



OAKLAND PARKS and  
RECREATION FOUNDATION

# 2016 Community Report Card on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks



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## I. Executive Summary

This report, our 11<sup>th</sup> in the annual series of Community Report Cards on the State of Maintenance of Oakland Parks, reflects the results of our fall survey of 112 parks. It contains our analysis of the data and recommendations for addressing issues that were raised in the survey. This was also the sixth year of a drought which has wreaked havoc on park landscaping, especially trees, a matter which we will discuss in this report.

Following the survey questions about the various aspects of the park, the surveyor is asked to give the park a **Park Overall Rating**. This year's **Park Overall Rating** average was 2.51, equivalent to a C, and essentially no different from the 2.5 average in 2015. Six out of seven parks that had been on the **Parks in Jeopardy** list for years improved and were removed from the list. However, other parks were deemed to be failing and were newly placed on the list.

Although our survey covers the totality of park conditions, we feel that certain park features are in greater decline this year. Accordingly, we will present an overview of all the survey category results but will concentrate our focus on several areas which this year's surveys prove to be of top concern:

- Homelessness in our Parks
- Poor Condition of Greenery and Trees
- Poor Restroom Conditions

Our surveyors were a mix of Park Stewards and other volunteers. The Park Stewards know their parks well; they monitor and report park problems to the Public Works Call Center and many weed, pick up litter and organize park workdays. They have a vested interest in keeping their parks safe and appealing for their families and neighbors. Some of their comments poignantly convey the frustration they feel with the slow pace at which park problems are addressed. Our other volunteer surveyors come to us on *Love Your Parks Day* and may be setting foot for the first time in the parks assigned to their teams.

Our survey is both qualitative and quantitative. Ratings are subject to the perspectives and experiences of the park surveyors and thus reflect a wide spectrum of expectations. We can often distill the bigger picture from surveyors' comments and we will quote them liberally throughout the report. Here's a comment from two park stewards who are very involved in their park and gave it an Overall Rating of C:

*“The park is much used and well loved by local residents but desperately needs more regular maintenance. From the small tasks that need to be done frequently, such as sweeping and general clean up around where kids play, to more attention to plant care, weeding and pruning for health.”* —Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt/FROG Park, Stewards Carol Behr and Theresa Nelson

Finally, we will demonstrate, through survey data and observation, the acute need for additional park resources and innovative approaches to maintenance practices. And, we will make recommendations that we feel will help to promote the improvement of park conditions.

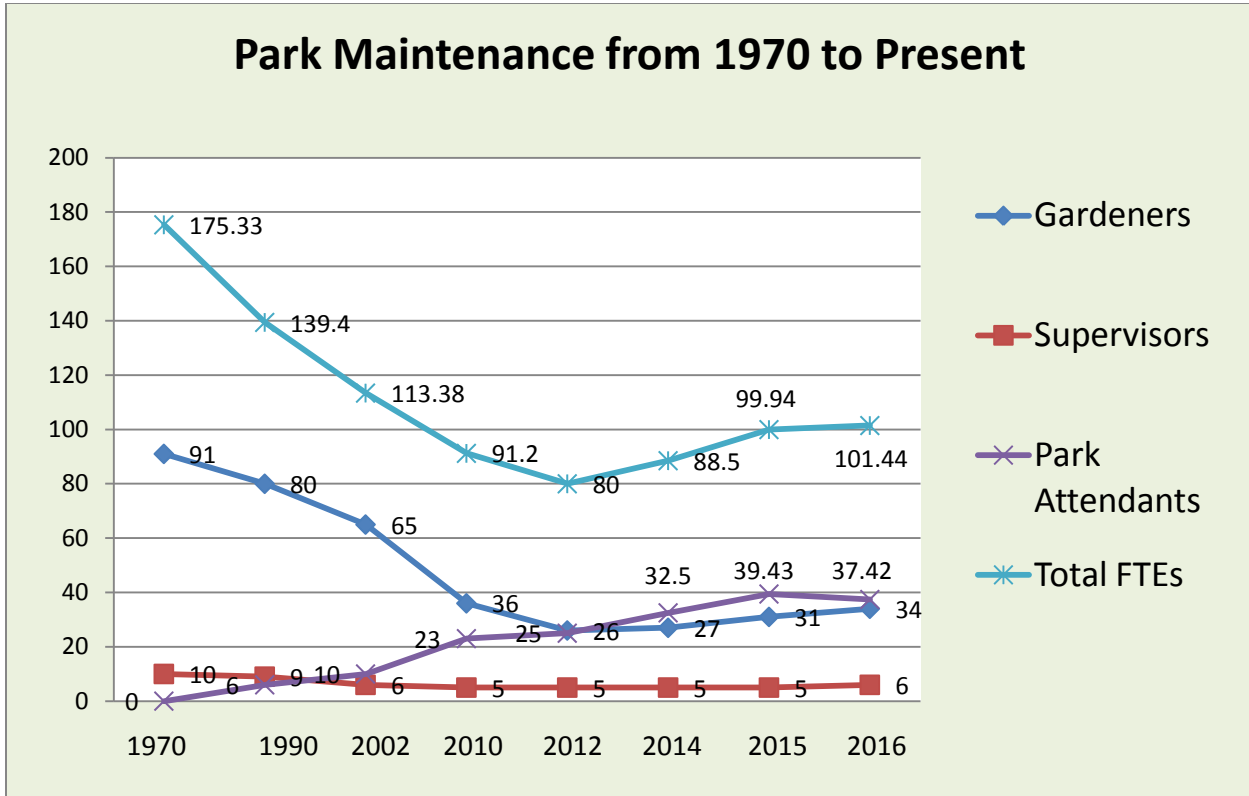
## **II. Survey Introduction**

### **A. Maintenance History**

Studies have demonstrated that new and well-maintained parks and trees enhance the quality of life in cities and raise property values. City of Oakland officials have seized opportunities through the decades to create new parks but, while funds have been secured to develop scores of acres into parks since the 1970s<sup>1</sup>, staffing levels of skilled personnel for maintenance and tree care have plummeted. Since the 70’s Gardener I and II positions have been reduced by almost two-thirds even as the number of unskilled PTTs and PTs (Permanent Part Timers and Part Timers) has been on the upswing and currently surpasses gardener staffing. In 2008, at the height of the recession, maintenance staffing levels took a colossal hit and have not recovered since. The loss of gardeners skilled in horticulture and trained tree personnel necessarily has a deleterious and lasting impact on the landscape.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Oakland FY20115-17 Adopted Budget, G-68-69: “Bonds and former Redevelopment funds are restricted to



The lowest point of maintenance staffing in recent years was in 2012 with 80 FTEs. Increases since then were due in part to organizational changes and partly to the addition of unskilled Park Attendants. The bump of over 10 FTEs in 2015 (from 88.5 to 99.94) was the outcome of the transference of responsibility for maintenance of ball park infields from Oakland Parks and Recreation (OPR) to Oakland Public Works (OPW) and the personnel that went with it. Lumped into that increase were four additional FTEs paid for out of the General Fund and dedicated to Lake Merritt Measure DD landscaping.

Occasionally, public pressure brings additional resources to specific areas but those monies cannot be counted on for long-term benefits. The funding for dedicated maintenance of Lake Merritt landscaping is one recent example. The \$400,000 is good for only the 2015-17 budget cycle.<sup>2</sup> What happens after 2017? Allocating funds for maintenance on a park by park basis is not a sound plan for the overall health of a park system.

<sup>2</sup> 2015-17 Proposed Policy Budget, A-4: Dedicate ongoing funding for Lake Merritt Park maintenance by \$400,000 annually after it reaches plant establishment in May 2016 to preserve this new public space.

## B. Survey Background

*Oakland Parks Coalition* (OPC) was established in 2002 when Oakland Residents Gillian Garro and Audree Jones-Taylor, concerned about what they perceived as a gradual decline of conditions in their local parks, applied for and were awarded a grant from The Trust for Public Land to report on park conditions. OPC developed a comprehensive survey that would shed light on conditions of amenities and landscaping in all Oakland parks. Recreation Center programming was also evaluated in the final report.

The resulting report of the 2003 survey posited that park conditions were below acceptable standards. The strong recommendation of that report was to:

*“empower communities to share in park stewardship, promote efficient use of existing resources, advocate for additional resources, establish new standards for maintenance and recreation programs, and facilitate communication and partnerships between community, public agencies and private organizations.”<sup>3</sup>*

Envisioned improvements depended not only upon changes in maintenance practices but also required increases in budgets to support sufficient staffing levels. This goal proved the hardest to attain. The primary funding source for park maintenance at the time, the Landscape and Lighting Assessment District [LLAD] of 1989, fell short, as the years passed, of providing the necessary funds to sustain existing maintenance levels and eventually had to be supplemented by monies from other sources.<sup>4</sup> As budgets shrank so did maintenance staffing. In 2006, after an organizational shift of park maintenance from OPR to OPW, OPC reprised the survey but modified it to focus solely on park conditions.

In 2015, OPC merged with *Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation* to become *Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation*. The survey continues to be an important component of the Parks Foundation agenda. During the month of September, 2016, Foundation Park Stewards surveyed conditions in their own parks. The final day of the survey, *Love Your Parks Day*, was held Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup> when twenty-nine volunteers gathered at the Lakeside Park Sailboat House for their survey training and assignments. They finished the survey of 112 Oakland parks, medians, and City Landscapes that same day.

