

# City Auditor's Highlights

Audit of the Department of Parks and Recreation's Expenditures and Maintenance Priorities, Resolution 19-91, CD1  
Report No. 20-04



Despite the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) recent efforts to improve park facilities, further improvements are needed to effectively manage city parks and ensure that maintenance efforts are consistent and equitable. Current operational practices are reactive and appear to wait for park conditions to deteriorate before action is taken, rather than maintaining quality conditions. Park vandalism continues to be a high-risk area as it compromises park usability and appearance. For its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects, DPR does not track financial data and lacks awareness of project status. There is limited accountability for park CIP projects that were funded, but not completed.

## DPR Lacks Sufficient Policies, Procedures, and Consistent Staffing to Ensure That Parks are Maintained Properly and Equitably

### National Comparison: Maintenance Standards

| Jurisdiction                                     | Policy, Manual, Guidance, Report Name    | Pictorial Maintenance Standards | Detailed Explanation of Pictorial Maintenance | Maintenance Checklists | Service Level Classifications | Qualitative Standards | Quantitative Standards |
|--|--|---------------------------------|---|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| City & County of Honolulu<br>Population: 980,080 | Pictorial Maintenance Standards          | Yes                             | No  | No                     | Yes                           | Yes                   | No                     |
| Denver, Colorado<br>Population: 716,492          | DPR Maintenance Standards                | No                              | n/a   | Yes                    | Yes                           | Yes                   | Yes                    |
| San Francisco, California<br>Population: 883,305 | San Francisco Park Maintenance Standards | Yes                             | Yes   | Yes                    | Yes                           | Yes                   | Yes                    |
| San Jose, California<br>Population: 1,030,119    | Report on Sustainable Park Maintenance   | No                              | n/a   | Yes                    | Yes                           | Yes                   | Yes                    |

Source: Department of Parks and Recreation, City of Denver, City of San Francisco, City of San Jose

We reviewed maintenance standards for other jurisdictions with similar population sizes and found that those programs utilized formal maintenance checklists, in addition to pictorial standards, for evaluating the quality of service levels. These jurisdictions' maintenance programs evaluate service levels through the use of both qualitative and quantitative standards. In this comparison, DPR lacked maintenance checklists or quantitative standards. The department's reliance on qualitative and subjective benchmarks for park maintenance diminishes effective internal control and lacks accountability. We also found that nearly 14% of grounds maintenance staff positions were vacant in FY 2018 and FY 2019. The department continues to struggle with sufficient staffing and its impact on park conditions.



#### Insufficient Park Maintenance Cost Data

Maintenance expenditure data at the park and council district levels are not collected, maintained, or reported. Although the department has implemented standards based on pictures, parks are inadequately maintained. The department's maintenance efforts are not sufficient for maintaining excellent park conditions. DPR maintenance efforts are reactive and lack effective preventative measures. As a result, DPR is unable to effectively plan and prioritize park maintenance service and parks are at risk of not receiving the appropriate level of maintenance service.



#### Park Vandalism

Despite city efforts to deter the occurrence of vandalism, vandalism is an ongoing issue at city parks. From FY 2017 to FY 2019, the city spent \$770,478 for security guard services at parks and also spent a total of \$624,039 to repair vandalism at parks. In that same time period, repeated vandalism costs totaled \$59,265. Vandalism is inaccurately reported and as a result, vandalism costs may be understated. Park managers acknowledge that vandalism is one of the primary challenges for maintaining parks because its occurrence and costs cannot be predicted and its impact on park appearance and functionality is significant.



#### Capital Improvement Program Projects for Parks

Between FY 2015 and FY 2017, over \$49 Million in Council-Initiated Park Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Projects went unspent. DPR lacks awareness of its CIP projects and does not track financial data for its CIP Projects. Although DPR meets with the Department of Design and Construction (DDC) monthly, financial data for CIP projects could not be provided. As a result, actual CIP project financial data is limited to quarterly CIP reports that does not provided detailed financial information on each CIP project.



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