



COUNCIL BUDGET STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

[SLC Budget FY25](#)

TO: City Council Members
FROM: Allison Rowland
Public Policy & Budget Analyst

Item Schedule:
Briefing: May 21, 2024
Budget Hearings: May 21, June 4
Potential Action: June 11

DATE: May 21, 2024

RE: CORRECTED - FY2025 BUDGET – DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS

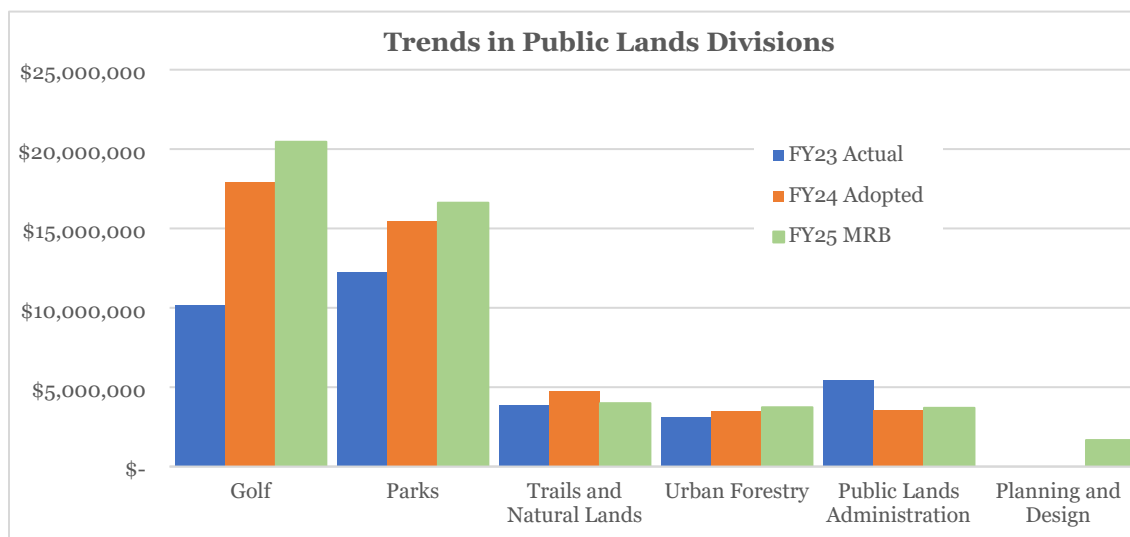
MAYOR’S RECOMMENDED BUDGET PAGES:

- Key Changes, 58-59; Department Overview, 221-226; Staffing, 295-298

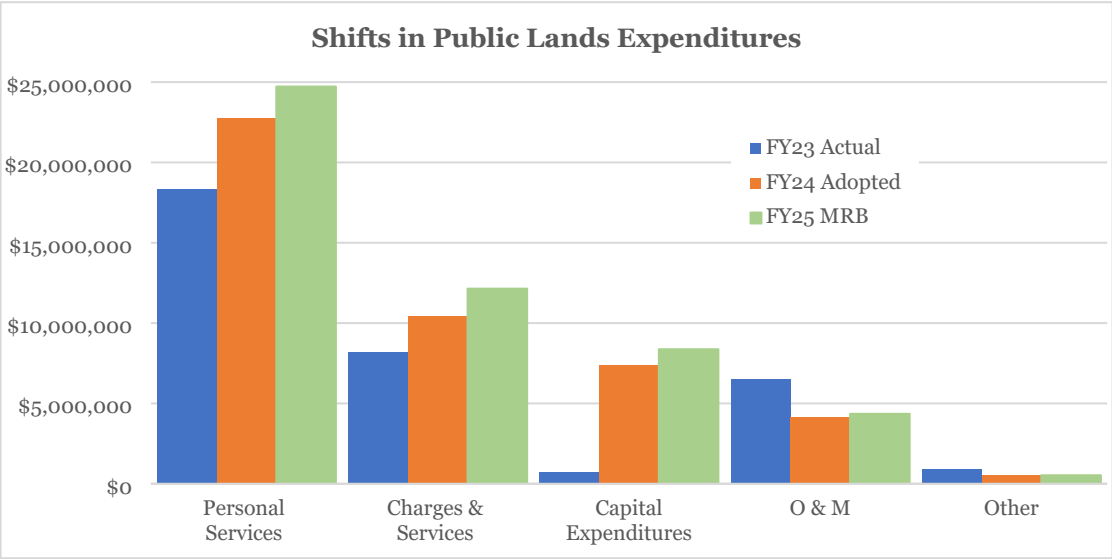
Please see corrections in red below.