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<sup>3</sup> Survey of Maintenance at Oakland Parks, Median Strips and Facilities, Report and Presentation #3, Audree Jones-Taylor and Gillian Garro, October 22, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Without a built-in COLA in the LLAD maintenance expenses began to supersede revenues and, by 2009, the shortfall had reached 6.02M. Staffs were cut and expenses transferred to other appropriate sources to balance the budget. Current funding for parks, grounds and medians comes from the LLAD, the 1720 Comprehensive Cleanup Fund and the General Purpose Fund, with the LLAD providing the funding for a slight majority of the FTEs.



### C. Survey Format and Rating Scale

Our 2016 survey consists of 41 questions in ten categories, with additional questions about surveyors’ priorities and a final **Park Overall Rating**.<sup>5</sup> The rating scale for each question is the letter grade A through F where A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1 and F=0. The rating charts in this report use the numerical values and show only a rating range of 1-3 because no category except **Gophers** averaged higher than a 3.0 (B). A comment box was provided in each category for additional information that would help to clarify conditions and we will draw freely upon those comments in this report. In addition to ratings charts, photos and surveyor comments, we will make comparisons among the categories, between this year’s survey and last year’s, by Council districts and by OSCAR Element designations<sup>6</sup>.

## III. Survey Overview

### A. Park Overall Ratings

The **Park Overall Rating** is the final question of the survey. After rating questions in all the categories we ask the surveyor to consider conditions in the park as a whole. The 2016 average, 2.51 (C) for this question, was virtually the same as in 2015. Of the total 112 parks that were surveyed this year Council District 1 came out the clear winner with a grade of 2.9, just short of a 3.0 (B). But no district scored above a C+ average and District 7 scored below a 2.0 for a D+ average. Only Lakeside Park (surveyed in sectors by five stewards) scored a 3.0 (B).

| PARK OVERALL RATING by COUNCIL DISTRICTS |            |           |           |           |           |           |            |               |                              |  |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|------------------------------|--|
| What Council District is this park in?   |            |           |           |           |           |           |            |               |                              |  |
| Answer Options                           | CD 1       | CD 2      | CD 3      | CD 4      | CD 5      | CD 6      | CD 7       | Lakeside Park | 2015 Grand Average<br>2.5=C  |  |
| A-Excellent                              | 5          | 3         | 3         | 2         | 0         | 2         | 1          | 0             |                              |  |
| B  | 9          | 8         | 9         | 5         | 7         | 5         | 2          | 4             |                              |  |
| C  | 5          | 6         | 8         | 2         | 2         | 3         | 4          | 0             |                              |  |
| D  | 1          | 3         | 2         | 0         | 0         | 2         | 2          | 0             |                              |  |
| F-Failing                                | 0          | 1         | 2         | 1         | 1         | 0         | 2          | 0             |                              |  |
| Responses                                | 20         | 21        | 24        | 10        | 10        | 12        | 11         | 4             | Total=112                    |  |
| Rating Averages                          | 2.90<br>C+ | 2.42<br>C | 2.38<br>C | 2.70<br>C | 2.50<br>C | 2.58<br>C | 1.82<br>D+ | 3.00<br>B     | 2016 Grand Average<br>2.51=C |  |

<sup>5</sup> A survey is appended to the report on pages v-vi

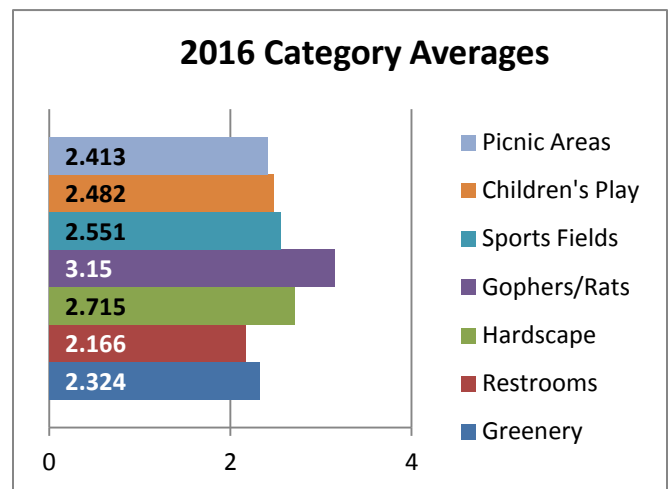
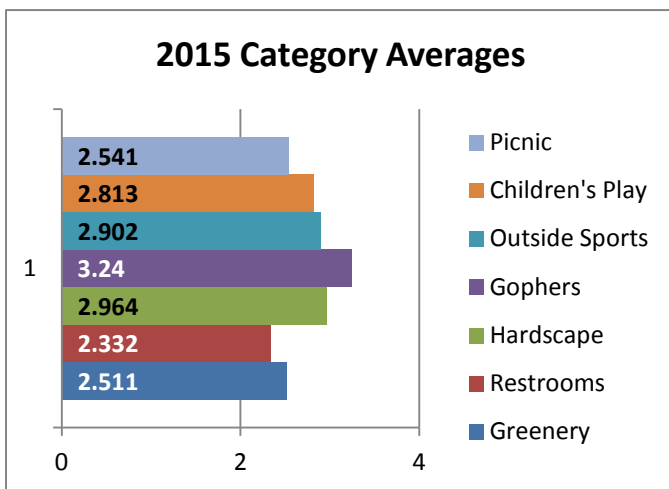
<sup>6</sup> An explanation of the OSCAR element of the General Plan is found on Page vii

Looking at the **Park Overall Rating** average by park types (OSCAR-Open Space Conservation And Recreation element) we see that *Passive Mini Parks* rated highest while *Resource Conservation Areas* and *Athletic Fields* rated lowest. Low scores for RCA and AF areas may be explained by the fact that service to Resource Conservation Areas is limited to complaints only. Athletic fields, on the other hand, are heavily used, especially during soccer season, and recovery from high impact sports is slow despite frequent servicing.

| PARK OVERALL RATING by OSCAR   |            |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |            |                                |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| Key: AF/Athletic Field, AMP/Active Mini Park, CP/Community Park, LP/Linear Park, NP/Neighborhood Park, PMP/Passive Mini Park, RCA/Resource Conservation Park, RSP/Regional Serving Park, SU/Special Use Park |            |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |            |                                |
| Answer Options   | AF         | AMP        | CP         | LP         | NP        | PMP        | RCA        | RSP        | SU         | 2015 Grand Average<br>2.5 = C  |
| RATINGS  |            |            |            |            |           |            |            |            |            |                                |
| A-Excellent  | 0          | 1          | 2          | 2          | 5         | 4          | 1          | 0          | 2          |                                |
| B  | 1          | 7          | 5          | 7          | 17        | 3          | 0          | 5          | 3          |                                |
| C  | 4          | 4          | 1          | 1          | 12        | 2          | 1          | 1          | 5          |                                |
| D  | 1          | 2          | 1          | 1          | 4         | 0          | 0          | 0          | 2          |                                |
| F-Failing  | 0          | 3          | 0          | 0          | 2         | 0          | 1          | 0          | 1          |                                |
| Number of Responses  | 6          | 17         | 9          | 11         | 40        | 9          | 3          | 6          | 13         | Total = 112                    |
| Rating Averages  | 2.00<br>C- | 2.06<br>C- | 2.89<br>C+ | 2.91<br>C+ | 2.48<br>C | 3.22<br>B- | 2.00<br>C- | 2.83<br>C+ | 2.23<br>C- | 2016 Grand Average<br>2.53 = C |

**B. Comparing Category Averages 2015-2016**

While the **Park Overall Ratings** for the two years were static, all of the survey category ratings declined in 2016.





**Restrooms** scored lowest of all categories both years with a 2.166 average in 2016. We will discuss restroom issues in more depth in the **Survey Focus**.

**Gophers** was the highest scoring category both in 2015 and 2016 and two parks in particular made spectacular improvements in that category: DeFremery and Willow went from an F to a B (3.0) in 2016. On a recent visit to Willow this writer spoke with Natasha, a denizen of the park, who related that last year she used to see gophers come out of their holes in broad daylight. She said that she has not seen any gophers this year. OPW has an ongoing contract for gopher eradication at DeFremery and Raimondi and observation confirms that lawns and turf conditions have improved exponentially at those two parks.

**Children’s Play**

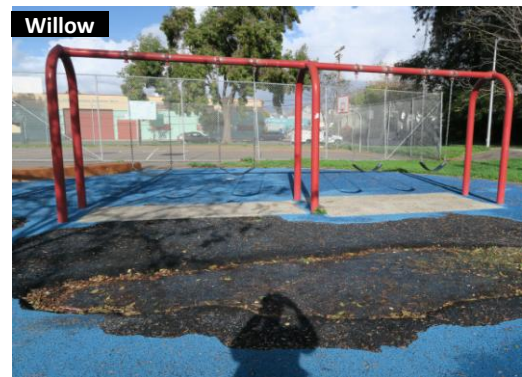
The process for cleaning sand or fibar is tedious and very low on the maintenance priority list so it is not surprising that #2 was rated lowest in this category. Question #4 is of even greater concern because of safety issues.

| OUTDOOR CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS                        |                |
|--|----------------|
| Answer Options                                       | Rating Average |
| 1. Availability of trash receptacles                 | 2.51           |
| 2. Cleanliness of sand or fibar                      | 2.23           |
| 3. Condition of play equipment                       | 2.55           |
| 4. Condition of safety padding under play structures | 2.34           |
| 5. Condition of seating for parents                  | 2.78           |



Safety padding is one of three surfaces used in Oakland play areas and the only ADA compatible. It’s the easiest to maintain, that is, until it develops holes. Patching, if done in a timely manner, can help but repeated patching is less successful and replacing the entire padding is very costly (approximately \$50K).

