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Audit Report

**Follow-up Audit of
Park Maintenance**

August 24, 2010

Office of the City Auditor
Austin, Texas

Audit Team

Kathie Harrison, Auditor-In-Charge, CGAP, CFE, CICA
Henry Katumwa, CICA

Assistant City Auditor

Niki Raggi, CGAP, CICA

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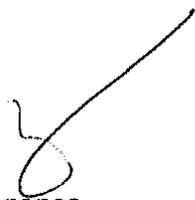


Office of the City Auditor

301 W. 2nd Street, Suite 2130
Austin, Texas 78767-8808
(512) 974-2805, Fax: (512) 974-2078
email: oca_auditor@ci.austin.tx.us
website: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/auditor>

Date: August 24, 2010

To: Mayor and Council

From: Kenneth J. Mory, City Auditor 

Subject: Follow-up Audit of Park Maintenance

I am pleased to present this report on our Follow-up Audit of Park Maintenance. The audit objective was to determine whether recommendations issued in our 2002 Park Maintenance Audit have been implemented. The recommendations set forth in the 2002 audit were intended to strengthen Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) maintenance processes.

Our review confirmed the implementation of the four recommendations that were reported as completed by PARD. The remaining recommendations from the 2002 audit have not been implemented. PARD management reported that seven of the remaining recommendations are underway and six are planned.

PARD management should continue to focus on fully implementing recommendations which are key to the department's operations. These recommendations are aimed at improving park asset management, developing a baseline assessment for park conditions, and enhancing information management.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance we received from staff in PARD during this audit.

cc: City Manager
Assistant City Managers
Parks and Recreation Department Director
Public Information Officer

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COUNCIL SUMMARY

In February 2002, the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) completed an audit of park maintenance. The audit determined that the Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) did not have adequate data on the condition of parks and facilities and identified discrepancies in park maintenance and unmet park maintenance needs. To address these findings, the auditors issued 19 recommendations intended to strengthen PAR maintenance processes. PAR management agreed, fully or partially, with 17 of those recommendations, which were accepted by the Audit and Finance Committee in February 2002.

This report presents the results of our follow-up audit conducted to determine whether PAR implemented the recommendations issued in the original audit.

OCA's review confirmed that the four recommendations reported as complete by PAR were implemented. The results are presented in detail in the following report and summarized in the table¹ below.

Recommendation (summary)	Status verified by auditors
Review workload, staffing, training, and logistics between park districts to determine management span of control and establish more equitable workload.	Implemented
Define maintenance responsibilities, distinguish park maintenance duties from other operational duties, establish controls to ensure that maintenance duties are not subordinated to non-maintenance duties, and <u>improve cost accounting to account separately for park maintenance and other duties.</u>	Implemented
To improve the Voice of the Customer survey by: <u>increasing the sample size, selecting a sample that yields valid data for each of the 26 City planning areas,</u> and changing the calculation of satisfaction for all questions to be a proportion of all responses, as calculated in this report.	Implemented
<u>Direct that parks maintenance activities be designated as core activities</u> and that any budget reduction decisions take this designation into account.	Implemented

Additionally, PAR management has not implemented 13 of the recommendations from the 2002 Park Maintenance Audit. In July 2010, PAR reported that these recommendations were either underway (6) or planned (7). OCA reviewed the outstanding recommendations to identify the ones that are still relevant and need to be implemented. Our review identified ten such recommendations. The remaining recommendations should be considered closed.

The audit did not result in any additional recommendations.

¹ The text underlined in the table indicates the portion of the recommendation PAR management concurred with.

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BACKGROUND

In February 2002, the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) completed an audit of park maintenance. The audit determined that the Parks and Recreation Department (PARC) did not have adequate data on maintenance or conditions of parks including lack of a comprehensive maintenance inventory and routine assessment of park condition. Further, the audit identified discrepancies in park maintenance as well as unmet park maintenance needs.

To address these findings, the auditors issued 19 recommendations. PARC management concurred, fully or partially, with 17 of them, which were accepted by the Audit and Finance Committee in February 2002. The audit recommendations were intended to strengthen PARC maintenance processes. Specifically, they were aimed at improving management systems, management information, and accountability for use of maintenance resources.