OVERVIEW

The proposed Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget for the Department of Public Lands, including the Golf Fund, would reach just over \$50.2 million, which is 10.9% (\$4.9 million) higher than in FY24. The increase would be due primarily to a \$2.5 million increase in the Golf Division, as well as nearly \$1.2 million more in the Parks Division.



The distribution of funding among types of expenditures in FY25 would continue the shifts begun in FY24, particularly the increase in Capital Expenditures while Operations and Maintenance would remain mostly flat (see chart below). Relative to FY23, the FY25 MRB Personal Services costs (pension and merit changes, salary, and insurance rate changes) would continue to account for the largest share of growth, increasing by 35%, to \$24.7 million. In contrast, Charges and Services, which make up a much smaller share of the budget, would grow much faster since FY23, by 48%. Capital Expenditures would grow faster still since FY23 (1,070%), as work funded by the 2022 Public Lands Bond, which got underway in 2023, continues. Operations and Maintenance spending has dropped by one third since FY23, though the FY25 MRB proposes a 5.1% increase relative to FY24. See Section C, below, for additional information on concerns with maintenance levels.



- ***The Council may wish to ask whether Glendale Park reconstruction is the main driver of the rapid growth in Capital Expenditures since FY23, or if other projects are contributing substantially. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund originally funded the City’s purchase of the site, and the City is required to show substantial progress on Glendale Park reconstruction by Spring of 2024.***

Because the Golf Division is an Enterprise Fund, whose budget is supported primarily by revenue for services offered, it is briefed separately. The remaining Public Lands Divisions are supported by the general fund and Funding Our Future. They are discussed in the rest of this staff report.

Public Lands General Fund Budget

The proposed FY25 Public Lands Department budget (minus the Golf Fund) would reach \$29.7 million dollars: 9.0% higher than the FY24 budget. This would continue the Department’s rapid growth, as the City responds to increasing public expectations for its open spaces, as well as rapid population growth. Since the Department’s inception in 2022, this amount would represent a 56% (\$10.7 million) increase in general fund budget allocation in just four years. In addition, the Department is carrying out activities related to the \$85 million GO Bond which voters approved in November 2022.

Among the five Public Lands Divisions, the Parks Division would continue to receive the lion’s share of the overall budget in FY25, at 56% of the total, \$16.6 million (see figure below, and additional information on each Division in section F). Parks also would see the second-biggest increase from FY24 among the Divisions, at \$1.2

million, or 7.6%. It would be exceeded only by the new Planning and Design Division, which would begin its first full year of operation with \$1.7 million. The Council approved the new division last March, as part of FY24 Budget Amendment #4 (see item F5, below).

Proposed Funding Changes Among Divisions in the Department of Public Lands

	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Adopted	FY25 MRB	FY24-25 Change
Parks	11,019,015	12,247,383	15,444,530	16,621,580	7.6%
Trails and Natural Lands	1,403,976	3,886,105	4,755,123	3,992,477	-16.0%
Urban Forestry	3,006,927	3,141,141	3,526,680	3,734,071	5.9%
Public Lands Administration	3,598,566	5,473,498	3,547,945	3,699,086	4.3%
Planning and Design	--	--	--	1,668,798	--
Total	19,028,484	24,748,127	27,274,278	29,716,012	9.0%

Staffing Levels

- A. **New Positions.** The proposed budget would add eight new FTEs to the Public Lands Department, including four which the Council already approved for the new Planning and Design Division as part of FY24 Budget Amendment #2. (Another five positions listed in the staffing document for Planning and Design would be transferred from the Trails and Natural Lands Division.) The Department's four other new positions are funded for 10 months in the MRB, rather than one full year, which means additional funds would be needed to maintain the staffing levels in FY26: \$337,315 for these FTES is included in the budget, compared to \$404,778 in annualized costs.

