

VI. Park Maintenance



Similar to the establishment of the Level of Service for the Parks System, a level of service must be established for park maintenance. Determining maintenance tasks and task frequencies is an important starting point in developing a realistic level of service necessary to achieve the community's goals and to maintain the City's current investment of trees and other infrastructure improvements. Currently the level of service is based on the unique character of the public space.

Multiple levels of attention may be factored into an individual park depending on the nature of specific areas within that public space. In reviewing the daily maintenance logs, staff grouped similar tasks and activities into a three tiered level of service as follows:

Level 1: State of the art maintenance used in high traffic and highly detailed areas

Level 2: High to moderate level of maintenance associated with the City's well developed park areas

Level 3: Moderately-low level maintenance usually associated with budget reductions and lack of staff availability



level 1

Parks Include: Government Center, Hector House, Herald Court, Harborwalk Pittman Park

Class-A state-of-the-art maintenance applied to a high-quality landscape setting. It is associated with high-traffic urban areas.

- **General Park Areas Turf:** Mowed at least once every seven to nine work days. Aeration as required. Reseeding or sodding as needed. Weed control is practiced so that no more than 1 percent of the surface has weeds present.
- **Fertilizer:** Adequate fertilization applied to plant species according to their optimum requirements.
- **Irrigation:** Sprinkler irrigated – electric, automatic.
- **Litter Control:** Minimum of once per day, seven days per week.
- **Pruning:** Frequency dictated primarily by species and variety of trees and shrubs.
- **Disease and Insect Control:** At this maintenance level, the controlling objective is to avoid public awareness of any problems.
- **Surfaces:** Sweeping, blowing, cleaning, and washing of surfaces should be done so that at no time does an accumulation of sand, dirt, or leaves distract from the looks or safety of the area.
- **Repairs:** Repairs to all elements of the design should be done immediately when problems are discovered, provided replacement parts and technicians are available to accomplish the job.
- **Inspections:** A staff member should conduct inspection daily.
- **Floral Plantings:** Normally, extensive or unusual floral plantings are part of the design. These may include ground-level beds, planters, or hanging baskets. Maximum care, including watering, fertilizing, disease control, disbudding, and weeding, is necessary. Weeding flowers and shrubs is done a minimum of once per week. The desired standard is essentially weed-free.

level 2

Parks Include: Gilchrist Park, Hounds on Henry, Lashley Park, Ponce de Leon Park, Sculpture Park

High-to-Moderate-level maintenance: It is associated with well-developed public park areas

- **Turf Care:** Grass cut once every 7 to 9 working days. Weed control measures normally used when 50 percent of small areas are weed infested or when 15 percent of the general turf is infested with weeds.
- **Fertilizer:** Applied only when turf vigor seems to be low.
- **Irrigation:** Sprinkler irrigated – electric automatic, in key locations
- **Litter Control:** Minimum service of two to three times per week. High use may dictate higher levels during the season.
- **Pruning:** When required for health or reasonable appearance.
- **Disease and Insect Control:** Done only to address epidemics or serious complaints.
- **Surfaces:** Cleaned on a complaint basis.
- **Repairs:** Should be done whenever safety or function is in question.
- **Inspections:** A staff member should conduct inspection daily.
- **Floral Plantings:** Only perennials or flowering trees or shrubs.

level 3

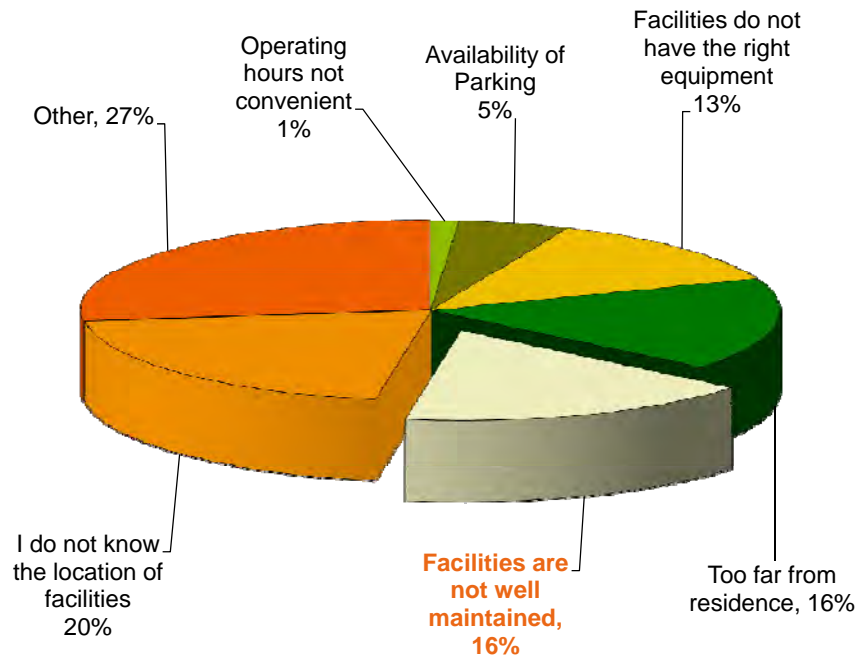
Parks Include: Alice Park, Breakers Park, Elizabeth Park, Nature Park, Shreve Park, Wilson Park

