Bureau of Parks and Recreation:
A Review of Management Systems

February 2000

Office of the City Auditor
Portland, Oregon

February 15, 2000

TO: Vera Katz, Mayor
              Jim Francesconi, Commissioner
              Charlie Hales, Commissioner
              Dan Saltzman, Commissioner
              Erik Sten, Commissioner
              Charles Jordan, Director, Bureau of Parks & Recreation

SUBJECT: Audit of the Portland Bureau Parks and Recreation, Report #261

Attached is Report #261, an audit of the Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation. The study was conducted at the request of Commissioner Francesconi, and was included in our annual Audit Schedule published in February of 1999.

As a follow-up to our recommendations, we will conduct a brief review of progress in six months. We also ask that the Bureau prepare a detailed status report on the steps taken to address the recommendations in one year. This status report should also be distributed to the Audit Services Division and the Commissioner in Charge of Parks & Recreation.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance we received from staff in the Bureau and the Commissioner's Office in conducting and preparing the report.
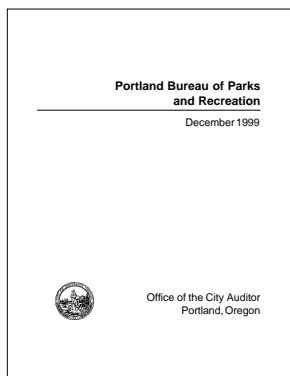
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A Report by the Audit Services Division
Report #261

Office of the City Auditor
Portland, Oregon

Production/Design

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Summary

Government agencies are responsible for using public resources efficiently and effectively. Organizations should strive to achieve desired objectives, provide services at a reasonable cost, and safeguard and protect public assets. Good management helps provide reasonable assurance that these objectives will be achieved.

An important part of good management involves creating a structure of methods and systems to guide and control the activities of the organization. These systems are intended to help the entity achieve goals and objectives, control and monitor operations, and report on accomplishments.

At the request of the Bureau's Commissioner and in consultation with Bureau staff, we evaluated some of the management systems identified as critical to the Bureau's success. Specifically, we evaluated the methods used to:

- monitor and report on performance

- maintain buildings, and

- communicate with employees and the public.

We worked closely with the Bureau to identify current practices and to assess strengths and weaknesses. We compared the systems used by the Bureau to those recommended by experts, proposed by national bodies and industry standards, and used by other organizations. We also spent time with managers and staff to develop practical solutions to problem areas.

Current strengths and weakness in management systems

We found both strengths and weaknesses in the Bureau's management systems. The Bureau compares favorably with other city parks organizations and has made significant efforts to improve the delivery of parks and recreation services. In fact, in many instances the Bureau has systems which are equal to, or better than, the cities we surveyed in our field work.

We found **strengths** in the following areas:

- developing strategic plans, mission statements, and program goals,

- recognizing the importance of building maintenance efforts,

- committing significant resources to parks maintenance,

- instilling employees with a good understanding of the Parks mission,

- implementing commonly used internal communication tools, and

- improving and refining public involvement techniques.

We also found a variety of weaknesses that affect the ability of the Bureau to meet its priority goals and objectives. While the Bureau is a national leader in many areas, opportunities exist to continually improve the management and performance of the organization.

We found **weaknesses** in the following areas:

- focusing efforts on an achievable list of priority goals and performance measures,

- gathering reliable and consistent performance data,

- using performance information for accountability and decision-making,

- developing reliable information on building inventory, condition, and maintenance spending,

- devoting sufficient resources to maintain parks buildings,

- helping employees be heard, improving communication flow, and

- developing a clear and consistent strategy to involve the public in decisions.

Actions needed to address system problems

In order to address the problem areas we identified in our review, we developed a number of recommended actions in consultation with Bureau management and employees. In brief, we recommend that the Bureau:

1. Develop a clear framework for performance measurement and a set of performance measures that are supported by reliable sources of management data.

2. Develop a more structured building maintenance system that contains complete information on inventories, physical characteristics, maintenance condition, and annually spending.

3. Request and reallocate sufficient resources to maintain existing parks and recreation buildings.

4. Develop and implement a communication plan that recognizes current communication problems and establishes a strong commitment to improve internal communication.

5. Implement an annual employee satisfaction survey to identify problem areas and track improvement.

6. Pursue and complete a public communications strategy that involves park stakeholders in Bureau planning and decision-making.

These recommendations should be considered in context with the current <u>Parks 2020</u> planning effort. The Bureau initiated Parks 2020 in the fall of 1999 to develop plans for the future delivery of parks and recreation services in Portland.

We also believe that other areas in the Bureau warrant additional analysis: parks grounds maintenance, recreation programming and costs, and workload and staffing analysis.

Capacity to change   In order to address these recommendations, the Bureau needs leadership, commitment, and follow-through. Experience has shown that the Bureau has not always been successful in implementing recommendations from previous audits and internal improvement initiatives. To help support the Bureau's capacity to change, we believe help is needed in several areas:

- technical assistance to develop asset maintenance systems and to simplify performance measurement methods,

- staff training on the development and use of performance information,

- organizational development to address and improve internal communication, and

- additional resources to upgrade building maintenance efforts and initiate a public involvement strategy.

The Bureau should seek help to improve their capacity to change from the Audit Services Division, the Bureau of Human Resources' Organizational Development Manager, and the Bureau of Financial Management.

In coordination with Commissioner Francesconi, we will closely monitor the progress toward implementing the recommendations of this report and addressing the identified system weaknesses. We will issue a six-month monitoring report on implementation progress. We will also ask the Bureau to prepare a detailed status report one year from the release of this report.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Objectives, scope, and methodology

This audit was conducted at the request of Commissioner Jim Francesconi. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy of management systems in the Bureau of Parks and Recreation. We evaluated methods and procedures for:

- managing for results: establishing mission, goals and objectives, and monitoring performance,

- internal communication,

- maintaining Bureau of Parks buildings and facilities, and

- public and citizen involvement.

For each area, we studied whether the Bureau has in place the management systems necessary to ensure that progress toward accomplishing mission and objectives is measured and reported, that physical assets are well maintained, and that information is communicated in an effective and constructive manner to employees and the public. We worked cooperatively with Bureau managers to develop an audit plan to address each of the primary objectives. Fieldwork was conducted from April through October of 1999.

To involve employees in the audit process, the Bureau established an Audit Liaison Committee which met four

times during the course of the audit. This committee, made of up of six Bureau staff members from various divisions, provided a sounding board for auditors to suggest alternative fieldwork approaches and potential recommendations. In addition, we interviewed sixty-seven Bureau employees and received 103 attitude surveys from employees concerning internal communications.

For each of the major study areas we reviewed relevant literature, conducted interviews with Bureau staff and practitioners, and reviewed prior audit work. Detailed methodologies for each of the main audit areas can be found in the individual report chapters.

We worked with the Bureau to develop a Request for Proposal and contract specifications for an outside consultant to study the public involvement process. We hired the firm of Barney & Worth, Inc. to deliver a report on this objective. See Appendix A for their full report.

We also conducted a survey of six other cities to obtain comparative information about their policies, procedures and management tools relative to our main audit topics. We received information from Kansas City, Missouri; Austin, Texas; Indianapolis, Indiana; Phoenix, Arizona; Seattle, Washington; and Virginia Beach, Virginia

During the course of our work, we also identified other management systems that may warrant additional audit attention in the future. These areas include:

- procedures for grounds and park maintenance,

- organizational structure, workload and staffing levels, and

- recreation program planning, administration, and costs.

The audit was included on the Audit Services Division's 1999 Audit Schedule. We conducted the audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards, and limited the scope of our review to those areas specified in the audit scope and methodology section of this report.

Parks Bureau background information

In accordance with its current mission statement, the purpose of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation is to ensure access to leisure opportunities and to enhance Portland's natural beauty. The Bureau operates and maintains a system of parks and community facilities for these purposes. The Bureau has established three primary goals:

1. to preserve and enhance the parks legacy and promote knowledge and appreciation of the natural environment

2. continually improve the availability and effectiveness of recreational services and park programs that benefit the community

3. create a safe, productive, and rewarding workplace which emphasizes effective communications and recognizes innovation and achievement

The Bureau has responsibility for over 9,000 acres of developed parks and natural areas. The parks system includes 147 developed parks, 217 sports fields, 12 community centers, 12 pools, and four golf courses. Cultural activities and experiences are available through the Children's Museum, Pittock Mansion, and a variety of other

facilities. A network of neighborhood schools is used to bring additional learning opportunities to neighborhoods. The Bureau also offers both indoor and outdoor recreation activities, and instruction ranging from basketball and swimming to white water rafting and skiing.

Portland residents like the parks system

Portlanders express high satisfaction with the quality of parks and recreation in the City. According to the City Auditor's 1998 citizen satisfaction survey:

- Eighty-one percent of residents rated the overall quality of parks "good" or "very good."

- Sixty-nine percent of residents rated overall recreation quality "good" or "very good."

- Eighty percent rated parks grounds maintenance "good" or "very good."

These survey results have shown a fairly consistent positive trend over the past eight years.

Expenditures, Staffing and Organization

Operating expenditures, adjusting for inflation, have increased almost 26 percent since FY1989-90, from $30.5 million to $38.3 million in FY1998-99. Capital spending increased from $2.5 million to $24.0 million during the same period due to the $60 million General Obligation Bond Initiative (GOBI). Operating spending per capita increased about 7 percent.

The Bureau has a FY1999-00 budget for all funds of $55 million and 375 full-time positions. The Bureau is organized into five major divisions, as shown in Table 1. The Bureau plans to recover about $26 million through user fees and charges.

Figure 1   Park Bureau Expenditures: FY1989-90 to FY1998-99

Expenditures (Inflation adj)
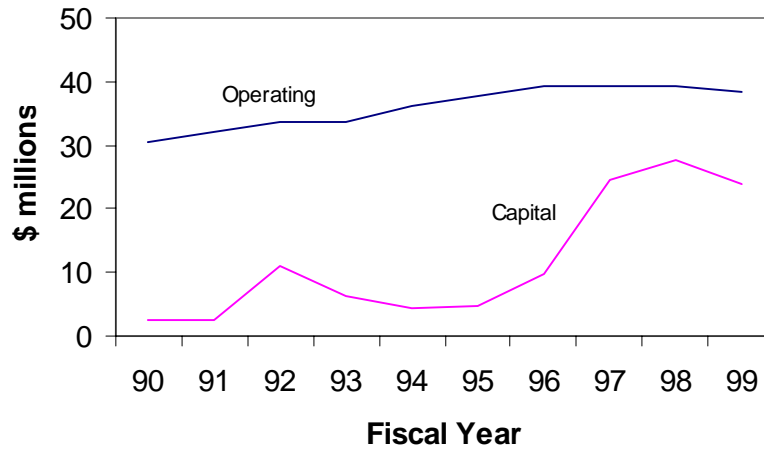
Table 1   FY1999-00 Adopted Budget

	Budget	Positions
Parks and Recreation Division	$37,968,618	325
Golf Division	8,341,453	31
Parks Bond Construction Division	5,233,356	10
PDX Raceway Division	908,567	6
Parks Construction Division	2,938,950	3
TOTAL	$55,390,944	375

Recent Bureau Initiatives

The Bureau has undertaken a series of major initiatives in recent years to improve its service delivery and management systems. The most important of these are:

General Obligation Bond Initiative (GOBI) -- The Bureau is completing work on a five year, $60 million bond program that has included work on over 114 projects in ninety-nine parks throughout the City. Money was used to build two new community centers, repair and improve pools, rest rooms and playgrounds, as well as dozens of smaller projects such as community garden improvements, new paths, landscaping and irrigation. The projects have been largely completed on time and as planned.

Reorganization -- During the audit the Bureau made an organizational change, creating a Planning and Development Division. The purpose of this Division is to centralize and standardize the planning, design and construction management functions of the Bureau. This change represents the creation of a significant new Division within the Bureau. These positions will be paid for with a mix of grants, interagency agreements, and general fund appropriations.

Comprehensive Organizational Review and Evaluation (CORE) -- This was an overall strategic planning iniative focusing on the Bureau's major programs. The process included a detailed plan for the Recreation Program, and reviews of the Forestry, Natural Resources and Structures maintenance programs.

Chapter 2 Managing for Results: Setting a Course, Measuring Performance

Government agencies are responsible for providing quality services at a reasonable cost, and reporting the results of their efforts to elected officials and the public they serve. To provide accountability, it is essential that government agencies clearly state why they exist and what they are trying to achieve. Moreover, they need to measure and report the degree to which they are able to accomplish the goals and objectives they have established.

Over the past decade, the Bureau of Parks and Recreation has made progress in developing a performance measurement system. The Bureau began reporting performance measures in the City budget in FY 1988-89 and in the City Auditor's annual *Service Efforts and Accomplishments (SEA): 1990-91* report. The Bureau adopted its first strategic plan in 1993 and integrated its performance measures with the mission and goals established in its 1995 strategic plan.

Our review of the Bureau's performance measurement system indicates, however, that additional work is needed to ensure the Bureau's performance information is useful and reliable for decision-making and public accountability. While the Bureau's performance measures are tied to a relatively strong foundation of mission and goal statements,

the Bureau has had difficulty establishing objectives and performance indicators that provide a simple, practical and reliable method for monitoring and reporting on performance.

In order to improve measurement practices the Bureau needs:

■ clear program objectives that flow directly from the Bureau's mission and goals and that provide a sound basis for performance measures,

■ a more complete but simplified set of performance measures that are clearly linked to the major objectives and goals of the Bureau,

■ more timely and reliable data on the activities and results of major programs, and

■ more acceptance and use of performance information by management and staff for decision making.

In this chapter, we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Bureau's performance measurement system, and make several recommendations for needed improvements. In addition, we have proposed a list of core performance measures to assist the Bureau in its efforts to improve and simplify its performance measurement process.

What is performance measurement?

Because government lacks the barometer of profit-and-loss to gauge success, government agencies have developed another tool for assessing their performance — performance measurement. Performance measurement is government's

way of determining if it is providing a quality product at a reasonable cost. It gives an accounting of performance to legislative officials and the public, and provides managers with information to set policies, develop budgets, and adjust organizational efforts.

As shown in Figure 2, performance measurement is part of a larger management process. Performance measures are derived from an agency's mission, goals, and objectives, and should provide a reliable indicator of the progress toward achieving desired results.

Figure 2   Performance Measurement in the Government Management Cycle
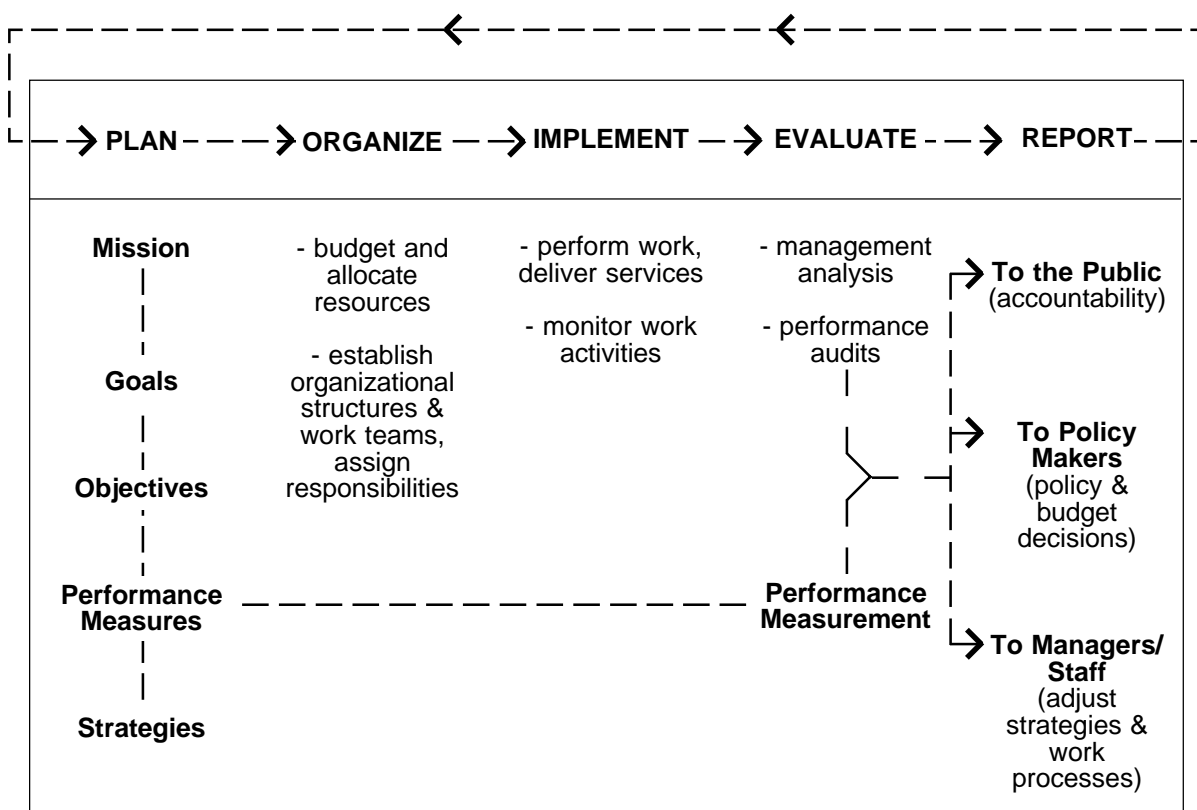
Source: City Auditor's Office

After an agency has completed its planning, allocated and organized resources, and performed work, data on actual work activities and results are gathered to see how well the agency has achieved its goals and objectives. Results are then reported to agency management, policy makers, and the public for evaluation and decision-making.

From our review of professional literature, we have prepared a list of commonly used performance measurement terms (see Table 2).

Methodology Using criteria we identified in professional literature, we evaluated key elements of the Bureau's performance measurement system, including the mission, goals, objectives, and performance measures adopted by the Bureau. Specifically, we determined if the Bureau's performance measures were:

- based on goals and objectives that are tied to its mission, or purpose,

- measuring both the efficiency and effectiveness of services,

- based on what is most useful, relevant, and valid to the Bureau,

- complete but limited in number and complexity,

- supported by data that is accurate, reliable, and timely,

- developed by both managers and line employees, to promote employee buy-in and use, and

- reported both internally and publicly, and used both for decision-making and accountability.

Table 2   Terms and Definitions in Performance Measurement

Term	Definition	Sample
Mission	an agency's purpose; the reason for its existence	*we are dedicated to ensuring that citizens have access to leisure opportunities and to enhancing the natural beauty of the city*
Goal	a general ends toward which an agency directs its efforts	*make recreation programs available to the youth and elderly*
Objective	a measurable target for specific action; it marks an interim step toward achieving an agency's mission and goals	*at least 50% of the City's youth will participate in City recreation programs*
Strategy	a detailed action step intended to help accomplish an agency objective	*distribute recreation program brochures to all public schools in the City*
Performance Measure	a quantifiable expression of the amount, cost, or result of activities that indicate how well services are provided	*see below*
Effectiveness Measure	a type of performance measure that is used to assess how well an agency has achieved its public purpose or an intended outcome	*% of the City's youth that participate in City recreation programs*
Efficiency Measure	a type of performance measure that is used to assess an agency's cost of providing services; often expressed as cost per unit of service	*the cost per hour of youth participation in City recreation programs*
Workload Measure	a type of performance measure that is used to assess the amount of work performed or the amount of services rendered	*the number of youth served by the City's recreation programs*

SOURCE: City Auditor review of professional literature and City documents.
See list of reference documents at the end of this chapter.

We interviewed personnel with oversight responsibility for strategic planning and performance measurement. We also interviewed various personnel throughout the Bureau to determine the extent to which performance measurement is communicated to and used by Bureau managers and staff.

We also conducted detailed analysis in several key areas, including park grounds maintenance, facility maintenance, and recreation program participation, to help the Bureau develop new or improved performance measures. In addition, in conjunction with other issues studied in this audit, we conducted a survey of six other cities and obtained information on their performance measurement practices. We reviewed professional literature to increase our understanding of the fundamentals of performance measurement and to identify criteria for judging the quality of the Bureau's performance measurement practices (see list of reference documents at the end of this chapter).

Bureau has developed a clear mission and relevant goals

An agency's mission statement is the foundation for performance measurement. A mission statement should succinctly identify the unique purpose of the agency and what the agency does and for whom. A mission statement should be developed with significant input from all levels of the organization and the public, and be in harmony with legislative intent. If a mission statement is well-crafted, it will seldom change.

Agency goals should be in harmony with the mission statement, address the top priorities of the organization,

and be derived from an assessment of internal and external factors. Goals should provide a clear direction to managers, be unrestricted by time, and be relatively few in number. Goals should provide a firm foundation for quantifiable, time-based objectives to follow.

Based on our review, we believe the Bureau's mission and goals contained in Table 3 meet the criteria discussed above. In 1993, the Bureau followed an intensive process in developing and adopting its mission, goals, and objectives. The process incorporated broad employee involvement and

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Table 3
Bureau Mission and Goals

MISSION STATEMENT

Portland Parks & Recreation is dedicated to ensuring access to leisure opportunities and enhancing Portland's natural beauty. In pursuing this mission, Portland Parks & Recreation has three interrelated responsibilities, as follows:

- To establish and protect parks, natural areas, and the urban forest.

- To develop and maintain places where citizens can pursue recreational activities on their own initiative.

- To organize recreational activities that promote positive values in the community.

GOALS

(Stewardship) Preserve and enhance our parks legacy and promote an appreciation of the natural environment.

(Community) Continually improve the availability and effectiveness of recreation services and Park programs that benefit the community.

(Employee) Create a safe, productive, and rewarding work place which emphasizes effective communication and recognizes innovation and achievement.

SOURCE: Bureau of Parks and Recreation 1997 Strategic Plan and FY 1998-99 Adopted Budget.

input from users of Bureau services. In addition, the Bureau identified a set of related performance measures, which were termed "performance goals" in the 1995 and 1997 updates of the Bureau's strategic plan. (See Appendix B for a full listing of the Bureau's mission, goals, and performance measures.)

We note that the Bureau's "employee" goal does not tie to any purpose or responsibility identified in the mission statement. While it is an appropriate goal for any organization, it should either be reflected in the mission statement, or be given a lower level of importance for measurement and reporting.

Lack of clear, consistent objectives

Program objectives should tie directly to the major goals of the organization. Statements of objectives should be time-based, quantifiable, realistic and achievable. When an objective is achieved, it should clearly indicate progress toward one of the agency's stated goals.