The salary and program costs of one of the new FTEs (a maintenance technician for Glendale Park) would come from Funding Our Future revenue, and the others would draw from the general fund. The new Parks and Public Lands Project Coordinator position would be funded from "within the Public Lands seasonal personnel budget."

Proposed Staffing Changes in Department of Public Lands Divisions

	FY22 Actual	FY23 Actual	FY24 Adopted	FY25 MRB	Change FY24-25
Parks	78.00	81.00	84.85	84.85	0
Trails and Natural Lands	7.00	29.00	37.15	32.15	-5.00
Urban Forestry	15.00	18.00	18.00	18	0
Planning and Design	--	--	--	11.0	11.0
Public Lands Administration	17.35	15.35	17.85	19.85	2.00
Total	117.35	143.35	157.85	165.85	8.00

The Department also proposes to repurpose two existing FTEs to provide different functions: a Senior Florist position (Grade 18) in Parks would be reclassified as the Division Director for Trails and Natural Lands (Grade 35); and an Office Tech II position will be reassigned at the same grade from the Parks Division to provide customer service and administrative support for Public Lands Administration.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- A. **Annual Report.** Since the adoption of the *Reimagine Nature Plan* in 2022, the Department of Public Lands has tried to align its annual budget proposal with key goals of the plan. These goals, strategies, and results are outlined in the [Public Lands Annual Report](#). Highlights of some topics of special interest to Council Members include:
1. Launching Keep Your Cool, which helped thousands of residents learn about the importance of trees and tree watering.
 2. Saving nearly 30% more water in 2024 than in 2023, thanks to new irrigation systems and other turf and water reduction strategies.
 3. Updating the 2016 Invasive Species Management Plan, with best practices in natural areas, and functional approaches for low-pesticide/no-pesticide management in parks, golf courses, gardens, farms, and orchards.
 4. Completing an innovative stormwater management system at the Regional Athletic Complex (RAC) which eliminates the need to use the Public Utilities drainage system and includes a comprehensive mosquito management plan.
 5. Protecting City stormwater infrastructure by proactively clearing debris from the City Creek riverbed in response to 2023-24 snowpack levels and the rapid onset of warm weather in early spring
 6. Conducting an ADA Accessibility Audit in Parks with the Mayor's Office ADA Coordinator, assessing the ADA compliance of various elements and amenities—like play features, parking, walkways, sports fields, and seating—in every park.
 7. Elevating the Green Loop project at Mayor Mendenhall's direction, beginning with the Green Loop pop-up event in the summer, and followed by planning and designing the 200 East section.
 8. Engaging directly with more than 4,500 individuals, prioritizing traditionally under-represented communities, for Public Space Visioning that significantly influenced the design of public spaces.

B. Staffing Issues.

1. **Vacancies.** Skilled labor vacancies remain difficult to fill in the Department of Public Lands because of high demand and pay along the Wasatch Front. For example, the Department reports that City salaries for irrigation/plumber positions are below-market.
2. **Seasonal Staff.** The Department has succeeded in hiring seasonal staff this year to fill most positions: 132 seasonal and part-time positions have been hired, with 53 positions still vacant. Still, serious challenges remain. In response to staff questions, the Department stated:

“Many of our usually [regular seasonal] staff have declined to return due to conditions in the parks. We have been able to hire new staff to our team in large

part due to the seasonal staff pay increases from the previous two years. This comes with the unfortunate drawback of having to train new staff each season. [Meanwhile,] Ensuring staff safety remains a serious concern. We have had several "close calls" with negative interactions this year between our parks staff and hostile individuals. Some areas have needed police officer support to safely perform park maintenance. Staff can spend 40-50% of their time picking up litter and trash in parks and along the Jordan River when people are living and camping there. The increase of litter pickup means that they are unable to attend to normal park maintenance and landscaping duties.

As the homeless population and crime in our parks increase, morale sinks. While we do all we can to train and incentivize existing staff and new hires, it is clear that their work is comprised of less time beautifying parks and more time cleaning up trash, property misuse, and vandalism. The occasional serious run-ins with potentially dangerous people and the growing presence of drug use and trafficking in public green spaces affects retention and has caused greater turnover than in previous years. Some full-time staff have quit, other regularly returning seasonals no longer show up, and when many candidates have a choice between a Salt Lake City parks job and another municipality, they choose the other city.