The holes at Bella Vista and Willow are so extensive that patching may no longer be an option. The missing swings at Willow have finally been replaced and apparently enjoyed by the neighborhood kids, but, with little or no padding left under them, safety is definitely an issue.



## IV. Three Major Issues in our Parks

### A. Homelessness

Rather than continue in the order of the survey categories we're going to skip to the last category on the survey—**Homeless Encampments**—because the issue of homelessness negatively affects all aspects of park maintenance. Surveys show that in 37 of the parks we surveyed (just under a third of the total) there were homeless encampments or other evidence of homeless people living in the park. The actual percentage of homelessness in the parks may be much higher.



Allowing people to take up residence in our parks puts untold stress on the park environment and facilities, especially the free-standing restrooms, and discourages use of the park by neighborhood children and adults. One surveyor of a downtown Oakland park related that he spoke to a group of children who wanted to play on the play equipment but were reluctant to do so because the “homeless people” had claimed that space.

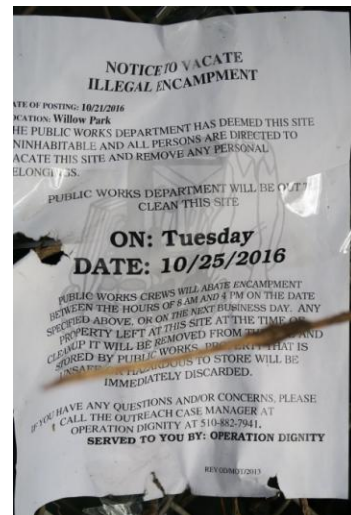
If we do not find alternatives for the homeless we have tacitly condoned their living in our parks.



The possessions pictured in this photo belong to a homeless man who has been living at Willow. The sign posting on the fence is standard practice for preparation to clean out a homeless

encampment.

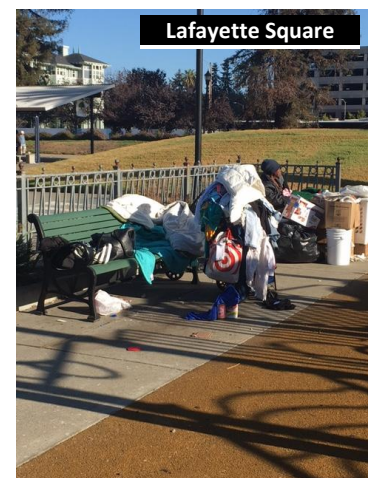
Public Works records indicate that, in 2015, \$150K was spent in work hours to clean out homeless camps. The actual time



dedicated to this task may be much higher as not all cleanups are recorded. Adding to the frustration of having to defer routine maintenance to accomplish the chore is that, inevitably, the belongings of the homeless individuals reappear not long after the cleanup. Parks with free-standing restrooms appear to have the greatest concentration of homeless encampments. The following surveyors' comments bring more light to the situation.

### Homeless Category Comments

- Hardy Park (CD1): *"Constant problem! Homeless sleeping and then sitting near basketball courts and rose garden. (Also homeless problem along greenbelt and within Little Frog)." —Carol Behr*
- Chinese Garden (CD2): *"Lots of camps near bridge side of park." —Susan Nguyen*
- Madison Square Park (CD2): *"Very large population of homeless." —Susan Nguyen*
- Peralta (CD2): *"Lots of encampments along the channel!!" —Myra Redman*
- San Antonio (CD2): *"The gazebo on East 19th St and 17th Ave is hosting several homeless individuals. We have reported this to the police on many occasions. This is a growing problem throughout Oakland. Fortunately, this particular group at the Gazebo is not hostile and they keep the area relatively clean but this could change on a dime." —Wendy Jung*
- Splashpad (CD2): *"Homeless are trampling our garden and defecating in the park." --Ken Katz*
- Lafayette Square (CD3): *"8-10 people living here according to man who helped me." —Nancy Friedman*
- Snow Park (CD3): *"There were at least three tents and a grocery cart. The homeless were mostly camped out along the edge of the park." —Liz Westbrook*
- Union Point (CD5): *"Providing a refuge for the homeless seems the primary function of this park. It was so sad. I went there twice to see if it had any neighborhood use during the week and basically it did not. On the first visit on a Saturday I had a long conversation with a homeless woman who dedicated herself to trying to clean the park but when I went back the next day it still looked pretty trashed."—Richard Cowan*





### **Addressing the Homeless Problem**

Homelessness has proliferated throughout the Bay Area, seemingly overnight. In Oakland homeless encampments can be seen everywhere, under overpasses, in medians, on highway exit ramps, in public ways, and in our parks. Where the occasional individual might have been camping just a few years ago multiple tents—or even small tent cities—can now be found.

When homeless people are reported to be camping in our parks Public Works must follow a set procedure: post a notice giving the owner of the property seventy-two hours to remove it; notify Project Dignity to offer assistance to the person; remove belongings after seventy-two hours. The homeless are familiar with the procedure and often temporarily remove their belongings only to return to their preferred site after the deadline has passed. Clearly, this operation disrupts maintenance routines, and it does not resolve the problem. We must remind readers that when we had Park Rangers they were the first to deal with the homeless. Kent McNab, a 30-year Oakland Park Ranger, had this to say: *“Rangers cleared out homeless camps and made social service referrals. Many were cleared without the need for assistance of Public Works or Social Services.”*

Although cities throughout California—and, for that matter cities all over the country—are experiencing what appears to be a rise in homelessness, the problem in the Bay Area is far more acute due to the steep increase in home values, and the concomitant increases in rents. Oakland is experiencing astronomical rent increases, more than most cities, and homelessness is the fallout from this housing market disruption. Our parks have become havens for citizens who have lost their homes and this is not a tenable solution for anyone, neither the homeless nor the Oaklanders who frequent those parks.

### **B. Greenery and Trees**

The condition of plants, ground cover and trees in a park can make the difference between an appealing or an off-putting park. Much effort and expense is invested in the installation of new landscaping in parks and good maintenance is essential to keep it in good condition. Mowing is on a regular, routine schedule (currently, every two weeks) while other necessary practices—aeration, fertilization and top dressing of the soil, weeding, edging, and pruning—unfortunately, are done less routinely.

### Maintenance Service Schedules

Public Works publishes its maintenance schedules on the City website. The current schedule was formulated in 2008, at the top of the recession, after revenue declines forced deep cutbacks in park maintenance staffing.<sup>7</sup> Parks, City landscapes and medians were grouped into three levels of service provision.<sup>8</sup>

- *Areas in Service Level 1 would receive a high level of “frequent, regular routine maintenance”*
- *Service Level 2 “a moderate level with regular monitoring, and adjustments to keep the area ‘appealing’.”*
- *Service Level 3 “little to no routine maintenance.”*

Of the 163 parks and city landscapes on the maintenance list 50 are in Level 1, 89 in Level 2, and 24 in Level 3. There is an additional list of 77 medians, most of which are Level 3.<sup>9</sup>

### Grass, Ground Cover and the Drought

**Parched and Spotty Grass.** Our survey poses questions essential to the practice of good park maintenance. The lowest rated **Greenery** question is #4 (bare spots/1.92 [D+]) and can be explained by the State mandate of 25% cutback in irrigation water usage. This was also the number one concern of surveyors for the **Priority** question for this category.

| GREENERY Answer Options                                     | Rating Average |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Is the grass mowed?                                      | 2.70           |
| 2. Is the grass edged?                                      | 2.15           |
| 3. Is the grass/ground cover free of animal/bird droppings? | 2.79           |
| <b>4. Is the grass/ground cover free of bare spots?</b>     | <b>1.92</b>    |
| 5. Are planted areas free of weeds?                         | 2.08           |
| 6. Condition of shrubs and/or flowers                       | 2.26           |
| 7. Are shrubs pruned?                                       | 2.16           |
| 8. Condition of trees (any dead branches, etc.?)            | 2.56           |
| 9. Are trees pruned?  | 2.30           |
| <i>Category Average</i>                                     | <i>2.324</i>   |

<sup>7</sup> City of Oakland FY 2015-17 Adopted Policy Budget, G-69: “Park maintenance staffing levels for fulltime staff was reduced nearly 50% in 2008. These reductions have impacted the maintenance; resulting in a look and feel that Oakland parks are unkempt and have increased risk.”

<sup>8</sup> See Park List beginning on page I for current service levels of the surveyed areas.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/oakca1/groups/pwa/documents/marketingmaterial/oak050141.pdf> This list is being revised by OPW and service levels for many parks will be downgraded as a result.

Since our survey is conducted during the dry months of summer, we would not expect all parks to be verdant at the time of the survey. However, the damaging impact of water restrictions on park vegetation is of great concern for OPW. In 2015, the Foundation joined with other volunteer groups to help create a demonstration drought-tolerant planting project at Public Works headquarters to be used as a model for plant replacement in other parks as funds became available. Since then, seven large-scale drought resistant replacement projects have been implemented in several of our parks including Lakeside, Burckhalter and Arroyo Viejo. Others projects are in the works.

