performance Measure Name	2022 results	2023 results	2024 results	How does this measure reflect your organization's impact?
How much did you do?	# Building Communities grants awarded	14	10	11	Demand for Parks Foundation grants was strong in 2024. Communities and sport groups organized volunteer-led park and sport amenity projects.
	# Amateur Sport grants awarded	22	17	15	
	# <u>new</u> community projects supported by the Project Support Program	29	30	21	
	Program (PSP) # <u>ongoing</u> PSP projects	130	122	127	Parks Foundation continues to support over one hundred community and sport organization-led projects that include playgrounds, rink projects and pump tracks.
	Total disbursements to projects	\$11.5M	\$8.6M	\$12.6M	Disbursements included granting programs and construction of playgrounds, hockey rinks, a large-scale mural, sport courts, naturalization projects and a social enterprise community hub.

<b>How well did you do it?</b>	# Donors/contributors	1,110	1,066	1,007	In 2024, contributions to the Parks Foundation were strong at \$15.1 million, the highest value achieved in our history. These funds were used for programs, park projects and sport amenities. Contributions come from donors, foundations, corporations, and government.
	\$ Value of contributions	\$11.5M	\$13.9M	\$15.1M	
	Return on Investment of City dollars (city dollars compared to total disbursements to projects)	\$1:\$7.2	\$1:\$3.9	\$1:\$3.6	
	*Satisfaction rate of program partners and users	98%	94%	91%	
<b>How are Calgarians better off?</b>	Number of youth impacted by park and playground grants and support provided (Building Communities Program)	20,500	31,075	21,660	Through Parks Foundation's grant and support programs, new playgrounds and parks are created, giving thousands of Calgarians places to enjoy and be active.  Projects such as playgrounds, parks and sport facilities are improving access to health and nature in local neighbourhoods  Community groups are learning new skills that they can use to create future projects and initiatives. These skills include project management, grant writing and fundraising, volunteer management, financial oversight and project advocacy.
	% of our clients who said their project improved access to nature and active lifestyle close to home*	84%	73%	83%	
	% of our community volunteers who said they gained new skills*	85%	81%	87%	

\*Based on annual survey of program participants (grant recipients, program clients and users of Project Support Program)

### 3. Are there any additional stories or information you wanted to share beyond performance measures that demonstrate the impact of your organization's programs or services?

The Parks Foundation takes great pride in seeing projects that we support come to fruition and ask our community partners to share their stories about the impact the project makes in their community. Below are a few samples of these stories.

#### **Vivo "Kapwa" Community Mural – completed in 2024**

"At Vivo, We believe that creativity and connection help build healthier generations. The Kapwa Mural, part of the Northeast Public Art Initiative, is an exciting reflection of that belief. In partnership with the City of Calgary, the Parks Foundation and local artists, this mural proudly brightens the eastern wall of our building, adding life, colour, and energy to Vivo's recent expansion. This project is a celebration of local talent and a response to the need for more public art in our community. It's more than just a mural - it's a symbol of togetherness, the spirit of Kapwa and our "shared identity."

## Vivo for Healthier Generations

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### **Forest Lawn Community Park Revitalization- opened in 2024**

Noting that this project changed the story for the youth of Forest Lawn: "...providing the opportunity for the kids who live here, to grow here and have that dignity and the pride to be able to say I had lived here, not only themselves, but even the next generation. It's the start of the actual realization of what community looks like."

**Gar Gar**

**President, Forest Lawn Community Association**

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### **St. Alphonsus School Playground & Inclusive Play Space – completed in 2024**

"The St. Alphonsus Playground Society is truly thrilled about what the new playground means for our school and the surrounding community. This playground is enjoyed every day by children who play on the equipment and are also growing in their physical literacy, communication, leadership skills and more. This playground serves a play space for after-school care groups, day homes and students alike. Including ramps and a varied range of play equipment makes this playground stand out- and welcomes kids with diverse abilities, including those in wheelchairs. The playground is used daily during the school year by over 480 students during recess, and before & after school. It is a welcoming play space for families on the weekend and serves the community of Renfrew that has a population over 5,500. We are so grateful to Parks Foundation for their support of our project; thank you for helping to make this dream a reality!"