This is compounded by the market rate used to pay SLC parks staff being [equivalent] to places like Sandy City, Provo and Logan. The work in SLC is much more challenging and less hospitable than other cities in Utah and the pay is intentionally the same."

3. **Funding Our Future Staffing in Public Lands.** The total amount of Funding Our Future revenue used in Public Lands in FY25 would rise to \$2.4 million, from \$1.8 million the year before. Most of the increase would be in the form of employee-related expenses, like the 5% proposed cost of living salary increase, and pension and insurance rate changes. The use of FOF revenue in this Department began with the FY23 City budget, when 21 Park Rangers and associated program costs were funded with this sales tax revenue. In FY24, eleven new Public Lands FTEs, along with many seasonal employees, were shifted to this funding as well, and one more FTE is proposed be added in FY25.

C. Maintenance Issues.

1. **Council Concerns and Department Response.** Council Members have expressed concerns recently about how the Department of Public Lands is balancing its substantial number of new projects with the need for day-to-day maintenance at existing properties. For example, they are receiving complaints from the public about overflowing trash containers, and poor lawn maintenance. In response to a Council staff question, the Department acknowledges the problem, and responded as follows:

"The Parks Division is continually outpaced by the impacts of people living on, misusing, and vandalizing public lands all while aging infrastructure demands more staff time to maintain an adequate level of function. This is the main reason traditional parks work seems to be falling behind. Parks staff have to repair damaged turf, broken irrigation systems, riverbanks, overflowing trash cans, and vandalized fixtures, valves, playsets. Park staff are now responding to camp mitigations, ruined toilets, stolen wire from light poles, and abandoned trash/property to the point that maintaining

2. *and beautifying parks to a higher standard is not possible. In addition, lower wages along with the stigma of working in Salt Lake City's gritty and sometimes dangerous parks has the Parks division losing staff because they can get equal or better pay from surrounding municipalities. Many skilled labor positions go unfilled - especially those who can work in the private sector trades or other municipalities where drug use, violence, and vandalism don't exist. Equipment is aging and breaking more and more often, and our Fleet Division has struggled to get vehicles and key equipment repaired and returned in a timely fashion. These are Salt Lake City issues that can only be improved with more full-time Park Maintenance Technician positions with associated seasonal staff and newer equipment/vehicles. Parks has time-tested protocols and schedules to keep ahead of the springtime rush, but the aforementioned problems are outpacing our team's ability to respond as quickly as they used to."*

- ***The Council may wish to discuss with the Administration whether the shift in the Department's expenditures toward planning and implementing new projects (as reflected in the FY24 and FY25 MRB expenditures) needs to be re-balanced with greater emphasis on maintenance.***

2. ***Adequately Maintaining SLC's Public Lands.*** In May 2023 the Department prepared and presented an analysis titled *Adequately Maintaining SLC's Public Lands* in response to an FY22 Council Legislative Intent. It estimated what would be needed to fully fund ongoing maintenance for all of its public lands (including those in the Golf Division) and concluded that \$35.4 million would be needed for one-time costs, along with \$10.2 million and 54 new FTEs on an ongoing basis. This analysis is not expected to result in immediate budgeting for these amounts, but rather to aid the City's elected officials in annual budget considerations and inform incremental steps in coming years. The summary of these costs appears in Attachment C1.

In response to a staff question, Public Lands outlined its progress in a few key areas in FY24, and its plans for FY25:

- **Rising Wages:** Higher seasonal salaries (now starting at \$17.00 /hour) increased the number of seasonal applicants in FY24 and improved stability in the seasonal workforce.
- **Investing in Full Time Employees:**
 - In FY 24, the Trails and Natural Lands team was allocated six new FTE Natural Resource Technicians. *"This is a significant increase in maintenance capacity and has lowered our average acres maintained per Natural Resources FTE from 633 acres to 211 acres per FTE."*
 - Parks: In FY24, Parks added the following FTEs: 1 Park Maintenance Technician, 1 Electrician, 1 General Maintenance Worker, 1 Central Control Irrigation Specialist, 1 Irrigation Technician, .5 Sr. Warehouse Operator.
- **Insufficient Planning and Project Delivery:** *"The FY25 budget includes two FTEs for the Planning and Design Division to help address the backlog of existing capital improvement projects, accelerate project delivery timelines, and implement better planning to reflect the departments and the City's evolving needs."*

