



Park Management

Park Management and Maintenance

The image of Golden Gate Park is one of green meadows and forests, and well tended gardens. The goal of the park's naturalistic design is to look as if nature created the meadows, forests, and vistas. That illusion is very successful, but misleading. In fact the park is an manmade creation that is the antithesis of what nature provided on this site. To maintain the illusion takes great care and effort. Maintaining this type of landscape in an urban park with such high usage presents an even greater challenge.

In the past few years, the Recreation and Park Department, and its maintenance staff, have met the challenge of maintaining Golden Gate Park in the face of declining resources. There is a limit, however, before the results of this trend become more evident and the image of the park declines.

Maintaining Golden Gate Park

The Recreation and Park Department has several maintenance groups that work in Golden Gate Park:

- **Gardeners** have primary responsibility for horticultural and landscape maintenance. The park landscape maintenance is based on a section and "beat" system. The park is divided into six sections (previously there were eleven sections), which are further divided into smaller subsections, referred to as gardener beats. Each section has a supervisor that oversees the gardeners who are assigned to beats. This system provides workers who know their areas well and can take pride in them.

- **Custodians** are assigned to park facilities and perform cleaning and simple maintenance tasks.
- The **turf management division** maintains fields, meadows and other turf areas.
- The **forestry division** manages tree hazards, large tree pruning, and the reforestation program. It also provides forest management training for gardeners. Forestry crews include arborists, gardeners and other workers.
- The **golf division crew maintains the golf course.**
- The **structural maintenance division** consists of crews of various building trades such as plumbers, carpenters, electricians, and other crafts. They maintain and repair the park's water system, other infrastructure and buildings, and operate heavy equipment.
- The **mechanics shop** (under the Purchasing Department) performs repairs on equipment and vehicles.
- The **supply warehouse** (under the Purchasing Department) receives and disburses supplies and materials.

Planning and coordinating the work of the various maintenance groups is the responsibility park managers, including the General Manager, Assistant General Manager, Park Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Urban For-

estry and Turf Management, Assistant Superintendent for Structural Maintenance, the Area Supervisor for Golden Gate Park, and Urban Forester Supervisor. (It should be noted that all of the above managers, except for the Area Supervisor, also have responsibilities for other parks throughout the city.)

