

Maintenance Plan

Careful planning and design are essential to building a great community park system, but it is the level of long-term care that determines how attractive facilities remain, how long equipment lasts, how safe the parks are, and displays a city's commitment to its resident's quality of life.

Sustainable maintenance improves the quality of the natural environment and carefully balances the need to enhance or restore natural resources with the need for active play opportunities.

The amount of necessary maintenance will vary from park to park. Active parks, for example, tend to need a higher level of attention while most open spaces only require some type of annual maintenance.

Parks, Facilities & Trail Maintenance Goals and Recommendations

Goal

Create a successful and functional maintenance program that will address the concerns of both existing and future parks, open space and trails.

Recommendations

- Provide adequate and well-trained park personnel.
- Promote an understanding of the significant scope of work related to parks, facilities and trail operations and maintenance.
- Plan for realistic time frames when scheduling maintenance work.
- Acquire appropriate equipment to perform maintenance effectively and efficiently.
- Create and maintain a log for tracking park system and individual park maintenance activities.

Goal

Strive to use sustainable maintenance and care practices for park land, trails, and park facilities whenever possible.

Recommendations

- Periodically survey the condition of each park and facilities within the park in order to effectively and efficiently schedule routine maintenance projects.

- Design a sustainable maintenance program that will evaluate annual labor, supply and equipment needs, and develop an effective and efficient method for keeping park landscapes and facilities maintained and working properly.
- Include in the maintenance program the following guidelines:
 1. Retain existing soil during construction and planting projects. Stockpile and reuse this soil on-site to minimize disturbance that could encourage growth of invasive plant species.
 2. If fill needs to be imported, request weed-free fill.
 3. When using fertilizer, use organic or “slow-release” and use no more than recommended for proper growth.
 4. To determine the need for fertilizer, soil should be tested once every three years.
 5. If soil pH needs to be adjusted, the use of lime or soil acidifying materials can be added.
 6. Use compost as an annual dressing.
 7. Create a compost area within the park system to supply needed compost.
 8. Mulching retains moisture in the soil, moderates soil temperature, prevents erosion and the washing away of nutrients, and keeps weed growth under control. Mulch should be applied no deeper than 4” on trees, 2-3” on shrubs, and about an inch on perennials.
 9. Use shredded hardwood mulch rather than wood chips because of its slower decomposition rate, which has less nitrogen depletion properties.
 10. In turf areas and newly planted areas, water deeply, about one inch of water per week to keep plants healthy and to prevent soil erosion. Water in the early morning to prevent evaporation.
 11. Consider using two types of grass within the parks, a cool season athletic mix turf grass for active play areas, such as ball fields and picnic areas, and a native cool season grass such as Canada rye in place of Kentucky bluegrass and fescue in other areas of the park.
 12. Mow high (about 3” or no more than one-third of the blade of grass) in earlier morning hours, leaving grass clippings on the turf. Longer blades of grass tend to grow deeper roots helping to avoid erosion and obtaining more moisture and nutrients from the soil.
 13. Include large drifts of native grasses and flower areas in parks, especially around water bodies to protect water quality, provide seasonal color and texture, enhance wildlife habitat and deter geese populations.
 14. Include a controlled burn approach to maintaining native landscapes within parks. Controlled burns should be performed only by trained personnel.
 15. Incorporate natural storm water-control measures within the parks such as rain gardens, grass swales and additional planting of trees around parking and other hard surface areas to reduce site run-off.
 16. Reduce the use of pesticides, herbicides or other chemically treated products such as wood products, whenever possible due to their impacts on water quality and wildlife habitat. When needed, especially in the case of invasive plant species control, they should be applied only by trained personnel and care should be taken to ensure proper use and storage.

17. Turf grass on ball fields and soccer fields will be mowed 2x/week during the seasons when needed. All other turf grass areas will be mowed 1x/week as time and weather permit.

Goal

Operate and maintain the parks, facilities and trail system in community partnership and cooperation.

Recommendations

- Solicit public evaluation of parks, facilities and trail maintenance from the public using periodic surveys, online feedback via a Park and Trail web page or comment/suggestion boxes placed in the parks system.
- Use community volunteer resources to assist in park beautification projects, e.g., rain garden, restoration projects, invasive species control and installation of signage, new playground structures, etc. These types of activities bring community members together, especially in neighborhood park settings and can create a sense of ownership that may continue.
- Create volunteer recognition programs to acknowledge groups or community members for their service.
- Educate the public on the aesthetics and benefits of sustainable park landscapes using brochures, fact sheets, city website, city newsletter and signage.

Maintenance Guidelines

Landscape

Planting Type	Annual Maintenance Schedule						
	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	At 2 Years	At 5 Years	At 10+ Years
Trees and Shrubs					Only prune lower branches that will create a hazard. Trees should not be staked unless absolutely necessary.	Selectively replace shrubs that have overgrown.	Replace shrubs that have become overgrown.
Planting New/Replacement		X	X	X			
Fertilizer	Only when needed						
Mulch		X	X	X	Renewal prune woody shrubs to improve shape.	Renewal prune woody shrubs to improve shape.	
Pest Control (only as needed)		X	X				
Plant Repair	X	X	X	X			
Pruning	X	X	X	X	Renewal prune woody shrubs to improve shape. DO NOT SHEAR SHRUBS. Pruning should be done only by trained personnel.	DO NOT SHEAR SHRUBS. Pruning should be done only by trained personnel.	
Perennials/Ornamental Grasses						Divide existing plants to keep them healthy and maintain shape.	Divide existing plants to keep them healthy and maintain shape.
Planting New/Replacement		X	X	X	In areas where establishment is unsuccessful, amend soil and replant.	Replace dead plant material. Change plant species in cases of major die-outs.	Replace dead plant material. Change plant species in cases of major die-outs.

Planting Type	Annual Maintenance Schedule						
	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	At 2 Years	At 5 Years	At 10+ Years
Aeration		April		Sept.	Re-grade sections that may have become "bumpy". Remove lawn from area around tree trunks.		Complete major renovation of turf areas designated for active sports such as ball fields, soccer fields, etc.
Mowing		X	X	X			
Re-sodding		X	X	X			
Re-seeding (over-seeding)				X			
Weed control (only as needed)		X		X			
Fertilization		X		X			
Naturalized Areas							
Planting		X		X	Weeding/burns and general management is critical during the first three years of establishment. The goal is to have minimal contact in subsequent years to reduce impact to wildlife habitat. ONLY BURN IN NATIVE GRASS & FLOWER AREAS. Most trees and shrubs cannot typically survive this method of weed control.	Plant species selection should be modified based on success rates.	Long-term management should consider wildlife habitat quality. Plant species selection should be modified based on success rates and aesthetic quality. Replace plants or re-seed as needed.