- Aging Infrastructure: *“For the FY 25 CIP process, Public Lands shifted how we were approaching capital improvement application process to focus primarily on asset replacement of aging infrastructure. The Planning and Design Division submitted eight internal applications for FY25. Six of the eight applications were focused on key asset replacement. It will continue to be critical to address asset replacement through the CIP and annual budget cycle to address these asset replacement needs. Public Lands is currently soliciting proposals from consultants to complete our Capital Asset Plan to better address asset replacement and capital needs. This will be complete in FY 25 and guide all future CIP applications.”*

➤ ***The Council may wish to consider requesting an update on Adequately Maintaining SLC’s Public Lands analysis in time for the FY26 budget discussions.***

3. **Unfunded Maintenance.** The Parks Division and the Trails & Natural Lands Division will take on new unfunded maintenance responsibilities listed below in FY25 at new properties throughout the City. This year, maintenance will be provided through contractual services or seasonal labor using one-time funds, but new sources will need to be found for subsequent years.

- 300 West complete - street improvement waterwise plantings and more than 300 trees.
- Section of *Life on State* - includes landscaping and trees between 600 S to 800 S.
- Portion of 9-Line Trail (300 West to State Street and North frontage along Liberty Park) - maintenance.
- Sunnyside pedestrian improvements - maintenance for green medians and park strips.
- Roundabout at 1000 W and 700 S - landscape maintenance.
- Weed abatement complaints throughout the City - handled by Parks Division.
- Marmalade Park – unique water feature, main plaza, tree-lined corridor with lawn.
- Foothill Trailheads - new amenities at all trailheads including signage, garbage, dog bags.

4. **Constituent Request Management (CRM) software.** The Department reports *“Responses to constituent inquiries have improved after hiring a part-time Office Technician and relocating an Office Technician II to Public Lands Administration.”*

- D. **Consolidated Fee Schedule (CFS).** The Public Lands finance team works with the City Finance Department to ensure that the CFS has been fully vetted, including coordinated cost analysis and adjusting charges as appropriate.
- E. **Public Utilities, Fuel, and Contractual Charges.** Unlike many other City departments, Public Lands pays utilities fees on the infrastructure it maintains, such as watering and lights in parks, some park strips, roundabouts, and traffic island irrigation, as well as fuel. Year-to-year fluctuations have been substantial in recent years, and depend on weather conditions, the City’s new asset purchases, contractual changes, and more. The annual Utilities and Contractual budget request is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus the proposed rate increases for public utilities.

Public Lands Estimates for Utilities, Contracts, Fuel Payments

	FY22	FY23	FY24 Adopted	FY25 MRB
Utilities	162,500	332,157	451,800	549,300
Contracts	79,000	391,468	159,000	197,200
Fleet Fuel	-	162,938	38,700	50,300
Total	\$241,500	\$886,563	\$649,500	\$796,800

F. Division Details.

1. **Parks Division** (\$15,982,287; 84.85 FTEs).

The Parks Division is charged with oversight and care of all City Parks, the Salt Lake City Cemetery, and the Regional Athletic Complex. The Division notes that this year, *“Parks will be saving costs through equipment upgrades, turf-care strategies resulting in cost and water savings, lighting upgrades to energy-efficient fixtures, and anti-vandalism related strategies designed to lower repair and replacement costs.”*

a. **Staffing Changes.** The Parks Division would add **two** new positions.