Over the past several years, the Bureau has produced several documents that contain a number of statements that could be described as objectives. The Bureau has given these statements a variety of terms including "objectives," "strategic efforts," "areas of improvement," "strategic issues," and "outcomes." These statements do not provide a clear basis to measure performance because they (1) are not always linked to one of the Bureau's three stated goals: Stewardship, Community and Employees, (2) change from document to document, and (3) are too numerous to track effectively.

For example, the Bureau's FY1999-00 budget contains seven "objectives" and 57 actions that lack a clear connection to one of the Bureau's three goals. Consequently, it is difficult to determine if any of the actions contribute to some desired result, or if the Bureau is better off in some way by completing the action steps.

We believe that the Bureau's performance measurement difficulties, discussed below, stem in large part from the inability to develop clear and consistent objectives against which to measure progress.

Weaknesses in performance measures

Over the past several years the Bureau has worked hard to develop a set of performance measures that provide accurate and useful information to the public, Council, and management. We found that the measures generally reflect the goals established in the Bureau's strategic plan. However, we believe the measures have a number of weaknesses that limit the value of the information for accountability and decision making purposes. The primary weaknesses are inconsistency, incomplete or redundant measures, and unreliable and untimely data. The sections that follow briefly discuss these weaknesses.

Inconsistent measures

The Bureau has had difficulty establishing a constant set of performance measures. Both the number and type of measures have varied significantly over the years, and a core set of essential, enduring measures has proven elusive. For example, in addition to the 23 "performance goals" listed in its strategic plan, the Bureau reports an-

other 21 "performance measures" in the City budget, and another 24 "performance indicators" in the City Auditor's annual *SEA* report. Out of 68 measures contained in these three documents, only six are presented in all three documents. As a result, it is difficult to know which measures, or which list of measures, are most important or deserve the most attention by management and staff responsible for monitoring and tracking measures, collecting data, and reporting.

Redundant or incomplete measures

While the Bureau has developed too many measures to track some of its goals, other important goals are not measured at all. As shown in Table 4, while the Bureau has developed five measures to monitor employee safety and nine measures to track the availability of recreation services, employee productivity and communication is not measured at all. Similarly, the Bureau lacks specific measures that would illustrate the degree to which Parks programs are "enhancing Portland's natural beauty" or "promoting our appreciation for the natural environment." In addition, the Bureau has not developed measures to track progress on several of the seven objectives presented in the Bureau's FY1999-00 budget. For example, there are no measures to assess progress in addressing the needs of senior and disabled individuals, or in building community partnerships.

Finally, the Bureau has not established sufficient measures to evaluate the efficiency of services. Although the Bureau developed measures to track resources received from volunteer work and non-tax contributions, the Bureau

Table 4   **How Well Bureau Performance Measures Address the Bureau's Mission and Goals**

Statement in mission or goal *	Measures that address statement*
"ensuring access to leisure opportunities"	#13, #14
"enhancing Portland's natural beauty"	none
"establish and protect parks, natural areas, the urban forest"	#1, #2, #3, #13
"develop and maintain places where citizens can pursue recreational activities on their own initiative"	#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #13, #14, #18
"organize recreational activities that promote positive values in the community"	#10
"preserve and enhance our parks legacy"	#1, #2, #3
"promote an appreciation of the natural environment"	none
"improve the availability and effectiveness of recreation services and park programs that benefit the community"	#7, #8, #9, #10, #11 #12, #15
"create a safe working place"	#19, #20, #21, #22
"create a productive working place"	none
"create a rewarding working place"	#23
"create a working place that emphasizes effective communication"	none
"create a working place that recognizes innovation and achievement"	none
Measures that do not address any statement	#16

* see Appendix B.

SOURCE: City Auditor analysis of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation's 1997 Strategic Plan.

lacks measures that track the cost per unit of work in its park maintenance operations and in its recreation programs. The Bureau needs to develop good efficiency measures to help monitor the cost of services.

Unreliable, untimely data

Many of the Bureau's performance measures lack reliable, timely sources of data for measuring results. Fifteen of the Bureau's 23 measures listed in Appendix B do not have reliable data sources. For example, the Bureau does not generate accurate information on the condition of its park grounds or on the condition of physical assets (see measures #1, #3, and #4 in Appendix B). Park condition ratings reported in the current budget are based on assessments performed in 1993. The Bureau also lacks reliable information on major building maintenance spending and work-order turnaround time. It is important to have reliable, timely information on asset condition because the Bureau made parks and facilities maintenance its first priority.

Over the past several years the Bureau has also been unable to produce valid, consistent data documenting the number of people participating in recreation programs. Although attendance is primarily a workload measure, it helps indicate whether Bureau programs are available, accessible, and used by Portland citizens. Attendance counts or participant hours can also be used to develop efficiency indicators such as "cost per participant hour."

We reported in our 1991 audit of the Bureau (Report #152: *Opportunities to Enhance Services through Improved Management*) that the Bureau lacked systems for monitor-

ing performance to ensure goals and objectives are met. This problem has continued as we have worked each year with the Bureau on the SEA report. Although the Bureau has worked to develop better methods for collecting data, it continues to lack reliable information to report the results of its work efforts.

Communication and use of performance measures

Our interviews with Bureau managers and staff indicate that top management has not advocated the use, value, and importance of performance measurement. Moreover, measures have generally been developed by a few managers with too little input from line managers and staff. While the Bureau's top managers understand they must report performance results externally, performance measures are not considered a valuable management tool and they are not routinely communicated to line managers and staff.

The National Performance Review's "Summary of Best Practices in Performance Measurement" states:

> "In many of the organizations we studied, leadership commitment to the development and use of performance measures was a critical element in the success of the performance measurement system . . . Communication is crucial for establishing a performance measurement system. It should be multidirectional, running top-down, bottom-up, and horizontally within and across the organization . . . Employee involvement is one of the best ways to create a positive culture that thrives on performance measurement. When

employees have input into all phases of creating a performance measurement system, buy-in is established as part of the process." (pages 11-12)

We believe the lack of leadership by top management and involvement by line managers and staff has contributed to the adoption of measures that are incomplete, not useful, and unreliable. In addition, by not regularly communicating the results of performance measurement internally, line managers and staff do not receive useful information that could help them assess and adjust their work activities.

Performance measurement in other cities

Our survey of six other cities revealed significant variation in their performance measurement practices. We found great variety in the measures used, how they tie to goals and objectives, and the methods of reporting. The following constitutes a brief review and comparison of some of the measures and techniques which were reported to us by other cities. Table 5 is a partial listing of the measures adopted by those parks departments.

Austin

Departmental data are collected and reported internally to the Director and department managers, then reported formally in the annual City budget. The Parks Department has a list of key indicators which covers primary programs (see Table 5). In general, programs support specific department goals. In many instances, programs have additional indicators which are tracked to give more detail. For instance, the Community Services Program focuses on youth

participation, and tracks youth participation, number of supervised youth activities, percent of youth who report making positive life choices, and the percent of free programs offered. Our review, however, indicates that like our Bureau, it is difficult to directly tie performance measures to stated goals and to be assured there is a proper mix of indicator types. Through their performance audits and special reports, the City of Austin's Auditor's Office has advocated and trained City staff in the development and use of performance measures for several years.

Kansas City

Performance measures are reported publicly in Kansas City in the annual City budget. The system of measures was developed during a strategic planning process, with input from upper level management employees. Each budgetary program, or subprogram, has a goal. Each program also has a set of objectives and a set of performance measures. For example, the Community Center program has a goal of providing public facilities and opportunities for social, cultural, educational, recreational and leisure activities. Their objectives are to operate community centers, provide a wide range of activities, provide summer activities for children close to their homes, etc. Performance measures, however, are largely workload, such as the number of educational classes and number of marketing efforts.

Indianapolis

In Indianapolis, parks data are collected monthly by an employee in the Mayor's Office. The measures are primarily workload in nature, and are not reported or monitored in the annual budget.

Table 5 Performance Measures in Six Other Cities: 1999 Survey of Parks and Recreation Departments

City of Austin, Texas

Public perception of park safety
Number of supervised youth activities
Number of participating youth
Gross operating and maintenance per capita
Net operating and maintenance per capita
Customer satisfaction with facilities per capita
Parkland acres per 1,000 population*
FTEs per acres
% of free programs offered
% of youth who report making positive life choices

> *   Austin reports there is a National Recreation and Parks Association standard of 10 acres/1,000

City of Kansas City, Missouri

Note: Performance measurement system was recently developed during a strategic business planning process.

Music in the Parks performances/attendances
Cultural center visitors
Number of artifacts acquired
Shakespeare Festival performances/attendance
Interpretation of collections - volunteer hours
Visitors to the zoo
Total specimens
Educational programs
Number of cross-marketing activities

City of Phoenix, Arizona

Note: Monthly performance data reported in the City Manager's report.

Acres of developed parks per 1,000 population
Customer satisfaction with service
Number of parks users
Park safety - number of citations
Cost of maintenance per acre
Cost of maintenance per hour
Total operating cost per capita
Personnel per 1,000 population
Cost per recreation participant

City of Seattle, Washington

Note: Goals, Actions, Results, and Measures (GARMS) in its first year. Data will be collected and reported twice a year.

Increased attendance at key programs during out of school hours
Total new community center hours available
Citizen ratings of parks maintenance
Total available park acreage
Total number of trees planted

City of Virginia Beach, Virginia

Note: Performance indicators included in Quarterly Budget report.

RECREATION PROGRAMS:
  Fees per capita
  Cost per capita
  General Fund contribution / Expenditures
PARKS:
  % of patrons satisfied
  Avg. days to process special event applications
GOLF COURSES:
  % of customers satisfied
  Maintenance cost per round played
TENNIS:
  % change in youth and adult tennis classes
  Number of youth and adult participants
RECREATION CENTERS:
  Number of directed participants increased
  % change in directed participants
  Amount of revenue increased
  % increase of projected revenue vs. prior year

City of Indianapolis, Indiana

Note: Performance measurement data is collected by an employee of the Mayor's office.

FORESTRY:
  Number of emergency calls
  Number of park trees removed
  Cost per inch to remove trees
LAND DEVELOPMENT:
  Number of shelters built
  Number of playgrounds installed
  Linear feet of walking trails installed
GROUND MAINTENANCE:
  Number of mowing cycles
  Trash cycles
  Shelter cleaned and maintained
FACILITIES MAINTENANCE:
  Number of pools opened on time
  Work orders completed within 48 hours
  Work orders received
  Preventative maintenance cycles completed

SOURCE: City Auditor's survey of other cities.

Phoenix

The Parks, Recreation and Library Department of Phoenix reports key workload and efficiency measures in the City budget. Measures are primarily reported and used as an internal management tool. In addition, an annual performance report contains ten years of data with breakouts for input (spending and staffing), output (workload), outcomes (results), and efficiency. There seems to a good balance of types of indicators, but there is no direct tie to the agency's mission, goals and objectives.

Seattle

In Seattle, goals are developed cooperatively between the parks department staff and the City budget office. Data are collected and reported twice a year to the budget office and City Council. Some of the goals are action items and projects which specifically support City-wide priorities and/or the department's priorities. Others are broader and far-reaching, such as "More park space", and "Cleaner parks and facilities." Each goal describes who is responsible for working on it, what the final outcome should be, and most have performance measures to identify progress toward the goal. Although performance measures tie directly to goals, the goals are really a mixture of broad goals and individual projects or tasks, with no clear tie to the agency's mission.

Virginia Beach

The City of Virginia Beach, Virginia, is accredited by the National Recreation and Park Association. They have developed a set of policies concerning the performance measurement system which explain the interrelationship of the agency's goals and objectives with the City's overall strategic direction. Status reports are submitted quarterly

to the City Manager. Proposed goals and objectives are placed in a matrix to assure alignment with the six business strategies of the City. Each parks program has a description of services, which in some cases is a statement of broad goals. Each has one or more objectives stated in positive terms, such as "increase tennis participation by 5 percent". Each objective then has an output, quality, and efficiency measure with several years of data to indicate trends. Some of the measures are reported publicly in the budget.

Conclusion from survey of cities

Although there is not a common approach to performance measurement in the cities surveyed, performance reporting appears to be driven by agency mission and goals. However, like Portland, it is difficult to see the direct tie between performance measures and the goals and objectives of the various park agencies. We also found great variety in the use of terms like goal, objective, and performance. In addition, most of the cities had more and better indicators of efficiency than Portland's Bureau of Parks and Recreation, but fewer measures of effectiveness and outcome.

Overall, we believe the performance measures adopted by the Bureau of Parks and Recreation, and reported in the City Budget and annual *SEA* report, compare favorably to those in the cities we surveyed.

Recommendations   The Bureau needs to take several steps to strengthen its performance measurement system and improve the quality and usefulness of its performance measures. Specifically, we recommend the Bureau:

1. ***Develop a clear and cohesive framework for performance measurement.***

   The performance measurement framework should clearly define the following elements:

   ■ the purpose of the performance measurement system and how performance information will be used to manage the organization and provide accountability,

   ■ the relationships and connections between the Bureau's mission, goals, objectives, and performance measures,

   ■ the link between organizational units, their goals and objectives, and associated performance measures,

   ■ management and employee responsibilities for developing relevant measures, establishing timely data collection methods, and reporting reliable performance information, and

   ■ the frequency and nature of periodic reporting of performance information for operational management and decisions, and for public accountability.

2. ***Simplify the measurement process by selecting a limited set of the best, most useful performance measures that address the Bureau's highest priorities.***

The Bureau needs to develop a good number and mix of performance measures that can be administered efficiently and provide reliable information. The Bureau should consider first developing a set of measures for annual public accountability reporting, and then later expanding the number and type of measures for individual programs and activities. The Bureau should focus on a few essential measures that address its most important goals and objectives, and give priority to effectiveness and efficiency measures. To help the Bureau begin developing a core set of measures, we offer a list of proposed measures in Table 6 and Figure 3. Table 6 shows the source and adequacy of measurement data for each measure while Figure 3 provides an illustration of how these core measures relate to the Bureau's mission and goals.

3. ***Improve the reliability and accuracy of data used to measure performance.***

Each performance measure needs a consistent reliable data source. Some measures, such as the citizen satisfaction indicators, already are derived from a good data source. However, other measures, such as the parks and facility condition ratings, need improvement and development. Bureau management and staff should work closely together to define the method, frequency, and reliability of data collection. Staff from

the Audit Services Division can provide technical assistance and advise on data system and collection methods.

We also recommend the Bureau conduct an annual employee survey to obtain information on employee perception of workplace safety, internal communication, and employee productivity and achievement. To minimize costs, the survey could be processed electronically for many Bureau employees.

4. *Communicate and use performance measurement for both decision making and accountability reporting.*

Top management should communicate their commitment to the value and use of performance information to all Bureau staff. Management should involve line managers and staff in the development and reporting of performance measures, so that measures are meaningful and useful to all. The Bureau also needs to communicate performance results internally as well as externally, so that the organization can better understand its efficiency and effectiveness, and make necessary adjustments in their work processes.

Table 6   Proposed Core Performance Measures for the Bureau of Parks and Recreation

	Reliable data is available	Data must be improved or developed	Recommended source of data
GOAL #1: STEWARDSHIP			
Percent of citizens who feel that park grounds maintenance is good	✔		SEA Citizen Survey
Percent of citizens who feel facility maintenance is good	✔		SEA Citizen Survey
Percent of citizens who feel the overall quality of parks is good	✔		SEA Citizen Survey
Park grounds condition rating		✔	Annual assessment by Operations Division
Facility condition index rating *(see chapter 3)*		✔	Annual assessment by Operations Divisiion
Maintenance expenditures per acre of developed parks		✔	Park inventory & accounting records
GOAL #2: COMMUNITY			
Percent of citizens who are satisfied with the availability of recreation programs	✔		SEA Citizen Survey
Percent of youth who participate in City recreation programs	✔		SEA Citizen Survey
Percent of users who feel the overall quality of recreation programs is good		✔	Annual user survey
Percent of citizens near a park		✔	Periodic research
Percent of citizens near a community center		✔	Periodic research
Expenditures per hour of recreation participation		✔	Participation reports & accounting records
GOAL #3: EMPLOYEE			
Number of workers' compensation claims per 200,000 hours worked	✔		Claim statistics from Risk Management
Percent of employees who feel the Bureau provides a positive safety climate		✔	Annual employee survey
Percent of employees who feel the Bureau's climate fosters productivity and achievement		✔	Annual employee survey
Percent of employees who feel there is good communication at all levels of the Bureau		✔	Annual employee survey
Percent of employees who are satisfied with their job		✔	Annual employee survey

Source: Audit Services Division research.

Figure 3   Relationship of proposed performance measures to Bureau's existing mission and goals

MISSION:
Portland Parks & Recreation is dedicated to
ENHANCING PORTLAND'S NATURAL BEAUTY and ENSURING ACCESS TO LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

GOAL: Stewardship
PRESERVE and
    ENHANCE our parks legacy and
        PROMOTE AN APPRECIATION
            of the natural environment

Percent of citizens who feel the
overall quality of parks is good

Facility condition index rating

Parks grounds condition rating

Percent of citizens who feel
facilities maintenance is good

Percent of citizens who feel
that park grounds maintenance
is good
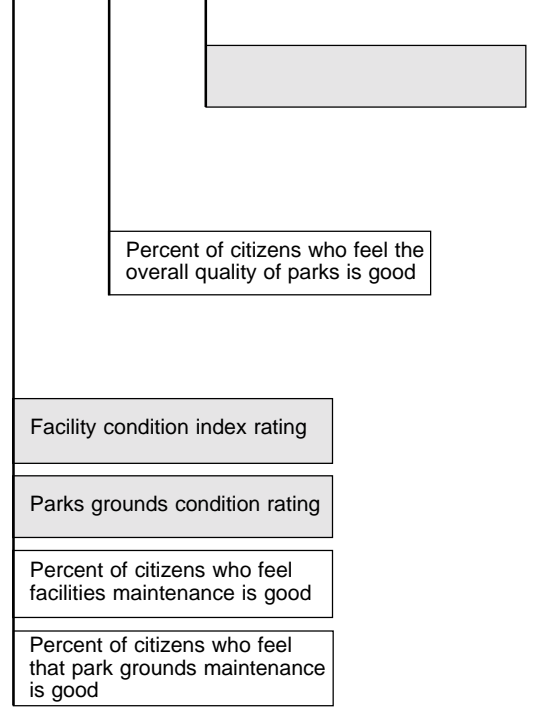
GOAL: Community
Continually improve the
 AVAILABILITY and
    EFFECTIVENESS of recreation services
                        and parks programs that
                        benefit the community

Percent of users who feel the
overall quality of recreation
programs is good

Percent of youth who participate
in City recreation programs

Percent of citizens who live
near a park

Percent of citizens who live
near a community center

Percent of citizens who are
satisfied with the availability of
recreation programs

GOAL: Employee
Create a
SAFE, PRODUCTIVE and
                    REWARDING work place

Percent of employees who are
satisfied with their job

Percent of employees who feel
that communication is good at
all levels of the Bureau

Percent of employees who feel
the Bureau's climate fosters
productivity and achievement

Percent of employees who feel
the Bureau provides a positive
safety climate

No. of worker's compensation
claims per 200,000 hrs. worked

EFFICIENCY MEASURES:

Maintenance expenditures
per acre of developed park

Expenditures per hour of
recreation participation

Note: Shaded boxes are measures which need to be developed or improved upon by the Bureau.

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Chapter 3   Stewardship:
Maintaining Park Buildings

Background   The Bureau of Portland Parks and Recreation is responsible for maintaining over 200 buildings. These buildings include a diverse range of structures, from large, multiple purpose community centers, to park restrooms and service buildings. Park buildings have been acquired through the investment of tax dollars over the years and they are critical to the Bureau's mission which is "to ensure access to leisure opportunities and enhance Portland's natural beauty."

Maintaining park buildings is particularly challenging because many of the Bureau's buildings are 30 to 50 years old, or older, and some were built for other purposes. While all buildings require maintenance, the effect of neglected or deferred maintenance becomes more apparent as facilities age.

The Bureau has recognized the importance of building maintenance in a number of ways. For example, it commits significant resources to provide daily maintenance and repair of park buildings. We believe the Bureau has a dedicated maintenance staff made up of individuals who are qualified and experienced in appropriate trades. Yet, for reasons that we discuss in this chapter, the Bureau has had a difficult time adequately maintaining park buildings.

Methodology   We reviewed the Bureau's building maintenance methods to determine if they ensure that buildings are maintained in good condition. To provide a context for understanding the Bureau's building maintenance program, we researched effective maintenance management practices as described in professional literature. To gain an understanding of the Bureau's maintenance procedures, we interviewed key managers and staff, and we visited selected sites to observe conditions first hand. We obtained and reviewed financial records pertaining to the maintenance of Bureau buildings, and we contacted officials in other jurisdictions to obtain comparable information about their programs. We also reviewed existing inventory systems and prior studies of park building conditions.

Building preservation requires effective procedures and enough resources

Professional literature suggests a need for structured maintenance management systems to ensure that buildings are properly maintained and taxpayers' investments are safeguarded. Building maintenance needs that do not receive adequate attention can result in the following consequences:

■ poor quality buildings,

■ reduced public safety,

■ higher subsequent repair costs, and

■ poor service to the public.

The National Research Council believes that the safeguarding of buildings should include a commitment to provide the maintenance needed to prevent deterioration and to ensure the continued use of buildings. In 1990, the

National Research Council's Building Research Board prepared a report titled "Committing to the Cost of Ownership, Maintenance and Repair of Public Buildings." This widely distributed report cited credible analyses indicating systematic neglect of public buildings at all levels of government. According to this report, the factors contributing to neglect include:

- difficulties in assessing building condition,

- use of short-lived, inferior materials and equipment, and

- failure to allocate adequate funds for maintenance and repair.

Further, the report suggested that a major element of the building maintenance problem is the difficulty that public agencies face in trying to convince those responsible for public policy that maintenance neglect can lead to losses. The complete summary of the Building Research Board's 1990 report is reproduced in Appendix C.

Many park buildings need repairs due to insufficient maintenance

For many years, Portland's citizens and Parks' staff have been aware of the need for improvements to existing facilities in City parks. In 1986, the Bureau initiated the Park Futures project. The project report was issued in November 1991, and made recommendations for improving specific parks. This report, and subsequent park facility assessments conducted by Bureau staff and outside consultants, identified approximately $100 million of needed capital improvements. Similarly, a Bureau contractor, Barney and Worth, Inc. with architects Barrentine Bates Lee, stated

in a 1992 report that, "the Bureau's existing facilities are in extremely poor condition."