Moderately low-level maintenance: It is associated with locations affected by budget restrictions that cannot afford a high level of maintenance.

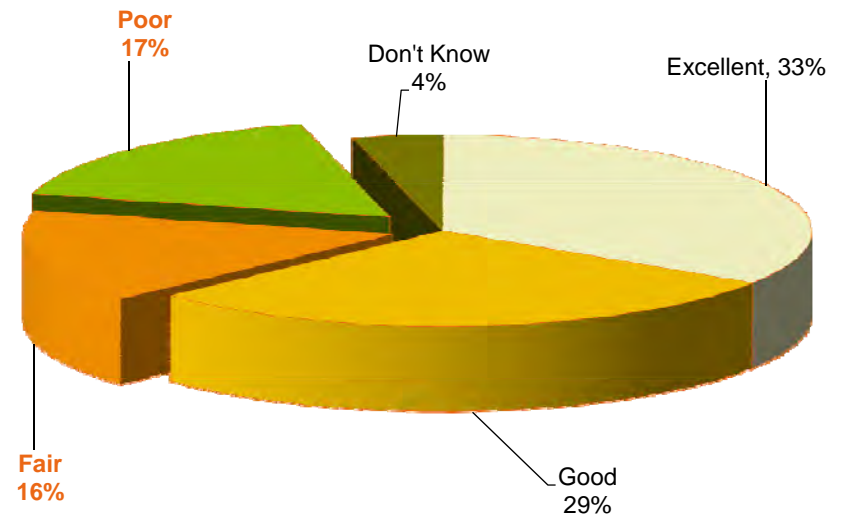
- **Turf Care:** Low frequency mowing scheduled based on species.
- **Fertilizer:** Not fertilized.
- **Irrigation:** No irrigation.
- **Litter Control:** Once per week or less.
- **Pruning:** No regular trimming. Trimming only for safety or damage.
- **Disease and Insect Control:** None except where the problem is epidemic and the epidemic condition threatens resources or the public.
- **Surfaces:** Should be done whenever safety or function is in question.
- **Inspections:** Inspections are conducted once per month.
- **Floral Planting:** None. May have wildflowers, perennials, flowering trees, or shrubs in place.

Information collected as part of the public input from the Parks & Recreation Master Plan Charrette, provided staff with some insight to the community's needs and desires for an improved, integrated and maintained Park System. Analyzing the survey results, staff found that 16% of the participants indicated "maintenance" prevented them from utilizing the Park System. When asked specifically to rate the park maintenance, 33% answered with a fair or poor rating. These results indicate room for improvement in order to meet community expectations.

Reasons for not using the Park System



Park Maintenance Rating



City parks are a high priority of City Council in terms of improving the quality of life and as an economic development tool. As such, the City has made substantial financial investment in acquiring park land and making capital improvements to the parks. However, staff finds investment in park maintenance has not received the same financial investment. In fact the Parks and Grounds Division has undergone personnel and budget reductions over the past year, while simultaneously, adding trees, landscaping, and other park features.