- i Parks and Public Lands Project Coordinator. The MRB states that funding for this position “is to be identified within the Public Lands seasonal personnel budget.” Implement deferred maintenance projects and asset renewal maintenance funding, and also review, inspect, and coordinate new Public Lands projects and those in other City departments.
- ii Parks Maintenance Tech III. FOF \$76,700 for 10 months, \$92,040 in FY26. For maintenance of Glendale Park, Phase I. (See below for ongoing maintenance costs of new amenities.)

b. **Glendale Park Progress Update.** The Department reported the following on progress at Glendale Park:

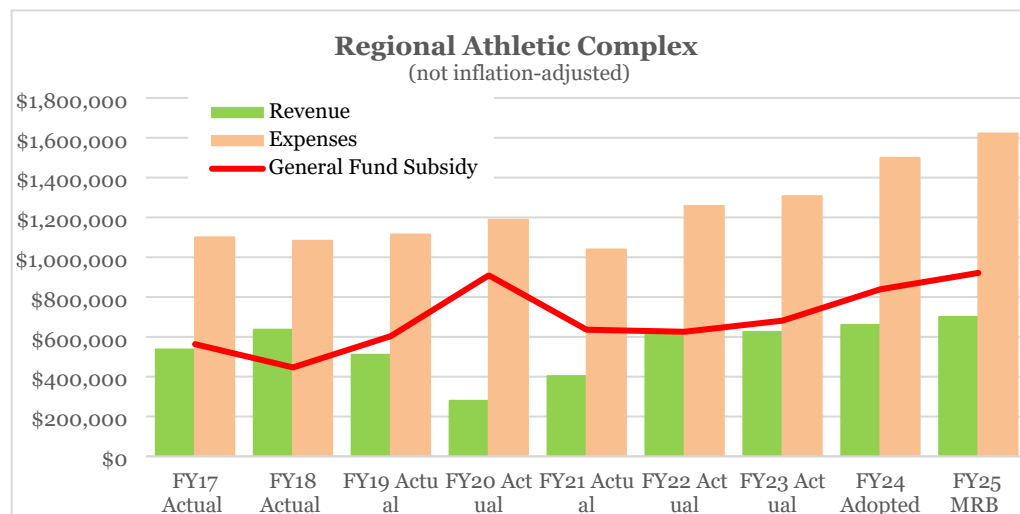
“Design for Phase 1 is complete, and the City is working with the low bidder to negotiate a construction contract. We anticipate starting construction on Glendale Phase 1 in six to twelve weeks. The construction period for Phase 1 is expected to take nine months if there are no weather-related delays. We anticipate Phase 1 opening to the public in late spring/early summer of 2025.

Proposals for a landscape design firm to complete schematic design of the park is ongoing, with selection anticipated for this summer. Schematic design for the entire park should conclude by Fall 2024. Full design for construction will follow for funded amenities and be complete by summer of 2025. Glendale Phase II construction is anticipated to take 9-12 months. Phase II will be open to the public by summer of 2026. Timelines for potential future phases are unknown and based on securing additional funding.

Currently we are evaluating proposals for landscape architecture and design firms to complete schematic design of the remaining amenities of the Park. At that point, we will have planning level cost estimates that will allow us to

more accurately determine what we can accomplish with current funding, and what will require additional funding and may be a part of additional phasing. Due to the cost and special skills required to design and construct an aquatic center, it is likely that may be an additional, third phase.”

- c. **New Glendale Park Maintenance Funding.** Progress in the reconstruction of Glendale Park has spurred requests for new ongoing funding for both maintenance of amenities and a new position to carry out these duties. (The new FTE is described in the Staffing Changes section above.) In response to a staff question, the Department of Public Lands noted that the \$106,800 listed in the FY25 MRB as an ongoing expense reflects an error that will need to be corrected in a future budget amendment. The true amount would be \$66,500, to be spent on maintenance supplies for Phase I amenities: the playground, basketball court, multi-use grass area, pavilion, shrub beds, art, and parking lot with planted islands.
 - d. **Regional Athletic Complex (RAC).** Since the facility opened, revenues have consistently failed to keep pace with expenses. The general fund subsidy is estimated to grow to over \$900,000 in FY25. *Staff note: When the RAC was approved by voters in 2003, the City estimated it would need some sort of ongoing general fund subsidy. The amount identified at the time was \$200,000.*
- ***The Council may wish to request a full briefing on the Regional Athletic Complex for a future work session, along with strategies the Administration is pursuing to help manage the general fund subsidy.***



2. **Trails and Natural Lands Division (\$3,992,477, 32.15 FTEs).**

- a. **Staffing Changes.** The Trails and Natural Lands Division would lose five FTEs to the new Planning and Design Division in FY25: one Planning Manager, and four Parks and Public Lands Landscape Planners. A Trails and Natural Lands Division Director position would be created, by “repurposing” a Senior Florist position from the Parks Division and raising the grade to 35 from 18. The ongoing cost of this change would be approximately \$55,000 annually depending on the level of experience of the individual being hired and subsequent pay and benefits selected.
- b. **Foothill Trails Maintenance.** In conjunction with the FY22 budget, the Council adopted a budget contingency that halted construction in the Foothill Trails while community concerns

were addressed. Additional information on the budget contingency and subsequent Department and community work related to this issue can be found in Attachment C3.

