



Parks and Open Spaces: Community Level Amenity Analysis (2026)



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Executive Summary

Purpose

This report explains how park amenities are distributed across Calgary's communities. It looks at seating, shade structures, playgrounds, sports fields and sports courts. It explains how amenities are planned in established and new communities and identifies differences among Wards.

Key Findings

- Calgary has a large network of community park amenities, but the number and type of amenities vary by Ward and community.
- Differences reflect historical development patterns, available park land, community needs and City design standards.
- Lower amenity counts do not always mean there is a service gap. Some Wards include large industrial, transportation, or environmentally protected areas where community amenities would not normally be built.
- Most Wards have similar amounts of seating; shade structures are uncommon and have no current service target.
- Calgary has many playgrounds, but their locations, designs and sizes do not always reflect current community needs.

Strategic Alignment

This report supports [Council's 2027-2030 Strategic Priorities \(C2027-0240\)](#), including reliable & sustainable infrastructure and community livability & well-being. It also supports the community indicators that measure whether residents live within 400 metres of a multi-functional park.

[Connect: Calgary's Parks Plan \(Connect\)](#) guides how Calgary's park system meets social, recreational and environmental needs. It calls for resilient, accessible parks with amenities that serve a wide range of users.

[GamePLAN](#) is a long-term public recreation strategy. It guides the rebuilding, expansion and modernization of public recreation facilities and services. The Emerging Sports Strategy, now being developed, should consider the park assets described in this report so that planning and investment decisions are coordinated.

How to read this report

- Community vs. regional: Unless stated otherwise, counts cover community parks only. Regional parks are summarized separately and excluded from Ward comparisons.
- Class D: Bookable fields and courts on City land, maintained by Parks and Open Spaces. Class E fields: Located on school board land, maintained by school boards are not included.
- Units: Counts are by Ward (14 in total) and by community (211 residential communities). Averages per community use that denominator.
- Data date: Inventory as of end of 2025; population from 2021 Statistics Canada data.

Regional versus Community Parks

Regional Parks

Connect sets a target that all Calgary residents should live within a five-kilometre drive of a regional park. **Regional parks** serve several neighbourhoods and support longer visits. They often include specialized amenities such as water features, multi-sport surfaces, cultural landscapes and large event spaces.

The figures below cover Calgary's 42 regional parks. Because regional parks serve several communities and are planned to a different standard, they are reported separately here and are not included in the Ward comparisons later in this report.

2,848	38	44	55
Seating Structures	Shade Structures ¹	Playgrounds	Class D Fields & Courts

Community Parks

Community parks are neighbourhood parks intended to meet local recreational and gathering needs. Residents should be able to reach them easily by walking or wheeling. *Connect's* target for local park space is two hectares per 1,000 residents. In the Greater Downtown, the target is one hectare per 1,000 residents. These targets measure the amount of park land, not the number of amenities within parks.

The figures below are the community park inventory that the rest of this report analyzes.

8,120	155	1,109²	1,081
Seating Structures	Shade Structures	Playgrounds	Class D Fields & Courts

Population growth is increasing demand for both park space and park amenities and adding pressure to existing infrastructure. The City is still developing service targets for amenities such as courts and seating. Until those targets are complete, Parks and Open Spaces tracks the number and distribution of amenities by community through the *Parks Development Guidelines and Standard Specifications: Landscape Construction (Parks DGSS)*. This work is expected to continue through the next budget cycle.

Connect's park targets measure land, not amenities. Until amenity service targets are set, this inventory is the baseline for judging whether communities are adequately served.

¹ Shade structure amenity types include shade structures, windbreaks, pergolas, gazebos and picnic shelters

² Parks and Open Spaces maintains, operates and lifecycles 1,172 playgrounds across the city (44 in regional parks, 1,109 in community parks and 19 in connector parks and cemeteries).

How Community Park Amenities are Planned

Established and New Communities

Park amenities are planned and funded differently in established and new communities:

- Established communities: Many amenities were built under older laws and standards. Their number, type and condition can vary, especially in communities developed before 1963, when Alberta first introduced land reserve requirements through the Planning Act.
- New communities (greenfield): Amenities are planned and built through current development processes. The Calgary Parks and Open Spaces *Development Guidelines and Standard Specification: Landscape Construction (Parks DGSS)* guides this work, which generally results in a more consistent distribution of amenities.