In some areas, where the drought has already compromised the grass cover, efforts are made to revive the grass by more frequent aeration and addition of soil amendments, but it's an uphill battle. In open areas of some parks the grass has been so damaged by high impact pickup games, especially soccer, (ex: Lowell and Eastshore) that it is almost impossible to retain a good green cover. Other park grounds suffer from gopher holes or dogs running free (ex: South Prescott).



South Prescott-high impact



Carter Gilmore-low impact



Verdese Carter-high impact

**Mowing.** The second highest rated **Greenery** question was #1 (mowing/2.7 [C+]). The service schedule on the city website lists a three-week rotating mowing schedule for most parks although we are informed by Public Works that the current rotation is actually two weeks. This basic task, along with litter collection, are OPW's top priorities.

Other questions in the **Greenery** category pertain to pruning, weeding and edging and were rated substantially lower. These gardening practices, which are so essential to the health and aesthetics of trees, shrubs and ground cover, are only performed when time allows. Routine edging also preserves walkways as seen in this photo of a DeFremery walkway.



**Priorities in the Greenery Category**

| <b>Greenery Category Priority Questions</b>                 | <b># of Responses</b> |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. Is the grass mowed?                                      | 8                     |
| 2. Is the grass edged?                                      | 5                     |
| 3. Is the grass/ground cover free of animal/bird droppings? | 7                     |
| <b>4. Is the grass/ground cover free of bare spots?</b>     | 26                    |
| 5. Are planted areas free of weeds?                         | 11                    |
| 6. Condition of shrubs and/or flowers                       | 8                     |
| 7. Are shrubs pruned?                                       | 4                     |
| 8. Condition of trees (any dead branches, etc.?)            | 8                     |
| <b>9. Are trees pruned?</b>                                 | 12                    |

Priority #1/Question 4: *Is the ground cover/grass free of bare spots?*

In each category the surveyor was asked: “What is your first priority to fix in this category?” In the **Greenery** category there were nine questions so surveyors were asked to “Choose from among the 9 items above.” The chart above shows that question #4 received the most votes with 26. The long drought and mandated cutback of 25% in irrigation has taken its toll on the grass and ground cover. The priority ratings show this as a major concern.

Priority #2/Question #9: *Are trees pruned?*

This was the runner up priority in the **Greenery** category with 12 votes. Trees are more than ornaments in our parks. They provide shade, habitat and nutrients for the soil and are essential in moderating climate. The importance of healthy trees throughout a city cannot be overestimated.

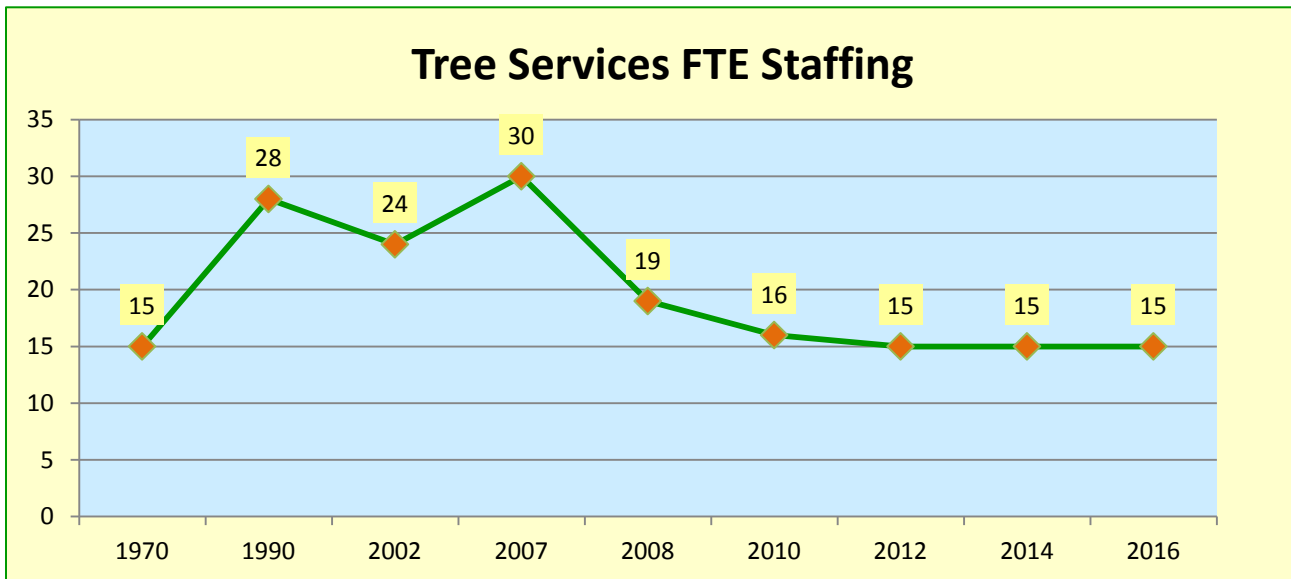
**Our Trees are Dying**

There are well over 200,000 street and park trees in Oakland. Because of the prolonged drought and cutbacks in staffing for tree services hundreds, perhaps thousands of our trees are dying; that translates to a loss of metric tons of stored carbon, contributing heavily to global warming. The 2015-17 budget states:



*“Landscaped assets and Trees have been compromised by staffing decreases, resulting in increased blight, weeds, litter and a generally unkempt appearance. Tree maintenance is limited to hazardous response only.”<sup>10</sup>*

In 2007, the budget for tree services was at its apogee with \$4.4M provided for a staff of 30 FTEs (Full Time Employee positions). Precipitously, in 2008, at the height of the recession, the budget was slashed by half and the tree service FTEs were reduced to 19. FTEs finally leveled off at 15 in 2012 and remain at that level today. Of those fifteen positions, only eight are tree trimmers and, of those, one position has gone unfilled for a year and another is vacant because of sick leave; that leaves only six working tree trimmers as of this writing. Tree maintenance is now reduced to emergency service—only hazardous and dead trees are attended to.



### Comments about Trees

- Glen Echo (CD1): *“There is an outstanding work order at Public Works Tree Services for removal of 1 large invasive tree and pruning of hazardous branches on another large one”*. —Arlene Feng
- Mandana Plaza (CD2): *“Total of 6 HUGE Redwood trees. Three trees at each end of the park. Beautiful trees appear to be healthy. Some dead branches. All the trees need professional tree service.”* —Patricia Hardy

<sup>10</sup> City of Oakland Fiscal Year 2015-2016, G-61, Prior Reductions

Morcom Rose Garden



- Morcom Rose Garden (CD2): *“What is most worrisome, however, are the dead and dying trees. A huge branch fell on the Vernon St sidewalk 2 weeks ago, and would have hurt anyone below it. Another very large, dead tree is losing its branches and is dangerous.”* —Nancy Friedman & Grace Neufeld
- San Antonio (CD2): *“We have lost 35 large trees in the 25 years I have lived across the street from the park. Less than 5 have been replaced. Many are stressed from lack of water. Most need to be pruned. All need to be evaluated by an arborist. The top priority here is to repair the old irrigation system so that the park is watered regularly during the dry season.”*—Wendy Jung
- Lafayette Square (CD3): *“Many of the perimeter small trees are dead and others are dying. Remaining trees should be watered to survive.”* — Marilyn Reynolds
- Mosswood (CD3): *“Two dead trees have been removed recently. Shrubs are definitely stressed by drought. Some summer water would improve their appearance.”*—Mary McAllister
- Oak Park (CD3): *“Redwood trees extremely stressed – users strip their bark off, &/or use them as urinals.”* —Elisabeth Brandon
- Montclair Railroad Trail (CD4): *Park Maintenance has no one to deal with our “wild land” style park. Lots of fire prone brush abutting residences, dead wood and unbalanced limbs in trees need pruning.* —Lin Barron
- Maxwell (CD6): *“Over five years of accumulating dead palm fronds over the children’s sand and play area, and above the retaining wall where a lot of parents sit is an unacceptable danger. A few normally fall each week, and in high winds, sometimes a dozen in a day. One just missed a mother and toddler last month. With a fall from up to 40 feet, a frond could easily sever a child’s spine, as a falling branch just did to a mother in a SF park this month. We need all the dead fronds trimmed! This cannot wait!”* —Nancy Karigaca

Maxwell Park



## Tree Management and Maintenance

From comments alone, it is obvious that many of our park trees are in poor condition. Morcom Rose Garden alone lost 18 trees in 2015! The primary cause is, no doubt, the prolonged drought. However, the secondary cause is the lack of pruning and replanting. With its severe reduction of tree crews, the City has essentially abandoned its commitment to make Oakland a truly *Green City*. The following summary comes from the FY 2015-17 Proposed Policy Budget:

*“Oakland is known for its green tree canopy; the 100-year-old Jack London Oak tree symbolizes our commitment to being a Green City. The urban forest maintained by OPW consists of over 250,000 trees of which 42,642 are street trees (per the 2008 Sidewalk Survey) plus trees found in public parks, medians, streetscapes, and within the street right-of-way, the exact number has not been quantified. Several hundred new street trees have been planted by Urban Releaf, Sierra Club, West Oakland Greening Initiative and homeowners, far fewer than pre- 2006 when the City had a tree planting crew that planted over 1,000 trees a year. Tree staff is also responsible for processing over 200 tree permits annually under the City Tree and View Ordinances. All permits and hazardous tree requests must be inspected by an Arboricultural Inspector or Tree Supervisor. There are currently two positions which handle this work. Tree Services staffing was reduced by 50% since 2006. Tree services are limited to managing emergency tree response. The City ended the tree planting and aesthetic tree pruning program in 2008.”<sup>11</sup>*