A $60 million bond measure approved by voters in 1994 helped the Bureau address its capital deficiencies by providing money for new construction and maintenance. However, despite completing nearly all of the projects planned for this money, a large unmet maintenance need remains.

During our visits to Bureau facilities, we observed general deterioration in many buildings caused by age, weather, and insufficient or deferred maintenance. In some buildings, we observed serious problems. For example, at the Multnomah Arts Center a leaking roof has resulted in damaged ceilings, walls, and flooring in areas of the building. Other visible problems that we observed at this facility included sections of badly weathered siding and peeling paint on the exterior, deteriorated masonry, and windows that did not seal properly. At the University Park Community Center, exterior siding is chipped, rotted, and in need of paint. Maintenance personnel report other serious problems with this building, including electrical, plumbing, and structural deficiencies.

Even some newer buildings have maintenance problems. Maintenance staff showed us an exterior wall at the East Community Center that was not sealed during construction and now leaks. This facility also has a roof-top heating and cooling unit that has leaked since it was new. Altogether we visited a sample of twelve Park buildings, all of which had some degree of unresolved maintenance needs.

In fact, Bureau maintenance managers and staff readily acknowledged insufficient building maintenance which they attributed to an increasing workload and too few resources. In September 1999, the Bureau's building maintenance section faced a backlog of 250 work orders. This long list does not reflect the full extent of maintenance and repair needs because it does not include maintenance requests for all park buildings, such as the Bureau's 110 restrooms. Other deficiencies have not been added to the work order list because staff believed it is futile to add new orders when there is already such a large backlog.

Structured maintenance management systems are needed

While the shortage of resources is a problem, the Bureau also does not have adequate information to properly administer its building maintenance activities. For example, accurate counts of basic items such as the number and age of buildings, and expenditures on building maintenance and repair, were not readily available.

Complete and accurate information on the physical condition of Bureau buildings was also lacking. While staff were in general agreement that a backlog of maintenance and repair work exists, the Bureau has not clearly identified the full extent of this problem or the cost to resolve it. Without an explicit, well-organized knowledge of facility conditions, it is impossible for the Bureau to plan, fund, and execute a meaningful building management strategy.

The National Research Council recommends that formalized condition surveys be used to improve the

effectiveness of maintenance and repair activity. Currently, the Bureau does not have a formal condition assessment process. The Council recommends building condition inspections be conducted to determine the specific repair and maintenance requirements of the structural, mechanical, and electrical components of each building. The inspections should identify the physical deficiencies of buildings and result in a quantified description and cost estimate for each deficiency. Such condition assessment information can be used to:

- provide the basis for evaluating deferred maintenance and funding requirements,

- plan a deferred maintenance reduction program,

- compare conditions between buildings and with other institutions,

- establish a building condition baseline for setting goals and tracking progress,

- develop cost estimates and priorities for major repair and replacement projects,

- improve communication of building conditions,

- provide accurate and supportable information for budget planning and justification,

- facilitate the establishment of funding priorities, and

- develop budget and funding analyses and strategies.

The "facility condition index" is a simple measure of deterioration

A simple measure of the relative condition of a single building or a group of buildings is described in a publication titled "Managing the Facilities Portfolio," written by Sean C. Rush of Coopers and Lybrand (National Association of College and University Business Officers, 1991). This measure is called a "facility condition index." The facility condition index is the ratio of the cost of deficiencies to the current replacement value. For example, a building with a current replacement value of $1 million and total deficiencies of $10,000, has a condition index of .01. A building with a current replacement value of $100,000 and total deficiencies of $10,000, has a condition index of .10. The building with an index of .10 is in considerably worse condition than the building with an index of .01, since 10 percent of its value has deteriorated compared to only 1 percent of the other building.

The facility condition index provides a valid indication of the relative condition of a single building or group of buildings, and it enables comparison of conditions among buildings or groups of buildings. Authors of the index suggest the following ranges for ranking building conditions:

Table 7   Suggested Condition Ratings

FCI range	Condition rating
Under .05	Good
.05 - .10	Fair
Over .10	Poor

Source: From "Managing the Facilities Portfolio," by Sean C. Rush, Coopers and Lybrand.

The facility condition index does not take into account the differences in priorities between individual deficiencies. For example, a building with an index of .01 but with a severe roof leak may be given a higher priority than a facility that has an index of .10 but has less urgent repair needs. We believe the facility condition index could help the Bureau measure and track building deterioration over time.

Generally accepted maintenance guidelines suggest minimum funding levels

The National Research Council and other industry experts recommend that between 2 and 4 percent of facilities' current replacement value be allocated annually for maintenance. These experts also suggest that reducing a substantial deferred maintenance backlog may entail budgeting much more than 4 percent of current replacement value for as many years as are necessary.

Although comprehensive maintenance expenditure data was not available for all Bureau buildings, we estimate the Bureau spent only 1.1 percent of current replacement value for 55 major park buildings during FY1998-99. For the Bureau to achieve the suggested 2 to 4 percent level of funding for these buildings, it would need to increase maintenance spending by $1.2 million to $3.9 million annually. Our estimate provides one indication that maintenance funding levels have not been commensurate with generally accepted practices.

The City of Portland has adopted a Comprehensive Financial Management Policy that recognizes the importance of building maintenance. According to this policy, "assets will be maintained at a level that protects capital investment and minimizes future maintenance and replace-

ment costs." Moreover, this policy states that "maintenance and operations of capital facilities should be given priority over acquisition of new facilities, unless a cost/benefit analysis indicates to the contrary." The Bureau's strategic plan for FY1998-99 also calls for protecting infrastructure by giving "first priority to maintaining our parks, facilities, and the urban forest so as to protect their long-term health, safety, and attractiveness to the community." While the tradeoff between acquiring new park facilities and building maintenance involves difficult choices, the City's financial policy and the Bureau's strategic plan provide clear direction to managers responsible for allocating scarce capital improvement dollars.

Critical management information is not currently available

As we developed our estimate of the Bureau's building maintenance spending compared to recommended guidelines, we noted serious data limitations that the Bureau will need to resolve if it is to effectively care for its buildings. For example, contrary to requirements of the City's comprehensive financial management policy, the Bureau does not have a reliable inventory of its buildings. We could not locate comprehensive and verifiable records showing basic information on the Bureau's buildings. The Bureau needs to develop a building inventory that provides, at a minimum:

- building number / name,

- gross square footage,

- date of construction,

- estimated lifespan, and

- historical / acquisition cost.

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To justify its maintenance and repair budget the Bureau also needs to determine building replacement values. As noted previously, experts recommend that, in the absence of other information, maintenance and repair budgets for buildings be set at between 2 and 4 percent of the aggregate current replacement value of the buildings. In order to apply this guideline, the Bureau must first determine the current replacement value of its buildings. One way to do this is to determine current unit construction cost (e.g., dollars per square feet) for various types of buildings in the Bureau's inventory, multiplied by the total number of units (e.g., square feet). Another method uses original building cost multiplied by an escalation factor to estimate a building's value in current dollars.

The National Research Council's maintenance budget guideline involves appropriately categorizing items to be included as maintenance or repairs. While this may seem straightforward, the Bureau will have to budget and account for maintenance and repair activities separately from building alterations and improvements. Otherwise, maintenance and repair activities could be underfunded. Alterations and improvements, such as adjusting interior partitions or adding building features, are intended to improve the effectiveness of building operations. On the other hand, maintenance is work done to prevent breakdowns, while repairs are performed to restore damaged or worn-out property to normal operating conditions. Bureau accounting staff told us accounting system changes necessary to make this distinction would not be difficult.

Elements of an effective asset management program are already in place

Our review showed the Bureau has some of the essential elements of a strong building maintenance management system already in place. Bureau managers have expressed a commitment to building maintenance, the Bureau has a core group of qualified maintenance personnel, significant funds are dedicated to building maintenance, and much information about the Bureau's building inventory and the condition of buildings already exists in a variety places.

Notwithstanding, we believe the Bureau has opportunities to build on its existing asset management program to make it work even better. Our review suggests that the Bureau has not achieved a stable condition for its buildings. Our research indicates that many governmental organizations face similar difficulties in their efforts to preserve building value over the long term. Effective maintenance is difficult to demonstrate, because early signs of neglect are often subtle and escape the notice of those unprepared by training or experience to recognize them. Turning this situation around will require forward thinking, determination, and concerted effort from many levels within the Bureau, and citywide. Some reallocation of resources may be necessary, but nevertheless, we believe the long-term benefits will more than pay for any immediate costs. While developing a structured maintenance management system is a substantial effort, we believe it is necessary to ensure that Bureau buildings are properly maintained.

Recommendations We recommend that the Bureau of Portland Parks and Recreation strengthen its systems for maintaining its buildings by taking the following actions:

1. *Complete and keep current a building inventory that accurately lists all park buildings and key features.*

    At a minimum, the facility inventory should provide building number/name, gross square footage, date of construction, historical/acquisition cost, and original expected lifespan. The information in the inventory should be used to compute building current replacement values.

2. *Conduct annual or periodic condition assessment surveys to determine building maintenance and repair requirements.*

    Condition assessments should focus on facilities that are critical to the Bureau's mission; life, health, and safety issues; and building systems that are critical to a facility's performance. Building condition inspections should be performed routinely, based on a developed schedule. Specific deferred maintenance items and the approximate cost to resolve them should be identified and tracked over time using a tool such as the "facility condition index."

3. *Adopt standardized budgeting and cost accounting techniques and processes to facilitate tracking of building maintenance and repair funding requests, allocations, and expenditures.*

4. *Allocate funds to building maintenance in accordance with the annual 2 to 4 percent of replacement value recommendation by the National Research Council, or at a minimum to demonstrate that sufficient funds are allocated to maintain Park buildings in a stable condition.*

5. *Establish performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the building maintenance program, as discussed in Chapter 2.*

Chapter 4 Internal Communication: Listening and Conveying Information

Effective internal communication is a critical component of good management. Good communication helps organizations achieve goals, operate efficiently, and improve morale. Our assessment of communications in the Bureau revealed a number of strengths, including a willingness to adopt new technologies and employ a wide range of strategies for communication improvement. Recent efforts have also helped reduce communication barriers between some operating units. We found that methods and techniques used by the Bureau are consistent with many good practices identified in the literature and used by other city parks systems we contacted.

However, we also found a number of opportunities for improvement. Our discussions with 51 parks employees and review of attitude surveys returned by 103 employees showed that many employees feel unheard, and some lack information they need to do their jobs effectively. For many employees, poor internal communication is a priority issue facing the Bureau. This weakness has persisted over many years and has proven difficult to correct.

Good communication is often a matter of perception. While employees in any large organization will be dissatisfied to some degree with how management listens to, and

handles complaints and suggestions for improvement, negative perceptions can result in real problems: poor morale, a decline in customer service, and roadblocks to planned organizational improvements.

Methodology

In order to identify the importance of organizational communication and the characteristics of organizations with good internal communication, we researched applicable literature and spoke with several communication specialists. We interviewed 51 employees from various organizational units and levels to obtain their opinions about communication in the Bureau. We followed up these interviews by administering a written survey to an additional 103 employees. We also asked parks agencies in other cities about internal communication methods that work best for them.

In order to test the reasonableness of our preliminary conclusions, we asked the Bureau's Audit Liaison Committee to review our initial findings and to give their opinions as to whether our conclusions seemed appropriate and were in line with their expectations. Finally, to develop our recommendations we met with a group of twenty-three Bureau managers and line employees at a half-day retreat held at Pittock Mansion. The retreat was assisted by a meeting facilitator and the City's Organizantional Development Manager.

Benefits and components of internal communication

An organization is critically dependent on its communication practices for a number of reasons. Effective internal communication improves morale, customer service, organizational problem-solving, and decision-making. It helps

an organization communicate goals and objectives to employees and the public, and to achieve them in an efficient and effective manner.

Modern communication literature and theory generally describes three basic lines of communication in an organizational hierarchy: downward, upward, and horizontal.

Downward communication involves the transmission of messages from upper levels to lower levels of the organization hierarchy. Downward communication is most often used to transmit directives, goals, policies, and announcements. The basic problem with most downward communication is that it is usually a "one-way street", not allowing for feedback from the employees.

Poor downward communication can create an organizational climate of suspicion and mistrust. Such a climate may have far reaching effects on employees and the decision-making process. Downward communication can be improved by managers getting out of offices and into the field, and by listening to upward communication.

Upward communication involves transmission of messages from lower levels of the organization. Upward communication provides a "two-way street" and promotes employee morale. Moreover, adequate upward communication is a prerequisite for employee involvement in decision-making, problem solving, and development of policies and procedures that work effectively. Establishing effective means for upward communication is problematic and may be only a token gesture in some organizations. Employee morale will suffer if solicitation of employee input is a token gesture, endorsed in word, but ignored (or perceived to be ignored) in practice.

Horizontal communication refers to the flow of messages across functional areas throughout the organization. It facilitates problem solving, information sharing, and task coordination between departments or project teams. Problems occur because of territoriality, rivalry, specialization, and lack of motivation. Service delivery and customer service can be impacted when one part of the organization doesn't know what another is doing.

Attributes of an organization with good internal communication

We spoke to several experts in the field of organizational communication and reviewed literature and texts on the subject. While we did not find definitive characteristics of an organization that exhibits good internal communication, we were able to develop some general guidelines which are useful for this analysis. Good communication exists when:

■ employees feel they have a voice in the organization, and feel their opinions are valued,

■ employees are not reprimanded for seeking out information,

■ employees are encouraged to participate through meetings with others,

■ top management completes the communication loop (i.e., when input is solicited, management lets the employees know why they did or didn't take their advice), and

■ information flows upward, unimpeded and unfiltered by middle managers.

Among the practices often mentioned as effective techniques for effective internal communication are e-mail,

cross functional teams, and job sharing. Staff meetings that cross functional and heirarchical lines, and frequent personal communication between top management and workers in the field also help internal communication.

Communication in the Bureau: Strengths and weaknesses

The Bureau has several unique factors which has made effective communication difficult. First, Bureau operations are located throughout the City, at 147 developed parks and about 200 buildings and facilities. It is a challenge to communicate with employees who are located at community centers and schools, pools, golf courses, the Portland Building, and various maintenance facilities throughout the City. In addition, the GOBI capital improvement initiative placed pressure on traditional communication methods as different Divisions struggled to coordinate and complete a large number of projects on time and on budget. Finally, Bureau managers report that an increased use of park facilities in recent years has resulted in a commensurate need to improve the communication of customer needs and maintenance needs among Divisions.

The Bureau has made an effort to improve its internal communication in recent years and has identified this as a primary issue in its strategic plan. As we will show, they employ several generally recognized effective methods of communication, and have shown a willingness to use new technology and methods to improve communication.

We also identified several areas where the Bureau can improve. Specifically, the Bureau needs to improve the way it communicates with, and receives communications from, its line employees. It also needs to improve task

coordination among Divisions, and develop ways for different Divisions to interact and understand each others' work and value to the organization.

Strengths

We found that the Bureau has effectively communicated its mission and goals to employees. As shown in Table 8, employees most often agreed with survey statements related to the goals and objectives of the Bureau (statements 1 and 2). Of the sixteen statements on our survey, employees reacted most favorably to the statement, "We understand how our operations fit into the mission and objectives of the organization." In addition, our interviews with employees showed a knowledge of how individual jobs contribute to the Bureau's goals and objectives. For example, parks groundskeepers follow the simple mantra of "clean, green and safe" to guide them through their daily work. They understand it is their basic duty to keep the facilities clean, the lawns green, and the play equipment safe. Recreation program staff likewise understood the Bureau's emphasis on providing as many quality programs as possible, while serving certain specific groups such as youth and the elderly.

Some employees made unsolicited comments on our survey indicating they derive satisfaction from their work, and view the Bureau's leadership favorably. One employee commented that she feels proud to be part of a team that provides such an excellent service, and feels professionally respected and challenged. Another said the Bureau delivers an excellent community service.

Table 8   Parks Bureau Communication Survey Results

Statement	Average Score
1) We understand how our operations fit into the mission and objectives of the organization.	6.2
2) People in this organization are provided with useful information about customer needs/complaints/attitude.	5.9
3) Organizational strategies are clearly communicated to me.	5.5
4) We see positive progress from our strategic planning efforts.	5.5
5) The Bureau has strong leadership.	5.4
6) People here are willing to change when new organizational strategies require it.	5.3
7) Our senior managers agree on the organizational strategy.	5.3
8) As an organization, we know where we are going and how to get there.	5.3
5.0	
9) Top management expectations are clearly communicated to me.	4.9
10) Our organization collects information from employees about how well things work.	4.7
11) We, as a Bureau, learn from our mistakes.	4.7
12) Bureau managers listen to our suggestions and act on them.	4.5
13) Bureau managers actively solicit and use our suggestions for improving efficiency and effectiveness.	4.5
14) When something goes wrong, the Bureau corrects the underlying reasons so that the problem will not happen again.	4.1
15) Top management is attuned to, and knows what is happening out in the field.	3.8
16) When processes are changed, the impact on employee satisfaction is measured.	3.6

(Right margin annotations: **Agree** for statements 1–8; **Disagree** for statements 9–16.)

Note: The reponses are arranged in order from most positive to most negative.
The scale is 0 (Strongly Disagree) to 10 (Strongly agree).

The Bureau currently uses several methods of internal communication and has shown a willingness to employ new technologies such as e-mail, to aid communication efforts. Among the current tools are:

■ staff meetings,

■ all-bureau meetings,

■ bureau newsletter,

■ e-mail,

■ project sign-off sheets, and

■ scheduling of events and projects through the reservation system.

The Bureau employs many of the same communication tools as the other cities we surveyed. For example, most cities reported having all-department meetings either once or twice per year, most on a regular basis. Primarily these are social gatherings such as picnics and seasonal parties, with opportunites to recognize employees' work. The Bureau's all-department meetings are similar in nature.

The Bureau's number of staff meetings, and its use of e-mail and newsletters seem to be in line with the cities that returned our survey. Every responding city said that e-mail has proven their most useful communication tool.

Recently, there have been improvements in communication between the Recreation Division and the Operations Division. As part of the Recreation CORE process, a sub-committee made up of staff from the Recreation Division and Operation's Structures (maintenance) group worked to improve communication between the divisions. Representatives from each Division met several times.

Staff from Structures listened to Recreation staff issues and clarified their role in the maintenance of facilities. They also asked Recreation staff to prioritize their work to better show improvements versus actual maintenance work. In return, Structures staff promised to improve communication by returning messages promptly, informing Recreation staff about planned work, and educating Recreation staff about work priorities and the work order system.

Interviews with both Structures and Recreation staff indicate that communication between the two groups is greatly improved.

Weaknesses

Despite the Bureau's positive communication efforts, our interviews, surveys and meetings with employees showed that internal communications is viewed as a major problem facing the Bureau. Problems exist with both vertical and horizontal communication. We found that many employees feel the organization does not value their opinions, and there is a lack of understanding and teamwork among Divisions. Many of the comments we heard were pervasive and were similar whether the source was a line employee or a middle manager.

Weaknesses can be summarized in four main areas:

Employees feel they do not have a strong voice in the organization. Employees we surveyed and interviewed do not feel their input is solicited consistently or used by top management. Of the five lowest rated items on our survey, three related to how well Bureau management listens to employees (Table 8, statements numbered 12, 13 and 16).

Specifically, we learned from our interviews that employees feel their recommendations are not seriously considered. Frequent comments concerned recommendations made to the Planning and Development Division about capital improvement projects. Employees from the Operations and Recreation Divisions often felt their recommendations and comments on types of building materials to use to minimize operating and maintenance costs were not adequately considered in constructing GOBI projects. Representatives from the Planning and Development Division, however, indicated that while they offered Operations personnel opportunities for input, their responses were inconsistent.

In other cases, employees believe they were not asked for input before decisions were made. For example, Operations staff complained that Planning and Development and Administration staff don't ask their opinions on operating and maintenance costs for potential new facilities. One manager said that changes to capital funding and project scope have been made without consulting him or understanding the effects such changes may have on operating and maintenance budgets.

These experiences give employees the feeling that upper management and other Divisions do not respect or value their professional advice and opinions. Upper management staff, on the other hand, told us that while employee input is seriously considered, factors leading to how and why decisions are made may not be explained well to employees.

Employees feel top managers are unaware of what's going on in the field. The second most negative reaction to our survey items was to the statement, "Top

management is attuned to, and knows what is happening in the field" (Table 8, statement number 15). This reaction was common in personal interviews and in comments written onto survey forms, some saying top management "doesn't have a clue" as to what is going on in the field. Employees we interviewed said they feel disconnected from the downtown administration.

A frequently mentioned issue is the physical separation of working environments. Most managers and employees mentioned this as a cause of poor communication. However, field employees said they rarely see top managers in "the field" attempting to bridge this gap. Many employees feel that top managers, the decision-makers, occupy an "ivory tower", where decisions about how they do their jobs are made with little knowledge about what their jobs entail. Employees question how policies can be written by top management without their input and without top management knowledge of their day-to-day work.

In addition, the most negative reaction to any statement on our survey was "when processes are changed, the impact on employee satisfaction is measured," (Table 8, statement number 16). As a result, employees feel that top management doesn't know what is going on in the field, writes policies that may not be effective, and then does not ask the employees for feedback.

Some staff don't get operational information they need. Recreation staff complain they do not consistently receive information about construction projects to be done in their parks and facilities. This sometimes results in logistical problems and even cancellations of scheduled events. Sometimes critical information gets to one of the three recreation managers, but not the other two, who may

also need it. They also complain that they don't get enough information from each other. Grounds maintenance employees also voiced the need to have more timely information about the nature of events in parks and facilities.

Generally, not enough quality communication takes place. There is a feeling among staff in general that other Divisions don't understand or respect their work. Bureau staff in each of the major Divisions voiced this concern. This is also true between various levels in the organizational heirarchy. Staff in the field generally think of "downtown" employees as the "ivory tower" crowd who don't understand what they do on the job. Likewise, senior administrators in the downtown offices commented that people in the field don't understand how difficult their jobs are.

Employees are also frustrated by the perceived ineffectiveness of staff meetings. Members of our liaison committee, retreat participants, and others complained that staff meetings are frequently ineffective because the wrong people are invited, or because the meetings are a formality.

Recommendations   To formulate recommendations for improving internal communication, the Bureau scheduled a retreat held October 26th at the Pittock Mansion. Twenty-three Bureau staff attended the meeting.   The purpose was to formulate practical ideas for improving internal communication based on the weaknesses we found in our survey and interviews.

