OFFICE OF
CONTROLLER

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January 5, 2006

The Honorable Antonio Villaraigosa, Mayor
The Honorable Rockard J. Delgadillo, City Attorney
The Honorable Members of the City Council
City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Mayor Villaraigosa, City Attorney Delgadillo and Members of the City Council:

Today I release the second in a trilogy of audits of the Department of Recreation and Parks; this one evaluates the recreation and community services offered the public. The first audit was a report on the financial operations and revealed that the Department runs a fund with an unexplainable, growing balance of over $20 million dollars. The third audit, to be released next week, is of the maintenance of our many parks and facilities.

My focus on the Department of Recreation and Parks is designed to give our City leadership a road map to providing safe, attractive and busy parks and recreation centers, as well as programs that are available in all our neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, this audit revealed a startling and disturbing fact... we cannot evaluate the delivery of recreational services to the public because there just isn't enough information to do so. In 2006, we cannot and should not be running any City department, much less one that is so essential to our residents' quality of life, by groping in the dark. This Department must do the following:

- Conduct a thorough needs assessment of the desires and requirements of our diverse communities. To stay current, these assessments must be done every five years.

- Develop a performance based evaluation which can accurately measure the Department's success in meeting the public's needs.

- Adopt a long-term strategic plan which is a detailed guide to delivering first rate recreation and community programs to the people of Los Angeles.

The most recent needs assessment is six years old and missing key information. What that survey did find, however, was that 51% of respondents said they were reluctant to visit neighborhood parks due to safety concerns. LAPD drop-in centers, designated for the highest risk parks, were designed to address these concerns; but they remain scarcely staffed. With 26 Park Rangers assigned to patrol 15,710 acres and our Police Department grappling with their own lack of resources, we must find a more effective way to keep our parks safe. We will never be a truly great City until we can declare all our public places and spaces safe for our children and their grandparents.

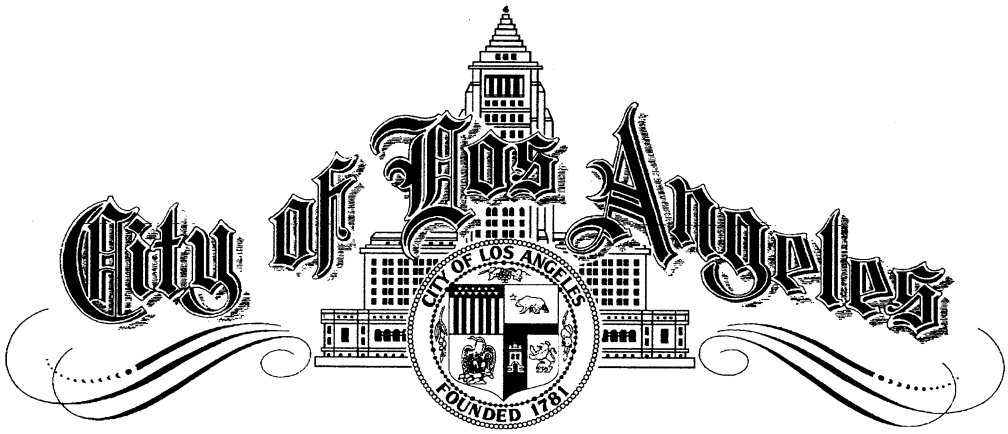
My audit also cites studies that reveal that not all areas of the City have the same level of service in programs and activities. Lower income neighborhoods, including those predominantly populated by Latinos, African-American and Asian-Pacific Islander communities, have dramatically less access to park resources than more affluent areas. In addition, some economically empowered neighborhoods are able to offer more and better services through fundraising in the community often with the assistance of active Park Advisory Boards.

The message of this audit is clear: Offering the public an ample amount of quality activities and programs is too important to be left on automatic pilot. Next week I will release an audit on how we maintain the spaces and structures of our parks. I hope that these three audits will help draw a very clear picture for the leadership of our City to create a Department of Recreation and Parks befitting the second largest City in America in the 21st Century.

Sincerely,

Laura N. Chick

LAURA N. CHICK
City Controller

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January 5, 2006

Jon Kirk Mukri, General Manager
Department of Recreation and Parks
1200 West 7th Street, Suite 700
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Dear Mr. Mukri:

Enclosed is a copy of our Performance Audit of Recreation and Community Services in the Department of Recreation and Parks. A draft of this report was provided to your office on December 15, 2005. Comments provided by you and your staff at the December 20, 2005, exit conference were evaluated and considered prior to finalizing this report.

Please review the final audit report and advise the Controller's Office by February 6, 2006 on planned actions you will take to implement these recommendations. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at (213) 978-7392.

Sincerely,

FARID SAFFAR, CPA
Director of Auditing

Enclosure

cc: Honorable Antonio R. Villaraigosa, Mayor
Honorable Members of the City Council
Honorable Rockard J. Delgadillo, City Attorney
Robin Kramer, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Jimmy Blackman, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Christina Sanchez-Camino, President, Board of
Recreation and Parks Commissioners
William T Fujioka, City Administrative Officer
Frank Martinez, City Clerk
Gerry F. Miller, Chief Legislative Analyst
Independent City Auditors