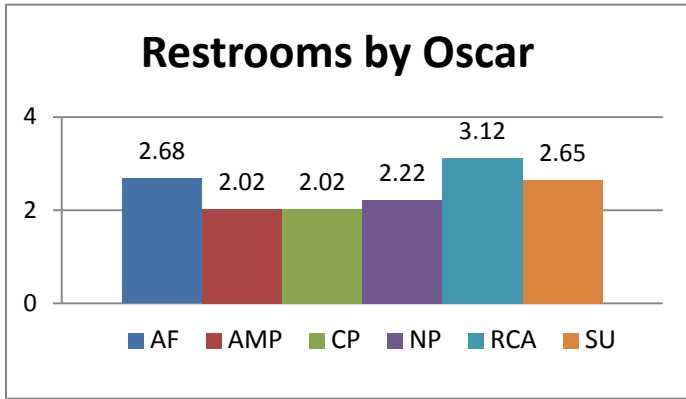
It’s a vicious cycle. The less care we give to our trees the more trees we lose. Oaklanders are proud to live in a city that ranks high on *Green City* lists, both for its building and recycling practices and for its abundant parkland and trees. But the “green” in Oakland is rapidly fading and will be impossible to recover any time in the foreseeable future if we fail to provide the staffing and equipment needed to save our trees now.

### C. Restrooms

Our survey covers only free-standing restrooms, not recreation center restrooms or portapotties. Parks with recreation centers also have free-standing or outdoor-accessible restrooms for the hours when the recreation center is closed. Restroom maintenance is essential for a good park experience especially for parents and their children. This requires that the restrooms be kept clean and well equipped, but meeting that requirement is challenging, especially on weekends.

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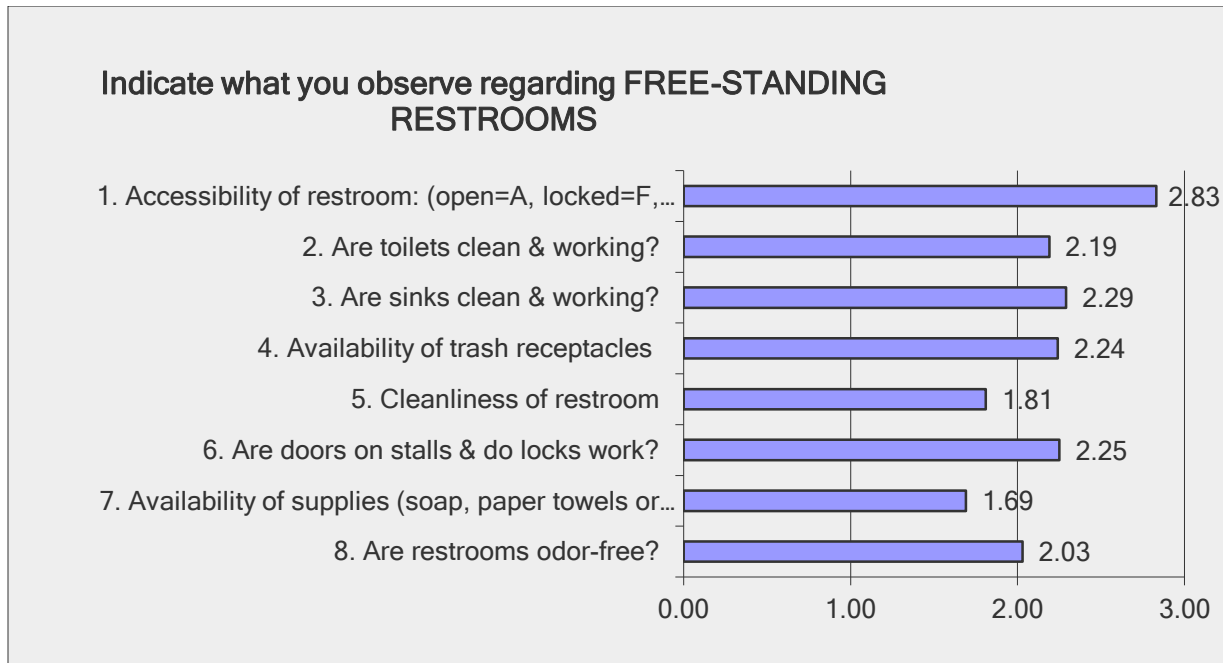
<sup>11</sup> City of Oakland, FY 2015-17 Proposed Policy Budget, G-68



Ratings by OSCAR designations show that **Athletic Fields** and **Special Use** park restrooms are perceived to be the cleanest, best stocked and equipped, but keep in mind that the scores are merely in the C to C+ range.

The chart below displays the eight questions in the **Restroom** category.

Question #7, Availability of Supplies (soap, paper towels or dryers, toilet paper, etc.) was scored the lowest with 1.69 (D). Question #5, Cleanliness, was close behind with 1.81 (D+).



Clean and well-supplied restrooms are essential for an enjoyable park experience. There are thirty-five free-standing restrooms scattered among our parks. They are open to the public seven days a week unless they are locked, as is the case with almost 20% of them.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Note: Some restrooms have been closed because of damage inflicted upon them by users. Porta-potties are provided for events in some of those cases.

The posted maintenance schedule calls for a thorough daily cleaning and resupplying of every park restroom.

- Wash down walls and floors
- Refill soap dispensers where applicable
- Refill toilet paper and hand towel dispensers
- Remove trash from interior litter receptacles and perimeter receptacles within a 50ft radius
- Sweep and wash down entrances and perimeter



Central Reservoir



Montclair



Union Point

A staff of 18 personnel attend to the cleaning and supplying of the 35 restrooms once a day (more frequently at enterprise facilities) from Monday to Friday; however, only two weekend workers cover the same territory. The weekday schedule may work for most parks but the weekend schedule can—in no way—provide for clean, functional, well-stocked restrooms and that’s when the complaints roll in. Moreover, fixtures for supplies (and thus supplies) are often absent, which can result in a very regrettable experience for the user. Many of our surveys were conducted during the summer and on weekends so the comments below will illustrate conditions that are of great concern.

### Restroom Category Comments

- Rockridge/Temescal Greenbelt (CD1): *“No soap. Light not working inside bathroom. No trash receptacles inside bathroom-only outside. No seat covers. Graffiti inside bathroom (rude words). Bathroom smells, feels really dirty. Needs a major spray down. Please confirm cleaners have access to water hose and valves vs using a 'bowl' to splash-clean the bathroom!”* —Carol Behr

- Pine Knoll (CD2): *“Women’s stall latch broken, men’s is stuck. Women’s faucet is loose, but works. Men’s urinal very dirty. Toilet paper, but no paper towels.”* —Terry Boom
- San Antonio (CD2): *“The bathrooms are not well maintained. I get more complaints about these facilities than any other parts of the park. On several weekends, they have remained locked and thereby unavailable to park users. the condition of the restrooms has been an ongoing problem. More frequent maintenance is the only solution I can suggest.”* —Wendy Jung
- Lakeside Park (CD3): *2 are locked - 3 open but DISGUSTING. Reporting to call center.* —Barbara Schaaf
- Mosswood (CD3): *“No paper towels, but toilet paper and toilet protectors.”* —Mary McAlister
- Brookdale (CD4): *“Overall, the restrooms are OK.”* —Paul Vidican
- Montclair (CD4): *“The restrooms were very disappointing. They were very dirty and unhygienic. The restrooms would discourage use of the parks for extended periods of time. There was no soap and or paper towels. One of the stalls seemed not to have a door.”*—Monique Spyke
- Josie de la Cruz (CD5): *“The restrooms lack toilet paper and paper towels, the restroom stall door features some large graffiti.”* —Alexei Puchkov
- Union Point (CD5): *“The restrooms open to the public are quite dirty.”* —Richard Cowan
- Willie Wilkins (CD7): *“Bathroom needs be clean and then closed. Trash by both men women’s area in and out.”* —Mike Hammock

## V. Changes in our Survey

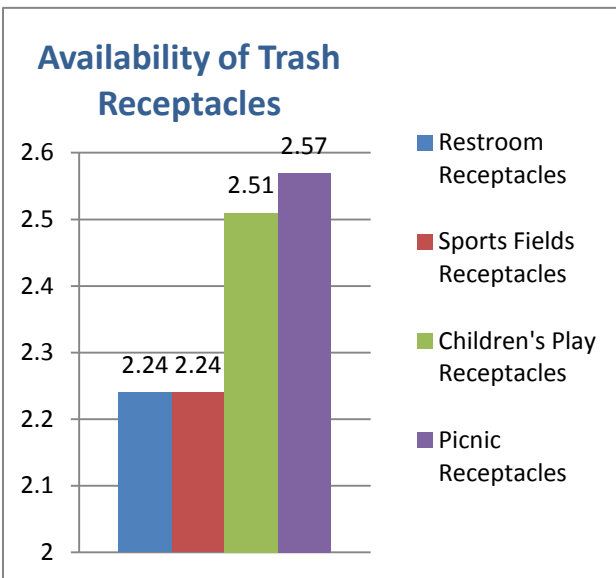
We have modified the survey several times across its 11-year span to capture information that will be more useful for all. From conversations with Public Works officials about the problems around litter and because of the ongoing drought we decided to eliminate two categories from the original survey—**Irrigation** and **Litter**. We replaced these categories with relevant questions interspersed in other categories. Irrigation is addressed in the **Greenery** category with a question about “bare spots”. **Litter** is covered in other categories with questions about the “availability of trash receptacles”.



