Current State of Municipal Forestry in Texas – As Viewed from Austin

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Graduate Research Project

- Texas State University – San Marcos
- Master's of Public Administration
- Online Survey
- 241 Cities – 34% response rate
- 441 Individuals – 21% response rate

1. Measures of Program Success

A. Staff
   - Average 55,000 residents per staff
   - Austin - 27,000 residents per staff (PARD, PDRD, PWD)

1. Measures of Program Success

B. Ordinance
- Austin has all 4 tree ordinance provisions

City Size	Respondents	Tree Board or Employee (%)	Provide Guidance (%)	Regulate Private Trees (%)	Require Construction Protection (%)
Small	37	32.4	40.5	32.4	37.8
Medium	26	42.3	84.6	46.2	53.8
Large	14	64.3	50.0	57.1	57.1
Mega	4	50.0	75.0	75.0	75.0
Overall	81	42.0	58.0	43.2	48.1

1. Measures of Program Success

C. Advocacy

- Austin meets both advocacy measures

City Size	Tree Board		Non-profit Group	
	Resp.	(%)	Resp.	(%)
Small	37	29.7	37	29.7
Medium	26	38.5	26	38.5
Large	13	61.5	12	58.3
Mega	4	75.0	4	100.0
Overall	80	40.0	79	40.5

1. Measures of Program Success

D. Management Plan
- Austin does not currently have a management plan

City Size	Plan Mandated?		Plan Exist?	
	Resp.	(%)	Resp.	(%)
Small	35	8.6	37	8.1
Medium	25	0.0	25	12.0
Large	12	16.7	12	33.3
Mega	4	25.0	4	0.0
Overall	76	7.9	78	12.8

1. Measures of Program Success

E. Inventory and Maintenance Cycle

- Austin has a sample street tree inventory and scattered park tree inventory
- Austin has no proactive park tree cycle or street tree cycle

City Size	Street Tree Inventory		Proactive Street Tree Maintenance Cycle		Park Tree Inventory		Proactive Park Tree Maintenance Cycle	
	Resp.	(%)	Resp.	(%)	Resp.	(%)	Resp.	(%)
Small	36	11.1	34	44.1	35	11.4	34	61.8
Medium	25	16.0	22	59.1	23	21.7	24	58.3
Large	11	45.5	12	50.0	12	50.0	12	75.0
Mega	4	50.0	4	0.0	4	25.0	4	0.0
Overall	76	19.7	72	47.2	74	21.6	74	59.5

1. Measures of Program Success

F. Position of Program within the City
- Austin's Urban Forester is positioned #6
- Austin shares responsibilities between three departments

City Size	Respondents	Average
Overall	65	3.9
Small	29	3.4
Medium	21	3.8
Large	11	4.9
Mega	4	5

Department	Respondents	Percent
Parks and Recreation Dept.	52	69.3
Public Works Dept.	14	18.7
Combined Responsibilities between both Parks and Public Works	4	5.3
Other	5	6.7
Total Respondents	75	100.0

2. Measures of Municipal Spending

A. Spending on Urban Forestry Activities per Capita
- Austin spends about $3.90 per capita (PARD, PDRD, PWD)
- Tree City USA $2 per capita (1974) or $9.38 (2012)

City Size	$ per Capita	
	Reporting	Average
Small	28	$6.71
Medium	23	$2.11
Large	13	$6.21
Mega	4	$2.06
Overall	68	$4.78

2. Measures of Municipal Spending

B. Spending on Urban Forestry Activities as Percent of Total Budget

- Austin spends 0.1% of its total budget on urban forestry (PARD, PDRD, PWD)

City Size	Total % of City Budget	
	Reporting	Average (%)
Small	24	0.58
Medium	21	0.29
Large	12	0.69
Mega	4	0.08
Overall	61	0.47

3. Quantity of Assistance Received

The following was reported for Austin

A. Financial – no response
B. Technical – 5 times
C. Educational – no response

Table 5.13 – How Receiving Assistance from the State varies according to City Size

City Size	Financial Assistance			Technical Assistance			Educational Assistance		
	Reporting	(%)	Av. Times	Reporting	(%)	Av. Times	Reporting	(%)	Av. Times
Small	26	7.7	0.1	28	32.1	1.0	26	30.8	0.7
Medium	13	7.7	0.2	17	52.9	1.5	18	55.6	1.4
Large	9	33.3	0.6	10	90.0	4.0	11	72.7	2.2
Mega	3	33.3	0.7	4	75.0	3.8	3	66.7	3.7
Overall	51	13.7	0.2	59	50.8	1.9	58	48.3	1.3

Highlights

- Only about 13% of respondents meet or exceed the adjusted Tree City USA value of $9.38 per capita. Austin is at $3.90

- Despite this, Austin is strong on Measures of Program Success such as Staff ratio, Advocacy, and Ordinance.

- Austin is deficient in the categories of Management Plan, Inventory/Proactive Maintenance, and Program Position.

- Austin takes advantage of opportunities from the State for Technical Advice

  - Financial opportunities are limited for large cities, though Austin has in the past taken advantage of scholarships

  - Austin sends a large number of employees to the Texas Trees Conference and would likely fall above average on this measure