Audit staff summarized information from audit field-work, discussed strengths and weaknesses of internal communication in the Bureau, and held a discussion ses-

sion led by a trained outside facilitator. In addition, the City's Organizational Development Manager participated in the discussion to add an experienced perspective to suggestions made by the group.

The following recommendations are a synthesis of ideas discussed at the Bureau retreat, and conclusions developed by the Auditor's Office:

1. **The Bureau should develop a comprehensive Bureau-wide internal communication strategy.**

   A committee should be established to work out the details of this plan. This work can be coordinated with Bureau work on a public involvment strategy (see recommendation 1, Chapter 5). It should be developed with broad input from all levels of the organization. It should include:

   - a recognition of the elements that make up good internal communication,

   - a recognition of current Bureau conditions,

   - a statement of the Bureau's commitment to good internal communication practices,

   - a statement of Bureau values concerning internal communication, and

   - a listing of both policies and new tools which can be used to implement the plan, such as the ones discussed below.

2. **The Bureau needs to include in the plan tools and policies which increase the likelihood that employees' opinions and input will be valued and considered.**

Such tools and policies could include:

■ an employee suggestion system,

■ universal e-mail access for field crews, providing employees with unfiltered access to top management,

■ an explicit policy stating that employees will be notified of the disposition of ideas, suggestions and feedback given on all subjects,

■ an explicit policy that commits decision-makers to solicit employee input on changes to Bureau policy, procedures and objectives, and

■ regular roll calls at field offices where announcements can be made.

3.   The Bureau plan needs to include policies and tools to improve the flow and coordination of information across Divisional lines.

These methods could include:

■ a weekly calendar of major events and policy announcements taking place at Bureau facilities,

■ staff meeting effectiveness training for all managers,

■ the recording and distribution of meeting minutes to appropriate persons, and

■ an on-line discussion group for the interactive posting of, and responses to, announcements, and general staff inquiries.

4. **The Bureau should adopt policies and procedures to ensure the understanding of roles and responsibilities of staff among Divisions.**

These methods should include at a minimum:

- standing cross-functional teams,

- job shadowing (short term learning assignments where staff members spend time with, and assist, other employees in completing their daily work),

- shared goals among Divisions when possible, and

- ad hoc team meetings of intensive work, where two or more Divisions are having particular communication issues. Perhaps using lessons learned by Recreation and Structures.

5. **The Bureau should adopt methods which increase the visibility of top managers in the field. These methods should include at a minimum:**

- regular brown bag lunches at field sites by senior managers,

- senior management meetings held at field locations so that field employees may participate to some degree, and

- field days where senior managers actually perform work at field sites.

6. **The Bureau should measure the effectiveness of communication efforts through an employee satisfaction survey.**

Chapter 5 Public Involvement: Connecting with Citizens and Park Users

Much of the Bureau's work involves significant public involvement and communication. For example, long-term planning for developing new parks and facilities requires public input and advice to ensure community needs and wishes are adequately addressed. In addition, when adding to or changing the physical features of existing parks and facilities, the Bureau notifies neighborhood residents and invites public comment and feedback before building or work begins.

The Bureau also conducts general public communication efforts relating to marketing parks and recreation activities and special events, obtaining public comment on policies or management decisions concerning the use of parks, and responding to information requests and public complaints.

The key elements of the Bureau's public involvement and communication procedures involve 1) informing citizens, 2) inviting input, and 3) responding to comments. The goal of the Bureau's public involvement process is to invite participation and assure that programs and planning efforts are responsive to community and agency needs. A credible and meaningful public involvement process

should result in decisions that are both technically sound and have the support of affected stakeholders.

Recently, the Bureau has completed much of the work on a five year, $60 million capital construction project (GOBI) which has improved park grounds and facilities. The Bureau has completed over 100 projects to improve and upgrade parks, sports fields, pools, and recreation centers. Two completely new community centers have been opened recently as part of the project.

The size of GOBI and resulting impact on the entire parks and recreation system generated public controversy about the development of, and use of parks in the City. GOBI placed a great deal of pressure on Parks staff to complete promised projects on time and on budget. Our 1998 audit of the GOBI program found that most projects will be completed on time and within reasonable budget guidelines (see Report #247, *Parks Bond Construction Fund: Status of Improvements*). In addition, most will be completed with the features as promised in the original bond proposal. We did not, however, study the quality of the public involvement process.

We issued a Request for Proposal for this portion of the audit because we felt it required professional public involvement expertise. We chose the firm of Barney & Worth, Inc., to conduct the review.

Barney & Worth, Inc. is a consulting firm with offices in Portland and Olympia, Washington, advising managers in government and business on public involvement, strategic planning and policy analysis for over 20 years.

The conclusions and recommendations presented in their report are the result of extensive interviews of Bureau employees and members of the public who were identified as stakeholders in various Bureau projects and policy decisions. Their work is also based on a detailed review of the public involvement process used by the Bureau in several recent high-profile cases, and of public involvement methods used by other government agencies both local and national. Details of the case studies and lessons from other agencies are described in the appendices to the consultant's report.

The Barney & Worth report is attached as Appendix A. We urge all readers to review the work in detail. However, we will present an overview of the findings and recommendations here.

Strengths and weaknesses

In general, Barney & Worth concluded that the Bureau learned a lot from the GOBI experience regarding public involvement. In the firm's view, the Bureau got much better at obtaining and using public input during the final large GOBI capital projects. Specifically, the Bureau has made progress with these projects in:

■ devising public involvement plans for most, if not all projects, based on public outreach strategies that increasingly fit the sweep and scope of each project,

■ reaching key project stakeholders with information about the substance and decision making process for projects,

■ offering multiple opportunities for public participation in project decision making,

■ showing citizens they were heard, making adjustments to Bureau proposals to reflect public input,

■ being flexible with public outreach approaches, responding to new issues as they emerge.

On the other hand, Barney & Worth states the Bureau still faces challenges which will require a greater commitment to public involvement if significant progress is to be made. Barney & Worth point to at least four areas which need to be addressed:

■ Bureau public outreach strategies and plans need to address policy and program decisions as well as capital projects. Recent efforts to achieve public consensus on Bureau policy and programs, covering such issues as off-leash dogs in parks and development of memorials in parks, have suffered in part due to a lack of clear Bureau strategy and plans for approaching the public on these potentially controversial issues.

■ The Bureau has inadequate skilled resources to assure effective public involvement results. There's only one experienced public outreach specialist on the Bureau roster. Heavy reliance for delivery of public involvement is placed on

project managers. Some are highly effective, but others are often insufficiently trained or not appropriately cast for dealing with the public.

■ The Bureau must build strong, ongoing relationships with all its stakeholders, not just vocal park users or next-door neighbors. Connections to community residents beyond neighborhood association networks are limited, and connections with many business leaders at the district level have not been made.

■ The Bureau has no standard approach or yardstick to evaluate the effectiveness of its public involvement efforts and capture what's to be learned from its engagements with the public.

Recommendations   The Barney & Worth report describes criteria for developing public involvement plans and evaluating their effectiveness. It calls for the creation of a partnership with all of the Bureau's stakeholders in planning, designing and making other key decisions about the programs, facilities and long-term future of the community's parks and recreation resources.

Five specific recommendations are made and detailed in the full report. They are:

1. *Pursue and complete a Bureau Public Involvement Strategy.*

This document should articulate the Bureau's level of commitment and the general principles it will apply in its approach to public involvement, broadly describing the process to be followed. The Strategy is intended to guide Bureau management and staff as it engages the public, and assure the public it will be informed and involved with key decisions on the community parks and recreation resources. A representative from the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) should participate in the strategy development, both to add their experience, and to inspire ONI to pursue such strategies with other Bureaus.

2. ***Create individual public involvement plans, responsive to the agency's Strategy, for each policy, program and capital project the Bureau undertakes.***

Each plan, developed after research and deliberation at the outset of any public engagement, will include identification of all stakeholders, anticipated issues to be addressed, resources required, public involvement roles of assigned staff or consultants, outreach techniques and tools to be utilized, and evaluation measures.

3. ***Expand Bureau staff capacity for effective public involvement by adding two skilled and experienced full-time employees and assigning them to a team of community relations specialists.***

Members of this specialty team, with a nucleus of personnel currently assigned public involvement

responsibilities, would be active participants in each Bureau undertaking with a public involvement plan.

4. ***Develop an evaluation system to guide both the Bureau Public Involvement Strategy and each public involvement plan. The system should be based on the criteria presented in this report.***

5. ***Develop the steering committee of the Parks 2020 program as the foundation of a "cabinet" group of citizens to advise the Bureau on long-term policy matters after the 2020 process is completed.***

Appendix A

Review and Evaluation:
Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation
Public Outreach

Barney & Worth, Inc.

Review and Evaluation: Portland Bureau of Parks & Recreation Public Outreach

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Appendices

Report: Review and Evaluation of Portland Parks & Recreation Public Outreach

A.   INTRODUCTION

This audit of the public outreach program and practices of the Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau over the past five years is an opportunity to look at the effectiveness and limitations of a City agency with a community-wide constituency engaging its publics under both normal and extraordinary circumstances. All City of Portland bureaus can benefit from what the Parks and Recreation Bureau has learned and applied as it faced many decisions during this period involving major physical changes to well-used and much-loved community facilities.

The Bureau's traditional approach to its publics in policy, program and project decisions underwent a major and necessary adjustment in 1995 as the agency began implementation of a voter-approved general obligation bond measure. The $60 million measure financed capital improvements in 114 park and recreation areas in the City system over a roughly five-year timeframe.

As the Bureau assumed the role of big-time developer, it sought community support to facilitate its work throughout Portland. The Bureau encountered a high level of community interest, rising in some cases to insistence, in participating in the implementation decisions.

The high level of interest from parks users, neighbors of parks and recreation facilities, environmental and land use activists, and general taxpayers strongly tested a bureaucracy of employees dedicated to the facilities they manage, operate and maintain, but not used to intensive demand for public involvement, requiring significant time, resources and energy.

In general, the Bureau responded in 1995 with a broad plan for managing and conducting public involvement that is carrying it through most of the 114 General Obligation Bond Improvement (GOBI) engagements effectively, with the exception of several early, high-profile, ultimately controversial GOBI projects. The plan was amplified and detailed in a 1998 report to the City Council.

However, in concurrent policy making efforts of the Bureau, Parks has operated without a public involvement strategy, and has not fared well. The problem cases required virtually all criteria for effective public involvement to be met to carry the Bureau through controversy, and some were not.

This report begins with a listing of criteria for effective public outreach based upon the practices of other public agencies and discussions with internal and external stakeholders about Portland Parks and Recreation's practices.

The report next recounts the Bureau's public involvement efforts of the past five years and examines them against the criteria to determine the agency's strengths and weaknesses.

The analysis is based on qualitative data developed through six cases studies of Bureau outreach activity within the GOBI implementation and outside it (see Appendix 1 for details). Interviews with three dozen stakeholders enriched the audit. More than one-third of those

interviewed were key City officials and managers in or associated with the Bureau. The balance was parks and recreation users, neighbors of parks facilities, participants in recent Bureau outreach process, and civic activists.

In addition, the audit encompassed a review of public involvement procedures and practices of eight public agencies. These agencies are inside and outside the Portland metropolitan area and with and without responsibilities for parks and recreation programs. The consultant worked with the Auditor's Office to gather reports and materials these agencies use in public outreach efforts. The results are summarized in Appendix 2.

The final section of this report contains recommendations to improve Portland Parks and Recreation public outreach.

B.   CRITERIA

Drawing on this consultant's review of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation's own public involvement plan for GOBI projects, other public agencies' criteria and guidelines, and Barney & Worth's own 20 plus years experience consulting with public agencies on outreach programs, the consultants developed the following criteria for effective public involvement:

1. *Develop a public involvement plan at the start of all policy, program and facility projects.*

An agency needs, at the start of a project, to plan how to involve the public in each of the key decisions for a project and to integrate public outreach activities into the overall work plan of the project. This is the focal point of the most detailed public involvement policies, such as those that Seattle Parks and Recreation, Metro and Multnomah County have developed.

The public involvement plan needs to embody the additional criteria for effective public involvement listed below. To ensure a fully developed plan, it may be beneficial to require a review by either agency community relations staff and/or citizens advisers. The planning step can also assist the project manager in estimating the resources in time and staffing needed to execute an effective public outreach plan and incorporating costs into the project budget.

The exercise of taking the time to think through the basic elements of public outreach for a project – identifying stakeholders, delineating key decision points for a project, and finding good ways to involve citizens in these decisions – has value in and of itself.   It allows the project manager to integrate the public involvement tasks and timetable into the project work program.

An agency needs to require a public involvement plan for all its projects and programs, from facility construction to policy setting.

2. *Devise public outreach strategies appropriate to the projected magnitude of community impacts and numbers of citizens impacted.*

Not every project requires a full-scale public involvement campaign. Reseeding a lawn in a park does not carry the equivalent impact to a neighborhood as constructing a new

community center. The length and level of disruption must be a consideration in judging the scope of a public involvement plan. In addition, successful public involvement attempts to reach all persons a project may effect. A regional facility requires outreach on a broader scale than a small, local facility.

Making these calls is equally part art and science, and experience in community relations can prove very helpful. Judging the match between the level of outreach to the project's impacts and stakeholder community should be part of the review of a project public involvement plan.

3. *Invite at the start of the project the participation of all citizens potentially interested in the project.*

It nearly always pays dividends in the long run to attempt to reach as many citizens as possible at the very start of a project. Involving people at the beginning helps guard against persons getting involved later and attempting to revisit past decisions. This means contacting a broad range of citizens living or working around facilities, far beyond the communications most municipal planning codes require.

Groups using parks facilities and the recognized civic organizations are a point of departure, but an agency needs to also include groups and individuals tied to schools, churches and other special interests such as environmentalists, open space advocates and the disabled.

4. *Involve community in all key project decisions.*

Interested citizens need to have an opportunity to express their views in all decisions in a project that carry a significant community impact. Closing off discussion of key decisions breeds mistrust of the decision-making process.

At times, project managers need to resist the temptation to rush ahead with decisions. The risks here are of getting too far ahead of the public, leading to a backlash. Involvement is the basis for developing in the community a sense of ownership in the project, as well as a sense of trust in the decision making process.

5. *Offer multiple opportunities for involvement.*

Citizens need to be able to participate in project decision-making in many ways. Leading up to a key decision for a project, an agency needs to offer more than one channel for a citizen to make his or her voice heard. For example, if an agency is holding a public workshop to discuss a key project decision, it should also offer other opportunities for public input. The agency could sponsor a multiple-day open house with comment forms or a mail-back survey on the question at hand. The aim is to make participation as convenient as possible for interested citizens.

6. *Offer choices and options.*

Whenever possible, an agency needs to offer to the public options and choices at each decision point. Part of the role of staff is to explain the pros and cons of each option in detail. If an agency presents choices and trade-offs, the public gets involved in thinking

through the problem and comes to a more thorough understanding of the issues. If the agency presents only one recommended choice, the public can feel left out and mistrust can develop. Citizens often respond by trying to shoot holes in the plan.

7. Show citizens they were heard.

When people take the time to share their thoughts and ideas, the agency needs to show it listened. This does not mean doing everything citizens suggest. What it does mean is getting back to people and explaining why their idea will or will not work. Citizens report distress when they see no trace of their thoughts shared at one meeting in presentations at later meetings. "Why waste our time?" is the common reaction. This action of closure is an essential element of interpersonal communication that people understand in their social lives, but is often lost in public involvement.

8. Evaluate effectiveness.

No agency has a 100% effectiveness rate with its public outreach. An agency should always be examining how successful its involvement efforts are to learn for the next outing. There are many techniques for evaluation. For example, ask workshop participants how they learned about a meeting and for ideas on how to improve the next meeting. For large projects, it is wise to conduct interviews with community leaders at project's end to gain their perspective on public involvement efforts.

Effective involvement does not mean consensus on the issue. It does mean people feel they have an opportunity to participate in decision-making. Evaluation also allows the agency to make adjustments to its public involvement strategies in the course of a project to make improvements.

9. Be flexible.

Effective public involvement allows for an agency to try different outreach tools to find the best fit for a project's stakeholders. For some projects, meetings might be best. For others, mail-in surveys are the way to go. Do not be locked into a set strategy if the community is requesting a different approach. Obviously, the public involvement strategy should be flexible enough to accommodate change and new emerging issues in the course of a project. When the public sees an agency adjusting its public outreach mechanisms in response to evaluations of effectiveness, it sends a message to citizens that it is really trying to hear them.

10. Signal commitment to effective public involvement.

An agency must signal to its employees and its constituents that it is serious about involving the public. Agency management needs to reward staff who conduct public involvement plans that follow the criteria for effective public outreach.

Developing a written public involvement policy is one way some agencies have selected to establish an ethos of community input with staff. This, in turn, can help the agency communicate to the broader public that it believes that the only way for its projects to succeed is to work in partnership with citizens.

C.   STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Background on Parks Bond Projects Public Outreach

The Bureau developed written guidelines for community involvement for the Parks Bond projects approved by Portland voters in 1994. These guidelines apply only to GOBI projects, not to other bureau activities. The guidelines first offered in May 1995 community involvement instructions for four different gradations of projects, from major renovations to regional facilities down to small-scale improvements to neighborhood parks. Later that year, the Bureau collapsed the program to two different levels of projects.

For major projects involving redevelopment of regional parks or facilities, the Bureau proposed forming a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to establish priorities and make design recommendations. Members were to live in the region the park served and represent park neighbors, neighborhood associations, park users and resource people with a regional perspective.

In addition, for such projects, the Bureau committed to a series of public meetings, in the context of neighborhood association general meetings, at various stages in the project development.

The Bureau's public involvement program also specified the role of a project public involvement consultant and specified that the Bureau's Project Manager serve as the convener of the CAC.

The community relations scope for the less intensive projects, "moderate-scale project involving renovation of neighborhood parks and facilities," was correspondingly more narrow. For these projects, there were fewer options in the design. The Bureau proposed a newsletter on the project, to be sent to park neighbors and stakeholders, inviting input through a feedback form. The Bureau would present the conceptual plan at a neighborhood meeting, and then develop a fact sheet on the final design.

The Bureau did acknowledge the need to do more than this minimum with projects that were of greater importance to the community or carried additional partnership opportunities. These projects could require "a series of up to three meetings" with the community.

In our review of Parks Bond projects, Portland Parks and Recreation did indeed follow its guidelines. Public involvement for early, smaller-scale GOBI projects was handled well. For example, the Bureau steered "close to a textbook" public involvement process for improvements to the Sellwood Park pool, according to a citizen committee member. Citizen input drove the final design of the pool on both shape and depth.

The challenge came with what emerged as higher profile, more complex projects, such as Pier Park or aspects of the Southwest Community Center siting. For these, the public involvement program elements were not specific or varied enough to identify all key issues early, or reach all key stakeholders. The written program did not provide project managers with adequate instruction to handle the wide variety of public response encountered in more controversial projects.

In May 1998, the Bureau drafted an Interim Report to Council on the bond projects. In this report, one of the goals of the Bond projects is public involvement. The Bureau lists a variety of strategies it has implemented on behalf of the 114 Bond projects for planning, notifying, involving, informing and celebrating.

The additional steps for public involvement in this report are instructive for they elaborate on the directions of the initial guidelines. For example, the report says Bureau reviews the public involvement strategy for a project with neighborhoods or neighborhood coalition offices. This indicates that the Bureau was moving toward a formal public involvement plan for each project.

The Bureau publishes and distributes broadly an initial informational newsletter, and informal advisory committees and open houses join the mix of involvement activities along with CACs. As the Bond Projects progressed, the Bureau moved into the broader array of outreach activities good public involvement requires.

1. <u>STRENGTHS</u>

The Bureau has learned from its experience with implementing GOBI-approved projects, becoming more and more responsive as the implementation continues to criteria for effective public involvement. Compared to 1995, the Bureau today is moving, with increasing improvement, toward:

- Developing a thorough public involvement plan for most, if not all, of the projects (Criteria #1)

- Devising public outreach strategies that fit the sweep and scope of each project Criteria #2)

- Involving the community in all key project decisions (Criteria #4)

- Offering multiple opportunities for involvement (Criteria # 5)

- Offering choices and options (Criteria # 6)

- Showing citizens they were heard (Criteria # 7)

- Being flexible with public outreach approaches (Criteria # 9)

Parks mounted solid public involvement processes in the later GOBI stages with the large-scale Mt. Tabor Master Plan and Mt. Scott Community Center projects, and with most of the smaller GOBI projects.

The Mt. Tabor Master Plan and Mt. Scott facility projects both featured strategies for public outreach that matched their scope. Each involved citizen advisory committees with clear charges and solid support from Bureau staff and consultants. A facilitator was employed for the Mt. Tabor public process. Each included strong public outreach efforts from the beginning, reaching broader audiences, including those with community-wide agendas relevant to a regional facility. Mailings and survey work were extensive and the materials were clear and informative describing the issues, choices, and progress of the project and decisions ahead.

Open houses for Mt. Tabor featured input stations and comment cards to respond to choices for improvements. Mailings included feedback forms. Many citizens involved in the two projects felt they had been heard.

Unexpected issues emerged in the Mt. Scott process – whether trees might have to be removed – and the Bureau with its citizen advisory committee adjusted the process to accommodate them, adding a public open house on the tree issue.
Top City and Bureau management views on GOBI project implementation are mostly sanguine. The GOBI public involvement plan worked "beautifully", one Bureau official feels, complicated only by "politics and political solutions". Several other Bureau managers say they don't see how they could have done things much differently in trying to work with the public on GOBI projects, especially the controversial ones.

"We got a good mix of people to testify on projects, including people who had not before been involved" in public affairs, says a City official. He adds that citizens were also involved in selecting consultants for some of the GOBI projects.

Another official holds the view that the Bureau has grown more sophisticated in dealing with the public during the past five years. Staff has the bruises and scars to show with Parks as a major developer and mass builder of public facilities, a new role for the Bureau. Parks was out there making visible, physical changes, and no public process will always produce consensus or make all people happy when those kinds of changes are involved, says another official.

Some project managers connected with GOBI projects feel there was room for improvement in the Bureau's performance: greater up-front efforts to scope out public issues and stakeholders were needed, and staff should have been more flexible and responsive to public input during the project.