Categories for **Gophers** and **Homeless** are recent additions and, this year, we added a question about the surveyor’s maintenance priority in each category.

**Litter/Availability of Litter Receptacles**

We have eliminated the litter category because a survey depicts only a moment in time and a rating for **Litter** did not inform as to a general and ongoing condition. Variables such as when the last collection occurred, traffic in the park, and wind and rain can positively or negatively affect litter conditions and surveys are not scheduled with those factors in mind.



However, just because a once-a-year survey cannot measure average litter accumulation, we must not dismiss the problem out of hand. Although some argue that litter containers only invite more littering, for now it is policy to provide them so we include questions about the “availability of trash receptacles” in practically every category. The rating average for this question was 2.39 (C) and their absence in restrooms and at sports fields was of most concern to surveyors.



Trash receptacles are gone from Willow Park. The cardboard receptacles formerly in use were reportedly stolen by a homeless man to use for his bed and were not yet replaced as of this writing. There are permanent containers on the sidewalk (emptied by Waste Management) but, on the day this photo was taken the sidewalk containers were overflowing. In the absence of trash receptacles refuse is strewn on benches.



Willow

Litter collection consumes a sizeable percentage of park maintenance hours, necessarily reducing time that could be spent on landscape management. Litter collection is conducted two full days during the 5-day workweek and at regional-serving parks on weekends, even as new techniques and equipment —mini packers, underground receptacles—have actually made the process more efficient and less time consuming. Until creative solutions are found to address the culture of littering and to radically improve collection methods this task will continue to steal time from much more important maintenance needs.

## VI. Parks in Jeopardy

This is the third consecutive year that we have drawn attention to parks that fall far short of acceptable standards. When parks are allowed to decay they can compromise the integrity and safety of their neighborhood. We hope our focus on these substandard parks will help to garner additional resources to turn them around.

### 2015 Parks in Jeopardy

Cypress Memorial (CD3)  
88<sup>th</sup> Street Mini (CD7)  
Holly Mini (CD7)

St. Andrews Square (CD3)  
Columbian Gardens (CD7)

Willow Mini (CD3),  
Dolphin Mini (CD7)

### 2016 Parks in Jeopardy

Chinese Garden (CD2)  
Marj Saunders (CD4)

25<sup>th</sup> Street Mini (CD3)  
Union Point (CD5)

McClymonds (CD3)  
Holly Mini (CD7)

Of the seven 2015 **Parks in Jeopardy** only one—Holly Mini—remains on the 2016 list, an encouraging outcome. For some of those that were dropped from the list there are apparent reasons:

Cypress Memorial has been taken off the list (in fact it got a C rating this year) and the reason may very well be because supplementary work to spruce up the park was done in time for a memorial ceremony, just as the survey was being conducted. This goes to show that a bit of cosmetic care to a site that is often neglected can make a considerable difference in its appeal.

St. Andrews Square is under renovation. This outcome happened only after a long hard-fought campaign to improve the square by a neighborhood group led by West Oakland activist Alex Miller-Cole.

Willow has finally seen the replacement of the swing set that was destroyed in a fire several years ago. Its **Overall Park Rating** was upgraded from an F to a D.

88<sup>th</sup> Mini has been the recipient of additional care this year (see photos). Its back fence that was once covered with gang graffiti has been cleaned up as well as its grounds. The partial (and unusable) play structure remains, however. This park has benefited from a caring OPW supervisor but the broken play structure, which has been in this condition for years, still needs to be replaced.



2015 88<sup>th</sup> Mini graffiti on back wall



2016 88<sup>th</sup> Mini back wall



2016 88<sup>th</sup> Mini



Holly Mini remains on the list of this survey, as it has for years. It is on a quiet neighborhood street and the play equipment is in good shape but the furniture and equipment are festooned with gang graffiti and garbage is strewn upon the ground. Neighbors relate that this park belongs both to the gangs and the homeless and they are afraid to bring their kids there to play.

**Five First-Time Parks** received an **F Park Overall Rating** and all but one, Marj Saunders, are clearly understandable choices.



Chinese Garden



McClymonds



Union Point

### 2016 Parks in Jeopardy: Surveyors' Comments

Chinese Garden: *"Neglected. No sign of visitors other than homeless."*—Susan Nguyen

McClymonds: *"The current condition of McClymonds Mini-Park is well below the acceptable standard. The park is full of trash and graffiti, and the safety matting is damaged and incomplete under the swings."*—John Bliss

Union Point: *"This a potentially beautiful spot with great views that is littered with trash and full of homeless encampments. I spoke to some of the homeless that were making an attempt to clean up the area, but they seemed in the minority. In certain areas of the park, it even seemed a little hostile and menacing."* —Richard Cowan

25<sup>th</sup> Street Mini: *"The gates are locked. A park that cannot be accessed is failing the community."*—Liz Westbrook

Marj Saunders: *"Frequent calls to OPW Call Center. Issues are pending. We do get drains cleaned annually but, generally, there is not much City support. We are applying for a KOB grant to repair the WPA wall."* —Elaine Geffen

Holly Mini: *"This park is a blight. It is used only at night by various unsavory elements. I spoke with the person who lives next door to the park [who said] 'This park should be cleaned up and then shut down with a high strong fence'."* —Mike Udkow



We call attention to these needy parks with each survey in hopes that the issues that propelled them to this list will indeed be addressed. We applaud the efforts that have been made to improve some parks on the 2015 list and hope that the remaining parks will have improved with the next survey.

## VII. Optimal Maintenance Goals

Ideally we would like to see an increase in gardener positions to the previous 2007 level of 57.5 FTEs. In the meantime, there are strategic improvements to the Park Maintenance Program that are not beyond reach. The 2015-17 Proposed Policy Budget sets options for maintenance goals that we should be striving for; either A or B would bring us closer to restoring health to our vast park and grounds system and should be considered in all future budget negotiations.

### Policy and Service Tradeoffs: Additional Park and Landscaping Maintenance

| Activity                         | Current Service Level                                   | Service Level A                  | Service Level B                         |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Mowing                           | Every 3 weeks   | Weekly                           | Every 12-14 Days                        |
| Edging and Pruning               | Every 4-6 Weeks   | Bi-weekly                        | Monthly                                 |
| Fertilizing Lawns                | None  | Biannually                       | Annually                                |
| Litter Collection                | 1-2 times per week (Lakeside park only 7 days per week) | Daily including weekends         | 3-4 times per week including weekends   |
| Irrigation Repairs               | 3-5 days delay depending on workload                    | Repairs within 24 hours          | Repairs with 24 hours (except weekends) |
| Weeding                          | Respond to weed complaints                              | Spring and Fall weeding          | Spring weeding                          |
| Planting                         | None (volunteer based projects)                         | Spring replacement planting      | Replacement plantings if time allows    |
| Medians/Streetscapes             | Complaint only (visual obstructions or hazards)         | Monthly routine maintenance      | Quarterly maintenance                   |
| Full time staff at parks         | Lakeside Park only                                      | Lakeside Park and 7 major parks* | Lakeside Park only                      |
| Sat/Sun Litter container service | Lakeside Park only                                      | Sat. & Sun. at major Parks       | Lakeside Park only                      |
| Open space / Trails              | Complaint only  | Routine maintenance              | Monthly routine maintenance             |

*“The resources required to provide Service Level A would increase park maintenance staffing levels by 65 FTEs and increase the maintenance budget by 85 percent. Service Level B would increase park maintenance staffing by 37 FTEs and increase the budget by 54 percent.”*

**TOTAL COST – Service Level A Ongoing: Y1 - \$4,500,000 / Y2 - \$4,500,000**

**TOTAL COST – Service Level B Ongoing: Y1 - \$2,886,000 / Y2 - \$2,886,000<sup>13</sup>**

<sup>13</sup> City of Oakland, FY 2015-17 Proposed Policy Budget, Additional Park and Landscaping Maintenance, B-8



## VIII. Core Recommendations

**Augment Staffing for Gardeners.** —Preventive maintenance is the key to sustaining park landscaping. Gardeners have the skills to apply those practices and teach them to crew members. Implementing a more rigorous schedule of preventive plant maintenance will save time and money in the long run.

**Restore Tree Workers.** —Restoration of tree maintenance personnel is crucial to the survival of our green canopy; the canopy is vital to the quality of our air and is our bulwark against global warming. We do not have enough staff today to keep our trees healthy and our park users safe. In 2007 we had a Tree Services staff of 30. Today, with a staff of only 15, they are constrained to addressing only the most dangerous situations presented by failing limbs and dying trees. Before it is too late we need to restore the 15 positions we lost in the recession cutbacks.

**Homelessness.** —The city must address the homeless situation with expedience. The longer the homeless are without shelter and resources the more deleterious the impact on their lives and on our parks. Other cities have made far more progress in this regard than we have in Oakland.