**Andrea Lau**

**The St. Alphonsus Playground Society**

## **4. Does your organization use benchmarks to evaluate and improve performance and operations, and increase your organization's impact?**

### **a) Examples of benchmarks:**

Parks Foundation has historically benchmarked performance in several areas:

- Satisfaction Rate with Parks Foundation's Programs:
  - This information is used to gain valuable insights into how programs can be improved. Feedback has led Parks Foundation to revise its website, change communication processes and upgrade granting forms.
- Number of community projects helped by the Project Support Program:
  - This information is used to ensure that a target number of communities are being helped with Parks Foundation's support services and grants. By tracking this information, we can understand the obstacles facing communities, and how to help address issues.
- Value of Contributions to Parks Foundation (grants, donations, etc.):
  - This information is used to understand the current fundraising landscape, to track success with fundraising efforts, and to revise our methods and practices.

**b) What is your current and targeted performance in comparison to these benchmarks?**

Benchmark	2024 Target	2024 Actual
Satisfaction Rate with Parks Foundation Programs	85%	91%
# of community projects helped by the Project Support Program (PSP)	120	127
Value of Contributions to Parks Foundation (donations, grants, etc.)	\$10.0M	\$15.1M

**c) How this information is being used to support continuous improvement?**

Information gathered from the survey is used to upgrade programs and evaluate the efficacy of our service levels. For example, we heard that communities wanted to receive more information on available funding they could be seeking. As a result, we implemented a monthly newsletter that highlights upcoming grants and other funding sources available to community projects. This will be a valued resource for groups fundraising for parks, playgrounds, and sport amenities. The number of new community projects and value of contributions are predictive indicators that ensure we are supporting projects at a sufficient level to deliver continued impact.

**5. How does your organization address equity, diversity or inclusion, or support racial equity?**

Enhancing equity in the development of park and sport spaces is key to enhancing the overall quality of life for all residents of Calgary. In our experience, communities with lower socioeconomic status or fewer privileges encounter greater challenges in fundraising and completing projects. Thanks to generous one-time funding from The City of Calgary, we have been able to allocate additional staff resources to support equity-seeking communities. Our focus lies in directing resources towards bolstering capacity in areas of Calgary that often face prolonged timelines or lack the necessary resources to fundraise and manage projects effectively.

For instance, we have expanded our support by providing fundraising assistance, such as grant writing and budget completion, and have dedicated extra project management services to these underserved areas. In 2024, Parks Foundation was able to raise \$10M in support of projects from equity-seeking communities, further speaking to our commitment to address equity disparities.

To ensure we are supporting the communities that need it the most, the Parks Foundation actively seeks to support projects in areas that hit equity markers as highlighted in the Calgary Equity Index. These include areas that carry a higher overall burden of inequities, areas that fall below the benchmarks of access to greenspace and community space, and areas that have a high percentage of people with low income after tax. Parks Foundation also has a keen interest supporting underserved groups, including persons with disabilities, racialized people, women and girls, Indigenous Peoples and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

We often build inclusive projects and are committed to promoting the idea that Calgarians should have equitable access to parks, regardless of differing abilities, socioeconomic status or backgrounds. In 2024 we completed inclusive playgrounds at the Forest Lawn Community Park and St. Alphonsus School and in 2025 we will break ground on a first-of-its-kind ambitious project to support persons living with a disability – the Dementia Inclusive Park.

**6. How is your organization advancing Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation? (For example addressing specific calls to action in the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#) report or [The City's White Goose Flying Report](#))**

Parks Foundation's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan included recommendations related to Indigenous Peoples, including making land acknowledgement a standard practice, engaging with Indigenous Peoples on community projects, and working towards projects with Nations surrounding Calgary in Treaty 7 territory.

## RESOURCES

### 7. Please estimate how The City's operating funding was allocated in 2024.

1%	Advertising and promotion
0%	Programs or services
5%	Office supplies and expenses
11%	Professional and consulting fees
71%	Staff compensation, development and training
1%	Fund development
0%	Purchased supplies and assets
3%	Facility maintenance
0%	Evaluation or Research
1%	<i>Other, Memberships, Travel &amp; Conferences</i>
3%	<i>Other, IT &amp; Telecommunications</i>
4%	<i>Other, Governance</i>

### 8. Did volunteers support your operations in 2024? (including board and committee members)

How many volunteers?	183
Estimated total hours provided by volunteers:	2,207

### 9. Did your organization receive any awards or recognition in 2024, or have any client or participant feedback that you want to highlight?