Both approaches provide park infrastructure such as pathways, trees, shrubs, benches and garbage receptacles. Some parks also contain natural features and ecological value. Adding amenities in established communities usually requires City capital funding. Changing amenities in new communities usually requires updates to design guidelines and collaboration with the development industry.

Established Communities

Connect recognizes that park access and amenity distribution vary because neighbourhoods were built under different planning rules and practices. It directs The City to improve parks based on local needs, demographic changes and community input. *Connect* also identifies capital investment opportunities to address increasing park use and capacity pressures, particularly in areas experiencing residential population growth.

In areas where it is not feasible to establish new park space, *Connect* emphasizes enhancing the quality, functionality and capacity of existing parks through additional or improved amenities and programming. This approach supports increased usage while improving the overall park experience for residents.

Park redevelopment should consider:

- public input
- accessible, adaptable and resilient design
- the Calgary Equity Index
- possible climate-change impacts
- nearby park amenities
- the current and future demographics and cultures of residents

New Communities

The *Parks DGSS* sets requirements for selected amenities in developer-built parks. Some amenities have minimum or maximum requirements. Others are included only when they suit the park type and community needs. Developers fund and install standard amenities. The City then maintains and replaces them over time.

Developers may also build enhanced amenities, such as skate parks, pump tracks and off-leash dog areas, to support their community vision. Developers normally fund these amenities and maintain them through Optional Amenity Agreements (OAAs).

Established communities depend on City capital funding to change their amenities, while new communities depend on design standards. Closing amenity gaps therefore needs two different tools: capital prioritization in established areas and *Parks DGSS* updates in new areas.

Optional Amenity Agreements

Developers may be approved to build amenities above City standards if they enter into an Optional Amenity Agreement (OAA). The developer maintains the amenity for five years and provides some funding for rehab and removal and sometimes repairs, but not replacement. A community, resident or homeowner association may take over the agreement after the agreement ends.

Once these agreements end, Parks and Open Spaces assumes ownership of the amenity and assesses whether to continue maintaining the asset or remove it based on condition, safety and budget. These decisions can be difficult when community expectations remain high. The same issue can occur when an established community requests and funds an above-standard amenity. After these agreements end, only the developer's amenities that had an OAA have funds attached to the assets. Community agreements have no funding for maintenance, repair or renewal.

Future Maintenance and Replacement (renewal) Costs

New park amenities create future maintenance, repair and renewal costs. Many amenities are built by developers and later transferred to The City. Parks and Open Spaces does not automatically receive additional operating or renewal funding when these asset transfers happen. Instead, renewal needs are deferred and typically addressed only when assets reach the end of their useful life. This approach has contributed to the growing renewal funding gap. The resulting analysis has informed future investment recommendations and helped prioritize funding requests through the 2027-2030 budget process.

Current *Parks DGSS* Requirements

The tables below summarize current amenity standards for new parks. They help explain later patterns: clear standards generally lead to more consistent distribution, while limited or absent standards can result in uneven distribution. A dash (-) in the table below means that the *Parks DGSS* does not identify a specific requirement.

Seating

Park Type	Benches	Picnic Tables	Game Tables	Bleachers
Sub-neighbourhood	1-5	0-1	0-2	-
Neighbourhood	1-5	0-1	0-2	-
Joint Use Site	2 per ball diamond	-	-	0-2 per ball diamond

Additional Requirements	4 per lineal km of pathway; 2 per play structure	-	-	-
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Shade Structures

Park Type	Pergola	Gazebo	Windbreak	Picnic Shelter
Sub-neighbourhood	-	-	-	-
Neighbourhood	-	-	-	-
Joint Use Site	-	-	-	-

Playgrounds

Park Type	Playground (structure or other rec equipment)
Sub-neighbourhood	If suitable
Neighbourhood	If suitable
Joint Use Site	1 – space only withing school building envelope

Sports Fields and Surfaces

Park Type	Sports Fields	Basketball/ Volleyball	Tennis/ Pickleball
Sub-neighbourhood	Not suitable	If suitable	Not suitable
Neighbourhood	As required	If suitable	Space for 2-4 courts within community lease
Joint Use Site	Soccer: 1 Major/ Minor Baseball: 1-2 Football: 1 (high school only) Track: 1 (high school only)	-	-

The standards are silent on shade structures and set no minimum or maximum for playgrounds. These are the two amenities this report finds most unevenly distributed or least aligned with community needs.