**Restrooms.** —Good restroom conditions are essential to the quality of the park experience. Our citizens should not have to choose to go to parks in other nearby cities where the facilities are better maintained. We need increased staffing, especially on weekends, to keep our restrooms clean and functioning properly and broken fixtures for restroom supplies must be repaired or replaced.

### Additional Recommendations

**Provide a Long-Term Funding Solution for Maintenance of Measure DD Lake Merritt Improvements.**—Thanks to a one-time infusion of funds the lake landscaping will be maintained properly for at least a year but all of the Measure DD installations and the new medians need ongoing care to maintain those areas to acceptable standards.

**Provide for Safety and Security in our Parks.**—Park Rangers provided tremendous value to Oaklanders using our parks. They knew our parks well and knew how to deal with park problems. OPD is now delegated to the task but better training and commitment are sorely needed.

**Support Neighborhood Groups and Stewards.**—Parks with stewards or neighborhood group support tend to thrive. Promote and support efforts by citizens to help their parks.

**Parks in Jeopardy**—Failing parks can be turned around as we have seen and time and effort should be invested to find ways to do that. Every neighborhood deserves a clean, attractive, functional and safe park.

**Stay Creative**—Continue to explore alternative maintenance funding approaches such as conservancies, dedicated fees or taxes, private funding, etc.

## IX. Conclusion

We do not want to leave readers with the impression that Public Works is short on dedicated, hard-working employees. The opposite is actually true: we on the Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation board and our stewards have come to know crew leaders, gardeners and part-timers who love their work and try their best, even in the face of limited resources, to serve their clients well. Their assistance and support to stewards and neighborhood park groups is essential to making the volunteer experience, so vital to the upkeep of many Oakland parks, a positive one.

We wish to thank all those who participated in our survey and in the writing of this report—our stewards, our surveyors, our Foundation editors and our Oakland Public Works advisors. We prepare this report and the subsequent Power Point presentation each year in a quest to shed light on the problems associated with our parks and bring resolution to those issues.

Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation is dedicated to making our park system outstanding through its work in obtaining capital improvement grants, providing scholarships for programming, providing financial support for park groups and lobbying for much needed resources for park maintenance. We know that functional and well-maintained parks help to create healthy and happy future citizens and provide peaceful retreats from the bustle of city life. We ask the readers of this report to do their part to help make our parks the best that they can be.

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**APPENDIX**



2016 Community Report Card on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks

Surveyed Parks

| District 1                                | OSCAR Codes | Park Overall Rating 2015/16 | Service Level |
|---|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Ayala Park                                | PMP         | C/A                         | 2             |
| Bushrod Park                              | CP          | B/A                         | 1             |
| Chabot Park                               | NP          | B/B                         | 1             |
| Colby Park                                | AMP         | B/B                         | 2             |
| Dover St Park /MLK                        | AMP         | B/B                         | 2             |
| Driver [Jasper P.] Plaza                  | PMP         | C/C                         | 2             |
| Frank Ogawa Firescape Garden & Open Space | SU          | B/C                         |               |
| Gateway Gardens Park & Pavillion          | SU          | A/A                         | 3             |
| Glen Echo Park                            | LP          | B/B                         | 2             |
| Golden Gate Park                          | NP          | C/B                         | 1             |
| Hardy Park                                | NP          | C/C                         | 1             |
| Helen MacGregor Plaza                     | SU          | D/D                         | 2             |
| Linden Street Park                        | AMP         | C/B                         | 2             |
| North Oakland Regional Sports Center      | AF/RCA      | B/C                         | 1             |
| Ostrander Park                            | LP          | C/A                         | Not on list   |
| Pleasant Valley Road Median               | LP          | A/B                         | 3             |
| Racine Point Median                       | PMP         | B/B                         | 3             |
| Redondo Park                              | AMP         | C/B                         | 2             |
| Rockridge Blvd Park                       | PMP         | B/A                         | 1             |
| Rockridge-Temescal Greenbelt (FROG Park)  | LP          | B/C                         | 2             |
| District 2                                | OSCAR Codes | Park Overall Rating 2015/16 | Service Level |
| Adam Park/Veteran's Center Gardens        | SU          | B/B                         | 2             |
| Athol Plaza Park                          | NP          | C/C                         | 2             |
| Bella Vista Park                          | NP          | B/B                         | 2             |
| Channel Park                              | LP          | D/B                         | 2             |
| Chinese Garden Park                       | SU          | D/F                         | 2             |
| Cleveland Cascade                         | SU          | A/A                         | 2             |
| Clinton Square Park                       | NP          | A/A                         | 2             |
| Eastshore Park (Embarcadero & Astro Park) | NP          | C/C                         | 1             |
| FM Smith Park                             | NP          | B/B                         | 1             |
| Franklin Park                             | NP          | A/C                         | 1             |
| Garfield Ball Field                       | AF          | B/C                         | 2             |

2016 Community Report Card on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks

|   |                    |                                    |                        |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Lincoln Square Park   | NP                 | B/B                                | 1                      |
| Park Blvd Plaza Park  | PMP                | B/A                                | Not on list            |
| Peralta Park  | LP                 | /D                                 | 2                      |
| Pine Knoll  | SU                 | B/C                                | 2                      |
| San Antonio Park  | CP                 | A/D                                | 1                      |
| Splashpad Park  | SU                 | C/B                                | 1                      |
| <b>Lakeside Park</b>  | <b>OSCAR Codes</b> | <b>Park Overall Rating 2015/16</b> | <b>Service Level</b>   |
| LP-A:Lake Merritt - sailboat house to Pergola. (Includes tot lot and labyrinth) | LP                 | C/B                                | 1                      |
| LP-B:sailboat house to Grand Ave. (Includes bandstand)                          | SU                 | B/                                 | 1                      |
| LP-C: Gardens @ Lake Merritt  | SU                 | B/B                                | 1                      |
| LP-D: Fairyland to Perkins St. along Grand Ave                                  | NP                 | C/B                                | 1                      |
| LP-E:Harrison & Grand to Cameron Stanford House                                 | LP                 | B/B                                | 1                      |
| LP-F: From Pergola along Lakeshore to Cameron Stanford House                    | LP                 | B/B                                | 1                      |
| <b>District 3</b>   | <b>OSCAR Codes</b> | <b>Park Overall Rating 2015/16</b> | <b>Service Level</b>   |
| 25th St Mini Park   | AMP                | F/F                                | Not on list            |
| Bertha Port Park  | AMP                | B/B                                | 2                      |
| Cypress Freeway Memorial Park   | PMP                | F/C                                | 2                      |
| DeFremery Park  | CP                 | C/B                                | 1                      |
| Durant Mini Park  | AMP                | A/A                                | 2                      |
| Estuary Park  | LP                 | B/B                                | 2                      |
| Grove Shafter Park  | NP                 | C/B                                | 2                      |
| Jefferson Square Park   | NP                 | A/B                                | 2                      |
| Lafayette Square Park   | SU                 | B/C                                | 2                      |
| Lowell Park   | NP                 | B/B                                | 1                      |
| Mandela Parkway (8 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> Streets)                    | LP                 | C/B                                | Under private contract |
| Marston Campbell Park   | NP                 | C/C                                | 2                      |
| McClymonds Mini Park  | AMP                | D/F                                | 2                      |
| Mosswood Park   | CP                 | B/A                                | 1                      |
| Oak Glen Park   | LP                 | B/A                                | 2                      |
| Oak Park  | AMP                | B/C                                | 2                      |
| Poplar Park /Willie Keyes Rec Ctr   | NP                 | B/B                                | 1                      |
| Raimondi Park   | AF                 | C/C                                | 1                      |
| Snow Park   | NP                 | B/C                                | 2                      |
| South Prescott Park   | NP                 | D/D                                | 2                      |

2016 Community Report Card on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks

|  |                    |                                    |                      |
|--|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Union Plaza Park/Fitzgerald  | SU                 | C/C                                | 2                    |
| Wade Johnson Park [aka Cole]                                       | NP                 | F/C                                | 2                    |
| Willow Mini Park   | NP                 | F/D                                | 2                    |
| <b>District 4</b>  | <b>OSCAR Codes</b> | <b>Park Overall Rating 2015/16</b> | <b>Service Level</b> |
| Allendale Park   | NP                 | C/A                                | 1                    |
| Avenue Terrace Park  | NP                 | B/B                                | 2                    |
| Brookdale Park   | CP                 | B/B                                | 1                    |
| Dimond Park  | CP                 | D/B                                | 1                    |
| Joaquin Miller Playground (Perry Field & Tot Lot)                  | NP                 | A/C                                | 1                    |
| Marj Saunders Park   | RCA                | C/F                                | 3                    |
| McCrea Park (casting pool)   | SU                 | B/C                                | 4                    |
| Montclair Park (RC)  | CP                 | B/C                                | 1                    |
| Montclair Railroad Trail   |                    | /B                                 | Not on list          |
| Redwood Heights Park   | NP                 | A/B                                | 1                    |
| Shepherd Canyon Park   | NP/RCA             | C/A                                | 1                    |
| <b>District 5</b>  | <b>OSCAR Codes</b> | <b>Park Overall Rating 2015/16</b> | <b>Service Level</b> |
| Central Reservoir Recreation Area                                  | NP                 | B/B                                | 2                    |
| Cesar Chavez Park (formerly Foothill Meadows)                      | NP                 | C/B                                | 2                    |
| Fruitvale Bridge Park  | LP                 | C/B                                | 3                    |
| Fruitvale Plaza Park   | PMP                | B/B                                | Not on list          |
| Josie De La Cruz Park (rec center/Carmen Flores, formerly Sanborn) | NP                 | B/B                                | 1                    |
| Manzanita Park   | NP                 | B/C                                | 1                    |
| Nicol Mini Park  | AMP                | B/B                                | 2                    |
| Peralta Hacienda Park  | SU                 | B/B                                | 1                    |
| Union Point Park   | NP                 | C/F                                | 2                    |
| William Wood Park  | NP                 | D/C                                | 2                    |
| <b>District 6</b>  | <b>OSCAR Codes</b> | <b>Park Overall Rating 2015/16</b> | <b>Service Level</b> |
| 85th Street/Eula Brinson Mini                                      | AMP                | D/D                                | 3                    |
| Arroyo Viejo Park  | CP                 | C/B                                | 1                    |
| Burckhalter Park   | NP                 | A/B                                | 1                    |
| Carter-Gilmore/Greenman Field                                      | PMP/AF             | A/C                                | 1                    |
| Concordia Park   | NP                 | C/C                                | 1                    |
| Lion's Creek Crossing (formerly Coliseum Gardens)                  | NP                 | A/C                                | 2                    |