**City of Los Angeles**
**Office of the Controller**

# Performance Audit of Recreation and Community Services in the Department of Recreation and Parks

**January 5, 2006**

**Laura N. Chick**
City Controller

# OFFICE OF THE CONTROLLER

## PERFORMANCE AUDIT OF RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

### Ranking of Recommendations

| Section Number | Summary Description of Findings | Ranking Code | Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | 1. The Department needs to improve the method and frequency with which they identify community needs and expectations.<br>2. The Department needs to strategically address issues of inequity regarding levels of service provided at parks citywide.<br>3. The Department should ensure programs at each center equitably target the City's diverse demographics through recreational, educational, cultural, and human service programming.<br>4. The Department could improve the methods with which it informs the community of the services it offers, opportunities for community input, and participation in Department services.<br>5. The development of a long-term strategic plan is necessary to ensure that recreation and community service programs not only address current needs and expectations. | **N**<br><br>N<br><br>N<br><br>N<br><br>N | 1.1 Conduct a Community Needs Assessment every five years.<br>• This Assessment should include community demographic trends, the public's perception of availability and access to parks and services, recreation activity preferences, usage patterns, the types and prevalence of non-City r service providers, and school schedules and programs.<br>• Partner with other City departments that conduct community research, such as the CDD, as possible sources for community information.<br>• Needs should be identified at the recreation center level – not the region or community level – to ensure each of the 176 recreation centers meet the various or different needs of their immediate surrounding community.<br>1.2 Make identified needs a central factor in determining which services to offer.<br>1.3 Develop a strategic approach, in concert with the Mayor and City Council, to identify and mitigate real and perceived inequities to maximize service delivery to all residents. This will include developing a measurable definition of equity and monitoring progress.<br>1.4 Develop policies and procedures that require recreation directors to target diverse needs through diverse programming.<br>1.5 Develop a departmental marketing and outreach strategy, in concert with the long-term strategic plan, that effectively informs the community of the services offered by the Department, opportunities for |

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| | | | community input, and participation (both as donors and volunteers) in Department services. |
| | | N | 1.6 Promote community outreach strategies including methods that directors can use to identify and partner with community resources such as local chambers of commerce, neighborhood councils, and other recreation service providers. |
| | | N | 1.7 Develop a five-year strategic plan that allows the Department to identify short-term and long-term needs. |
| | | N | 1.8 Create a strategic planning group responsible for developing and implementing the strategic plan, and for conducting on-going analyses of community needs and expectations, Department performance, and of independent studies issued.<br>• Develop relationships with research organizations and universities to conduct studies on the impact of services on the community. |
| **2.** | 1. The Department must improve their response to safety concerns in parks.<br>2. The Department should maximize the use of available facilities and provide more recreation and community services, by developing joint-use agreements.<br>3. There are no formal training or development programs to equip personnel to provide quality recreation and human services.<br>4. Policies and procedures have not been developed or updated to reflect current or best practices. | **N** | 2.1 Work with LAPD to address safety issues by increasing the visibility of officers at City parks, and by encouraging participation in parks' LAPD Drop-In centers. |
| | | **D** | 2.2 Consider all available funding sources, including grant funds, to fund improved public safety by subsidizing LAPD costs for increased police presence as well as by developing a more proactive presence of Park Rangers and improving lighting at City parks. |
| | | **N** | 2.3 Coordinate with community organizations and City programs, such as LA Bridges, to offer programs at City parks that are directed at reducing gang activity and violence at parks. |
| | | **N** | 2.4 Identify the service-delivery capacity for all Department facilities and parks, and develop a reporting mechanism to evaluate the actual usage to determine if parks and facilities are under- or over-utilized. |
| | | | 2.5 Develop cooperative partnerships, including, but not limited to joint-use |

| Section Number | Summary Description of Findings | Ranking Code | Recommendations |
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| | | | agreements, with Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the business community, and neighborhood service organizations, to efficiently increase resident accessibility to recreation and community services. |
| | | **N** | 2.6 Develop an intensive training program, including classroom, on-the-job and Continuing Professional Education (CPE) training by the Department's best performing recreation directors for all staff. Training should incorporate outreach techniques and public communication. |
| | | **N** | 2.7 Update and develop policies and procedures to reflect current practices; industry best practices; work priorities; the Mayor's and Department's mission, goals and objectives; management's franchise approach to service delivery. |
| **3.** | 1. The Department should systematically evaluate the success of programs with the purpose of identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.<br>2. The Department needs to improve internal monitoring of processes and practices at the service level.<br>3. The Department needs to develop standards and measures to assess efficiency in providing recreation and community services. | **N** | 3.1 Develop and implement appropriate performance standards, goals and measures (input, output, and outcome) for all programs and services for the purpose of:<br>• Identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.<br>• Determining the actual impact of the Department's efforts on the City's communities and residents.<br>• Assessing success in achieving the mission, goals and objectives, both at the Department level, and the region and center levels. |
| | | **N** | 3.2 Evaluate the method, quality, and utility of the data collected so reporting mechanisms can produce meaningful data that can be used to develop long-term trend analyses. Consider new methods to improve efficiencies, such as developing intranet-based forms for reporting and compiling data. |
| | | **N** | 3.3 Incorporate the results of all performance measurement and evaluation in the strategic planning process to ensure efficient service delivery. |
| | | **N** | 3.4 Develop a formal monitoring process |

| Section Number | Summary Description of Findings | Ranking Code | Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | that requires the involvement of supervisors and Department management at the center level. |
| | | **N** | 3.5 Assess the efficiency of center operations by evaluating the costs and the outcomes of specific programs, in comparison with benchmark or industry standards. |

**Description of Recommendation Ranking Codes**

**U - Urgent** - The recommendation pertains to a serious or materially significant audit finding or control weakness. Due to the seriousness or significance of the matter, immediate management attention and appropriate corrective action is warranted.

**N - Necessary** - The recommendation pertains to a moderately significant or potentially serious audit finding or control weakness. Reasonably prompt corrective action should be taken by management to address the matter. Recommendation should be implemented no later than six months.

**D - Desirable** - The recommendation pertains to an audit finding or control weakness of relatively minor significance or concern. The timing of any corrective action is left to management's discretion.

**N/A** - Not Applicable