The Division also notes that it recently increased trail maintenance capacity by selecting three on-call trail maintenance contractors to assist work in the Foothills Natural Area. This will help reduce future deferred trail maintenance.

3. Urban Forestry Division (\$3,734,071, 18 FTEs).

The Urban Forestry Division is proposed to remain at 18 FTEs in the proposed budget, the same as in FY23 and FY24. Last year, the Division noted that investments from FY23, along with efficiency improvements, were likely to result in noticeably elevated service levels in the upcoming budget year, and that it now has a higher capacity for work completion and customer interaction than ever before.

4. Public Lands Administration (\$3,752,082; 19.85 FTEs).

Public Lands Administration is not formally a division, but it is treated as one in this staff report for simplicity. The size of the staff would grow by two FTEs in FY25: a Deputy Director of Public Lands would be moved from Trails and Natural Lands, and an Office Tech II would be moved from Parks. Neither would experience a grade or salary change. The Office Tech would provide customer service and administrative support for Public Lands Administration.

A list of Citywide events organized by the Department of Public Lands can be found [here](#).

5. Planning and Design Division (\$1,668,798; 11 FTEs).

This division was separated from the Trails and Natural Lands Division and initially staffed in FY24 Budget Amendments #2 and #4. This is unusual, since a new division is typically approved only in the context of the annual budget. At that time, four existing Landscape Architects were transferred from the Public Services Department (Engineering Division), and a Planning and Design Division Director position was created to replace the existing Department of Public Lands Trails and Natural Lands Planning Manager position, with an increased pay grade.

The MRB proposes reclassifying one of the transferred Landscape Architects as a Senior Architect and would create a second, new Senior Architect position as well. It would also create one new Senior Public Lands Planner position. Another four Public Lands Planner positions would be transferred to Planning and Design from the Trails and Natural Lands Division.

- i Senior Public Lands Planner. \$121,979 for 10 months, \$146,375 in FY26; ongoing operational costs \$4,000. Help complete projects faster, reduce project managers' workload and plan for evolving needs.
- ii Senior Landscape Architect. \$138,636 for 10 months, \$166,363 in FY26; ongoing operational costs \$4,000. Help complete projects faster, reduce project managers' workload and plan for evolving needs.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment C1. Public Lands Maintenance Needs Estimates, 2023.

Attachment C2. Summary of the FY22 Foothills Trails Budget Contingency & Forthcoming Foothills Plan Evaluation and Recommendations Report.

Attachment 1. Public Lands Maintenance Needs Estimates.

The following chart is reproduced from *Adequately Maintaining SLC's Public Lands*, a document written in response to a Council Legislative Intent and presented to the Council in the May 2, 2023, Work Session, page 30.

	One-Time	On-Going	New FTEs	Notes/Other
Goal 1. Evolving our Workforce				
Afternoon Parks Crew	\$120,000	\$598,000	7	
Invest in full-time employees	\$696,000	\$1,367,925	21	7 new FTEs for each year (total of 3 years)
Park Inspector	\$72,500	\$116,000	1	
Trails and Natural Lands Operations	\$585,000	\$1,116,195	12	
Goal 2. Grown Gap: Matching Growth with Growth				
Public Lands Acquisition Plan & Strategic Capital Plan	\$300,000	N/A		
Additional Planning Team	\$115,500	\$605,160	5	Budget Amendment 2 new FTE Budget Insight FY24 3 new FTE
Goal 3. Address the City's Aging Infrastructure				
Begin regular cycle of asset replacement		\$5,000,000*		May increase 5-10% annually
Irrigation System Replacement (14 properties)	\$13,061,148**			\$2,000,000***
Large Equipment Replacement	\$3,322,576			
Golf Division Irrigation System Replacement at Three Courses	\$11,850,000			
Goal 4. Improve Stewardship through Partnerships Development				
Community Park Activation Grants	\$55,000	\$125,000	1	1 vehicle, equipment & office supplies
Increase budget for general communications, engagement, and volunteerism activities		\$25,000		

One-time equipment purchases for enhanced outreach capacity (vehicle, trailers, etc.)