In 2024 the Parks Foundation garnered significant media attention for its impactful projects and initiatives. Notably, the "Place Matters" project, a collaborative effort with VIVO, was featured in both Global News and CTV News. This project focused on enhancing parks infrastructure in North Central Calgary, aiming to improve access to public parks and green spaces in underserved communities.

We also announced a pioneering Dementia Inclusive Park designed specifically for those impacted by dementia, their families and caregivers, receiving coverage from multiple media outlets. Slated to break ground in 2025 in the equity-deserving Dover, this park will feature unique amenities to ensure the safety and engagement of individuals with dementia, while also enriching local community connections.

These media highlights underscore the Parks Foundation's commitment to enhancing community well-being through innovative park developments and inclusive recreational spaces.

Parks Foundation also conducts an annual Program Evaluation Survey with the communities we serve. The survey revealed that 97% of projects that Parks Foundation supported in 2024 addressed a key community need and 87% of community volunteers learned new skills. 83% reported that the completion of their project improved public spaces or provided opportunities for Calgarians to connect, providing them with an opportunity to be active close to home.

Our reputation for supporting community-led projects precedes us and as such we consistently attract community groups who are interested in partnering with us to access our support services and effectively deliver their projects. The best forms of referral for Parks Foundation are via word of mouth from community members, or come directly from The City of Calgary.

**10. How did your organization address climate change in 2024, for example, operational or program changes that reduced green house gas emissions (GHG), air/water pollution, or waste that aligned with [The City's Climate Change Program](#) including Council's Climate Emergency Declaration?**

Parks Foundation's mandate involves creating sustainable outdoor landscapes. Park designs include biodiversity of plant materials, storm water management, tree planting, and making efforts to utilize native species that adapt well to our local environment. We encourage and support communities to follow best practices in sustainable landscape design.

**11. Are there any projects, initiatives or plans for 2025 that you want to briefly highlight?**

The Parks Foundation plays a crucial role in supporting community development through its diverse range of programs, which we deliver on an ongoing basis. We help create park and sport projects by helping communities at every stage of the process. These projects encompass various amenities such as playgrounds, pathways, community gardens, ice rinks, bicycle pump tracks, and more.

The comprehensive support offered by the Parks Foundation through the **Project Support Program** (PSP) is instrumental in driving community-building projects forward. This support often proves pivotal in determining whether projects proceed or stall. Successful initiatives like playgrounds, parks, and pathways ensure that Calgarians have access to nature and opportunities for healthy, active lifestyles. In 2024 we provided 127 community-led projects with ongoing support services, including project development and management advice, grant writing and fundraising guidance, accounting services volunteer management guidelines.

In collaboration with The City of Calgary and the Saddledome Foundation, the Parks Foundation's **Amateur Sport Grant Program** allocates grants to local amateur sport organizations. These grants contribute to the enhancement of non-profit sport organizations by funding capital elements, thereby improving equipment and supplies. This initiative facilitates increased participation in healthy sporting activities among residents. In 2024, a total of \$774,161 was granted to 15 different sports organizations through this grant stream.

The **Building Communities Program** stands as a cornerstone of the Parks Foundation's commitment to fostering community cohesion and resilience. Through this initiative, the Foundation provides funding, resources, and support to create much needed park projects such as playgrounds, community gardens and naturalizations. In 2024, a total of \$474,500 was granted to 11 different community and school organizations through this grant stream.

The **Stella Conceptual Drawing Grant Program** supports community organizations by providing \$5,000 in seed money to complete professional project drawings for innovative projects. These drawings aim to enhance Calgary's park spaces and foster community engagement by offering opportunities for volunteer groups to improve their surroundings. In 2024, a total of \$26,250 was granted to 5 different community organizations through this grant stream.

Supported with funding from The City of Calgary, the **Embrace the Outdoors Program** provides grants of up to \$5,000 to support capital costs associated with activating outdoor spaces during the winter. Projects funded under this program include outdoor space enhancements, art installations like



murals, and the purchase of winter equipment that is beneficial to the community. The program aims to encourage outdoor activities during colder months and welcomes applications from local non-profit organizations. In 2024, a total of \$120,121 was granted to 27 different community organizations through this grant stream.

