	Subject: LEVELS OF VEGETATIVE MAINTENANCE ATTENTION FOR PARKS, FACILITIES, & RIGHTS-OF- WAY	Section: PARKS & ROW
		Page: 1 of 7

PURPOSE

These considerations will establish maintenance priorities and regimens. Matching the appropriate maintenance approach to landscaped sites forms the foundation of best practices in grounds management.

DISCUSSION

The optimal level of maintenance attention and the best methods to achieve it will vary within a given area, from one location to another and from year to year. The extent of development is the primary criterion for determining maintenance levels. Other factors include rainfall, sun exposure, soil conditions, topography, pedestrian traffic (both organized and social), intended and unintended uses, expectations, and available resources—both human and financial.

The level of attention refers to the resources dedicated to maintaining a landscape according to its design and/or intended use. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has established Park Maintenance Standards, from which the following categories of attention are derived. These categories are meant to establish standards for achieving maintenance goals based on the relevant level of development at any park, trail, or facility. They should be considered baseline guidelines, not rules, and adjustments should be made to accommodate the community's interests and needs in addition to the factors mentioned above.

The levels of maintenance attention are listed from the lowest to the highest, as the lowest levels are the easiest to achieve, allowing the City to progress as resources permit. This information does not include tasks necessary for the demolition or clearing of derelict structures, trash dumps, social trails, social roadways, or any other conditions resulting from past uncontrolled use of a site.

LEVEL 1 - State-of-the-Art Maintenance

APPLIED TO A HIGH-QUALITY DIVERSE LANDSCAPE. ASSOCIATED WITH HIGH-TRAFFIC URBAN AREAS SUCH AS PUBLIC SQUARES OR BUILDING LANDSCAPES TO SPORTS COMPLEXES WITH HIGHLY GROOMED FIELDS




Subject:

**LEVELS OF VEGETATIVE
MAINTENANCE
ATTENTION FOR PARKS,
FACILITIES, & RIGHTS-OF-
WAY**

Section: PARKS & ROW

Page: 2 of 7

- **Turf Care** – Grass height maintained according to species and variety of grass; mowed once per week, may be more in certain areas; aeration as required, but not less than four times per year; reseeding or sodding as needed
- **Fertilizer** – Fertilizer applied to plant species according to their optimal requirements; application rates and times should ensure an even supply of nutrients for the entire year; nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium percentages should follow local recommendations; trees, shrubs and flowers should receive fertilizer according to their individual requirements of nutrients for optimal growth; this could be modified by weather conditions and a shortening or lengthening of the growing season
- **Irrigation** – Dependent on weather conditions and nature of relevant areas; automatic system is recommended to allow a pre-programmed “sensor”-based schedule; this could be modified by weather conditions and a shortening or lengthening of the growing season
- **Litter Control** – Minimum of once per day, seven days per week in high seasons. Trash receptacles should be plentiful enough to hold all trash usually generated between servicing without overflowing. Use of recycling bins alongside conventional trash receptacles is desirable when community has recycling service well established
- **Control of Vandalism** – Locales of regular vandalism should be noted and staff performing litter control duties should remove graffiti and other signs of vandalism immediately
- **Pruning** – Frequency dictated primarily by species and variety of trees and shrubs; length of growing season and design concept also a controlling factor; timing scheduled to coincide with low demand periods or to take advantage of special growing characteristics and cycles
- **Disease and Insect Control** – The objective at this level of maintenance is to avoid public awareness of any problems. It is anticipated that problems will either be prevented or observed at a very early stage and corrected immediately; all care should be taken to use substances that will not endanger wildlife or predator insect populations
- **Weed control** – Weed control practiced when weeds present a visible problem or when weeds represent no more than one percent of the turf surface; some pre-emergent products may be used at this level
- **Repairs** – Repairs to all elements of the design should be done immediately when problems are discovered, provided replacement parts and technicians are available

	Subject: LEVELS OF VEGETATIVE MAINTENANCE ATTENTION FOR PARKS, FACILITIES, & RIGHTS-OF-WAY	Section: PARKS & ROW
		Page: 3 of 7


to accomplish the job; when disruptions to the public might be major and the repair is not critical, repairs may be postponed to a time period that is least disruptive