Bureau staff feel a range of factors has influenced the successes or failures with the public on GOBI implementation projects:

- Limits on Bureau resources;

- Level of individual project manager's commitment to citizen participation in the project decision making;

- Effectiveness of project managers in communicating to citizens the limits and opportunities attached to individual projects and the overall program;

- Skill level of individual project managers in listening to stakeholders and assimilating views into their work;

- Effectiveness of Bureau efforts to identify, reach and involve stakeholders;

- Pressure from citizens to expand the planned or prescribed scope on some projects;

- Whether projects impacted land use issues, especially use of open space; and,

- Whether the projects involved development of new buildings or facilities or redo of existing facilities.

Lessons that the Bureau's staff draws from the GOBI experience are important to future outreach with the public, and often parallel the same lessons outside observers would have the Bureau learn. These include:

- Ask what are the vision and goals for parks, recreation and open space in Portland. Be clear about where the parks system is header, and what customers – users, neighbors, and other stakeholders – want from their parks.

- Give thoughtful consideration in proposing physical change in the parks system to what citizens can handle and what their expectations. Match planned change with aggressive public communications and outreach to raise awareness, inform and gain public investment.

- Be more aware of the environmental ethic in Portland, and the intense competition for land uses.

- Build trust, remembering that the Bureau's job to create, operate and maintain community resources in partnership with the community.

For all that, a good number of citizens interviewed remain unimpressed with the Bureau's public involvement efforts, then and now. The Bureau stumbled on several big, early GOBI projects (i.e., Pier Park, Southwest Community Center), in these observers' view, for one or more of the following reasons:

- The Bureau did not develop a complete public outreach strategy, including thorough understanding of who are the stakeholders and what are the potential issues;

- The Bureau did not have good (or any) working relationships with some stakeholders as the project began, or build them as work progressed;

- The Bureau did not cast a wide enough net for public information to reach all stakeholders, leaving some neighbors and users in the dark for too long;

- The Bureau was not open enough in the selection process for choosing citizen advisers to the project; and,

- The Bureau projected a sense of exclusiveness to some citizens in the way public meetings were organized and conducted, giving them a sense of an uphill battle to make their views known.

In the case of the Southwest Community Center, a City-appointed Citizens Task Force recommended a siting decision that was unpopular with a segment of the involved. Opponents and even some supporters of the decision attacked the task force as "handpicked" to deliver its decision, as evidence of a rigged process. Voices are still raised in anger two years later. Some of these problems are still in evidence now, say these critics, especially if the Bureau's current foray in attempting to make policy on off-leash dog sites is considered.

Look at the way it has handled the off-leash dogs issue and the memorials-in-parks issue, says one citizen who watches the Bureau closely. "After doing so well with Mt. Tabor, they've reverted to form – no strategy, poor public process," he argues. He and others cite these policy and program issues, which are not part of the GOBI implementation. They are discussed under "weaknesses" in the next section.

2. __WEAKNESSES__

Key Bureau problems related to public involvement remaining unaddressed go to at least three criteria of effective public outreach:

- · Develop public outreach plan for all policy, program and projects (Criteria #1)

- · Signal commitment to effective public involvement (Criteria #10)

- · Evaluate effectiveness of public outreach (Criteria # 8)

(a) Public outreach for policy and program development.

While the Bureau has made progress on public involvement approaches on *projects* with an assigned, skilled resource and a strategy framework, it remains without a compass for public outreach on making or changing Bureau *policy* or *program* direction. Thus, the criteria for public involvement plans and strategies appropriate to the magnitude of the issue are not met in this arena.

In the Bureau's policy and program area, especially, there's debate about whether the criterion of involving community in all key decisions is met.

Other criteria appear acknowledged by current Bureau outreach activity in attempting to develop policy for off-leash dogs, or establishing memorials in parks, but the efforts seem incomplete and half-hearted.

The Bureau's record on public information and involvement in the Holocaust Memorial controversy was faulty, as it took a back seat for too long, and then applied too little public outreach activity too late. The selection process of members for the current citizen task force at the center of the continuing struggle to resolve the off-leash dogs issue was random, "not the best for the job" in the view of one Bureau staff member.

There is no public involvement plan to guide interaction with citizens on policy or program matters. Handling of the public on what has developed into highly controversial matters has been ad hoc, and as some observers would say, chaotic. The City Council member in charge of the Bureau and the Bureau Director have moved in and out as the situation heated up on the off-leash and Holocaust Memorial issues, creating churn. The bureau hired an outside consultant to mediate the memorial controversy. His efforts came to naught.

A citizen advisory committee is now at work attempting to craft a recommendation to resolve the off-leash dog issue. Past efforts on the issue have produced proposals but no clear and enforceable policy.

The Holocaust Memorial issue was a different sort of public involvement challenge for the Bureau. The proposal did not originate with the City, but with a group of citizens. Bureau staff were not proactive in taking the lead in public outreach for an outside project. By the time they got involved, the proposal had already been blessed in broad fashion by the City Council, proponents pursuing to implement the proposal were attempting public outreach with mixed results, and an opposition group was in operation.

Controversy on these policy questions has eroded public trust in the Bureau.

Bureau staff views run from "if there's a formula now, it's not specific enough," to "not enough guidelines, so we invent a process" for each event, to "I know there is a process, but I'm just not sure what it is because I've only worked on GOBI projects."

City officials say a senior Parks staff person has been assigned the task of developing a public involvement strategy for all Bureau outreach activity.

(b) Bureau commitment to public involvement.

Questions arise around this criteria in three areas:

- Adequacy of resources

- Willingness to involve the community in key decisions

- Attitude of Bureau personnel

(1) Adequacy of Bureau resources:

Voter approval of the GOBI bond measure for capital improvements to the Parks system brought the Bureau a public mandate on where and how to spend the money on 114 projects over roughly five years.

The Bureau moved into this new mode, benefiting from an umbrella public involvement plan for GOBI projects. However, only one Bureau staff person was on board to provide skilled direction about engaging the public to the entire undertaking.

Bureau project managers, often landscape architects or other technically based people, received initial consultation from this resource. These managers were also expected to carry the public involvement and political components of their project, along with all the technical and fiscal issues. They proceeded after launching mostly on general management experience and instincts in dealing with the public, without uniform training in effective public involvement approaches.

The outcome was uneven results with the public. Some project managers manifested strong skill in engaging the public, and/or developing process responses to public demands arising during the project. Others had less success, tending to emphasize scheduling or fiscal concerns in their project management, or not proving flexible or trained enough to hear what the public was telling them about the process and make adjustments when necessary.

One fallout of inadequate public outreach resources at the Bureau is limited capacity to develop a deeper understanding of localized issues, such as the residuals left in a neighborhood due to a previous, sour engagement between neighbors and another public agency.

It also meant that Parks had not established solid prior working relationships in some neighborhoods of the City, and project staff had a steep learning curve and limited

resources for public interaction when it brought a sometimes underfunded and always tightly scheduled GOBI project to bear in the area. In other cases, good relationships were in place between neighbors or users and Bureau operations or maintenance people, but those folks and their relationships were not always well utilized as projects were undertaken or policy crafted.

The Bureau appears now to be placing a higher budget priority on public outreach now, with more extensive public information mailings, and more liberal use of public participation opportunities, including open houses, workshops and focus groups. The challenge is to determine carefully at the outset of each outreach effort what level of resources is needed, avoiding overkill as well as inadequacy.

At the same time, the number of public outreach specialists remains inadequate at 1.5 FTE. The outlook for improvement is not bright: Bureau staff proposed four FTE for public involvement assigned to the Bureau's major new undertaking of Parks 2020, a visionary planning program with the community for the future of the system. However, budget cutbacks have reduced the capacity to one FTE for this program. With Parks 2020 expected to include a large citizen task force to steer it, the added staffing is likely to be absorbed, in practice if not assignment, by that group.

(2) Willingness to involve citizens in Bureau decisions:

The demand on the Bureau to engage and involve citizens in decisions about physical changes to the City's parks system and its operations has heightened remarkably in the past decade. Before GOBI implementation, the Bureau was in control of the pace, budget and decision-making process governing the limited number of improvement projects it undertook annually.

There was time to build public consensus around what a project should deliver. Bureau project managers had significant control over the final substance and design of their projects, current staff reports.

For GOBI, Bureau project managers — often landscape architects or other technically based people — received initial consultation from this resource. But these managers were then expected to carry the public involvement and political components of their project, along with all the technical and fiscal issues.

While the Bureau has consistently said the city parks and recreation system is "the people's resource", and in recent years expanded its efforts to reach citizens, there are questions around the level of the agency's commitment to including citizens in key decisions on policy, programs or even some projects.

Sterner critics, citing in particular public outreach on the dogs policy or the denouement of the Southwest Community Center process, see a lack of city desire or know-how for bringing citizens into the decision-making process. Key City decision-makers for Parks are seen by these critics as either trying to keep people happy by finding a quick fix to controversy, or showing impatience with public process and stepping in to override citizens if progress is seen as slow or efficient.

A City official does not buy this view, saying no public process, no matter how extensive is going to make all people happy with the outcome where physical change in public resources are involved. Ultimately, a judgment call has to be made in the name of good public policy by those designated responsible.

A top Bureau official proposes this scenario for letting more citizens in on decisions. It is the Bureau's job to say to citizens: "Here's the challenge and here are options. Tell us what you want for an outcome. Participate in the problem solving. Help find a solution that enjoys support for proceeding, if not total agreement." In short, he says, get government out of the decision-making equation as much as possible. Let the stakeholders have their hands on the steering wheel.

Part of the problem is that the Bureau needs to communicate the big picture, a vision of desired purpose, design and outcomes for the community's parks and recreation resources. Without this display, citizens asked to provide input may not feel they're serious partners of the Bureau when it comes to planning or developing individual policy, programs or some projects. Parks 2020 has potential for addressing this need.

Another apparent weakness that emerges from the interviews is a lack of business community understanding and involvement – and perhaps even interest – in the Bureau's resources and activities. Only one or two top City officials flag the need to inform the business community of the economic as well as social value of the parks system, and to gain business support for parks and recreation as a high civic priority.

Bureau management and City Commissioners in charge have wrestled with the question of developing a high-level, blue-ribbon citizen committee or "cabinet" to advise the City on the goals, objectives and long-term issues of the community's parks and recreation resources. A separate Parks Commission, as exists in several other large metro areas, doesn't fit comfortably with the City's commission form of government, officials reason. The electorate expects the Commissioner in charge and City Council to be the final decision-makers on use of the community resources.

More acceptable would be a group of advisers appointed by the Commissioner in charge to bring broad community perspectives to bear on operation and development of the parks system. Parks and Recreation Bureau Commissioner-In-Charge Jim Francesconi has proposed, and Bureau Director Charles Jordan has endorsed, such a group, or "cabinet", of advisers.

(3) Attitude of Bureau personnel:

Room still remains for further attitude adjustment among some Bureau staff. Some citizens complain, and some Parks staff acknowledge, that Bureau personnel has projected arrogance in the past, communicating that the agency is best skilled and positioned to be the real arbiters of what's right for the parks/recreation resource. When staff believes this, and/or when it gives even a hint of the perspective in public, there's a chilling effect on public involvement efforts, inhibiting development of solid partnerships with the public.

One close observer of the City's parks program sees the Bureau in a new world of public decision making that it may not fully appreciate, with citizens insisting on participation if not partnership. It goes this way:

In the 1970's, the City's parks system was a treasured community resource used by families, with demands for services and facilities filled with relative ease. The Bureau was viewed as the capable, competent operator and maintainer of this resource.

In the 1980's the resource deteriorated from lack of funding, raising questions about the City's and Bureau's commitment and passion for its parks. Citizens began to raise more serious questions about stewardship.

Now we are in a world with citizens acting out some of the steward's role and holding high expectations about their role in the decision-making process. The Bureau must absorb this change and listen patiently to citizens with an exploding set of demands on parks, related to new uses, public convenience and safety, and first-class operations and maintenance. The trick will be to bring these citizens to true partnership and shared accountability with the Bureau, not only on decisions, but on achieving the desired outcomes of those decisions.

A Bureau manager allows that Parks needs to come at our relationship with the public differently. There is some of the "we are the experts" in the Bureau, she observes, a tendency to present a plan and anticipate approval from stakeholders. Staff should contain expertise to designing and delivering the product the customer is seeking, she says, explaining as we work together the limitations of time and money and the tradeoffs we will jointly need to consider.

(c) Evaluating the effectiveness of public outreach efforts.

While the Bureau's GOBI public involvement plan provided good guidance on how to engage the public, it offered no help on how to evaluate effectiveness of the Bureau's effort. This is an important missing piece, leaving Bureau staff and the public to make their own judgments, case by case, or when called upon, as in interviews for this audit. Without a yardstick, the Bureau cannot measure success or discern clearly where it can and needs to improve. It is difficult to translate lessons learned into consistently improved results.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations to improve Portland Parks and Recreation public outreach spring from the criteria for public effective public involvement and the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Bureau's current practices and procedures.

1. **Pursue and complete a proposed Bureau Public Involvement Strategy that will effectively guide management, staff and stakeholders on the process the agency will initiate when new or revised Bureau policy, programs and key projects are planned.**

   · Build on the existing framework of the Bureau's public involvement plan for capital projects.

   · Develop the Strategy with the assistance of a designated working team representing Bureau management, staff, parks and recreation users, neighborhoods, business and other stakeholders.

     A representative of the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) should also participate in the Strategy development, both to bring that agency's experience to the table, and to inspire ONI to pursue such strategies with other City bureaus.

   · Preface the Strategy with a statement of commitment to public involvement, underscoring the Bureau's interest in a true partnership between the Bureau and its stakeholders.

   · Include a component for building partnerships and expanding the reality of community investment and stewardship of the parks and recreation resources by working closely and consistently with the system's users, neighborhoods, business community, special interests such as open space and environmental interests, and other stakeholders.

   · Describe goals, measurable objectives and priorities of the Strategy, and include an action plan for the first two years of implementation.

   · Identify Bureau personnel resources and their roles for implementation of the Strategy.

   · Include a clear component for evaluating the effectiveness of the Strategy. (See Recommendation # 4)

   · Gain approval of the Strategy from the City Commissioner in charge of the Bureau and the City Council.

2. **Create a public involvement plan, responsive to the agency Strategy, for <u>each public undertaking of the Bureau</u> to set or change public policy, to develop or modify public programs, or to launch a public project for new parks and recreation development.**

   · Begin with thorough research to identify the full range of stakeholders and public interest issues involved.

   · Enlist Bureau support staff and representatives of stakeholders in the development of the plan.

- Scale the public involvement plan appropriate to the projected magnitude of community impacts and stakeholders.

- Describe the purpose and planned outcomes of the plan.

- Identify in the plan: required personnel and funding resources; roles and responsibilities for implementing the plan; targeted audiences; public information approaches; public participation opportunities; timeline and milestones to be achieve; key decision points, and evaluation measures.

- In the plan, make clear where public input will be valuable, and where the impact of input may be limited due to conditions that already exist, previous process or decisions, or funding or physical limitations.

3. **Expand Bureau staff capacity for effective public involvement by adding two skilled and experienced full-time employees and assigning them to a team of community relations specialists. Members of this specialty team, with a nucleus of personnel currently assigned public involvement responsibilities, would be active participants in each Bureau undertaking with a public involvement plan.**

   Responsibilities of the community relations specialists would include:

   (a) Build relationships for the Bureau in the neighborhoods and businesses surrounding Bureau facilities and in program areas.

   (b) Bring the intelligence and advice of Bureau personnel in the field to the decision-making process.

   (c) Facilitate the development of partnership and stewardship relationships with stakeholders.

   (d) Conduct an annual training program in effective public involvement for Bureau project managers, and management responsible for key policy and program development.

4. **Develop an evaluation system to guide both the Bureau public involvement strategy and each public involvement plan that is based on the criteria presented in this report.** Turn the criteria into a check-off list, to be applied as:

   (a) Direction for the design of each public involvement plan

   (b) A yardstick during the progress of policy making or project implementation to identify the need for mid-course corrections in the public involvement approach.

   (c) A means of evaluating effectiveness at the conclusion of each public involvement process effort to identify lessons to be learned and improvements to the Bureau's overall public involvement strategy.

5. **Appoint and nurture the steering committee of the Parks 2020 program as the intended group of long-term citizen advisers, or "cabinet", to emerge upon completion of the program.**

The role of this cabinet is to bring a new layer of citizen participation to decisions affecting the future health and development of the community's parks and recreation resource. Appointees ideally would include citizens with a big-picture, long view, bringing a regional as well as local perspective to the table.

Appendix 1

November 19, 1999

TO: Ken Gavette

FROM: Tim Dabareiner and Don Barney

RE: Memorandum: Analysis of Case Studies
            City Auditor Review of Public Outreach – Portland Parks and Recreation

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Purpose and Methodology

One component of the review of Portland Parks and Recreation public outreach is an examination of the bureau's public involvement in six recent projects or programs. The six case studies selected in consultation with your office, bureau staff and staff of Commission-In-Charge Francesconi are:

· Southwest Community Center siting
· Lincoln Park
· Mt. Scott Community Center and Park Improvements
· Mt. Tabor Park Master Plan and Phase One Implementation
· Off-Leash Dogs
· Holocaust Memorial

Information about these projects was gathered through several channels. For each, we interviewed the bureau's project manager and key community stakeholders. At these interviews, beyond attempting to reconstruct through people's memories a factual record about steps the bureau took in dealing with the public, we also probed for perceptions about the effectiveness of the measures. In addition, we reviewed documents and public information materials made available to us by both the bureau and citizens.

These six projects reflect a portion of the diverse activities the bureau has engaged in over the last years. By no means can an analysis of only six case studies allow universal conclusions that apply to all Parks and Recreation programs.

This memo provides a short synopsis of the bureau's public outreach in each case study. This is followed by a discussion of key public outreach process issues raised by each project. Tied to criteria or guidelines for effective public involvement, these topics were raised in interviews with participants and include the strategies and the mechanics of public outreach for the project.

This memo is not an analysis of the product of each process. For example, whether Gabriel Park is the best site for the Southwest Community Center is irrelevant for purposes of this report. The process of the site selection, and the perceptions of key bureau staff and community leaders, is the topic at hand.

What we can learn from these case studies will help inform the recommendations for improvements to the bureau's public outreach.

CASE STUDY 1:
SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY CENTER SITING – 1995

Public Outreach:

After some citizens helped the City select a design consultant for the project, the Commissioner-In-Charge, Charlie Hales, appointed a 14-member Citizens Task Force and charge the committee with both "siting and design" of the new community center in Southwest Portland. The project was one of the 114 projects in a $58.8 million general obligation bond measure for parks improvements approved by Portland voters in November 1994. The Southwest Community Center was the largest project in the measure, projected to cost $9.5 million.

Citizens first helped the City staff select the consultant team to design the new facility. The Citizens Task Force convened in May 1995, and met biweekly, 15 times, to fulfill its dual charge to design the facility and to find a site for it.

The Commissioner accepted nominations of persons willing to serve on the Citizens Task Force. Criteria in the bureau's public involvement plan for bond projects steered membership selection. Task Force members, as stated in the description of outreach for projects demanding the most intensive public involvement, were to "reside in the region to be served by the new facilities" and offer a "broad regional and city-wide perspective and specific expertise related to programming as well as potential user groups." Public comment was accepted at task force meetings.

The Task Force, while the focus of public outreach, was not the sole public involvement tact the bureau took. The bureau held three well-attended community forums on the siting decision. Upon request, the bureau offered presentations to civic organizations. The bureau sent project newsletters to a mailing list of residents, businesses, civic organizations, neighborhood newsletters and community newspapers, and the bureau conducted a telephone survey of the Southwest community on key siting criteria.

The Task Force weeded through several possible sites before recommending Gabriel Park to Commissioner Hales in October 1995, a recommendation he accepted and forwarded to the City Council. The decision generated intense emotion among those who disagreed with the selection, leading to a resignation from the task force. Years later, the intensity of the feelings the process generated is remarkable.

Public Process Issues:

1.   The Legitimacy of the Citizens Task Force

The process used for selecting members to a citizens advisory committee (CAC) can often strike at the perception in some quarters of the community of the legitimacy of the group as a decision-making body.

Discussions with observers and participants in the Southwest Community Center siting process yield a sharp division about the legitimacy of the Citizens Task Force. Several community

persons described the membership as "handpicked" by Commissioner Hales who, these citizens are convinced, wanted "the thing wired for Gabriel Park." "When the list came out, no one had heard of these people," recalled one community leader.

As the work of the Task Force continued, one Gabriel Park opponent said: "We did our research" on the members, finding out, for example, "who was a real estate agent tied to Hales."

It is not unusual for opponents to an advisory body's recommendation to question the integrity of members and process. Still, we found even supporters of the siting decision, when the issue of the task force members being chosen in order to pick Gabriel Park, stating, "there may well be some truth to that."

"Nothing could be further from the truth," counters one member of the task force when reminded of the assertions. "I was in a room once with him, but I had never met Charlie Hales before" serving on the committee, stated another task force member. Another observer points out that the task force chair, in theory the most important selection for the committee, ended up voting for another site, not Gabriel Park. "If they handpicked them, they did a lousy job."

A review of the backgrounds of the members of the task force indicates that the selections did meet the criteria set forth in the bureau's public involvement plan for projects such as community centers. Members did live in the area to be served, and they did, as a whole, represent the various likely users, adjacent neighbors, neighborhood associations and other interests. Most of the people on the group were well known in the community, one member felt. One parks staff member said, "We wanted a mix of seniors, neighborhood people, and representatives of kids, and I think we got that."

In the end, there are two common paths to assembling a citizens advisory committee. The path taken for this project involves soliciting nominations from the community and having a group assembled that reflects the interests and diversity of the broader community. With a large service area for the project, one could view this as the easiest method to getting a reflection of the community.

A second path has civic groups or stakeholder organizations to select their own members to serve on the citizens advisory committee. That way, groups have their own person at the table. The challenge for the Southwest Community Center project is that the service area is so large, it would have been difficult to allow every stakeholder group to pick a member and keep the committee at a functioning size.

A clear majority of the community stakeholders we interviewed preferred this second option, yet it is possible for both to be successful. The key element is laying the groundwork with the community before forming the committee, getting their ideas and buy-in on the process of selection. This means lots of meetings and a fair amount of time before you can get the ball rolling.

From our discussions with parks staff and neighborhood leaders, these preliminary discussions for the community center appear to have not been thorough enough. "All of the sudden we heard there was going to be this group," reported one neighborhood activist. The

schedule constraints endemic to the Parks Bond Projects may have prevented this early buy-in to the process. Perhaps in recognition of the importance of this step, Parks Bureau documents prepared in 1998 suggest public involvement strategies for projects be reviewed with neighborhoods and coalition offices.