Looking ahead to 2025, the Parks Foundation is pleased to highlight several projects that have been fundraised for and are slated for construction. These projects include a pump track and skatepark amenity at George Moss Park in Ogden, and the groundbreaking of the Dementia Inclusive Park in Dover.

The bicycle **pump track and skatepark in George Moss Park** is the first instance of these amenities being combined in Calgary and will begin construction in 2025. A gathering space will be created for families and community members who want to spend time at the park and access this amenity, along with the basketball court and tot lot playgrounds completed with the initial phase of the project, which opened in 2024. The City has committed a \$1.12M capital contribution to this project, to revitalize the softball diamonds on site and enhance the overall optimization of the park.

The **Dementia Inclusive Park** in Dover will be the first-of-its kind in Canada, designed specifically for people impacted by dementia and their caregivers and is a testament to effective fundraising and meaningful community partnerships. This park will serve as a valuable resource and support system with an estimated 20,000 Calgarians currently living with dementia – a number expected to rise to 34,000 by 2030. The park aims to combat stigma and provide a safe, inclusive environment for both individuals with dementia and their caregivers. The City of Calgary has committed a \$1M capital contribution to this project and the Parks Foundation was able to leverage this funding to secure an additional \$3.25M in support of the nearly 4-acre project, which will begin construction in 2025.

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## THE FOLLOWING SECTION IS FOR CIVIC PARTNERS MANAGING CITY-OWNED ASSETS

### 12. CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

*Asset: Parks Foundation does not manage any City-owned assets, but they do build assets that are provided to The City to manage and operate*

**How did you use The City's capital funding in 2024?**

Project & Community	City Funding (2024)	Benefit (service improvement, efficiency, improved condition)
CN Rail Playpark Revitalization Community: Applewood	\$533,000	Total project cost: \$733,000 This project added skateboarding elements, an inclusive play feature, additional seating, shade structures and plant materials.
Saddle Ridge Playpark Revitalization Community: Saddle Ridge	\$416,500	Total project cost: \$731,500 This project added a mini soccer pitch, a zip line, additional seating, shade structures and plant materials.
Skyview Ranch Shade Structure Community: Skyview	\$435,000	Total project cost: \$435,000 This project added a shade structure and furnishings to create a community gathering space at a prominent location in the community.

Forest Lawn Community Park Inclusive Playground  Community: Forest Lawn	\$650,000	Total project cost: \$750,000 This project added an inclusive playground to the Forest Lawn Community Park, including features for wheelchair access, sensory elements and rubber surfacing.
Haultain Park Revitalization  Community: Beltline	\$200,000	Total project cost: \$1,380,000 (Construction in 2025) Furnishings will be repaired or replaced throughout the park; public art elements will be added. Gathering spaces, a running track will be added, along with trees and plantings.
Sunalta Community Hub  Community: Sunalta	\$754,955	Total project cost: \$4,216,000 A Community Hub to fund and deliver programming for Calgarians. It is a purpose-built facility that includes a commercial kitchen, coffee shop, and programming spaces. The Hub is a social enterprise, with the income it generates going back into the community – allowing the community to continue offering events, programs, and services.
Hidden Valley Park Playground  Community: Hidden Valley	\$52,500	Total project cost: \$160,000 This project added an inclusive playground to replace a play park that had surpassed its life cycle, including features for wheelchair access, sensory elements and rubber surfacing.
Oakridge Way Playground  Community: Hidden Valley	\$52,500	Total project cost: \$282,000 The project replaced an existing playground space with a larger footprint that was more suitable for all demographics, mobilities and abilities. It also includes a seating area to allow both active and passive participation.
Sandy Beach Park Project  Community: Altadore	\$55,377	Total project cost \$474,500 This project provides a versatile, accessible recreation space and play area that combines quality pickleball courts with family play and gathering spaces.
Silver Springs Playground  Community: Silver Springs	\$52,500	Total project cost \$242,800 The project replaced an existing playground space with a nature inspired play area that allows open-ended play. It also includes a gathering area to allow children, adults and seniors the ability to participate.
Sandstone MacEwan Hockey Rink  Community: Sandstone MacEwan	\$300,000	Total project cost \$949,300 The original outdoor hockey rink, an extremely popular location for all season events ranging from basketball, ball hockey, lacrosse as well as ice hockey games/practices had reached the end-of-life cycle. The project revitalized this multi-sport outdoor facility for years to come.