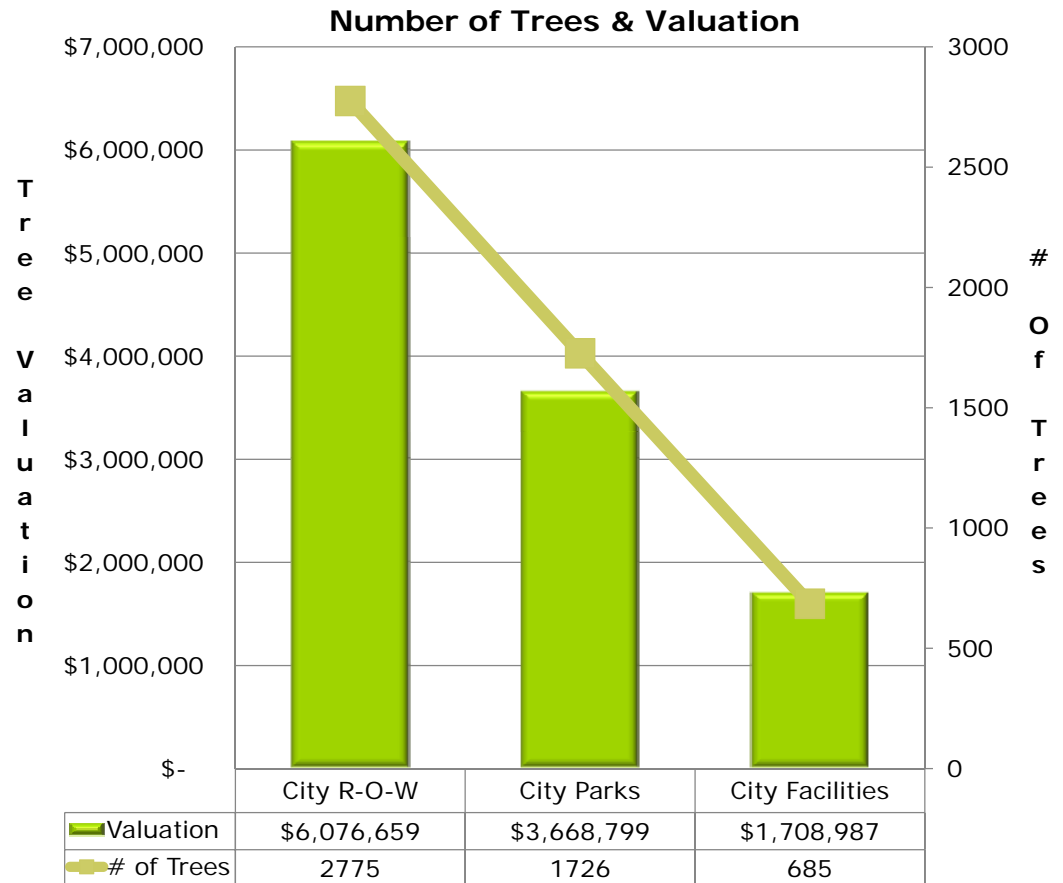


Parks & Ground Budget and Staffing Levels

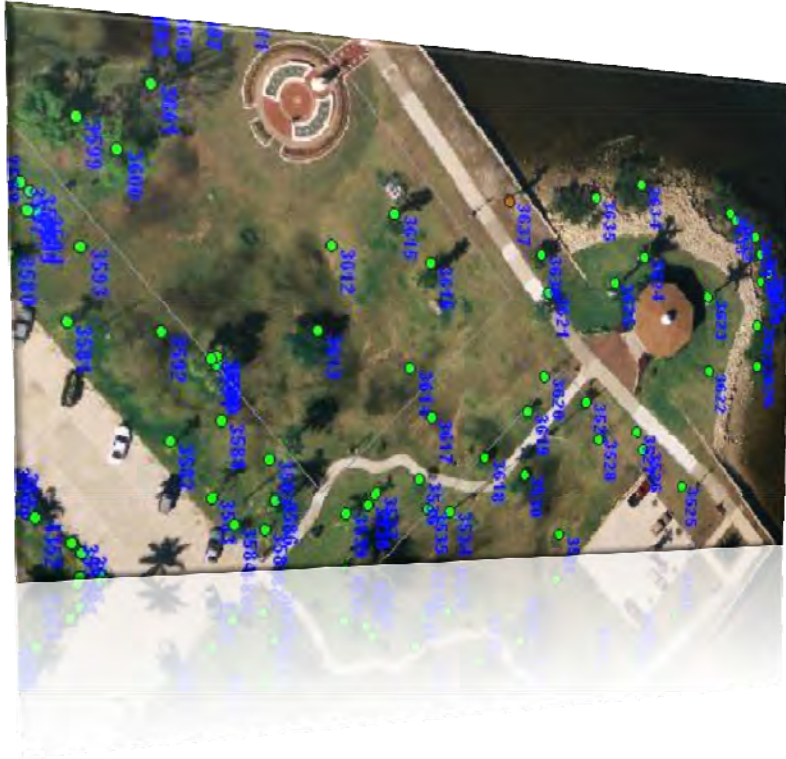


Traditionally the value of a park is measured solely by the value of the man-made improvements. A simple valuation of structures, benches, walkways, and other facilities encompasses one fraction of the actual economic value contained within the average park. Include in this assessment must be the value of the trees. Not only do they provide shade and aesthetic value but trees also provide other value through soil stabilization, storm water absorption, wildlife shelter, and reduction in heat island effect.

Realizing this need, the City applied for and received funding from the US Forestry Division to complete a citywide tree inventory. In summer of 2008 the City of Punta Gorda conducted a GPS tree inventory of trees of every tree within the City's Right-of-Way (R-O-W), Parks, and Facilities. The contractor, ArborPro, Inc., utilized the skills of a certified arborist to collect the requested tree attributes and the GPS coordinates. The attributes included in the survey are the GPS locations of the trees, species name in botanical nomenclature and common form, general health assessment, maintenance recommendation and species composition and an associated cost per tree.



While the information provided will prove invaluable to the Parks & Grounds maintenance crew, the valuation of the trees provides an asset to the City few realized. The valuation of the trees in City Parks, Facilities, and Public Rights of Way, is over \$11 million. This value cannot be underestimated and is necessary if cost effective policy and sound budget decisions are to be made. Investments in planting and the long term care associated with them require commitment from the community. Inadequate resources for planting and tree care will result in increased costs and reduced benefits of the planted environment to the community. The City will utilize the tree inventory as a tool to help quantify tree population and direct its limited resources to areas of maximum benefit to the community.



Park Name	Valuation	# of Trees
Gilchrist	\$ 843,636	388
Ponce De leon Park	\$ 708,134	254
Laishley Park	\$ 628,236	382
History Park	\$ 466,006	221
Nature Park	\$ 275,544	171
Mangrove Park	\$ 226,015	40
Sculpture Park	\$ 119,871	108