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OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This Follow-up Audit of Park Maintenance was conducted as part of the Office of the City Auditor's FY 2010 Service Plan, as accepted by the City Council Audit and Finance Committee.

Objective

Our audit objective was to determine whether recommendations from the original audit have been implemented.

Scope

The audit focused on those recommendations from the original audit report which were concurred by from Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) management in February 2002. (Refer to Appendix A for a list of all recommendations).

Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we

- reviewed implementation status and responses from PAR,
- for recommendations reported as implemented, conducted interviews with PAR management and staff and reviewed applicable documentation; and
- for recommendations reported as underway or planned, reviewed and ranked recommendations as critical or non-critical.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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AUDIT RESULTS

FINDING # 1: Our review confirmed the implementation of the four recommendations that were reported as completed by the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD).

In February 2002, the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) released an audit report on park maintenance. As a result of the issues identified in this audit, OCA made 19 recommendations and management concurred, fully or partially, with 17 of them. Of these 17 recommendations as of 2010, PARD management has indicated that 4 recommendations have been implemented. Our review confirmed this status.

One of the implemented recommendations directed PARD to review span of control and maintenance responsibilities between park districts, including workload, staffing levels, and training (refer to Exhibit 1 for more details). Based on interviews with PARD management and review of relevant documentation, we confirmed that since 2002 PARD has conducted several organizational realignments, which included review of staffing and workload for the park maintenance function. Further, management reported that PARD is currently planning a department structural reorganization, which should be implemented in FY11. This reorganization includes the centralization of the park maintenance function which, according to management, will improve management oversight, enhance staff development, and facilitate communication between park districts.

The second implemented recommendation required PARD to establish accountability mechanisms for park asset maintenance, such as clearly defining maintenance responsibilities and tracking maintenance related cost (refer to Exhibit 1 for more details). In 2002, PARD management partially concurred with this recommendation². Our review indicated that PARD has implemented the portion of the recommendation which was agreed to in the original audit report. We confirmed that PARD has improved cost accounting data to enable them to track labor and cost of materials related to maintenance activities separately from other departmental activities. However, management has indicated that some issues exist regarding the completeness of work order data. Management has also reported that through training and communication this problem has improved over time.

² The text underlined in Exhibit 1 indicates the portion of the recommendation PARD management concurred with.

**Exhibit 1:
PARD Reported Status of Selected Prior Audit Recommendations**

Recommendation (summary)	PARD response	Status verified by auditors
Review workload, staffing, training, and logistics between park districts to determine management span of control and establish more equitable workload.	Span of control and staffing realignments occur periodically throughout the organization. Examples of related realignments have included the separation of the North District into two separate areas, separating facility maintenance from park operations and aligning the park districts under community recreation. A department structural review is currently scheduled for July-August 2010.	Implemented
Define maintenance responsibilities, distinguish park maintenance duties from other operational duties, establish controls to ensure that maintenance duties are not subordinated to non-maintenance duties, and <u>improve cost accounting to account separately for park maintenance and other duties.</u>	The park districts have identified specific functions and job duties segregating mowing, park servicing and park facility maintenance. Work units are organized to perform exclusive tasks specific to unit functions. We are currently redefining job responsibilities.	Implemented

SOURCE: OCA analysis and information provided by PARD, July 2010.

Further, two of the recommendations reported as implemented were addressed to the City Manager. The first of these recommendations required the City Manager to direct the Human Resources Department to enhance the City’s customer satisfaction survey by increasing the sample size, evaluating the selected sample, and changing the calculation methodology (refer to Exhibit 2 for more details). In 2002, PARD management partially concurred with this recommendation³. This recommendation was implemented when the City revamped the Voice of the Customer Survey now called the Citizen Survey. In 2009, the City contracted with a new vendor to administer the survey which was conducted following the new methodology. After review of the City’s customer satisfaction survey reports and interviews with PARD staff, we determined that the sample size was increased and the calculation methodology was modified.