\$125,000

Enhanced Park Usage Data Gathering

\$70,000

Goal 5. Resolve Structural Imbalances

Weed Abatement

\$290,000

\$326,695

Goal 6. Urban Forest Resilience

Additional Arborist Crews

\$457,500

\$202,800

2

Temporary \$100,000 for three years

Golf Course Arborists

\$457,500

\$202,800

2

\$100,000 for three years

Storm Damage & Recovery

\$160,000 Revolving Account

Urban Wood Reutilization

\$3,777,500

\$171,500

1

Goal 7. Reduce or Eliminate Crime and Antisocial Behavior

Two Animal Service Officers (SLCO)

\$150,000

\$275,000

2

TOTALS

\$35,435,224

\$10,202,075

54

\$2,360,000+

*We are funded for an asset replacement plan that will determine this number

**Estimates for only high-priority projects

***Estimated annually 10 years for aged systems that need replacement

Attachment C2. Summary of the FY22 Foothills Trails Budget Contingency & Forthcoming Foothills Plan Evaluation and Recommendations Report.

Compiled by Austin Kimmel, City Council Public Engagement / Communications Specialist

In March 2020, the Council adopted the Foothills Trail System Plan. The following summer, Phase I trail construction began, resulting in over 15 miles of newly built trails. In May 2021, concerns were raised about the Plan's planning process and construction methods, and Phase I construction was paused. In the Council's adoption of the Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) budget, the Council adopted a budget contingency requesting the Administration work with various stakeholders to review the Foothills Trail System Plan and subsequent implementation. The contingency outlined the Council's request to the Administration to hire outside experts to evaluate the Plan's land preservation and stewardship strategies, respect for Tribal concerns, and identify strategies for improvement. The contingency has been provided below for convenience:

*2. **Conditional appropriation about future dollars spent on foothill trails**—Existing and new funds for the construction, modification and decommissioning of trails built under the Foothills Trail System Master Plan, Phase 1, will be placed on hold contingent on the Administration's review in collaboration with a broad spectrum of community stakeholders of:*

- a. the implementation to date of the master plan;*
- b. identification of adjustments or additional engagement as warranted; and*
- c. the Council's authorization to move forward after the Council evaluates the results of the process.*

The City Council is willing to provide funding to the Administration for one or more outside experts who can objectively evaluate the technical and public policy aspects of the trail changes and additions completed to date and anticipated in the masterplan. That written evaluation should focus on, but not be limited to, the extent to which trail planning and development have been consistent with the vision, goals, and principles in the Master Plan, including best practices, strategies for the preservation and stewardship of the land; and respect for Tribal concerns. In addition, the written evaluation should include an analysis of how the process could be adapted to better meet the needs and desires of all users. Existing and new funds for environmental studies will not be on hold, so long as such funds are not used for construction or decommissioning of trails. Existing and new funds for maintenance or repair of existing trails will be on hold, but may be released incrementally by the Council as information about adherence to best practices and progress on community feedback is received.

Since the FY22 contingency was adopted, the Department of Public Lands hired three consulting agencies to independently evaluate the 2020 Foothills Trail System Plan from three distinct areas of expertise:

1. **SWCA Environmental** provided a baseline pre-NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) ecological and cultural report to inform future areas for trail development, restoration, and conservation.
2. **SE Group** evaluated the Plan and the subsequent Phase I trail construction. It also provided several recommendations for the Administration.
3. **DEA Inc.** assisted the department with public communication efforts.

At a future meeting (date to be determined), the Council will be briefed on the steps the Department of Public Lands has taken following the Council's adoption of the FY22 contingency, the findings by the hired consulting agencies, and recommendations for future trail development and maintenance. The Council will also consider the department's request that the City Council approve said findings and recommendations and remove the hold on trail construction funding.

Approximately \$380,000 remains in existing Foothills Master Plan Capital funding.