Buy-in to the process is not a panacea. Some people who do not like the result will still attack the process. Nonetheless, it is a step that can help the community members with a sense of fairness weed out these complainers. Without this step, the agency can often empower those who may seem to be unreasonable.

2.   The Charge of the Citizens Task Force

For any decision-making body, including a citizens advisory committee, the more specific and defined the charge the more successful and productive the group will usually be. It is simply easier to stay on the task at hand.

The Citizens Task Force was charged not just to find a site for the project, but also to design the facility. At first, the task force met in relative calm working on selecting the program elements for the community center. As the siting issues began to creep in, however, the complexities of the situation became a challenge.

For some members of the community and members of the task force, this dual function led to confusion. Different sites would offer different combinations of services. "It was hard to keep it all straight," reported on member on weighing different locations, "cause we never had a apples-to-apples comparison."

Figuring out what the community wanted in a community center may require a somewhat different mix of stakeholders than picking a site. The Bureau had worked with the neighborhood coalition parks committee to sponsor a Parks Forum to begin to scope out both programming preferences and siting criteria. This pairing continued into the work of the task force.

The siting process could have been more simple and fast with a firm and fixed, community supported architectural program of services, with a community driven choice, for example, to not enter into the business of trading facility services for land acquisition dollars.

Parks staff offered two very strong reasons to have one body do both design and siting. First, the group would be invested in and protective of the design decisions. Second, it would be faster than forming one group to do design and then a second to site.

Again, there is no one way that is always right or always wrong when faced with a challenge like this. Having a single group concurrently design and site a facility does, however, require more extensive and detailed explanations to the community, so citizens can follow the decision-making process of the task force. With so broad a community of interest, so tight a schedule, and insufficient bureau resources, this was not accomplished.

3.   <u>The Role of the General Public</u>

The connection between the general public and a citizens advisory committee is often tricky. Some members of the community as well as members of the Citizens Task Force were unclear what their job was – to speak for themselves or to represent a constituency.

One common element of confusion with citizens advisory committees is the relationship between the individual member and his or her community organization. "We were told to represent ourselves," said one task force member, "but I came from a group who expected me to reflect their views."

To some members of the community, the instruction to represent themselves was the equivalent of a license to ignore the community. Numerous members of the community commented about the Citizens Task Force meetings were organized. The Chair received kudos for allowing sufficient opportunity to address the committee, but nearly every member of the public recalled the seating arrangement of the group, reporting members sat in a closed, U-shape arrangement on the far end of the room. "We couldn't hear what they were saying and they could basically ignore us," complained one observer. Another indicated that during public testimony, the task force members would eat, "huge, smelly subs," and this indicated disrespect to the community.

These are, in the overall scheme of things, no doubt small actions. Still, seating arrangements and the dinner hour can become powerful symbols to the public at large of a disconnect that leads many to feel the process did not allow them to be heard.

4.   <u>Time and Resources</u>

Citizens advisory committees must be staffed, and this is a time consuming chore. One Parks project manager for another bond project said of his citizens advisory committee, "They were great, but they sure created a lot of work."

Members of the task force itself felt well supported by Parks staff and consultants. "We had the information we needed, and then some." Still, within the bureau's upper management, there is recognition that a large outreach project requires its own part-time or full-time public involvement manager. For the 114 bond projects, the bureau had one person for public involvement. Primary responsibility for public outreach fell on project managers who had different levels of experience and training. One neighborhood leader reports, "They hired new people who had no idea how to talk to us."

What this staff resource problem may have led to was cutting corners on some public outreach steps. This may have meant, for example, fewer meetings up front with community groups or less time and research on the community. One senior parks manager official said she learned "our bulk mailings need to be broader, to cover a larger geographic area." Another adds, "When we took the time to get to know the community better, like in Mt. Tabor, things went better." With all of Southwest Portland interested in the community center project, the lack of resources may have been especially critical.

CASE STUDY 2:
LINCOLN PARK – 1998

Public Outreach:

The Parks Improvement Bond approved in 1994 slated $900,000 for improvements to Lincoln Park, a previously unimproved, former-County park in East Portland. Two public schools bracket the park, David Douglas High School and Lincoln Park Elementary.

To prioritize possible improvements for Lincoln Park, the bureau worked in close partnership with the two schools. Teams of students from the two schools surveyed area residents door-to-door to find out about current use of the park and potential future needs.

In addition, the bureau formed a citizens advisory committee (CAC) including neighboring residents, neighborhood association representatives, and the schools. The CAC met regularly for a few months, reviewing alternative schemes of park improvements, mixing and matching elements of the plans to develop a final package of improvements. Priorities for the CAC were to retain the park's safety by thoughtful placement of a tots play area, protecting trees and developing better pathways and improve the lighting.

Newsletters, fact sheets and postcard updates were sent to project stakeholders, and the bureau itself conducted a mail-in survey of area residents that the high school and elementary school students missed.

Lincoln Park may not have been the largest of the bond projects, but outreach was successful in at least two instructive ways.

Public Process Issues:

1.   Partnership with Schools

Reaching beyond neighborhood associations to involve a broader segment of the community is often productive and necessary, and bureau staff attest this was done often. In the case of Lincoln Park, the bureau worked closely with two public schools adjacent to the park. "It is the best example, but not the only one, of how we like to work with schools," a Parks senior manager stated.

The bureau project manager stated that he went out to Lincoln Park early in the project and found students already in the park working on the grounds. Continuing their involvement was an obvious idea.

The students' survey results formed the basis for the improvements the CAC considered. A citizen involved in the planning stated that only once did she hear a complaint that the bureau was "using the kids" to further its aims.

The involvement of the students offered advantages. First, students developed a sense of ownership with the park. Second, they pulled adults into the planning process, having their parents attend the CAC meeting at which they presented the results of their survey.

2.   Offering Options and Choices

It is usually better to present a series of choices and trade-offs to the public and ask for assistance in selection elements to develop a plan rather than having the expert offer a single preferred plan. People want to feel they are involved in grappling with the question at hand. If only one solution is presented, groups often take the quite natural posture of trying to shoot it down.

With Lincoln Park, the bureau presented the several ideas for improvements to the CAC in three different schemes. With the many ideas solicited through student door-to-door survey and the mail-in survey, it was easy for the project manager to fill up three stand-alone alternatives.

All of the alternatives had certain city code-mandated features, such as additional street trees. Still, the different elements between the three were clear. A representative on the CAC explained: "We had three plans in front of us, but we were not asked to pick one. Instead, we mixed-and-matched between them all." This led to a very satisfactory involvement experience and a sense of ownership in the result.

CASE STUDY 3:
MT. SCOTT COMMUNITY CENTER AND PARKS IMPROVEMENTS – 1997 to 1998

Public Outreach:

Mt. Scott Community Center improvements were budgeted at $5 million of the $58.8 million Parks Improvement Bond approved in November 1994. A few citizens first helped the City select pick the design consultants for the project. Another first step was the bureau's postcard survey on suggested improvements. Bureau staff worked through stakeholder groups and civic organizations to solicit nominations to serve on a Project Advisory Committee to help prioritize the improvements. The public outreach plan was similar to that employed for other major projects such as the Southwest Community Center projects.

The 15-member committee met nine times from November 1997 through March 1998. Area residents, representative of neighborhood associations, users of the current community center and others groups were represented.

In addition to the Project Advisory Committee meetings, which were open to the public, the bureau sent out four project newsletters, made presentations to neighborhood groups, and sponsored three public open houses, the last of which to air the issue of possibly cutting trees in the park. The project was even featured on the bureau's cable access television show.

By all accounts, the meetings went splendidly. Parks officials, consultants and the community members worked in close consultation and cooperation to devise a plan that, in the end, surprised many observers. Priority was given to the construction of a new pool, rather than improving the community center proper, and a location was chosen for the new pool that involved cutting some trees.

Public Process Issues:

1. The Project Advisory Committee and the General Public

As mentioned earlier, the relationship of a formally constituted citizens advisory committee and the general public can often prove frustrating. Many persons, both bureau staff and community stakeholders, are effusive in describing the relationship between the general public and the Project Advisory Committee for Mt. Scott. There are many reasons offered for this, including community more receptive to the project, but near unanimous praise is offered committee chair Bruce Swanson.

Perhaps because the project was smaller and the proposed changes less contentious, the separation between committee members and citizens was nearly obliterated. All citizens present at committee meetings were encouraged to participate in discussions and decision-making. One neighborhood official not on the committee reported: "I walked in and he had me talking with the rest."

The process developed strong allies for the group's decisions, people willing to advocate for the group's decisions even in the face of those opposed to cutting trees.

2. A Logical Path to Decisions

Keeping the charge for the Project Advisory Committee for Mt. Scott was a simpler task than it was for the Citizens Task Force for the Southwest Community Center. For Mt. Scott, the job was to prioritize community center improvements and, as it unfolded, select a site adjacent to the building for the new pool.

Nonetheless, members of the committee praise the logical order that the bureau presented information to them and to the community. "The first few meetings, all we did was listen," recalled a member. The committee was briefed on the community center, its conditions, and possible future improvements and costs. When people dropped into the process in midstream, members of the committee took the time to bring them up to speed on what had already been decided to avoid revisiting decisions.

Better still, when the committee or the community made suggestions, their input was reflected in the information and plans presented at the next meeting. As possible locations for the new aquatics center were studied, plans reflected community input received at the public meetings and committee members' thoughts aired at their meetings. "They got back to us on every idea, even if they could not do what we wanted."

3. The Value of Good Early Outreach

Getting out to the community before beginning a public involvement process can be very beneficial. First, it allows an agency to gather intelligence about the community, identifying key issues and uncovering stakeholders to involve. It also allows for a thorough understanding and buy-in on what the public decision-making process is going to be.

By all accounts, the bureau's initial outreach earns positive reviews for Mt. Scott. "I became involved when a parks person was at my neighborhood meeting," one citizen recounted.

"She handed out a form and I wrote 'Don't cut any trees.'" Soon thereafter, this person was asked to help the city select design consultants for the project.

Initial mailings around the park seemed to reach a broader circle. One neighborhood leader confessed that she and her group were ignorant of the project and grew upset upon hearing of the plan to cut trees. "Why wasn't I notified?" she asked. Parks staff showed her the mailings she had been sent and she recognized them. "I had to go back to my group and tell them, 'Hey guys, we are wrong on this one.'"

Outreach was aided because, as one official pointed out, "the community center was already there." This meant that the changes proposed at the site were not going to be as dramatic as building a new community center from scratch. Also, for purposes of outreach, an existing community center already has customers to be easily contacted for early involvement.

Perhaps due to this preliminary outreach, it was felt membership on the Project Advisory Committee was reflective of the broader community. "They cast a very wide net," reports one committee member.

4. <u>Flexibility to Address Unforeseen Issues</u>

In any public outreach process, issues arise that are unexpected. Nothing was more of a surprise to numerous members of the Project Advisory Committee than when they found themselves in the position to be contemplating removing trees from the park. "I never dreamed I would be talking about that," one committee member stated, recalling her desire to protect the trees was what drove her initial involvement.

When surprising issues arise like this, it may be time to pause and add additional outreach activities to the public involvement program. That is exactly what the bureau did in the case of Mt. Scott. The bureau added a public open house on the tree removal issue. This meeting allowed that Project Advisory Committee members could hear the views of more people and retrace for people the series of decisions that was leading them to favor a pool location that would remove over 20 trees.

Taking this extra time further ensured that committee members would take the lead, not the bureau, in defending their plan when fellow citizens advocating for not cutting the trees attempted to garner media attention.

CASE STUDY 4:
MT. TABOR PARK MASTER PLAN AND PHASE ONE IMPLEMENTATION – 1998 to 1999

Public Outreach:

Improvements to Mt. Tabor totaled $2.3 million of the 1994 Parks Improvement Bond measure. A master plan for the park was to be developed, and from that plan a list of improvements.

The bureau seems to have been sensitive to the challenge of forming a citizens advisory committee for Mt. Tabor. First, the park is deemed a regional or metropolitan park, so stakeholders extend well beyond the immediate park neighbors. Indeed, for another regional

park project at Washington Park, the bureau shelved the advisory committee idea and relied instead on open houses and focus groups of key regional and local park stakeholders.

The Mt. Tabor community also had the additional controversy regarding an on-again, off-again off-leash dog area, leaving some stakeholders on edge.

For these and other reasons, the bureau hired an independent facilitator to run the citizens advisory group. The bureau director selected the 20-member citizens advisory committee, comprised of neighborhood representatives and park user groups.

In addition to the advisory committee meetings, the bureau held three well-attended and interactive open houses where the broader public could comment on hundreds of ideas for improvements to the park. Project newsletters were widely distributed with mail back surveys on possible features for the park.

In the end, the committee working with the city and its consultants produced agreement on a master plan that is a 20-year vision for the park and also contains a framework for making decisions about the future of the park. In addition, a package of Phase One improvements was settled upon. A new "Friends of Mt. Tabor Park" was created to serve as stewards for the master plan.

Public Process Issues:

1.   Use of Independent Facilitator

When a past project has created some pockets of distrust, it is beneficial for a public agency to hire an outside, independent facilitator to coordinate public discussions. The decision to do so with Mt. Tabor is subject to mixed reviews internally. One Parks staff member described it as an "experiment" that was "spurred by concerns raised by the off-leash dogs issue." Another bureau official recalls it was the neighborhood association who requested the step be taken.

Did the experiment work? Inside the bureau and City Hall, reviews are mixed. "Some people want to credit that things went well because we had a facilitator," one high ranking bureau manager stated. "If they want to believe that, that's fine, but we did the same things at Mt. Tabor we did at Mt. Scott and Southwest Community Center." Another official thought hiring a facilitator for the project was "overkill."

Others sensed a concern that the facilitator was not well integrated into the design team, and at times focused the committee on less important issues than faced decision-makers for a regional park.

To the community, the results are less ambiguous. Hiring a facilitator signaled seriousness, reports one community leader. Parks was going to do things differently and was really going to listen.

It may well have been the assistance of the facilitator that allowed the bureau early on to spell out a ten-month-long schedule of advisory committee meetings and open houses that allowed the public to understand the decision-making process and timeline for the project.

That timetable, running from the first CAC meeting in June 1998 through final committee action in March 1999, was included in project information materials and reassured the public that there was a framework for the consideration of their thoughts and ideas.

One parks manager said that the facilitated process won over "the least trusting members" of the advisory committee, some of whom went on to form a Friends of Mt. Tabor Park.

2.   Value of Broader Outreach

The bureau understood the need to make certain involvement in the Mt. Tabor planning process was broad and extensive because the park was a regional facility. One parks official spoke admiringly of the outreach done before the project started, indicating it helped make certain the bureau placed the right people on the advisory committee, including representatives of The Audubon Society, bike interests, concerts in the park, and the soap box derby.

There is some dissent about whether the committee membership reflected the region-wide audience of Mt. Tabor Park. "The only voice for regional interests were the consultants," recalled one participant. "The neighbors said they acknowledged it is a regional park, and then developed a plan for a neighborhood park," he continued, bemoaning a list of missed opportunities. "There were no visionaries in the bureau or on that committee."

Regardless, the committee and the neighborhood appear to have gotten what they wanted. The committee ordered up more work, recalled a parks official. "They had us survey 4,000 households around the park," a number that seemed to be greater than normal for the bureau. Attendance at the first open house neared 200 persons, a remarkable turnout. Turnout slowly declined over time, but that may be seen as a reflection of a renewed trust in the community. "I believe they saw we were listening to them," one parks official stated.

3.   Feedback to Participants

One of the key principles in most successful public involvement programs finding ways to show participants they have been heard. This is a step often overlooked in the rush to move the project ahead to the next steps. The open houses for the Mt. Tabor Park Master Plan asked participants to share a vision for the park and ideas for improvements, grade how these ideas struck them when applied to the park, and then prioritize trade-offs to select a final list of improvements.

Literally hundreds of ideas were available for the public to examine and analyze at the open houses or through mail-in surveys. This let people know that all valid ideas were being considered.

In addition, with Mt. Tabor, reports and project newsletters summarized the results of open houses in a clear, succinct and understandable fashion. These results were conveyed back to those participating in the master planning process, giving them a record that their input had been heard.

Better still, future iterations of the plans showed that the public input had played a considerable role in giving the plan a direction. Reviewing the paper trail, it is easy to see the community-based origin of many of the elements of the master plan.

The bureau did attempt to "close the loop" with citizens with summaries of public meetings at other projects, but none we reviewed were as successful as Mt. Tabor.

CASE STUDY 5:
OFF LEASH DOGS – 1999

Public Outreach:

There is a long history in Portland about the issue of off-leash dogs in parks, a story too long to recount. In June 1999, Commissioner Francesconi convened a Citywide Off-Leash Task Force to provide direction to the city on the issue. "This is yet another round on this issue," states on parks staff member, "we have tried this before."

The 17-member group, with persons representing most viewpoints, is meeting every three weeks with a mid-November target to issue a report that will identify potential off-leash areas and suggest criteria to select the sites. Initial meetings have featured presentations by technical experts. Public hearings are set for the fall.

Public Process Issues:

1.   The Importance of a Public Involvement Plan

Before embarking on public outreach to help resolve a policy issue, public officials need to spend time to develop a strategy for involving the public and arriving at a decision.
A parks official states bluntly, "there's no strategy for reaching the public – it's all pieced together."

The sense that no one has thought the task through has reached the community. "I see no way we will reach any conclusions," said one task force member. Others view the process as an example of how the bureau does not learn from its successes. A Southeast Portland resident sees it as a step backward from the Mt. Tabor Park Master Planning process. "They do not learn. They are better at public outreach on projects rather than policies."

Pessimism pervades the bureau and officials in resolving this issue. When the topic is raised, officials quickly assert: "It is a no-win situation."

The lack of a plan manifests itself in many ways.

First, Parks staff state there is no plan to contact the disperse stakeholders interested in the issue. The bureau has no comprehensive project mailing list.

Second, membership on the Task Force seems random to citizens, even to some members. A person in the bureau described the selection this way. The Commissioner picked a friend to chair the task force, and that person added a few friends. Then the bureau director

contributed a few names. Finally, the bureau added people from neighborhood groups or dog owner associations.

A bureau manager states that the Task Force is a group of well meaning people, a mix of extremists and those in the middle. Still, the group is "not the best for the job," offers one bureau representative.

Third, community members and some on the Task Force itself feel that the work program for the committee has not been thought through. Information the committee is getting may not take members to a place where they can make a solid recommendation that will withstand public scrutiny, it is felt. "This issue cannot be resolved successfully by figuring out what we are doing one step at a time," offers an observer of the group's work.

Fundamentally, the grappling with the off-leash dogs issue confirms that the bureau has no set policy or guidelines for public outreach on its activities outside the Parks Improvement Bonds. Bureau staff members descriptions of public involvement policies outside of the bond projects range from: "I think we have one, but I have never seen it" to "nonexistent, we invent one as we go." Summarizes one parks manager, "We say we have a commitment to public outreach, but we do not have bureau strategy to follow up on that statement in all cases."

A complicating factor for the off-leash dogs challenge is that in the view of many the issue is one of animal control, and that is the responsibility of pet owners and Multnomah County Animal Control. The perception that this issue belongs to an agency other than the bureau may explain in part the long and frequently testy correspondence between the bureau and off-leash area neighbors.

The Off-Leash Dogs Task Force may succeed in finding an acceptable solution to the problem, but it is clear to observers that to date the group has not been placed in a setting offering the greatest chance for success.

CASE STUDY 6:
HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

Public Outreach:

Retracing the public outreach involved in the controversial siting of a Holocaust Memorial in Washington Park requires an understanding that this was not a City-generated project. In addition, the bureau, without a public involvement policy beyond that for Parks Improvement Bond projects, lacks public process guidelines for considering memorial proposals.

In early-1995, a group of proponents for a garden-like memorial approached the City for help in finding a site. The Bureau treated this project as it had several other memorials in the city and discussed several sites. In August 1995, the City Council approved an area in Washington Park for the memorial.

Memorial proponents in 1996 shared a design for the memorial with the bureau. The design was less of a garden and more of a plaza that had grown to fill the large space the Council had designated. The bureau suggested the proponents meet with park neighbors. Memorial advocates mailed out invitations but attendance was light.

In late-1997, some park neighbors became cognizant of the location and design of the memorial and formed an opposition to the site. Soon, Commissioner Francesconi and Director Jordan were involved, and the bureau has pulled together a mailing list of 300 people to keep informed of decisions on the project.

The Commissioner first asked the Director to make a recommendation on the site. The Director hired a mediator to attempt to reach a compromise location for the memorial, but no agreement could be reached. In April 1998, the Director recommended the Washington Park location to the Commissioner. The Commissioner then asked for a search of other possible sites that met the proponents' standards. Finding none, the Commissioner asked the Council to approve the site, which it did in September 1998. The City Council's approval is under appeal to the Oregon Land-Use Board of Appeals, which recently issued a partial decision that may send the approval back to the Council.

Public Process Issues:

1.   The Problem of No Public Process

Often public involvement guidelines or policies need to apply to projects that are not of a city origin. For example, conditional land-use review requires private developers to work with project area residents or neighbors.

In discussions with bureau staff, one of the frustrations with cases such as the Holocaust Memorial is that the bureau did not have a process for involving the public in considerations of memorials. In addition, this proposal did not fall under the Bureau of Planning's design or land-use review requirements, and therefore avoided the associated public hearings.

To weed out inappropriate memorial suggestions, the bureau does require an advisory review of the City's Design Review Commission. This commission did review the Holocaust Memorial proposal in early-1998 and opponents descended on the proceedings hoping to stop the memorial. To the frustration of opponents, the commission lacked the authority to take such action even if members had wanted to do so.

Then, there was the origin of the proposal for a memorial. As with prior memorial projects, a bureau staff member reports the Holocaust Memorial project was not viewed inside the bureau as a city project. This meant there was no city staff leading a public outreach effort. "It's not my project," one participant quoted a bureau manager as stating.

Without this sense of ownership, early efforts by proponents were found faulty by park neighbors. For example, the invitation to the open house in 1996 did not include a map showing the location for the proposed memorial.

Once the controversy erupted, bureau staff report they took the lead in informing and involving the public in key decisions. The bureau assembled a mailing list of site neighbors and interested parties and kept people posted on public meeting dates and locations, the progress of mediation efforts, and key decision points. A program of mailings and meetings and mediation efforts was invented on the fly. One observer familiar with this stage of the project reports, "It was all too ad-hoc, there was no strategy on how to resolve the issue."