The other recommendation directed the City Manager to designate park maintenance activities as core activities and consider this designation in future budget decisions. PARD management also partially concurred with this recommendation². Based on interviews and review of the City’s budget documents, we confirmed that the park maintenance activities have been classified as a core activity since 2003.

³ The text underlined in Exhibit 2 indicates the portion of the recommendation PARD management concurred with.

**Exhibit 2:
 PARD Reported Status of Selected Prior Audit Recommendations**

Recommendation (summary)	PARD response	Status verified by auditors
To improve the Voice of the Customer survey by: <u>increasing the sample size, selecting a sample that yields valid data for each of the 26 City planning areas</u> , and changing the calculation of satisfaction for all questions to be a proportion of all responses, as calculated in this report.	The Citizen's Survey is conducted by the Budget Office in coordination with City departments. Recommended changes have been partially incorporated: (a) sample size has been increased, (b) data is available by planning area (c) calculation methods have been modified to measure satisfaction rates.	Implemented
<u>Direct that parks maintenance activities be designated as core activities</u> and that any budget reduction decisions take this designation into account.	In its FY 11 Business Plan, PARD identified the five horizon issues that will impact its abilities to deliver key services effectively and cost efficiently during the next 3-5 years. The Department identified the inadequate levels of parkland maintenance and program supervision as its top horizon issue. PARD continues to be faced with the contradiction of adding new parks, facilities, and services while asked to contain costs, hold the number of positions constant, and reduce capital equipment acquisitions.	Implemented

SOURCE: OCA analysis and information provided by PARD, July 2010.

FINDING # 2: PARD management has not implemented the remaining 13 recommendations from the 2002 Park Maintenance Audit.

In July 2010, PARD management reported that out the remaining 13 recommendations, 6 were underway and 7 were planned. Specifically, efforts reported as underway by PARD management include:

- developing a facility inventory that includes parks and facilities,
- refining maintenance standards and standard operating procedures,
- working on completing an overall comprehensive maintenance standards plan with goals and objectives, and
- enhancing efforts to become more data-driven, including pursuing full implementation of the maintenance management information system.

Efforts that PARD management indicated are still in the planning stage include:

- planning and scheduling baseline condition assessments for all parks and facilities, and
- establishing an ongoing program of assessment for all parks and facilities.

Refer to Appendix A for more details on PARD efforts in addressing the outstanding recommendations.

PARD reported recommendation status to OCA in July 2010 differed substantially from a prior status reported to the Controller's Office. In 2006, PARD reported that eleven recommendations had been implemented and six were planned. As such, prior PARD management may have reported recommendations as implemented that had not been fully completed.

**Exhibit 3:
PARD Reported Status of Prior Audit Recommendations**

Implementation Status	2006	2010
Implemented	11	4
Underway	0	6
Planned / Other	6	7

SOURCE: OCA analysis of information provided by Controllers' Office, May 2010, and by PARD, July 2010.

FINDING # 3: PARD management should continue to focus on fully implementing recommendations which are critical to the department's operations.

Based on the time lapsed and changes in management, we have evaluated the outstanding recommendations set forth in the 2002 audit to identify recommendations that are still relevant and need to be implemented. Our review identified 10 such recommendations. These recommendations, which are listed in Appendix A, are aimed at improving park asset management; developing a baseline assessment for park conditions, and enhancing information management. The remaining recommendations should be considered closed.

As discussed previously in this report, PARD management has reported that several efforts are underway or planned to address these outstanding recommendations.

APPENDIX A

**PRIOR AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AND
2010 PARD RESPONSE**

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Prior Audit Recommendations and 2010 PARD Response