Elizabeth Park	\$ 94,333	50
Alice Park	\$ 89,572	23
Hector House Plaza	\$ 83,261	34
Hounds on Henry	\$ 77,303	26
Pittman Park	\$ 34,892	6
Herald Court	\$ 16,432	17
Brown Park	\$ 5,562	6
Total	\$ 3,668,799	1726

Additionally, in order to realize the fullest benefit of capital investments in our park infrastructure, a complete assessment of the existing facility conditions and maintenance standards needs to be performed. Functional operational standards, facility checklists, labor hours per acre, and consumable costs per year standards will need to be developed as part of this assessment. The assessment must also include the numerous other tasks performed by the Parks & Ground Division.

Scope of the Management Plan:

- Existing maintenance and operational standards
- Existing policy and procedures management
- Performance measures
- Budget & purchasing processes
- Staffing & utilization and needs
- Staff training & certification
- Workload requirements of Parks & Grounds Urban Design and Engineering
- Level of service development for Parks & Maintenance
- Field Equipment /Resources
- Partnerships/Volunteer support



The Parks & Recreation Master Plan will serve as the basis for staffing and budgetary requirements related to all existing and future public improvements. The subsequent maintenance assessment will be used to implement a comprehensive maintenance management plan which will address park project impacts to the various departments; thereby assuring all approved park projects include a sufficient and appropriate maintenance strategy. By identifying the additional maintenance, personnel, and contractual services associated with new park projects early on in the process, staff will be better able to prepare for the increased responsibilities



Goals of the Parks & Grounds Maintenance should include:

- Improving the overall maintenance of all parks to City standards
- Improving park related amenities such as hard surfaces, roads, plazas, lighting, fencing, play courts, playgrounds, water fountains, restrooms, shelters/gazebos, tree care and trails.
- Ensuring appropriate equipment is available to support parks & grounds needs
- Developing a volunteer maintenance group that can assist in high maintenance issues such as planting beds, gardens, weeding etc.
- Improving custodial care of parks & facilities