Another complication was the history of the bureau's interactions with the immediate neighbors of Washington Park. There are normal difficulties for neighbors adjacent to a regional park that in their view should function as their neighborhood park. Observers report that there is bureau staff who enjoy a relationship of trust with park neighbors. It is also a view, however, that parks management does not listen to or respect the views of these staff members, furthering neighborhood frustration. This history meant that attempts to resolve the memorial dispute would take place in an atmosphere of mistrust.

A parks staff member quotes the Mayor as saying, "Who'd have thought a memorial for Holocaust survivors would prove controversial?" But from such surprises lessons spring. "We have learned," reported a bureau manager. "We are more cautious now, we treat all memorial proposals as City projects." Still, without a formal policy for public outreach, there are no guidelines to offer some consistency in how the public is involved.

September 13, 1999

TO: Ken Gavette

FROM: Tim Dabareiner and Don Barney

RE: Review of Public Involvement Policies of Other Agencies
         Review of Portland Parks and Recreation Public Outreach

Purpose and Methodology

As part of this firm's review of Portland Parks and Recreation Public Outreach, we examined the public involvement practices of other public agencies in the Portland area as well as leading parks and recreation agencies. We reviewed written policies and/or spoke with staff members familiar with outreach procedures.

The purpose of this review is to find qualities of public outreach programs that prove successful for others. This is one step in determining the criteria that define effective public involvement.

Good public outreach does not mean a lack of controversies or projects always attaining a happy consensus. It applies to the process of informing, education and involving the public in projects so participants feel they have had genuine opportunities to share their opinions with decision-makers.

We are indebted to the Office of the City Auditor for sharing information gathered from other parks and recreation agencies on public outreach.

MUNICIPAL PARKS AND RECREATION AGENCIES

City of Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

The City of Seattle's Parks and Recreation Department recently adopted a detailed written Public Involvement Policy to "establish procedures for soliciting and considering public input in the review of proposals to acquire property, initiate funded capital projects, or undertake changes to a park property that will . . . substantially modify the property's use or appearance."

The policy, adopted July 1, 1999, is the product itself of an extensive public outreach effort, involving groups of citizens meeting with top department management to define procedures for the department to follow. Part of what drove creation of the plan was a desire to have written public process policy to share with the community.

The heart of the policy is a requirement that the department develop a public involvement plan coterminously with the project work plan. Public process tasks must be fully integrated

into the work plan to ensure the department will engage the public in a timely fashion in all key project decisions.

The policy orders for capital projects several procedures for "opportunity for direct citizen involvement, participation and public input." These measures include signs, flyers, Internet notices, and news releases. The policy also details specific organizations and groups to invite to any and all public meetings on a project, including residents adjacent to parks, local community organizations, "Friends of" groups, and other City departments.

A core management team reviews the public involvement plan for each project to ensure it meets the policies specific requirements for notification, meeting types, and communications with citizens. The Core Team, through reviewing plans for projects over time, appears to be in a position to evaluate the effectiveness of various outreach techniques.

Responsibility for delivering the public outreach activities the policy mandates falls on a Community Involvement Specialist who works closely with the project manager to carry out public involvement plan.

City of Boise, Idaho Parks and Recreation

The Parks and Recreation Department in Boise, Idaho does not have a written public involvement policy. A manager with the agency, Dave Selvage, explained that instead the desire to work in partnership with the community is "just part of the culture" of the agency.

The department posits four main characteristics for its public outreach practices:

1) Notification for planning or facilities projects extends to a half-mile radius around a park, which is defined as the service zone for a park.

2) The department offers flexible and multiple channels for participation on every project, including open houses, advisory committees, and mail surveys.

3) The department at the start of a project presents only the parameters for a project, not detailed sketches of what it would like to do. As design work continues, the department avoids presenting to the public any single plan, instead relying on "very cartoonish bubble drawings" that spell out a beginning set of options and opportunities. "We let the public steer us to one alternative."

4) The department communicates back to the public what it has heard and how it is responding to the public's preferences.

City of Phoenix, Arizona Parks and Recreation

The Department of Parks and Recreation in Phoenix relies on citywide public outreach policies to guide its public involvement. The guiding document dates to 1989 and is entitled, tellingly, "Early Citizens Involvement Program." The lead purposes of this program are tied to the desire to get notice out early in the life of a capital project to potentially interested citizens.

The program applies to the full array of city activities, so it understandably is slim on details for outreach tailored to the needs of a specific project. It does mandate a series of specific notification requirements for different types of facilities and projects, ranging from a one-half mile radius around a site to less.

The city coordinates public outreach for its various agencies through a Neighborhood Notification Office. Phoenix agencies are to complete a request and send it to this office to hold a public meeting. The office requests a three-month lead for setting up these meetings.

Tualatin Parks and Recreation

City of Tualatin parks and recreation services are now under the purview of its Community Services Department. The department does not have a written public involvement policy, but the agency's director, Paul Hennon, offered three important steps the agency takes in its public outreach activities.

1) The city uses a citizens board, called a Parks Advisory Committee (TPARK), to serve as the lead for its public outreach activities. Citizens from the TPARK serve as hosts for all public meetings on specific projects, reports Mr. Hennon. Citizens direct concerns to both staff and TPARK.

2) All outreach on projects begins with a clear statement of the benefits and goals of the project to keep focus on the positive.

3) **The city spells out the entire decision-making process for a project up front, laying out a schedule of public meetings and key decisions at the start of a project to assure constituents they will have opportunities for involvement.**

Also of interest to the city is guidance from the Commission of Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies. The commission publishes a document called a "Self Assessment Manual for Quality Operation of Park and Recreation Agencies" that covers a broad spectrum of activities parks agencies engage in. This document calls for "total citizens involvement" in planning processes, but does not offer much detail on how to reach this goal other than it is a criterion for accreditation.

PORTLAND AREA PUBLIC AGENCIES

City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services

Some citizens and city agencies point to Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) as having quality public outreach. In the view of other agencies, it is a function of the bureau having ample staffing resources.

BES staff forwarded a Public Participation Handbook the bureau drafted in 1995 as the best guide for its watershed based public outreach. This handbook is exactly that, a booklet for project managers to complete to ensure public outreach is done thoroughly.

The handbooks first emphasis is in making certain a project has sufficient resources dedicated to public outreach.

The handbook leads project managers through a series of what seem to be exercises. These include steps such as identifying people who may be interested in the project, coordinating with other agencies, and "developing a history of human activity in the project area."

Steps to establish and maintain the public's trust involve communicating back to people the content and results of their comments, inviting participation in all project decisions. The bureau frequently integrates citizens into its project team to share all information and set a tone of openness.

Also important, the bureau offers steps to evaluate the effectiveness of a public outreach program, including surveys and focus groups on the public process. This is an important and often overlooked component of good public outreach.

Portland Office of Transportation Pedestrian Program

Several citizens offered the Pedestrian Program at Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT) as an agency practicing excellent public outreach. In talking to the manager of the program, Bill Hoffman, he offered the following clues that may explain their success.

1) All staff are skilled in facilitating public discussions. This is a skill set that is a leading qualification for joining the program, not an afterthought. The program relies on numerous tools for public participation: mail surveys, workshops, informational mailings, citizens advisory committees and meetings with civic organizations.

2) The program staff work with the community at the very genesis of projects, developing ideas with citizens to resolve issues, rather than bringing citizens the staff's ideas for reaction.

3) "We practice 'low volume, high frequency' public involvement." This means that during the project development stage, the program is worked in partnership with the public through every single step, taking up lots of time with lots of meetings. The program manager is convinced, however, that this investment paid dividends in the "back end" construction stage of a project.

Multnomah County Facilities Siting Public Involvement Manual

In March 1997, Multnomah County published a manual to guide County project managers through involving the community in the decision-making process to site facilities.

With this specific application, the manual offers a fairly detailed approach the County is to take. Beginning with a list of principles and strategies, the manual concludes with a checklist of steps for project managers to follow.

The principles include sharing information early with a broad spectrum of citizens, inviting public participation in all critical project decisions, and being flexible with the project to meet the public's needs and desires.

As with the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department Plan and the Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces Plan discussed below, the heart of the County's manual is the requirement that the project manager develop a public involvement plan at the start of a siting project. The plan must apply public involvement strategies to ensure early and ample opportunities for stakeholders to weigh in key decisions in a siting process, from the establishment of criteria to the evaluation of candidate sites. This public involvement plan is subject to review and approval by the Office of the County Chair.

Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces

The Metro Involvement Planning Guide steers public outreach by all Metro departments. The Metro Council adopted the document in August 1998 as a way to solidify the public outreach approach of all the various activities of the regional government. Citizen stakeholders inter-viewed laud the uniformity of process Metro presents, and find the consistent public involve-ment approach reassuring.

Metro has a Committee for Citizen Involvement that serves as an advisory board to agency staff. That group has a subcommittee on parks and open spaces which serves as a close advisor to Greenspaces public involvement staff.

The focus of the Metro Public Involvement Planning Guide is creating a public involvement plan for a project. That plan must meet the requirements of the guide, involving all interested citizens in each key project decision and lining up the resources for an effective effort.

The guide includes a form the project manager must complete and file specifying the public outreach measures for the project and showing how they fit with the project's work plan. The form is "actually a good exercise," reports Ron Klein, a Public Affairs Specialist with Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces, "it helps me make certain I have not overlooked anything."

The forms also help Metro guarantee coordination between its various departments, allowing agency personnel to know about the activities of other units. This helps avoid a problem City staff often encounter with the public lumping all City agencies together and not understanding, for example, why a staff member from the Water Bureau does not know when sewer con-struction will end.

Mr. Klein also cites an ethos in the agency. Involving the public "helps us build a better product," he reports. "We honestly feel we cannot do it without the public."

A STARTING LIST: ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

From this review of the public outreach practices of other agencies, it is possible to begin to identify guidelines for effective public involvement.

1. The earlier involvement begins, the better.

Most agencies emphasize the importance of early involvement. For the City of Phoenix, early notification is nearly the beginning and the end of its written public outreach policy. Citizens are very suspicious of government coming to them after all the decision have been made. Rather than seeking partnership in defining a project, the agency appears to be seeking acquiescence or simply affirmation of what it intends to do anyway.

The Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT) Pedestrian Program serves as a model of early involvement, developing project ideas from discussions with the community.

2. Make outreach at the start of a project broad as possible.

Many of the agencies most successful at public involvement emphasize contacting as many people as possible at the start of a project to solicit participation from the beginning. There is nothing more frustrating than the arrival, well down the road in a decision-making process, of a large group of people who never heard of the project. It frustrates the agency that is forced in most cases to revisit past decisions, as well as those citizens who have been at the table from the get-go.

Outreach tools used for notification include bulk mailings and notices to the widest possible audience, beyond the requirements of municipal planning codes. A mass mailing may seem overkill, but it is usually beneficial to reach too far rather than make too limited an effort to raise awareness.

There is not a series of steps that can absolutely prevent people arriving late and uniformed. What an agency can do is take steps to minimize this occurrence.

3. At the start of a project, develop a public involvement plan and integrate the plan into the project work plan.

For many projects, public agencies conduct outreach as they go along. The focus is the product – getting the design started or developing policy options. Some move well into a project without a discernable plan to inform or involve the public. Citizens sense decisions have already been made and are seldom pleased.

This is why for the most thorough public involvement programs – Seattle Parks and Recreation, Metro and Multnomah County Facility Siting – the focus is on developing a plan for public involvement during project start-up. This is the best time to think through who the stakeholders are, what the key decisions for the project will be, and the best way to give the

public a voice in those decisions. These plans are submitted to a superior panel or office for review before the project moves forward.

If drafted early, the public involvement plan can be shared with the stakeholders from the start. Citizens can suggest refinements, and will be assured the agency is serious about involving them in the project. Tualatin Parks and Recreation highlights the benefits of this approach.

4. Having sufficient resources, skilled staff and taking time.

As part of the initial development of a public involvement plan, both Metro and Portland Environmental Services show keen interest in making certain sufficient staff resources are on hand to execute the public involvement. For PDOT's Pedestrian Program, public outreach skills are essential qualities for project managers. Some agencies view community relations as skills that can be taught. Others, like Seattle Parks and Recreation, have community involvement staff to assist the project manager.

Having sufficient resources for the early steps of involving the public can prevent problems later, saving time for the project overall. Regardless, agencies frequently underestimate the time effective public outreach requires at the front end of projects. This is why several community leaders offer as the singular axiom of public outreach that "good public involvement takes time."

5. Be flexible.

There is not a set of public involvement practices that will be effective for every project in all communities. Portland Environmental Services, with its emphasis on evaluating success, seems the most cognizant of the need to remain flexible, and try various public outreach tools when things are not going well.

In addition, sometimes the scope of a project may change. For example, a new candidate site for a facility springs up in an area where the public has not been contacted previously or it is learned that a project will now move closer to valued natural resources. In these cases, the agency needs to take the time to adjust public involvement to address these new factors.

6. Involve citizens in every key project decision.

Most of the comprehensive public involvement policies – Metro's, Seattle Parks and Recreation's and Multnomah County's Facility Siting – emphasize involving the public in all project decisions that have an impact on the public. This does not mean requiring a workshop to decide the nature of the flange joints on a new sewer line, even if this is a critical decision to the technical operations of the pipe. Construction impacts, such as blocking right-of ways or noise, however, are germane to community involvement.

The experience of PDOT's Pedestrian Program takes involvement far, sharing every increment of information and decision-making with concerned citizens in its "less volume, more frequency" approach. The pay-off for the program comes later with the public support built for the project.

7. Start with a clean sheet and then offer choices and options.

The City of Boise Parks and Recreation Department emphasizes presenting a minimal set of ideas to the public at the start of a project, and then, as ideas emerge, framing them as a series of alternatives and choices for citizens to consider.

It is tempting to present to the public exclusively what an agency believes must be done. It is better public involvement to present information that gives participating citizens knowledge to help point the direction.

8. Show people you listened and responded.

Agencies such as Metro and Portland Environmental Services place a great emphasis on showing people they have been heard. This is not the same as following their instructions to a letter, because citizens offer conflicting and mutually exclusive advice.

To develop trust, essential for public support, constituents need to see some reflection of their advice in progressive iterations of a plan. It lets people know they have been heard and considered, even if they did not get all they wanted.

9. Evaluation.

Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services specifies surveys or focus groups during and at the conclusion of projects to find out what works and what fails in its public outreach efforts. It seems obvious, but taking the time to talk to people before rushing onto the next project is one of the best ways to learn and improve performance with future projects. The focus of the evaluation is not on whether stakeholders reached consensus on the decision reached or whether there was an absence of controversy, but rather on the efficacy of the process used to involve the public in decisions.

10. Commitment of the agency.

When citizens praise an agency's public outreach and are asked what made it work, they pretty quickly refer to specific individuals. "He just gets it," they say. Staff has the skills to listen and respond to the public. The agency's procedures include the basic elements of effective public involvement. The project staff develops a public involvement plan to inform citizens and involve them in project decision-making.

Good public outreach requires a commitment through all levels of the agency. Management needs to reward staff who practice effective involvement, even if dealing with citizens comes at the expense at times of other project goals.

Appendix 3

Lessons Learned

How Parks Bureau managers propose to improve the agency's public involvement.

A.   Emphasize Preparation

·   Ask ourselves: What is the vision and the goals for parks, recreation and open space in Portland? Do we know where the parks system is headed? For example, if one goal is to provide a positive environment for kids to grow in the city, are we offering the appropriate programs and facilities to achieve it? Are we clear in our understanding of what our customers – park users, neighbors – want from their parks? We haven't asked ourselves what growth with its demands, and responses occurring in the City and its neighborhoods mean for the parks and recreation program, says a senior Parks staffer. "We don't do well at planning," he suggests.

·   Give thoughtful consideration in proposing physical change in the parks system to what citizens can handle and what are their expectations. Planned change has to be matched with aggressive public communications and outreach to raise awareness, inform and gain public investment in the change.

·   Be more aware of the environmental ethic in Portland, and the intense competition for land uses. Parks may need to undertake a long-term planning process to determine future use of all Parks properties, especially for active and passive uses. Respond to the heightened sensitivity to open space areas in the parks system displayed during the GOBI implementation.

·   Build trust as Parks goes about its business. We're in the business of creating community resources in partnership with the community. Engage, from day one, anyone and everyone who conceivably has a stake in what we're doing. Building relationships with citizens "is fundamental to achieving our goals", says a Parks manager.

B.   Approach the Public Differently

·   Get government out of the decision-making equation as much as possible. Let the stakeholders steer the decision. Parks job is to say to citizens: Here's the challenge. Here are the options. Tell us what you want for an outcome. Participate in the problem solving. Help us bring in a solution that enjoys consensus, if not total agreement. In short, give our customers the best possible advice we can, then facilitate a citizen-driven problem solving and recommendation process.

·   Come at our relationship with the public differently. There is some of the "we are the experts" about Parks, observes a senior manager of the Bureau, a tendency to present a plan and anticipate approval from stakeholders. Ideally, it's proposed by several Parks veterans, the relationship should be: the customer (Parks users, neighbors, taxpayers) tells us what they prefer as an outcome, and we use our expertise to design options to deliver that preference. Then we go back to the customer, present the choices, explain the tradeoffs that may needed to be made given budget limitations, and work together to a satisfactory solution.

- Help the public understand that in a climate of limited resources, choices have to be made and all good ideas can't be implemented. Citizens need to assist in producing a public deliberation process that is efficient as well as inclusive, and benefits from volunteer participation in organizing and facilitating process implementation. Priority setting is essential, and the tough decisions of what is pursued and what gets set aside have to be made openly with the involvement of stakeholders.

- Educate citizens, especially park neighbors, about the concept of "regional" parks within the Portland parks system: what makes a Mt. Tabor or Gabriel Park different from a Wallace or Lincoln Park. Build that understanding into multiple definitions of park ownership and stewardship.

- The ownership question is key, one Parks manager believes. The message is: it's not your park, it's not my park, it's not their park – it's our park. Parks are increasingly a place to have a shared community experience, she says.

- Recognize we're not dealing with a monolithic audience of citizens, but one involving many interests and varying levels of passion about parks and their use. We need to understand that there are real changes in perspective even at the geographic level, as we move from one quadrant of the city to another.

- Broaden the scope of Parks' public outreach endeavors to include policy and program decisions. Move beyond a current tendency in the Bureau to associate public involvement primarily with development projects.

C.   Shaping the Public Involvement Process

- Strive to produce a public deliberation process that citizens feel has been fair, even if it proves controversial. Make every effort to assure public awareness of the process, that the appropriate questions are asked and addressed, that a representative balance of stakeholders is involved in the deliberations, that options are offered, and opposing views are addressed.

- Stay true to the process. Once citizens understand and accept the rules of the game for designing and deciding key policies, programs and projects, maintain the course no matter how intense or controversial it becomes. Truncating the public process or taking a sharp detour to reach an early conclusion under-mines public trust. Let the process play out. Key public decision-makers may have to determine the outcome ultimately, but should avoiding stepping in abruptly or prematurely.

- Learn that the appropriate role for the Commissioner in charge of Parks and the Parks Director during an active development phase such as GOBI imple-mentation is to keep the long-term vision in front of the public. They should be out there, say those interviewed, to show interest and connote oversight on a regular basis, not just for celebrations and ribbon-cutting, and not to micro manage or plunge into the depths of controversy. Both officials should ensure there are adequate resources for Parks staff and citizens to work and commu-nicate together effectively.

- Be flexible enough to accept and absorb controversy when it occurs, acknowledging that consensus will not always be possible. Competition for land uses of open space, for example, will assure conflict.

- Assume the public deliberation process may take extensive time and energy of all involved, well beyond initial expectations in some cases. Anticipate the costs of conducting public involvement and the potential for change in project plans that may emerge from public deliberations. Calculate those costs as an integral part of the project budget.

- Do your homework before engaging the public. Know what's gone before in an area where Parks is preparing to work, such as other City programs and projects that may have engendered trust and support, or may have left a bad taste and ill feelings behind. "We saw a spillover effect in more than one case that wasn't helpful," says a Parks project manager.

- Develop more compelling information, including quantitative data, about Parks use and costs, about the effectiveness of completed improvements and the need for new improvements. This data has to be available and digestible to the public as well as staff, and used as part of gaining public support.

D. Detailing the Public Involvement Process

- Provide adequate staff resources to meet public needs for information and involvement. Assume people will want to know everything about a policy, program or project to be deliberated, and then more. Spend money to communicate with the public about planned changes in policy, programs or facilities; press release didn't do it, mailings weren't extensive enough in many cases. The lack of dollars for GOBI project communications was a "significant problem", says a senior staffer, adding, "We didn't reach all the people. Dollars for public involvement need to be part of the budget, not a stop gap."

- "We have a better handle now on what's really needed," says a Bureau official. For example, mailings have become increasingly sophisticated (and expensive) as Parks has learned more in working with the public on GOBI projects. We started using the reverse directory which proved faulty, then a GIS system which overlooked apartment dwellers, she recounts. More recently, for major projects, Parks has turned to carrier route mailings which get to citizens "harder to reach", but, she emphasizes, are "very expensive".

- Big Parks projects, such as community centers, warrant their own part-time or full-time public involvement staff. A heavy burden was placed on project managers to deal with public issues while handling complex technical matters. The project manager in these cases became the only source of response to public concern and comment. One manager of a major GOBI project said she took all phone calls from the public, which at times encumbered several hours a day.

- An assigned person for public involvement, on board from the outset, could have learned to address technical and policy concerns, and facilitate solutions where those concerns appeared to conflict.

- Use of an independent facilitator can help smooth a public process. Parks didn't plan for this resource on major projects such as the Southwest Community Center, where conflict and controversy took the process at times out of anyone's ability to moderate. One Parks manager sees the usefulness of a facilitator at large public meetings involving Parks policy or projects. More broadly, another staffer says the introduction of a facilitator early in the process, such in the Mt. Tabor master planning process, can lend credence to assertions that fairness and objectivity are sought, and that public involvement is a priority interest.

- Agree the standard public involvement plan for GOBI was a good framework to use, one project manager says, but acknowledge it needed enhancement by creative efforts tailored to the individual project, such as an all-day charrette with citizens to generate design ideas, or use of a "Sundae in the Park" neighborhood family event for similar purposes.

- Start "thinking out of the box" in working with the public. A senior Parks staff person cites an experimental approach to improvements at a northeast Portland park a few years ago, in which the public was attracted into hands-on participation in the closing physical development. Some 200 people showed up. Materials and a work plan for completing a trail through the park were provided, and the stakeholders pitched in. A job expected to take all day was completed in less than two hours. People left with a sense of participation and investment, he recalls.