Bolded and shaded recommendations are those outstanding recommendations identified by OCA as still relevant		
No.	2002 Audit Recommendation	2010 Status
1	<p>To improve data on customer satisfaction by planning area, the City Manager should direct the Director of the Human Resources Department to improve the Voice of the Customer survey by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ increasing the sample size, ▪ selecting a sample that yields valid data for each of the 26 City planning areas, and ▪ changing the calculation of satisfaction for all questions to be a proportion of all responses, as calculated in this report. <p><i>2002 response: partial concurrence</i></p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>The Citizen's Survey is conducted by the Budget Office in coordination with City departments. Recommended changes have been partially incorporated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a.) sample size has been increased, b.) data is available by planning area c.) calculation methods have been modified to measure satisfaction rates.
2	<p>To link park maintenance with external customer satisfaction, the Director of PARD should set a target for the measure, "satisfaction with park maintenance" from the Voice of the Customer survey, once the City has established its method of calculation. The Director of PARD should also analyze the number of "dissatisfied" and establish strategies for turning more respondents into satisfied customers.</p> <p><i>2002 response: do not concur</i></p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>PARD will systematically incorporate Citizens' Survey data, along with other customer satisfaction measures and public engagement results/metrics, into its budget preparations, business planning process, and park maintenance planning to further help develop service level standards, and implement strategies for improving satisfaction ratings.</p>
3	<p>The PARD Operations Division Manager should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ review the workload, staffing, training, and logistics between the North, Corridor, and South districts to determine whether management span of control is appropriate and ▪ establish a more equitable division of workload among districts. <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Implemented</p> <p>Although the recommendation has been implemented, span of control and staffing realignments occur periodically and are ongoing throughout the organization. Examples of related realignments have included the separation of the North District into two separate areas, separating facility maintenance from park operations and aligning the park districts under community recreation and central parks as a separate division.</p> <p>Due to turnover and two recent hires at the Assistant Director level, a department structural review is currently underway for implementation in July-August 2010.</p>
4	<p>The PARD Operations Division Manager should continue to develop and implement a plan to complete a comprehensive inventory of PARD facilities and to specify the facilities' maintenance requirements.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>Efforts to develop a facility inventory that includes parks and facilities have been ongoing. An asset inventory that makes use of GIS and GPS technology is currently accessible through the department's web site.</p> <p>The objective was to convert from a paper system to an electronic inventory data system. A lay out was designed to show the boundary of each park, the location of the park within the metro area, and to show a photograph of the park. Each map has a related inventory of facilities in the park.</p> <p>However, the recommendation to implement a comprehensive inventory inclusive of all assets and maintenance requirements that is also integrated with the work order system calls for significant funding which</p>

Bolded and shaded recommendations are those outstanding recommendations identified by OCA as still relevant

No.	2002 Audit Recommendation	2010 Status
		<p>PARD has not received.</p> <p>PARD has adapted the inventory database using the MS 2000 system to include upgrade component purchases. A review team is currently in place to evaluate best practices and recommend improvements such as merging the system's inventory and the work order components.</p> <p>Evaluation and implementation of related strategies will continue to be made in alignment with available resources.</p>
5	<p>To provide a basis for ongoing planning, the PARD Operations Division Manager should develop a plan and schedule for completing baseline condition assessments for all parks and facilities.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Planned</p> <p>This effort should have been undertaken by the department way before this was recognized in an audit report. Unfortunately, this was not the case nor did the department follow through with the recommendation in 2002.</p> <p>In 2008 a cemetery-specific condition assessment was conducted, and in 2009 PARD staff began re-initiated the enormous task of completing the baseline condition assessment of all parks and facilities. Although we recognize that this should have been fully implemented years before now and sustained, the results of this effort will produce staggering numbers in infrastructure needs.</p>
6	<p>The City Manager should identify funding outside of current parks maintenance funding for the maintenance inventory and baseline condition assessments needed as a basis for ongoing planning.</p> <p><i>2002 response: partial concurrence</i></p>	<p>Planned</p> <p>No funding has been approved for this activity. However within PARD, new staff assignments are being developed to review and monitor condition assessments, ongoing planning of preventative maintenance, and maintenance inventory. If funding is identified at the corporate level, PARD will have initiated internal efforts to implement baseline condition assessments of facilities and major capital assets.</p>
7	<p>To improve planning for maintenance and accountability for the condition of Austin parks and facilities, the PARD Operations Division Manager should establish an ongoing program of assessment for all parks and facilities.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Planned</p> <p>This is an item that should have been addressed way before an audit report. This is a very simple recommendation to implement, which would basically create an ongoing program for assessment, set a plan in place and adhere to it. The work order system has been used for annual inspection ratings for parks and pools, but not on a consistent programmatic or sustained manner. As a result, maintenance is performed on a demand driven basis.</p>
8	<p>To protect the City's investment in park assets, the City Manager and Director of PARD should develop for presentation to the City Council a comprehensive strategy for reinvestment in park assets based on their value and should develop suggested funding for those strategies.</p> <p><i>2002 response: do not concur</i></p>	<p>Underway</p> <p>PARD purchased an asset management system and has taken steps to implement the system by starting a park and facility inventory. The process is underway and anticipated completion is May 2011.</p> <p>The current value of the park assets has not been valued and a reinvestment program has not been developed or approved.</p>