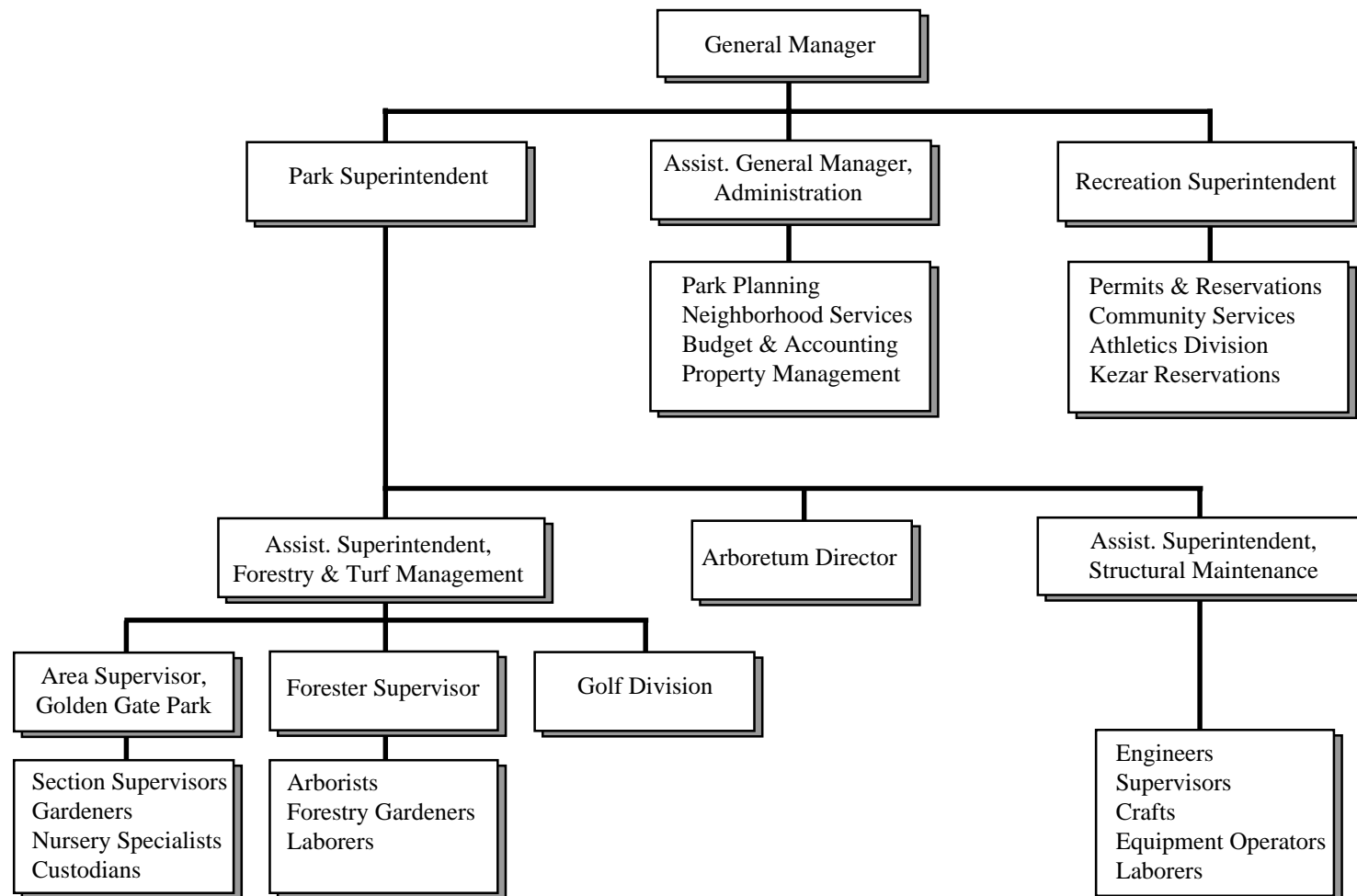
Successful maintenance requires supervision, planning, and accountability. For the system to work well, communication and follow-through are critical. Maintenance planning, setting priorities, and scheduling tasks (regular maintenance tasks and as needed tasks), requires a systematic approach. Communication with workers is needed to accomplish tasks as scheduled, and to receive feedback from workers. Accountability and incentives should be used to ensure that tasks are done well.

Coordination of various crews is vital for efficient maintenance. Work is frequently done with different crews relying on each other. Cooperation and respect between crews will foster efficient maintenance. Some tasks have cooperative responsibilities between crews such as reforestation, which is implemented primarily by forestry crews, but gardeners are responsible for some of the maintenance of reforestation trees.

Recommendations

- Park maintenance managers should improve maintenance planning to better understand needs and set priorities. Regular tasks such as irrigation, mowing, and litter pick up should be balanced with less frequent tasks such as path maintenance, erosion control, and shrub planting.
- A more systematic approach to planning maintenance should be implemented. Managers should meet at regularly scheduled meetings to plan maintenance tasks, coordinate work, and improve communication between maintenance groups.
- Section supervisors should plan park section maintenance systematically by employing a weekly checklist to plan maintenance tasks. Supervisors should walk and inspect the entire section weekly, and note problems on the checklist. The checklist should include a section map to pinpoint notations. Completion date of tasks should be recorded.
- Daily assignment sheets should be prepared by supervisors to plan what each worker will be doing. Supervisors should have daily meetings with workers to distribute assignments and to improve communication. Daily meetings can occur at the beginning or end of a workday, or before or after lunch.
- Management should use the weekly maintenance checklists to track park maintenance and improve accountability and worker incentives.
- Maps of each section and beat should be maintained (preferably on CAD system) to note special maintenance requirements, unique tasks, dedicated trees, locations of valves, and other information. Recording of this data will ensure proper maintenance in the event of new personnel.
- Continuing management training for supervisors and other employees should be established. Employees should understand the role and responsibilities of their position.
- Continue regular landscape assessments with gardeners, section supervisors, area supervisor, Park Division, and Park Planning office.

