

FY 2026-2027 BUDGET QUESTION
Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT(S): Austin Parks & Recreation;

CBQ NO.: 21

REQUESTED BY: (District 2) Vanessa Fuentes

DATE REQUESTED: Friday, July 17, 2026 12:16 PM

DATE POSTED: Wednesday, August 5, 2026

REQUEST:

How much funding and/or FTEs are needed to maintain current park maintenance levels? How much would be needed to reach an ideal level of service? How many new FTEs are included in the proposed budget?

RESPONSE:

APR estimates it needs 11 additional Park Maintenance FTEs (or equivalent temporary or seasonal staffing) to maintain today's service levels as new parks and facilities are added.

Achieving the department's ideal level of service, APR estimates it would require approximately 60 additional Park Maintenance FTEs.

For Forestry, APR estimates it needs 18 additional FTEs to support a 20-year proactive pruning cycle for approximately 300,000 trees in developed parkland and along trails while continuing reactive pruning in natural areas. Achieving the industry standard of a 3-10 year pruning cycle (averaging seven years for 80% of trees) would require 124 FTEs.

The proposed FY27 budget includes no new FTEs for either Park Maintenance or Forestry. In addition, the proposed budget reduces funding for seasonal and temporary staffing in these two programs by a combined \$500,000.

A 2024 staffing study found APR would need 70 additional Park Maintenance FTEs to achieve its highest level of service, including:

- Mowing and trimming approximately 80% of parks weekly during peak season.
- Daily trash collection in approximately 80% of parks.
- Daily servicing of all park restrooms.
- Proactive inspections of park amenities.

These estimates reflect only core park maintenance functions, including mowing, trash collection, restroom servicing, and routine maintenance. They do not include specialized services such as trails, playgrounds, horticulture, or graffiti removal.

APR Forestry continues to operate below industry maintenance standards as the park system expands. The unit estimates it needs 18 additional FTEs to maintain a 20-year pruning cycle on developed parkland and trails while providing reactive pruning in natural areas. Achieving the industry standard of a 3-10 year pruning cycle would require 124 FTEs. To further refine staffing needs and workload estimates, APR is pursuing a comprehensive tree inventory.

Additional Detail

Park Maintenance Summary:

Year	Summary
2024 Staffing Study	Need: The study found APR needed 70 additional FTEs to provide the highest level of park maintenance service.
FY25 Budget	Funded: 16 FTEs
FY26 Assessment	Need: As new parks and facilities opened, APR estimated it needed 6 additional FTEs to maintain existing service levels.
FY26 Budget	Funded: 11 Park Maintenance, 2 Forestry and 2 Athletics FTEs
FY27 Proposed Budget	No FTEs included for Park Maintenance
Current Need to provide highest desired level of service	60 FTEs

Forestry Summary:

Service Level	Additional FTEs Needed
Maintain a 20-year pruning cycle (developed parkland and trails, with reactive pruning in natural areas)	18 FTEs
Achieve the industry standard (3-10 year pruning cycle, averaging 7 years for 80% of trees)	124 FTEs
Proposed FY27 Budget	No FTEs included for Forestry

The new parks and amenities included in this calculation are below:

Park Name	Project Type	Base Cost Drivers
Zilker Maintenance Barn	Improvement	The new facility is anticipated to be completed in Fall 2026 and will require additional building maintenance.
Zilker Tree Planting	Improvement	Maintenance of new area not previously irrigated.
Zilker Clubhouse	Improvement	Services, irrigation, and plumbing related to the increase in maintenance needs and use, construction anticipated to be complete in Summer 2027.
Ridgeline Neighborhood Park	Development	Newly developed park opened in FY26
Grand Meadow Neighborhood Park	Development	Newly developed park under construction, anticipated to be complete Fall 2026.
Little Deer Neighborhood Park	Development	Planned development of nature trail with Texas Conservation

		Corps. Improvements will increase access requiring additional maintenance.
Pleasant Hill Creek Greenbelt	Development	Development of nature trails with Texas Conservation Corps. Improvements will increase access requiring additional maintenance.
Bull Creek - Old Lampasas #3 Dam Modernization	Improvement	Planned modernization project to improve the dam and upgrade it to safely pass the design flood required by the City Drainage Criteria Manual and State of Texas Dam Safety Rules. Improvements will increase access requiring additional maintenance.
Tillery Neighborhood Park	Development	New development anticipated to be completed in Summer 2027.
New Parkland	Acquisitions	≈377 acres of undeveloped parkland and ≈72 acres of developed parkland were acquired in FY26.

Forestry Service Levels	
Level 1	Fully maintained 3-10 year pruning cycle, \$76.23 per tree per year proactive maintenance

Level 2	Partially maintained 15 year pruning cycle, minimal proactive maintenance
Level 3	20-year cycle on developed parkland and reactive pruning in unmaintained natural areas
Level 4	Unmaintained area without trails, budgeted for safety related pruning as needed based on request, usually only on approximately 25% of land area (Preserve, Greenbelts areas without trails)