Current Service Level for Community Amenities

This section looks at local community parks and excludes regional parks. It includes seating, shade structures, playgrounds, sports fields and sports courts.

Amenity counts cannot be compared without considering how land is used in each Ward. Wards 5, 9 and 12 include large industrial, commercial or transportation areas. Wards 1, 4 and 13 include environmentally protected land. Community park amenities would not normally be built in these areas, so a lower count does not necessarily mean there is a service gap.

Connect identifies three main park functions: **recreation**, **sport** and **environment**. The amenities in this report mainly support recreation and sport. The **recreation** function includes amenities that support informal, unstructured and passive activities for people of all ages. They include amenities like seating, shade and playgrounds. Seating amenities include benches, picnic tables, games tables and bleachers. Shade structures consist of engineered amenities such as windbreaks, pergolas, gazebos and picnic shelters. **Sport** amenities facilitate formal and informal sport activities, while also supporting active recreation and other park spaces. Sport functions include fields and courts. Sports fields include turf-based amenities such as rectangular soccer fields, cricket pitches and baseball diamonds. Sports courts include tennis, pickleball and basketball.

The table below gives a citywide view of how each amenity type is distributed by Ward. Detailed breakdowns for each amenity follow.

Current Service Level of Community Amenities (by Ward)					
Ward	Seating	Shade Structures	Playgrounds	Sports Fields	Sports Courts
Ward 1	546	15	98	64	11
Ward 2	530	17	88	77	13
Ward 3	632	29	74	54	17
Ward 4	575	9	93	67	12
Ward 5	553	9	63	52	12
Ward 6	622	6	91	75	12
Ward 7	522	6	29	29	10
Ward 8	904	9	45	19	20
Ward 9	716	8	83	64	16
Ward 10	275	2	97	90	10
Ward 11	528	2	97	80	15
Ward 12	793	16	87	52	10
Ward 13	460	5	85	72	11
Ward 14	464	22	79	104	13

Gaps are amenity-specific rather than Ward-wide. Wards 7 and 8 have the fewest playgrounds and sports fields, Ward 10 has the least seating, and shade structures are scarce in most Wards. Wards 7 and 8 are inner-city wards where park land is limited, so adding capacity there depends on the established-community tools described above.

Amenities that Support Recreation

Seating

8,120	549.5	30	38.48
Citywide Total	Median per Ward	Median per Community	Average per Community

Seating amenities support longer park visits, rest and social interaction. Seating is especially important for older adults because it improves comfort and accessibility.

Most Wards have between 460 and 720 seating amenities. Wards 8 and 12 have the most (904 and 793), and Ward 10 has far fewer than any other Ward (275). In 2025, research for the Parks and Playground Amenities Program (PAPA) reviewed bench availability. Larger parks generally had more benches, and bench locations reflected the broader citywide seating pattern. Of 2,700 parks included in the review, 1,015 had no benches. Most were small parks with physical constraints such as steep land or older playground sites built in the 1960s and 1970s under different standards. The findings supported a citywide investment that added more than [400 benches and picnic tables](#) later in 2025.

Seating gaps are concentrated in small and older parks rather than in particular Wards; Ward 10 is the exception and will be reviewed as part of operational planning during the next budget cycle. The 2025 bench investment shows that targeted, low-cost, additions can close these gaps quickly.

Shade Structures

155	9	0	0.73
Citywide Total	Median per Ward	Median per Community	Average per Community

A typical shade structure costs around \$200,000 to install and can last more than 30 years. They remain uncommon and unevenly distributed because current *Parks DGSS* do not require them. A lower cost option may be to pair seating areas with shade trees. This could provide similar benefits while supporting climate and tree-canopy goals.

Without a requirement and a high cost, shade structures will remain scarce unless a service target is set. Shade trees in seating areas are the most cost-effective way to close the gap in the interim.

Playgrounds

1,109	86	4	5.25
Community-park Total	Median per Ward	Median per Community	Average per Community

At the end of 2025, Parks and Open Spaces managed 1,172 playgrounds. Of these, 1,109 were in community parks. Using [2021 Statistics Canada Population Data](#), this equals about 4.97 playgrounds per 1,000 children under 12.

Calgary's public-school boards (Calgary Board of Education, Calgary Catholic School District and FrancoSud³) operate an additional 312 playgrounds. When these are included, the citywide rate is about 6.29 playgrounds per 1,000 children. School playgrounds do not affect City maintenance or investment needs.