Bolded and shaded recommendations are those outstanding recommendations identified by OCA as still relevant

No.	2002 Audit Recommendation	2010 Status
9	<p>To enhance funding of park maintenance, the City Manager should examine the feasibility of allocating funds from the Hotel-Motel Bed Tax for maintenance of the Town Lake Corridor because of its importance to tourism.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Planned No such tax or funding system has been developed.</p>
10	<p>The Director of PARD and PARD Operations Division Manager should establish long- and short-range maintenance plans for each park asset based on initial condition assessments. Plans should establish an accepted standard of maintenance for each type of park asset and hold the applicable supervisors accountable for meeting those standards.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Underway Parks and Recreation did not establish a long and short range plan for each asset based on an assessment because no follow-through occurred with the assessment. However, in 2007 and 2008 staff drafted recommended standards for park facility maintenance.</p> <p>This operations manual is now being revised and additional information added to complete an overall comprehensive maintenance standards plan with goals and objectives. The standards manual is intended to provide a framework for condition inspections and evaluations for each park relative to established standards.</p>
11	<p>The Director of PARD should adopt and maintain preventive maintenance programs for all parks and facilities.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Underway We are very close to having this product by which the Director will whole heartedly support. Dedicated resources will be required to fully implement an ongoing preventive maintenance plan.</p>
12	<p>In order to improve accountability for park asset maintenance, the City Manager should assign responsibility for maintenance of rights-of-way, medians, blind corners, and other non-park maintenance to Public Works or other appropriate departments, as recommended in previous improvement efforts. The Operations Division of PARD should retain positions and appropriate funding to perform forestry and landscape maintenance duties on dedicated parkland.</p> <p><i>2002 response: partial concurrence</i></p>	<p>Planned PARD has repeatedly proposed this change during budget preparations with no results until recently. Effective October 1, 2010 the median and rights-of-way mowing will be transferred to the Public Works Department.</p> <p>To further complicate efforts, funding support from Austin Energy for this service is being reduced next fiscal year. PARD, however, continues to be tasked with addressing blind corners and emergency after-hour calls for tree limb removals.</p>
13	<p>In order to establish accountability for park asset maintenance, the Director of PARD should clearly define maintenance responsibilities, distinguish park maintenance duties from custodial and other operational duties, establish appropriate controls to ensure that maintenance duties are not subordinated to non-maintenance duties, and improve cost accounting to account separately for park maintenance and other duties.</p> <p><i>2002 response: partial concurrence</i></p>	<p>Implemented The park districts have identified specific functions and job duties segregating mowing, park servicing and park facility maintenance. Work units are organized to perform exclusive tasks specific to unit functions.</p> <p>Although non-maintenance functions are still performed by maintenance staff, using the work order system and the payroll system (use of code / task order number) PARD is able to track the costs of non-maintenance assignments such as special event support and unfunded mandates. These tasks are vital functions of the department and still need to be resourced.</p> <p>PARD is currently redefining job responsibilities.</p>

Bolded and shaded recommendations are those outstanding recommendations identified by OCA as still relevant

