

Staff Paper #4:
Parks Maintenance

ISSUE: Maintenance of park properties and open space

Over the course of the past 10 years, the Parks Operations Division has lost the equivalent of 23 full-time positions, or thirty-eight percent (38%) of the parks maintenance workforce. In the same timeframe park and open space acreage has grown. Maintaining our existing parks to the same standard as that established in 1993-1994 standard would require adding almost double the number of parks maintenance employees. Park Service Levels are based on the frequency of performing approximately 40 tasks. Service Levels are described as "Excellent", "Good", "Fair", "Poor", and "Unacceptable". Service Levels in 1993 – 1994 were in the "Good" to "Excellent" range. Service Levels for 2004 – 2005 will be in the "Poor" to "Fair" range. Parks Operations was able to absorb some of the cuts incurred over the past decade through maximizing efficiencies. However, since 02-03, cuts have translated to a visible loss in service levels and a parallel increase in customer complaints.

CURRENT PRACTICE:

The Parks Operation Division of the Operations and Maintenance Department currently provides landscape services, facility maintenance and recreation program support to the City's parks, planter strips and other green space and open space areas.

OPTION #1: Restrict construction of new parks facilities / landscaped areas unless all ongoing operations and maintenance costs are funded by new development.

- While most of the City's Community Facility Districts (CFDs) contain funding for some level of parks and/or landscaping maintenance, none of the CFDs provide full funding for these activities. Cost recovery is roughly 20% of total operations and maintenance in these areas.
- Of the 58 neighborhood and community parks in the City, only 2 (Coffee-Claratina and Ustach) are in CFDs. These two CFD parks are nearing completion at this time. All of the funding for maintenance, both accumulated and anticipated, has been directed toward the maintenance of these two CFD parks. There will be no maintenance funding available for future parks in these CFDs.

RAMIFICATIONS:

If new park construction is halted, impacts include the following:

- Violation of General Plan policies, which require a park ratio of 3 acres per 1,000 residents.
- Dissatisfaction of new residents promised parks when purchasing their homes.
- Accrual of Community Facilities Fees (CFF) funds collected for the purpose of park construction and dedicated to this purpose.

OPTION #2: Seek a Citywide Lighting and Landscape District to fund maintenance of parks, planter strips and other green space, as well as to fund street lighting.

RAMIFICATIONS:

A super majority (two-thirds) vote of the people would be required. Prior to the election, staff would need to complete an assessment to thoroughly evaluate the required financing and to ensure equity throughout the system (i.e., should CFD properties be charged less than those in the City's baseline developed area?).

The Council has the authority to place a measure on the ballot without a petition. A public hearing isn't required, but public input would be essential and achieving a supermajority is difficult.

OPTION #3: Privatize parks Landscape maintenance services.

RAMIFICATIONS: Privatization of parks landscape maintenance costs may reduce overall costs to the City. Staff has begun the legwork to develop an RFP in anticipation of going out to bid for parks and landscape maintenance services. It is unknown whether bids received will actually be below current staff costs to perform these services. Potential savings could be directed back to park maintenance to improve service levels.

OPTION #4: Support the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department's Fund Development Program, which will provide significant funding for enhanced and improved maintenance of parks, trails and other open space.

RAMIFICATIONS: The Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department is one of a very few in the United States that is uniquely positioned with a wide variety of facilities, from traditional neighborhood parks to baseball stadiums and a community/conference center. The department has taken the aggressive stance to develop an alternative revenue program that can be implemented to improve the system, its programs and facilities and to provide these improvements with private sector monies. These efforts will include seeking private and foundation funding for improvements to the City's open space system, including its parks and trails. In many cases, funding for infrastructure will come with a funding mechanism for bringing the City's open space up to a level of safety and aesthetics that provides the residents with the quality of parks and trails they desire and deserve.