Calgary's playground inventory grew by 25 per cent over the last decade. Developers add an average of 10 to 12 playgrounds each year. Another 44 playgrounds are open to Calgarians but remain under developer warranty. They are expected to transfer to Parks and Open Spaces within four years, bringing the managed inventory to 1,216 playgrounds. At that point, the estimated rate would be 5.16 City managed playgrounds per 1,000 children, or 6.49 when school board playgrounds are included.

The *Parks DGSS* does not set a minimum or maximum number of playgrounds per community, so developers have significant discretion. Earlier policy described playgrounds as desirable amenities (Calgary's *Open Space Plan*, precursor to the *Connect Plan*). The absence of clear standards and outdated City policy contributed to Calgary's current playground inventory. As a result, Calgary's current playground distribution does not always align with current community needs. This discrepancy has been amplified by shifting demographics – particularly in Calgary's established neighbourhoods. Although [playgrounds](#) are distributed citywide, notable disparities exist across Ward and community levels.

The main playground issue is fit (location, design and size) more than total number. Supply keeps growing by 10 to 12 playgrounds a year while demographics in established areas shift. That points to renewing and redesigning existing playgrounds rather than building new ones, and to setting clearer playground requirements in the *Parks DGSS*.

More detailed findings are available in the [Playground Sites Level of Service Report \(IPC2026-0034\)](#).

Amenities that Support Sport

Community Sports Fields

Sports fields are turf areas designed for organized activities. They include rectangular fields for soccer, ultimate frisbee, football, rugby; pitches for cricket; and diamonds for baseball, softball and slo-pitch.

Class D and Class E fields can be reserved through The City's [booking system](#). Class D fields are located on City land and are operated and maintained by Parks and Open Spaces. Class E fields are on public school board land and are maintained by the respective school board under the Joint Use and Planning Agreement.

Sports fields require considerable land and specialized design considerations. Opportunities to add them in established communities are limited and often difficult to accommodate. Among field types, cricket pitches generally require the most land, followed by rectangular fields and diamonds.

³ School playgrounds are not operated by The City; therefore, they do not influence current or future municipal investment requirements.

The table below shows which Wards have the most and fewest sports fields, and the mix of field types in each.

Ward	Rectangular Fields	Diamonds	Cricket Pitches	Total
Ward 1	36	28	0	64
Ward 2	44	33	0	77
Ward 3	31	23	0	54
Ward 4	30	37	0	67
Ward 5	30	16	6	52
Ward 6	48	27	0	75
Ward 7	13	16	0	29
Ward 8	11	8	0	19
Ward 9	22	41	1	64
Ward 10	38	51	1	90
Ward 11	35	45	0	80
Ward 12	34	17	1	52
Ward 13	45	26	1	72
Ward 14	57	46	1	104
TOTAL	474	414	11	899

Wards 7 and 8 are inner city wards and have considerably fewer community sports fields than other Wards. Ward 14 has the highest overall, including the most rectangular fields and the second-highest number of baseball diamonds. Wards 2, 6, 10, 11 and 13 also have relatively high levels of sports fields amenities compared to other Wards across Calgary.

Rectangular Fields (Class D)

1.08 ha	474	34.5	2.24
Land for Major/Minor Field	Citywide Total	Median per Ward	Average per Community

A total of 135 communities have at least one rectangular field. These fields have been part of park design standards for decades and are often located at joint use sites.

There is a shortage of goal posts for both major and minor fields. Early site observations found that soccer fields were actively used at about 15 per cent of booked time. As these findings are based on preliminary observational data, additional engagement and investigation with user groups is underway to better understand these findings and ensure that observational data accurately reflects how fields are being used. Early discussions with sport organizations have indicated that some booked fields may appear underutilized because they are intentionally left to rest between

games or reserved for competition use rather than practices. These insights suggest there may be opportunities to improve the efficiency and utilization of existing field inventory before pursuing additional field development, while continuing to validate utilization patterns through ongoing engagement with user groups.

Ball Diamonds (Class D)

0.6 ha	414	27.5	1.96
Land for Full-Size Diamond	Citywide Total	Median per Ward	Average per Community

A total of 126 communities have at least one ball diamond. The inventory appears to include more undersized diamonds than needed and too few major-sized diamonds that support higher levels of play.