No.	2002 Audit Recommendation	2010 Status
14	<p>In order to make informed decisions about the distribution of maintenance resources and support effective maintenance planning, the Director of PARD should continue to develop work standards, implement standard operating procedures for all activities, and more closely relate the financial reporting structure to work unit performance.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Underway PARD developed maintenance standards and standard operating procedures to provide consistent maintenance and servicing levels throughout the park system. The draft manual provides a framework for the provision of inspection and maintenance. We are refining the manual and working toward capturing better data through the work order system.</p> <p>The work order system is used to capture work performed and the associated costs, and to identify current maintenance needs. As needed, the department sets task order tracking numbers for cost accounting purposes.</p>
15	<p>To ensure complete and accurate maintenance information and to report correct performance data, the PARD Operations Division Manager should implement fully the MS 2000 maintenance management software, because there is too large a volume of maintenance and asset condition information to manage manually.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Underway The department has made incremental improvements on the implementation of the MS2000 maintenance management system consistent with limited available funding. This initial effort at developing an inventory database has already provided the department vital data; the system captures costs associated with maintenance needs and work performed.</p> <p>However, PARD has not used the maintenance management system to its full potential capacity. PARD plans on developing more meaningful performance measures congruent with financial services requirements.</p> <p>PARD has an internal committee reviewing the MS2000 work order system and monitoring any City-wide implementation of an enterprise system (i.e. Maximo).</p>
16	<p>The Director of PARD and the PARD Operations Division Manager should continue to shift the Operations Division from management by experience to management by complete, accurate, and documented information and experience.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Underway PARD now uses the information it has at its disposal and continues to develop standards to help become more data-driven. The data sources are numerous but include: MS2000, NRPA, ICMA, and internal measures.</p> <p>Additional funding for complete and accurate information is required for full and complete implementation. The primary reason is that inherent in this solution requires the full implementation of the MS2000 system to include the asset management module.</p> <p>PARD has begun to better utilize the information collected to assist in developing standards. We recognize just how critical data and trend analysis is in assisting us in our decisions.</p> <p>It is absolutely necessary to fully implement the MS2000 system to include the asset management module which will require additional resources.</p>

Bolded and shaded recommendations are those outstanding recommendations identified by OCA as still relevant		
No.	2002 Audit Recommendation	2010 Status
17	<p>In order to ensure implementation of maintenance improvement initiatives, the City Manager should require the Director of PARD to establish an Action Plan, which addresses the recommendations in this report, identifies barriers that hinder the implementation of a modern maintenance system, and addresses these barriers.</p> <p><i>2002 response: concur</i></p>	<p>Planned An Action Plan that addresses those items in the 2002 audit. In 2010 we will evaluate processes and systems using modern best practices.</p>
18	<p>In order to ensure implementation of maintenance improvement initiatives and protection of the value of parks asset, the City Manager should direct that parks maintenance activities be designated as core activities and that any budget reduction decisions take this designation into account.</p> <p><i>2002 response: partial concurrence</i></p>	<p>Implemented In its FY 11 Business Plan, PARD identified the five horizon issues that will impact its abilities to deliver key services effectively and cost efficiently during the next 3-5 years. The Department identified the inadequate levels of parkland maintenance and program supervision as its top horizon issue. PARD continues to be faced with the contradiction of adding new parks, facilities, and services while asked to contain costs, hold the number of positions constant, and reduce capital equipment acquisitions.</p>
19	<p>The City Manager should create a task force comprised of representatives of the departments with significant asset management responsibility to evaluate management of real assets citywide. The task force should be charged with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Developing a citywide asset management policy, ▪ Determining whether departments' asset management responsibilities are consistent with their respective missions, ▪ Determining whether asset management practices are coordinated effectively, ▪ Defining efficient and effective asset management practices, and ▪ Evaluating alternative funding sources and methods of service delivery for maintenance of real assets. <p><i>2002 response: partial concurrence</i></p>	<p>Planned The City has not created a task force to implement "Maximo" as the city's asset management system due to the lack of funding and overall expense to departments. PARD, however, has moved forward by purchasing an asset management system to compliment the current work order system. If a corporate team is formed, PARD plans on having representation.</p>

SOURCE: OCA 2002 Park Maintenance Audit Report and 2010 response provided by PARD, July 2010 and August 2010.