Figure 11-1
Golden Gate Park Management (as of 1995)



Park Staffing

Maintaining Golden Gate Park has always been labor intensive. In recent years, the cost of labor has increased faster than the park's available funding. Since 1977, the number of gardener and other maintenance worker positions has decreased by 25 percent. There have been similar reductions in other crews. At the same time, the needs of the park have never been greater due to the age of the park, its infrastructure and forests, and because of increasing social problems such as camping and vandalism. The forestry program is a completely new program (since 1980) that has required significant resources. The gap between needs and resources has increased efforts to improve productivity, but has also necessitated the reduction of maintenance levels in some areas. The reduced maintenance levels have resulted in deterioration that is becoming more apparent: turf areas are tended and edged less frequently, litter is more evident, the shrub layer is being lost, and bare earth and erosion problems are increasing. On the positive side, new infrastructure such as new automatic irrigation systems provided by the park infrastructure bond will increase efficiency of some tasks and reduce breakdowns.

The recommended staffing levels, shown later in this section, are general estimates of the numbers needed to maintain the park to a "proper" level. Proper park maintenance would include regular, timely care for all landscape areas, cleaning of park buildings, special care needed for gardens and horticultural attractions, and speedy repair of vandalism and cleaning of graffiti. Several proposals in this master plan will require additional maintenance staff such as

the additional soccer field and new landscape designs in the west end of the park. The recommended numbers were developed, in part, by examining the size of gardener beats (how much area one person can maintain). Beats with more highly maintained elements such as gardens are smaller, beats with meadows and forest areas are larger. The recommended staffing levels do not differentiate between job classifications, as there should be flexibility in planning how to meet the additional needs, including new job classifications.

Additional staffing will result in a higher level of maintenance for the park, including more frequent edging and mowing of turf areas, better tree pruning and maintenance, better weed control, more frequent litter pickup, higher level of care for areas outside of gardens, regular path maintenance, and better control of erosion problems.

Paying for Additional Staff

The additional staff are being recommended at a time when the Department is forced to cut positions due to the continuing reductions from the city's general fund. This trend is expected to continue, so other funding sources will be needed to increase park staffing. There are two potential funding sources, both are long-term and will take several years to realize. The first is a dedicated public funding for Golden Gate Park such as a parcel tax or special assessment. Unlike funding from bonds, these may contribute to funding staffing and ongoing maintenance; however, passing a "new" tax will not be easy. The second would be private funding

through a park conservancy organization. Fund raising for ongoing maintenance costs is more difficult than for capital projects, but it has been done successfully elsewhere. Fundraising for the Aids Memorial Grove is focusing on providing funds for a gardener position in the DeLaveaga Dell.

The Role of Volunteers

Volunteers are playing an increasing role in assisting with a variety of public services, including park and recreation services. Their value to Golden Gate Park may be much greater than the tasks that they perform. Volunteers also contribute to a constituency for the park that increases community involvement and provides political support. Management and supervision of volunteers is critical to their effectiveness. Volunteers must be used to fill maintenance voids that existing staff cannot handle, without jeopardizing the jobs of park staff. Volunteers should work under the direction of park staff, which will require scheduling flexibility to be available on weekends when volunteers are most available. Currently, there are several volunteer groups working in the park, and the Friends of Recreation and Parks is organizing a park volunteer corps.