Early observations found that booked diamonds were actively used about 40 per cent of the time. Moderate use, combined with a surplus of undersized diamonds, suggests the issue is diamond size and quality rather than total number. As these findings are based on preliminary observational data, additional engagement with user groups and further investigation are underway to better understand utilization patterns and the factors influencing diamond use. This work will help validate the findings and ensure future decisions regarding diamond infrastructure are based on a comprehensive understanding of community needs and the types of assets required to meet them.

There is an opportunity to plan new communities with more major sized diamonds and fewer small diamonds.

Pitches (Cricket, Class D)

1.95 ha	11	0	0.05
Land for Full-Size Pitch	Citywide Total	Median per Ward	Average per Community

Only seven residential communities have a cricket pitch. Cricket pitches were added to the *Parks DGSS* in the 2025 update and remain in limited supply. They are the most land-intensive park amenity, requiring approximately 1.95 hectares for an open-age pitch. As a result, identifying suitable land for new pitches, particularly in established communities, can be challenging.

Early observations found that booked cricket pitches are used approximately 93 per cent of the time, indicating strong demand for existing facilities. The current supply is also unevenly distributed across The City. Six of Calgary's 11 cricket pitches are in Ward 5. In recent years, The City has invested in expanding cricket infrastructure, resulting in a notable increase in the number of available pitches and improved geographic distribution of facilities. These additions reflect ongoing efforts to respond to evolving recreation trends and support a wider range of sport participation opportunities across Calgary.

Cricket is the clearest case of demand exceeding supply. Because pitches need the most land, new capacity is most feasible in new communities or on larger existing sites.

Parks and Open Spaces will continue to investigate and confirm use patterns and where possible continue converting or resizing underused fields to ensure supply can meet demand.

Sports Courts

Community sports courts include basketball and tennis/pickleball. Skate parks and pump tracks also support sport but are considered regional amenities and are not included in this section.

Courts require less land than sports fields and can support both organized and informal activity. Of the tennis/pickleball courts in the inventory, 34 are located on community association lease areas.

Because courts need little land, they are a practical way to add sport capacity in established communities. The table below shows how evenly courts are distributed and the mix of court types in each Ward.

Ward	Basketball	Tennis/ Pickleball	Total
Ward 1	6	5	11
Ward 2	7	6	13
Ward 3	13	4	17
Ward 4	5	7	12
Ward 5	12	0	12
Ward 6	4	8	12
Ward 7	4	6	10
Ward 8	9	11	20
Ward 9	8	8	16
Ward 10	3	7	10
Ward 11	6	9	15
Ward 12	8	2	10
Ward 13	6	5	11
Ward 14	8	5	13
TOTAL	99	83	182

Most Wards have a similar number of sports courts. Ward 8 is the exception, with a notably higher number of courts than other areas of the city. No Ward is significantly underserved; Wards 7, 10 and 12 have the fewest, with 10 each, compared to a citywide median of 12.

While overall distribution is relatively balanced, the mix of court types varies by Ward. Ward 5 demonstrates the most pronounced imbalance, with one of the highest supplies of basketball courts (12) but no tennis/pickleball courts.

Basketball (Class D)

0.04 ha	99	6.5	0.47
Land for One Full Court	Citywide Total	Median per Ward	Average per Community

66 communities have at least one basketball court. These flexible spaces support organized and informal play and are particularly useful for young adults, who may not be well serviced by traditional park amenities.

Tennis/ Pickleball (Class D)

0.22 ha	83	6.5	0.39
Land for Four Courts	Citywide Total	Median per Ward	Average per Community

72 communities have at least one tennis court. These courts support users of all ages including youth and seniors. Court supply is balanced by Ward but not by type. The larger gap is at the community level; 83 communities have no court of any kind. As a minimum service level, each community should have access to at least one court-based sports amenity. The choice of court should reflect local needs, community preferences and demand.

Summary and Next Steps

Taken together, the findings point to a couple of opportunities for planning and investment:

- **Amenity gaps are type-specific, not Ward-wide.** Investment should and will target specific amenities in specific areas rather than whole Wards.
- **Gaps in standards drive misalignment.** The *Parks DGSS* is silent on shade structures and sets no limits on playgrounds. Working with industry to update this can help create greater alignment in new communities.

Parks and Open Spaces will use these findings to inform the operational plans, *Emerging Sports Strategy*, amenity service targets and future updates to the *Parks DGSS*.