2016 Community Report Card on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks

|   |                    |                                    |                      |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Maxwell Park  | NP                 | B/B                                | 2                    |
| Owen Jones/Pinto Park                                 | AF                 | B/B                                | 1                    |
| Picardy/Normandy Gardens                              |                    | /A                                 | Not on list          |
| Rainbow Park  | NP                 | D/D                                | 1                    |
| Tomas Melero-Smith                                    | AMP                | B/B                                | Not on list          |
| <b>District 7</b>                                     | <b>OSCAR Codes</b> | <b>Park Overall Rating 2015/16</b> | <b>Service Level</b> |
| 88th Street Mini Park                                 | AMP                | D/C                                | 3                    |
| Brookfield Park (Ira Jenkins?)                        | CP                 | B/B                                | 1                    |
| Columbian Gardens Park                                | NP                 | D/F                                | 3                    |
| Dolphin Mini Park                                     | AMP                | D/D                                | 3                    |
| Hellman Park  | NP                 | B/A                                | 2                    |
| Holly Mini  | AMP                | F/F                                | 3                    |
| Officer Willie Wilkins Park (formerly Elmhurst Plaza) | NP                 | D/D                                | 2                    |
| Sheffield Village Park                                | NP                 | /A                                 | 1                    |
| Sobrante Park   | NP                 | D/C                                | 1                    |
| Stonehurst Park                                       | NP                 | A/                                 | 2                    |
| Tassafaronga Park                                     | NP                 | B/B                                | 1                    |
| Verdesse Carter Park                                  | NP                 | D/C                                | 2                    |

**2016 Community Report Card on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks**



## 2016 LOVE YOUR PARKS DAY SURVEY

- Assign a letter grade (A= excellent, F = failing) to each numbered item (or N/A-Not Applicable).
- Priority Question: Circle **only one** number that corresponds to the item in each category that would be your first priority to fix.

**GREENERY**

**GRASS & GROUND COVER**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. Is the grass mowed?                                      | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 2. Is the grass edged?                                      | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 3. Is the grass/ground cover free of animal/bird droppings? | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 4. Is the ground cover/grass free of bare spots?            | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |

**FLOWERS & SHRUBS** (No flowers or shrubs? Choose N/A)

|   |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 5. Are the planted areas free of weeds? | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 6. Condition of shrubs and/or flowers   | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 7. Are shrubs pruned?                   | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |

**TREES**

|  |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 8. Condition of trees (any dead branches, etc.?) | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 9. Are trees pruned?                             | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |

*First priority to fix in this category? Circle one →* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

**RESTROOMS** Freestanding Only (not in Rec Centers, NOT porta-potties) No restroom?--circle N/A for all.

|  |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. Accessibility of restroom: (open=A, locked=F, one open, one locked=C) | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 2. Are toilets clean & working?  | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 3. Are sinks clean & working?  | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 4. Availability of trash receptacles                                     | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 5. Cleanliness of restroom   | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 6. Are doors on stalls & do locks work?                                  | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 7. Availability of supplies (soap, paper towels, toilet paper)           | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 8. Are restrooms free of odor?   | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |

*First priority to fix in this category? Circle one →* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 N/A

**HARDSCAPE, FURNITURE, SIGNAGE**

|                                       |   |   |   |   |   |     |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. Condition of fencing or gates      | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 2. Condition of benches/seating areas | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 3. Condition of walkways              | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |
| 4. Condition of park signs            | A | B | C | D | F | N/A |

*First priority to fix in this category? Circle one →* 1 2 3 4 N/A

**2016 Community Report Card on the State of Maintenance in Oakland Parks**

|   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
|---|------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----|-----|
| <b>GOPHER HOLES AND MOUNDS</b> (A=no holes/mounds, F=lots of holes/mounds, No turf/grass-choose N/A)  |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| 1. Is the grass, turf free of gopher holes & mounds?  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| <b>OUTDOOR SPORTS AREAS</b>   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| 1. Condition of turf/grass (sports fields only)   | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 2. Condition of court (tennis or basketball) surfacing  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 3. Condition/existence of netting (tennis or basketball)  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 4. Condition of court lines (tennis or basketball)  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 5. Condition of bleachers   | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 6. Availability of trash receptacles  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| <i>First priority to fix in this category? Circle one →</i>   | 1                            | 2 | 3                           | 4                           | 5                            | 6   | N/A |
| <b>OUTDOOR CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS</b>  |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| 1. Availability of trash receptacles  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 2. Cleanliness of sand or fibar   | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 3. Condition of play equipment  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 4. Condition of safety padding under play structures  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 5. Condition of seating for parents   | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| <i>First priority to fix in this category? Circle one →</i>   | 1                            | 2 | 3                           | 4                           | 5                            | N/A |     |
| <b>PICNIC AREAS</b> (Picnic areas are designated by picnic tables with benches )  |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| 1. Availability of trash receptacles in the picnic area   | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 2. Condition of barbecue grills (no grills? N/A)  | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| 3. Condition of picnic benches & tables   | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            | N/A |     |
| <i>First priority to fix in this category? Circle one →</i>   | 1                            | 2 | 3                           | N/A                         |                              |     |     |
| <b>GRAFFITI</b>   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| 1. Does there appear to be a serious problem of graffiti in this park?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |   | <input type="checkbox"/> No |                             | Somewhat                     |     |     |
| 2. If you answered yes where is the graffiti? (check one or more)   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's play equipment <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic tables/benches <input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms <input type="checkbox"/> Sports courts<br><input type="checkbox"/> Signs <input type="checkbox"/> Walls & fences |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| <b>WATER FOUNTAINS/FEATURES</b>   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| 1. Are all water fountains/features in this park working? (No water fountains/features -check N/A)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |   | <input type="checkbox"/> No |                             | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |     |     |
| 2. If you answered NO check the areas below where they are not working.   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's play areas <input type="checkbox"/> Picnic Areas <input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms <input type="checkbox"/> Sports Fields or Courts  |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| <b>HOMELESS ENCAMPMENTS</b>   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
| 1. Is there evidence of homeless people living in this park?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |   |                             | <input type="checkbox"/> No |                              |     |     |
| <b>PLEASE GIVE THIS PARK/AREA AN <u>OVERALL RATING.</u></b>   |                              |   |                             |                             |                              |     |     |
|   | A                            | B | C                           | D                           | F                            |     |     |

### OSCAR Element

Parks were first classified in the early 1990s (as mandated by the State in 1970) according to the standards set by the OSCAR (Open Space Conservation and Recreation) element. The classifications were determined by acreage, use and park facilities or amenities and for our purposes of our survey they are especially useful in making comparisons of conditions among the various OSCAR groupings.

| <b>Summary of Oakland Parks in 1996</b> |             |               |                |
|---|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Type</b>                             | <b>Code</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Acreage</b> |
| Region Serving Parks                    | RSP         | 5             | 332.0          |
| Community Parks                         | CP          | 9             | 101.1          |
| Neighborhood Parks                      | NP          | 44            | 126.0          |
| Active Mini-Parks                       | AMP         | 16            | 5.8            |
| Passive Mini-Parks                      | PMP         | 5             | 2.2            |
| Linear Parks                            | LP          | 12            | 33.0           |
| Special Use Parks                       | SU          | 24            | 651.1          |
| Resource Conservation Areas             | RCA         | 19            | 1,622.8        |
| Athletic Field Parks                    | AF          | 14            | 68.6           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            |             | <b>147</b>    | <b>2,942.6</b> |

The first three classifications are for larger parks frequented by local residents and also by people who come from outside of the immediate area. They typically offer some or all of the following: recreation centers, sports fields, sports courts or even swimming pools and skate parks. Public Works schedules parks like these for routine maintenance which includes landscape management. Down the list, the only other parks that get more than very basic service (mowing and litter pickup) are Athletic Fields. However, all maintenance schedules can be disrupted by special events, workdays and homeless encampment cleanups. Parks not included in the routine maintenance schedule may receive more care if a neighborhood group is working directly with a crew leader to make improvements to a park.



## Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation Board and Staff

*“Providing financial and volunteer resources  
and advocacy for recreation programs and parks in Oakland”*

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