- Train Parks people who work in the field to know and understand better what the Bureau is doing and where things are headed. These people should be some of our most effective communicators, says a senior staff person, but they were often in the dark and had to respond, "I don't know." Parks internal organization – community center personnel, people in operations and maintenance – have to be acknowledged as a key part of the external communications network.

- The "expert face" is not the right face to show the public initially, says a Parks manager, adding the Bureau needs to train people who can listen well and bring what they hear to Park experts, e.g., landscape architects, to translate into design solutions.

Appendix B

Bureau's Current
Mission, Goals, and Performance Measures

Appendix B
Bureau's Current Mission, Goals and Performance Measures

MISSION STATEMENT

Portland Parks & Recreation is dedicated to ensuring access to leisure opportunities and enhancing Portland's natural beauty. In pursuing this mission, Portland Parks & Recreation has three interrelated responsibilities, as follows:

- To establish and protect parks, natural areas, and the urban forest;
- To develop and maintain places where citizens can pursue recreational activities on their own initiative; and,
- To organize recreational activities that promote positive values in the community.

GOALS

(Stewardship) Preserve and enhance our parks legacy and promote an appreciation of the natural environment.

(Community) Continually improve the availability and effectiveness of recreation services and Park programs that benefit the community.

(Employee) Create a safe, productive, and rewarding work place which emphasizes effective communication and recognizes innovation and achievement.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES*

Stewardship

1. Year-round average of at least 7.5 (on a scale of 10) for ongoing maintenance of parks.
2. At least 85% of City residents (in a random sample survey) who feel that park grounds maintenance is "good" or "very good".
3. Capital condition of parks: at least 75% of park features meets PP&R's quality standard (A on a scale of A-D).
4. Capital condition of facilities: at least 75% of recreation facility features meeting PP&R's quality standard (A on a scale of A-D).
5. Major maintenance of buildings: set-aside or spend on major maintenance projects at least 2% of the current replacement value of any buildings whose major systems have been upgraded since 1990.
6. An average turn-around of not more than 14 days for priority 1 and 2 work requests to the Structures Maintenance work unit.

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 * These measures are termed "performance goals" in the Bureau's budget and strategic plan.

Community

7. At least 50% market penetration among school-aged youth for registered activities in a year.

8. At least 75% of City residents (in a random sample survey) who feel the overall quality of recreation programs is "good" or "very good".

9. At least 90% of recreation program customers (in a random sample survey) who express overall satisfaction with the programs.

10. Impact on participants' lives: At least 80% of people in a random sample survey who, if they have participated in organized park or recreation programs describe the impact as either "I learned something I still might use" or "significant influence on my life."

11. At least 5 million total attendance in all recreation programs, or an average weekly attendance of 96,000.

12. At least 450,000 volunteer hours (or 216 full-time equivalents) donated in support of Portland Parks & Recreation programs or facilities.

13. Park availability: At least 90% of citizens living within a half-mile from a developed park.

14. Recreation facility availability: At least 90% of citizens living within 5 miles of a fully programmed community center.

15. Recover 100% of the direct program cost from adult recreation programs and 50% from youth programs (50% and 25% respectively, for those facilities whose primary market is in HCD-eligible low-income neighborhoods). After averaging in those facilities in low-income neighborhoods, the overall direct cost recovery goal in 1996-97 would be 35% for youth programs and 77% for adult programs, for a bureau average of 48.7% of direct program costs.

16. Overall leverage of taxpayer dollars: At least 50% of the dollars for Portland Parks programs or facilities come from non-tax sources (including the implied value of volunteer labor and financial partnerships with "Friends" organizations).

17. Public safety and liability trend: Three-year rolling average number of general liability claims against PP&R that is at least 5% less than the previous three-year rolling average.

18. Public perception of security in parks: At least 75% of City residents (in a random sample survey) who feel safe walking in their neighborhood park during the day.

Employee

19. Worker safety trend: Three-year rolling average frequency of workers compensation claims that is 5% less than the previous three-year rolling average.

20. Worker safety comparison: number of time-loss work injuries per year that is below the average for the industry classification(s).

21. Vehicle safety: Frequency of fleet liability claims below the average for all City bureaus.

22. At least 90% of PP&R's workers (from a comprehensive survey) who feel that the bureau has a positive "safety climate."

23. At least 90% of PP&R's workers (from a comprehensive survey) who like working for the bureau.

SOURCE: Bureau of Parks and Recreation 1997 Strategic Plan and FY 1998-99 Adopted Budget.

Appendix C

Summary of Findings and
Recommendations from
"Committing to the Cost of Ownership"

Appendix C   Summary of Findings and Recommendations from "Committing to the Cost of Ownership"

The following are the findings and recommendations from "Committing to the Cost of Ownership, Maintenance and Repair of Public Buildings," by the Committee on Advanced Maintenance Concepts for Buildings, Building Research Board, National Research Council, 1990, National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

The nation's public buildings—-government administration buildings, health care facilities, schools, correctional facilities, and a variety of other elements of public infrastructure—-are assets acquired through the investment of tax dollars over the years and are critical to the nation's high quality of life and productive environment. Public officials, the stewards of these assets, must bear responsibility for their effective maintenance. Widespread underfunding of maintenance and public facilities, caused by many factors, can affect public health and safety, reduce productivity of public employees, and cause long-term financial losses when buildings must be prematurely renewed or replaced.

This document is the report of a committee asked by the Building Research Board to undertake a broad review of maintenance and repair activities of government agencies

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and to recommend how these activities might be improved. Based on its own review of available information, consideration of reports by agency personnel and other professionals, and the experience of its members, the committee is troubled. The procedures and allocations of resources for managing the public's built assets—influenced by a variety of financial and political pressures as well as technical requirements—are failing to protect these assets, and the potential costs of correcting past neglect are measured in billions of dollars. These procedures and allocations must be changed to recognize the full costs of ownership of these assets and to support appropriate maintenance activities. The committee hopes that its findings and recommendations will help to bring about these changes:

1. Underfunding is a widespread and persistent problem that undermines maintenance and repair (M&R) of public buildings. To overcome this problem, M&R budgets should be structured to identify explicitly the expenditures associated with routine M&R requirements and activities to reduce the backlog of deferred deficiencies. An appropriate budget allocation for routine M&R for a substantial inventory of facilities will typically be in the range of 2 to 4 percent of the aggregate current replacement value of those facilities (excluding land and major associated infrastructure). In the absence of specific information upon which to base the M&R budget, this funding level should be used as an absolute minimum value. Where neglect of maintenance has caused a backlog of needed repairs to accumulate, spending must exceed this minimum level until the backlog has been eliminated.

2. Periodic condition assessment is an essential step in effective facilities management. Formal condition assessments programs should be implemented by agencies responsible for M&R budgets. These programs will initially serve as the basis for establishing appropriate levels of funding required to reduce and eventually eliminate backlog. Once backlog is eliminated and a steady-state performance is achieved, the condition assessment becomes a management tool for monitoring the effectiveness of M&R activities. Condition assessment programs require trained technicians and managers and should be standardized to control their cost and to ensure consistency of the results. Federal agencies and other owners and users of large inventories of buildings should undertake to establish guidelines for such programs.

3. While adequate M&R funding based on recognition of the full costs of ownership is a prerequisite for protection of the public's assets, effective maintenance management is also required to realize the full benefit of the funds made available. Agencies should make specific assignments of responsibility for M&R to qualified and trained staff and managers. Activities such as minor alterations and improvements that may be disguised as M&R should be clearly identified and not permitted to divert resources from legitimate M&R functions. Education, training, and recognition of staff members responsible for M&R are needed, along with firm commitment to effective management of our built assets.

Responses to the
Audit Report

CITY OF

PORTLAND, OREGON

OFFICE OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

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MEMORANDUM

To: Gary Blackmer, Auditor

cc: Charles Jordan, Director, Portland Parks and Recreation

Fr: Jim Francesconi, Commissioner

Date: February 8, 2000

Re: PARKS MANAGEMENT AUDIT

Portland is blessed with an excellent Park and Recreation system. Since coming to office, I have been fortunate to be assigned Parks as part of my Commissioner's portfolio. However, there are stresses in the system. Parks are in demand. The public wants more parks, particularly in the East and West parts of the City. Many of the park recreation and maintenance facilities are old and need to be repaired or replaced. Most of Parks' funding comes from the general fund, which is subject to competition with public safety and tax limitations. Our city, as well as our park system, is facing a critical juncture in trying to balance growth, livability and maintenance of our basic infrastructure.

I requested an audit of Parks' management as part of several strategic initiatives to support Parks. In addition to the audit, we are initiating:
1. A **Parks Foundation** to leverage private sector involvement and resources,
2. A **Parks 2020 Strategic Plan**, guided by extensive public involvement and a broad-based Citizen Vision team, to provide scenarios to guide the choices of the park system into the next century, and
3. A **long term capital plan** for Parks to ensure financial stewardship of our park assets.

I have the responsibility of ensuring that the public's dollars are well managed. This is especially important in times of scarce resources. I intend for the audit to be a **roadmap** in meeting these responsibilities and commit to working with Parks and the Auditor's office to implement the findings, as resources permit.

Performance Measurements and Managing for Results
Performance measurements are important to provide measurable progress on Parks' important mission and goals. Parks needs to work to improve their system and provide more hard data on activities. Parks has indicated that a system will be completed by May of this year, with the first measurement report in May of 2001.

Building Maintenance and Asset Management Practices
Parks has the responsibility of caring for and maintaining many neighborhood recreation and maintenance facilities. Maintenance of these buildings was deferred for decades. It is only within the last decade that there has been a change in the resources and attention.

The Auditor makes at least two recommendations of note. First, Parks needs a **single, standardized inventory that spells out the condition and useful life of these buildings has not been undertaken.** The inventory will provide us with a tool to better estimate our deferred capital and maintenance expenses and prioritize the schedule of repair and replacement.

Second, the auditor points out that the capital set aside for park buildings is much lower than the industry standard and more resources should be dedicated. Within the resources available to Parks through the general fund, there may be some reconfiguration possible, but the entire task cannot be done within current resources. This is a critical decision for the City Council to make.

Internal Communications

Internal communications is a challenging task, given the geographic reach of Parks and its many field locations. However, the auditor's office and Parks have identified a course of action. Already steps are being taken to ensure that all divisions within Parks are included in deliberations about what additional parks are purchased and improvements proposed. This is but one example. The annual survey will allow a feedback loop to judge the effectiveness, over time, of additional vehicles for input between the management and front line employees.

Public Involvement Practices

Parks' public involvement strategies for General Obligation Bond Issue (GOBI) projects were, for the most part, very well done. However, those practices are not paralleled in projects that were not funded through the bond measure. As a result, the public could not rely on a consistent methodology for public input from Parks.

Barney and Worth conducted a thorough analysis and made several excellent recommendations. The report counsels adding additional permanent public involvement staff to Parks. Given the shrinking resources and limited budgets, I must decline this recommendation. Instead, Parks will build the capacity of its current staff through training, and utilize consultants and staff from the **Office of Neighborhood Involvement** to add additional human resources.

I appreciate the work of the Audit Division, especially Dick Tracy, in completing the Parks Management Audit. I appreciate the Audit Division agreeing to act in the role of technical advisors to Parks and Recreation and offer concrete options for the improvement of these systems. I also appreciate the response from Director Jordan and the Parks Bureau, which outlines their plan for implementation, including the designation of key managers in charge and a time line for each portion of the implementation of the findings. **My office will work with the Auditor's Office and the Parks Management to ensure responsiveness and implementation of the Audit's recommendations.**

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Ensuring access to
leisure opportunities
and enhancing
Portland's natural beauty

PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

February 4, 2000

MEMORANDUM

TO: Gary Blackmer, City Auditor
           Commissioner Jim Francesconi

FROM: Charles Jordan, Director, Portland Parks and Recreation

RE: Response from Portland Parks and Recreation to the Auditor's Report:
           "Bureau of Parks and Recreation: A Review of Management Systems"

Portland Parks and Recreation is pleased to respond to the audit performed by the
Auditor's Office over the past several months. We particularly appreciated the approach
that you took, one focused on providing guidance and technical assistance, in addition to
evaluative feedback, to assist us in better addressing challenges and problems that we
would like to address.

What follows is the approach that we will be taking to each of the major
recommendations cited in your report. As we have discussed, we would like the
continued involvement of your office as we develop action plans and implementation
strategies for each of the key areas under study.

I have assigned David Judd, Deputy Director, to manage the overall staff implementation
of the various recommendations that you have presented to us. David has appointed
specific staff to be in charge of successful implementation in each area and a timeline for
completion has been prepared. I have taken personal responsibility to oversee our work
to improve internal communications.

1. ***Auditor's Recommendation No. 1:*** *Develop a clear framework for performance
   measurement and a set of performance measures that are supported by reliable
   sources of management data.*

   PP&R acknowledges the need to streamline our performance measurement process as
   the audit suggests, and the audit report provides us with valuable guidance as to how
   we can upgrade our current approach. Our strategy to act on this recommendation will
   consist of the formation of a staff and Auditor's Office task force team to examine the
   programs that you have cited from comparable cities, to examine in detail our current
   approach and, then, develop an improved performance measurement program.

The staff support for this project will come from the Assistant Management Analyst position, from various PP&R staff members and managers, as well as leadership from David Judd and Gordon Wilson. A revised set of accountability measures with reliable data will be completed in September 2000 in time for the next year's Service Efforts and Accomplishments reporting process. The development of improved data sources and methodology will continue over this coming year and next. Our goal will be to have actual data to report for the newly created measures by September 2001.

Responsible Manager: David Judd/Gordon Wilson
Completion Date: September 2001

2. *Auditor's Recommendation No. 2: Develop a more structured building maintenance system that contains complete information on inventories, physical characteristics, maintenance condition, and annual spending.*

PP&R concurs with the Auditor's recommendation and plans to take steps to upgrade our overall maintenance management program for park buildings.

For many years, PP&R has struggled to provide an adequate level of maintenance to park buildings. The problem is related both to securing adequate capital improvement funding to make necessary upgrades, as well as securing adequate funding to provide the daily maintenance required to maximize the useful life of each building. As the audit states, the age, pre-existing condition and functional uses of park buildings is very diverse. So are the available records. Many park buildings were constructed before World War II.

Although few decision-makers would doubt that increased maintenance and capital investment for park buildings is needed, the agency's ability to demonstrate that need through a systematic and comprehensive management system is limited. As the audit states, the PP&R staff that maintain buildings are knowledgeable and dedicated and much of the information needed to improve our store of data about existing buildings is available and now needs to be collected in an organized system.

To implement the recommendation, PP&R will form a task force of experts from within the PP&R staff, experts in building management from the public and private sector, the Auditor's Office and building users. The task force will approve the work plan and various milestone projects required for the creation of the improved system. Components would include:

a. Development of a comprehensive inventory system including data on age, square footage, life span, original capital cost, etc. or estimates if actual data is unavailable. The inventory should include data on the key building components -- HVAC, electrical, plumbing, roofing; etc. -- as well as an overall building condition assessment;

b. A tool and process to use the tool for determining the condition of each building, including the condition of all major infrastructure components, safety issues, conformance with agency mission, etc.;

c. A schedule of frequency of building assessments;

d. Development of budget and accounting systems to more precisely track maintenance and repair requests, budgets and actual expenditures.

In the initial work of the staff and task force, a system design will be created and reviewed by the task force, the Auditor's Office and other experts. It is assumed that this phase will be completed by May 1, 2000. Once the system design is clear, required data will be collected, a task that will be completed by January 2001.

Along with the work identified above, PP&R fiscal staff will assist the project by making adjustments to our current financial system to support the building condition and cost model developed.

Manager: Jim Gardiner
Completion Date: January 2001

3. ***Audit Recommendation No. 3****: Request and reallocate sufficient resources to maintain existing parks and recreation buildings.*

PP&R certainly supports the conclusion that additional resources should be applied to park and building maintenance. The development and implementation of the condition assessment/financial model described will provide more accurate information as to the depth of the need, but the need is very clear.

To address this problem within existing resources, over recent years PP&R has given priority status to protection of building and park infrastructure in budget downsizing. The FY 2000-2001 budget submission reflects the priority to protect, to the extent possible, funding for building maintenance even though that results in increased levels of budget reductions in other areas.

In the budget processes over the past 10 years, priority has been given by the bureau to budget requests for maintenance funding for new buildings and parks coming into service. That priority will continue. Our approach is based on the premise that adequate maintenance funding for any new improvement should be secured at the time the decision is made to make the initial capital investment. To PP&R, this is essential to avoid any further deficit in the level of maintenance for the entire system.

Many of the additions to the system are the result of community planning process, as done in cooperation with the Portland Development Commission, the PP&R Systems Development Charge Program, the Metro Greenspaces Program, and other funding sources. These important programs have provided capital improvement funding that

is tied to many other City infrastructure improvements, but they also create maintenance responsibilities.

In addition, renovation and major maintenance projects have been the main focus of recent park bond measures. The largest component of the 1994 Parks Bond Measure was a package of renovations and repairs totaling $35 million, and renovation was a significant component of the unsuccessful 1998 Parks Bond Measure. Each year, in the City's annual Capital Improvement Process, PP&R requests funding for a list of projects far in excess of the total amount of funding available in this bureau-wide process.

Reallocating existing General Fund allocation to PP&R, beyond the priority strategy mentioned above, would require elimination of many youth recreation programs for youth, youth-at-risk, seniors and other special groups as well as the general public. This is a position that the bureau is not prepared to take at this time, unless directed to do so by Council. The programs involved serve target audiences that simply must be served.

The approach that we intend to follow, with the use of the improved reporting on the financial condition of buildings and the more accurate information on annual maintenance costs, will be to develop a long term funding plan that will step up the level of maintenance funding over a reasonable period of time.

As is our current practice, we will continue to develop partnership agreements with PP&R "friends" groups, volunteers, corporate sponsors and other non-General Fund resources where possible to better support maintenance of basic infrastructure.

> Manager: Charles Jordan and staff
> Completion Date: Ongoing

4. **Recommendation No. 4**: *Develop and implement a communications plan that recognizes current communication problems and establishes a strong commitment to improve internal communications.*

PP&R concurs with the recommendation and will immediately begin to implement strategies to improve the internal communications. The challenge of internal communication is exacerbated by the distribution of 375 full time employees over 52 report-to-work sites. The administrative staff downsizing and consolidations in July 1997 have made it more difficult for management to be accessible, as well as lessening the capability to adequately share information about major initiatives, projects and events across all work units. This same problem makes it difficult to provide clear and consistent systems to allow information from the line staff to be heard and responded to by top management.

The approach here will be to form an internal communications advisory team that will develop the overall plan for internal communications and oversee the implementation of the plan. Charles Jordan, assisted by Evelyn Brenes, will provide leadership and staff support to this effort.

The team will be representative of each department and will consist of represented as well as non-represented employees at varied levels in the organization. The team will develop the overall plan by April 2000 and begin immediately to implement the components.

One component identified in the audit will be the centerpiece of this plan -- an employee satisfaction survey. The agency currently administers an employee safety survey every 2-3 years and that data does track some information related to employee satisfaction. An annual employee survey, however, will provide more consistent, ongoing data, and allow for better comparison over time. The team will be responsible for overseeing the development and administration of that instrument to all permanent employees and some sampling of part time employees. The survey will be administered by June of 2000 and from that point annually. A report of the findings will be broadly distributed to the staff and specific follow-up items will be the duty of the advisory team and staff assigned.

In addition to the survey, other specific strategies will be developed and implemented as part of the plan. Approaches will include: increased visits to field sites by top management; co-locating field offices for a selection of managers so that they are more accessible to field staff; rotating the location of weekly management team meetings; more effective use of the employee newsletter as a tool to communicate major events, initiatives, capital improvements, the projects and routines of various specific work groups, etc.; publishing minutes of staff meetings at all levels, and other specific communication approaches.

Finally, the advisory team will develop performance measures, in addition to the employee survey, that will aid the bureau in determining progress in this area.

> Responsible Manager: Charles Jordan/Evelyn Brenes
> Completion Date: Completion of the internal communications plan---May 2000
> Administration of the first annual employee survey---June 2000
> Evaluation of the overall impact of the first year----June 2001

5. *Recommendation No. 5: Implement an annual employee satisfaction survey to identify problem areas and track improvement.*

See discussion of this recommendation in No. 4 above.

6. ***Recommendation No. 6***: *Pursue and complete a public communications strategy that involves park stakeholders in the Bureau planning and decision-making.*

The programs and facilities of PP&R require, and are supported by, a continuously high level of public involvement. Many programs are operated through partnership with neighborhood and park advocacy groups. Over the years, most major capital improvement projects, policy and planning issues have involved substantial public involvement efforts to guarantee the public's needs were met. Without a doubt, the 1994 Parks Bond Measure was one of the most vivid examples of varied projects with a wide variety of public involvement strategies.

The bureau has learned much from these experiences, but it is clear that PP&R could benefit from a more uniform policy and clear procedures for public involvement. The policy would particularly relate to capital projects, planning initiatives, major new or altered policy directives or other activities having significant impact on the park system and the public. A formal public involvement policy has already been developed and is presently being reviewed by staff. In addition, the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, Neighborhood Coalitions, City Outreach Coordinators and private experts in the area of public involvement will all be asked to review the policy and procedures. The review of all groups is scheduled to be completed in April 2000.

The purpose of the policy is to provide consistent guidelines for soliciting public input related to decisions that could, in the judgement of the Director: (a) result in a significant change in the use or appearance of PP&R-owned facilities; or (b) have long term implications for provision of public open space and recreation programming.

The policy defines areas of responsibility and outlines a collaborative process for development of the required project-specific public involvement plans. The nature of the project, available resources, and anticipated level of public interest determine the general scope of the plan. Regardless of the scope, several key elements provide a framework for each plan: project purpose, timeline and key decision-making points, stakeholder identification, the planning approach, publications and their distribution, signage and displays, internet, meetings or other person-to-person opportunities for input, evaluation and documentation. Varied outreach tools are discussed.

The audit recommends that additional staff positions be created to provide a more comprehensive public involvement program. In the short term, given the pressures of the current City budget process, PP&R would prefer to enlist the services of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, the Neighborhood Coalition Offices, and similar agencies both inside and outside City government to assist the bureau in this

effort before additional staffing is requested. These partnerships could provide much of the guidance and support needed in this area for less cost.

Responsible Manager: Gay Greger
Completion Date: April 2000

We look forward to your continued support and assistance as we complete each of these action items over the upcoming months.

C: Mayor Vera Katz
Comm. Charlie Hales
Comm. Dan Saltzman
Comm. Erik Sten