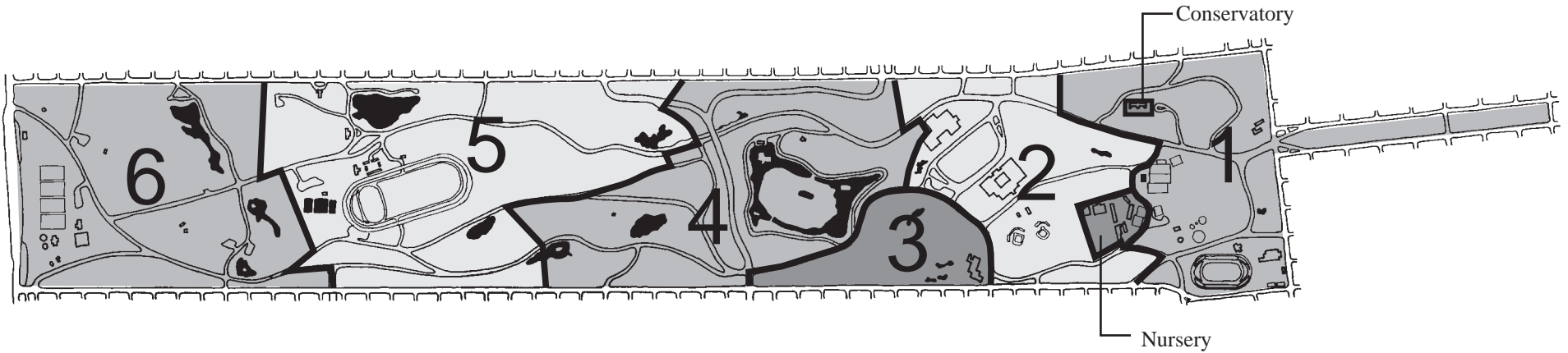
Recommendations

- Continue to explore options for a dedicated public funding source that can provide funds for ongoing maintenance and staff.
- The conservancy or park association should play a role in funding ongoing park maintenance in addition to capital projects. Maintenance endowments should be included with all capital projects.
- Explore the potential of the conservancy providing staff for needs that are not currently being met.
- Continue development of a Golden Gate Park volunteer corps to assist park maintenance staff. Maximize the value of volunteers to foster community involvement and to create a park constituency. Structure volunteer activities to not impact job security of park staff.
- Provide staff with flexibility in scheduling to provide proper supervision of volunteer activities, particularly on weekends.

Figure 11-2

**Maintaining Golden Gate Park—
Who Does What?**

	Beat Gardener	Forestry Gardener	Forestry Arborist	Golf Course Gardener	Mowing Crew (Gardeners)	Crafts	Heavy Equipment Operator	Truck Driver	Truck Driver (mower)	Laborer	Mechanic	Rodent Control Tech.	Custodian
Watering	●	●		●									
Small Scale Planting	●			●									
Pruning	●	●	●	●									
Turf Maintenance	●			●	●			●					
Spraying and Fertilizing	●	●		●							●	●	
Rodent Control	●	●		●								●	●
Small Scale Mowing & Edging	●	●		●									
Tractor Mowing - turf								●					
Tractor Mowing - high weeds							●						
Reforestation Planting		●											
Reforestation Maintenance	●	●	●	●									
Hazard Tree Removal		●	●							●			
Athletic Field Maintenance	●				●		●	●	●				
Golf Course Maintenance				●				●					
Irrigation Maintenance	●	●		●									
Irrigation Plumbing Repair	●	●				●				●			
Raking	●	●		●						●			
Litter Removal	●	●		●			●	●		●			●
Debris Removal/Chipping	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●			
Path Maintenance	●			●	●	●	●	●		●			
Erosion Control	●	●	●		●								
Equipment and Tool Care	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Mechanical Equipment Repair	●					●					●		
Building Cleaning	●												●
Restroom Maintenance	●	●				●							●
Truck Driving - Pickup	●	●	●	●	●				●	●			●
Truck Driving - Med. & Hvy.							●	●					