- **Inspections** – Should be conducted by some staff member at least once a day when regular staff is scheduled
- **Floral Plantings** – When extensive or unusual floral plantings are part of the design, such as ground-level beds, planters or hanging baskets; and when multiple plantings are scheduled usually for at least two blooming cycles per year; some designs may call for a more frequent rotation of blooms; maximum care, including watering, fertilizing, disease control, “dead-heading,” and weeding, is necessary; weeding flowers and shrubs is done a minimum of once per week; the desired standard is weed-free

LEVEL 2 - High-Level Maintenance

ASSOCIATED WITH WELL-DEVELOPED PUBLIC AREAS, MALLS, AND GOVERNMENT GROUNDS. RECOMMENDED LEVEL FOR MOST ORGANIZATIONS

- **Turf Care** – Mowing on a weekly basis; Aeration as required but not less than twice per year; Reseeding or sodding once per year in early spring, other than in high traffic areas or high profile areas if bare spots appear
- **Fertilizer** – Adequate fertilizer level to ensure that all plant materials are healthy and growing vigorously; amounts depend on species, length of growing season, soils and rainfall; rates should correspond to minimum requirements at least; distribution should ensure an even supply of nutrients for the entire year; nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium percentages should follow local recommendation; trees, shrubs and flowers should receive fertilizer levels to ensure optimum growth; do not over fertilize
- **Irrigation** – Dependent on weather conditions and nature of relevant areas; automatic system is recommended to allow a pre-programmed “sensor”-based schedule
- **Litter Control** – Minimum of once per day, five days per week in high seasons; use of recycling bins alongside conventional trash receptacles is desirable when community has recycling service well established
- **Control of Vandalism** – Locales of regular vandalism should be noted and staff performing litter control duties should remove graffiti and other signs of vandalism immediately

	Subject: LEVELS OF VEGETATIVE MAINTENANCE ATTENTION FOR PARKS, FACILITIES, & RIGHTS-OF-WAY	Section: PARKS & ROW
		Page: 4 of 7

- **Pruning** – Usually done at least once per season unless species planted dictate more frequent attention; high-growth species or favorable weather conditions may dictate more frequent requirements than most trees and shrubs in natural areas
- **Disease and Insect Control** – Usually done when disease or insects are inflicting noticeable damage, are reducing vigor of plant material or could be considered a bother to the public; preventive measures may be preferable such as systemic chemical treatments; cultural (planting methods, materials selection) prevention of disease can reduce time spent in this category; some minor problems may be tolerated at this level and all care should be taken to use substances that will not endanger wildlife or predator insect populations
- **Weed control** – Weed control practiced when weeds present a visible problem or when weeds represent five percent of the turf surface; some pre-emergent products may be used at this level
- **Repairs** – Should be done whenever safety, function or appearance is in question
- **Inspections** – Should be conducted by some staff member at least once a day when regular staff is scheduled
- **Floral Plantings** – Maintenance, usually at least once per week, but watering may be more frequent; health and vigor dictate cycle of fertilization and disease control; beds kept weed-free

LEVEL 3 - Moderate-Level Maintenance

LOCATIONS WITH MODERATE TO LOW LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT AND/OR USE, OR WITH OPERATIONS THAT ARE LIMITED BY RESOURCES

- **Turf Care** – Mowing bi-monthly based on relevant species and usage intent of area; normally not aerated unless turf quality indicates a need or in anticipation of fertilization; reseeding or resodding limited to high traffic areas if bare spots appear
- **Fertilizer** – Applied only when turf vigor seems to be low. Low-level application once per year
- **Irrigation** – Dependent on weather conditions and the nature of relevant areas; an automatic system is recommended to allow a pre-programmed “sensor”-based schedule.
- **Litter Control** – Two or three times per week; high use may dictate higher levels in “high” seasons of activity



Subject:

**LEVELS OF VEGETATIVE
MAINTENANCE
ATTENTION FOR PARKS,
FACILITIES, & RIGHTS-OF-
WAY**

Section: PARKS & ROW


Page: 5 of 7

- **Control of Vandalism** – Locales of regular vandalism should be noted and staff performing litter control duties should remove graffiti and other signs of vandalism immediately
- **Pruning** – When required for health or reasonable appearance; with most tree and shrub species, pruning would be performed once every two or three years when plantings mature
- **Disease and Insect Control** – Control measures may be put into effect when the health or survival of the plant materials or turf is threatened or when public comfort/health is an issue
- **Weed control** – Normally used when 50% of small areas are weed infested or when 15 percent of the general turf is infested with weeds
- **Repairs** – Only done when safety or function is in question
- **Inspections** – Once per week, construction supervision continues providing “eyes on the park”
- **Floral Plantings** – Only flowering trees or shrubs

LEVEL 4 - Moderately Low-Level Maintenance

LOCATIONS WITH RESOURCE LIMITATIONS OR MINIMAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Turf Care** – Low-frequency mowing schedule based on relevant species and usage intent of area; low-growing grasses may not be mowed, high grasses may receive periodic mowing
- **Fertilizer** – Not fertilized
- **Irrigation** – No artificial irrigation
- **Litter Control** – Once per week or less, monitor based on complaints, increase if able
- **Control of Vandalism** – On demand or complaint basis and in high profile areas (entries, etc.)
- **Pruning** – No regular trimming; safety or damage from weather to conserved native species may dictate a more active schedule
- **Disease and Insect Control** – No control except to prevent disease or safety hazard
- **Weed control** – Active elimination of noxious weeds and/or non-native species in relevant areas
- **Repairs** – Only done when safety or function is in question
- **Inspections** – Once per month at a minimum, construction supervision continues providing “eyes on the park”
- **Floral Plantings** – None; natural species identified for relevant areas

	Subject: LEVELS OF VEGETATIVE MAINTENANCE ATTENTION FOR PARKS, FACILITIES, & RIGHTS-OF-WAY	Section: PARKS & ROW
		Page: 6 of 7

LEVEL 5 - Minimum Level Maintenance


LOCATIONS WITH RESOURCE LIMITATIONS OR MINIMAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Turf Care** – Low frequency mowing scheduled based on relevant species and usage intent of area; low growing grasses may not be mowed, high grasses may receive periodic moving
- **Fertilizer** – Not fertilized
- **Irrigation** – No artificial irrigation
- **Litter Control** – On demand or complaint basis
- **Control of Vandalism** – On demand or complaint basis and in high profile areas (entries, etc.)
- **Pruning** – No pruning unless trees and shrubs present a safety hazard
- **Disease and Insect Control** – No control except to prevent disease or if it prevents a safety hazard
- **Weed control** – Limited to requirements for noxious weed control in relevant areas
- **Repairs** – Only done when safety or function is in question
- **Inspections** – Once per month at a minimum, construction supervision commences
- **Floral Plantings** – None, natural
- species identified for relevant areas

LEVEL 6 - NATURAL AREA

UNDEVELOPED

- **Turf Care** – Not mowed; weed control only if legally required
- **Fertilizer** – Not fertilized
- **Irrigation** – No artificial irrigation
- **Litter Control** – On demand or complaint basis
- **Control of Vandalism** – On demand or complaint basis and in high profile areas (entries, etc.)
- **Pruning** – No pruning unless trees and shrubs present a safety hazard
- **Disease and Insect Control** – No control except to prevent disease or if it prevents a safety hazard
- **Weed control** – None
- **Repairs** – Only done when safety or function is in question
- **Inspections** – Once per month at a minimum

	Subject: LEVELS OF VEGETATIVE MAINTENANCE ATTENTION FOR PARKS, FACILITIES, & RIGHTS-OF-WAY	Section: PARKS & ROW
		Page: 7 of 7

- **Floral Plantings** – None

PROCEDURE

Parks Superintendent

- The Parks Superintendent shall assess each park site and designate a level of maintenance.

Crew Leader

- Crew Leaders shall maintain each park based on the level designated by the Parks Superintendent, direct staff on the level of maintenance expectations, and keep a record of such maintenance.
- If the level of maintenance cannot be performed due to a maintenance constraint, it shall be conveyed to the Parks Superintendent and documented appropriately.

Crew Member

- Crew Members shall maintain each park based on the level designated by the Parks Superintendent.

REFERENCE

REVIEW & REVISION HISTORY

July 2025