



Internal Audit Department Parks and Recreation Department – Park Usage Permit Audit A2025-01

Objectives

The objectives of this audit were to determine if the Parks and Recreation Department:

- Has an established process for issuing Park Usage Permits.
- Has established criteria for the need of a Park Usage Permit.
- Has Policies and Procedures for the issuance of Park Usage Permits.
- Is charging Permit Fees accurately.
- Is following up/enforcing Park Usage Permits.

Scope

The scope of September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024 included:

- Reviewing departmental Policies and Procedures.
- Obtaining an understanding of the Open Park Space Permitting process.
- Conducting interviews with Parks personnel.
- Selecting a sample of issued Open Park Space Permits.

Finding 1

- Event organizers are not obtaining an Open Park Space Permit for unpermitted events.
- Events that do not follow the Permitting Process are not monitored.
- There are no Parks procedures to identify unpermitted events.
- There are no dedicated resources to allow for the identification and monitoring of unpermitted events.

Recommendation

- The Parks and Recreation Department staff should conduct community outreach to inform the public of the Permitting Process.
- The Department should also work with other City Departments to help monitor park areas for potential events.

Revised Management Response

Finding 1

“In partnership with Communication and Public Affairs, the Parks and Recreation Department will develop and implement a Communication Plan to include a Social Media campaign. This plan will provide key information to the community about Parks and Recreation permit processes and relevant City ordinances/municipal codes that govern the use of City Parks and Recreation Areas, and Park Rules and Guidelines that reinforce the enjoyment and safety of these spaces for Park users and the general public.”

Revised Management Response (Cont.)

Finding 1 (Cont.)

“Additionally, the Parks and Recreation Department began coordination with the El Paso Police Department and the Code Enforcement Departments to enhance the response to unpermitted events in our Parks and Recreation Areas. During the next fiscal year, Parks and Recreation and Code Enforcement will be reviewing the feasibility of adding a Park Ambassador Program. This would consist of Code Enforcement staff specializing in Park matters to assist with handling unpermitted events, to help reinforce Park Rules, to coordinate maintenance issues found at Park sites, and to assist park patrons supporting an overall positive experience at Parks and Recreation Areas.”

Finding 2

The following details were added by the Internal Audit Department:

- A table listing the 13 Municipal Codes applicable to the Parks and Recreation permitting process.
- A table listing 14 parks ranked by the number of permits issued and the total dollar amount of permit fees collected.
 - Lincoln Park was ranked #1
- A table listing the 9 permits issued for Lincoln Park totaling \$6,300.00.

Finding 2 (Cont.)

The current application requires 30 day advance notice. Nine applications were reviewed:

- Five Permit Applications were received less than 30 days before the event date.
- Four Permit Applications were received more than 30 days before the event date.

Recommendation

The Parks and Recreation Department should create a policy to enforce the 30-day Permit Application requirement.

Revised Management Response

Finding 2

The Parks and Recreation Department reviewed and will update the Administrative Guidelines to clarify when permit applications for the use of open spaces and sports areas require a minimum of 30-days. The following updates are scheduled for completion by October 2025:

1. Permit Issuance Process: As part of this update, we will develop a detailed Permit Issuance Process in accordance with Municipal Code 13.24. This process will establish clear, standardized procedures for the issuance of temporary permits for open spaces, facilities, and identifiable areas within City parks.”

Revised Management Response (Cont.)

Finding 2 (Cont.)

“2. Permit Application Requirements: The updated guidelines will include the following permit application requirements:

- a. 30-day advance application will be required for:
 - i. large events of 100 + participants
 - ii. when streets closures and traffic control are requested in open spaces and sports fields
- b. A minimum of two-week advance application will be required for use of any facilities such as recreation centers and aquatics area.

Revised Management Response (Cont.)

Finding 2 (Cont.)

“Lastly, with regard to the enforcement of unpermitted events, staff will bring forward a code amendment to Title 13.24 City Parks and Recreation Areas to mirror Title 9.40 Health and Safety. This will provide consistency and clarity in the provisions of enforcement authority under the new Code Enforcement Department and any relevant penalties to any persons violating the provisions of the chapter.”

Conclusion

Parks Department met the audit objectives as follows:

- Has documented Policies and Procedures for the issuance of Park Usage Permits.
- Properly reviews and issues Park Usage Permits to the public.
- Properly charges and collects fees for the issuance of Park Usage Permits.

Parks Department did not meet the audit objectives as follows:

- Unpermitted events are not identified and monitored by staff.
- Permit Applications are accepted less than 30 days before an event.
- There is no policy for the enforcement of unpermitted events.

Requested Action

To accept the results of the Parks and Recreation Department – Park Usage Permit Audit and forward the Audit Report to City Council for action.