Landscape and Custodial Maintenance

Area and Postions	Park Staffing 1977	Park Staffing 1994	Recommended Park Staffing*
Section 1			26 total
Gardeners	18	15	
Supervisors	3	1	
Custodians	6	2	
Section 2			23 total
Gardeners	19	15	
Supervisors	2	1	
Custodians	3	1	
Section 3			15 total
Gardeners	10	10	
Supervisors	2	1	
Custodians	2	2	
Nursery Specialists	1	1	
Section 4			16 total
Gardeners	9	11	
Supervisors	3	2	
Custodians	2	2	
Section 5			15 total
Gardeners	12	11	
Supervisors	1	1	
Custodians	2	1	
Section 6			13 total
Gardeners	10	8	
Supervisors	2	1	
Custodians	2	1	
Nursery			13 total
Gardeners	11	6	
Nursery Specialists	4	2	
Supervisors	1	0	
Conservatory			8 total
Supervisors	1	0	
Nursery Specialists	2	1	
Gardeners	4	3	
Custodians	1	0	
Park Totals			129 total
Gardeners	93	79	
Supervisors	15	7	
Custodians	18	9	
Nursery Specialists	7	4	
Total Park Maintenance Staff	133	99	129

Forestry Program

Positions	Park Staffing 1994*	Recommended Park Staffing*
Urban Forester	0.33	0.75
Arborist Supervisor	1	1
Arborists	4.5	6
Gdnr. Asst. Sup.	1	1.5
Gardeners	9	9
Laborers	1	1
Truck Driver	0.33	0.75
Heavy Equip. Op.	1	1
Seasonal gardeners	4 for 6mos./yr.	4 for 6mos./yr.

* Staff or portion of staff position dedicated to Golden Gate Park.

*Recommended staffing to maintain Golden Gate Park to proper standard.

Figure 11-3
Landscape Maintenance Sections and Staffing
(as of 1995)

Park Security

Golden Gate Park is a safe park, but as important as statistics are, the perception of safety is just as important. A sense of security is essential for park users to enjoy their park experience. Proper maintenance is one of the best deterrents to crime. A park that is well tended shows a commitment to make the park a secure place. Successful parks with high visitation are self-patrolling. Visible maintenance staff also provide a deterrent.

The following are some positive steps to address some of the security issues:

- Ensure a high level of maintenance to all parts of the park. Fight graffiti and vandalism aggressively—remove markings and repair damages quickly.
- The Park Patrol should be expanded to 24 hours a day, with sufficient staffing to permit a ranger to be in Golden Gate Park at all times. Daytime patrols by mountain bikes will enable patrolling of out-of-the-way places. The role of the Park Patrol should be to:
 - provide a visible uniformed presence at all times patrolling with mountain bikes and vehicles;
 - provide enforcement of park code and other minor violations (enforcement role to be coordinated with SFPD, may require legislation);
 - communicate with the SFPD when situations arise.
- Coordinate efforts with other City departments to address camping, drug abuse, and other social problems in the park. Establish a regular ongoing program with the SFPD to clear camps. This program will require a regular commitment of maintenance staff to clean and restore camp sites.
- Involve community groups in park security issues so they see the park as an extension of their neighborhoods. Establish a park-neighborhood security committee as a working group to focus on park and neighborhood safety and security issues. Have an ongoing forum with community groups, Police Department, District Attorney's Office, the Department of Social Services, and the Health Department to discuss park and neighborhood security and enforcement issues.
- Support community groups that are proactive in area security issues.
- Seek legislation to assist security efforts in Golden Gate Park such as the existing "Drug Free Zones" around schools which carry stiffer penalties.
- Implement a "Park Watch" program:
 - install signs at all entries asking park users to report suspicious activities;
 - install emergency phones at each park entrance and other locations (direct connection to police dispatch).
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle lighting between night use areas and parking areas, park entries, bicycle routes, and MUNI stops.
- Require all park maintenance employees to wear uniforms to provide a visible presence.
- Relocate Park Patrol office to front of maintenance yard (fronting on MLK Drive) with access to the public to report suspicious activities.