

**Chester Trash and Parks Maintenance/
Grass Cutting Issues Discussion
Part 1 – Current Situation**

MFRAC Committee Meeting

June 8, 2021



THE KAPOOR COMPANY
ADVISORS & CONSULTANTS

Purpose of Presentation

- Chester residents deserve to live in a City with clean streets, clean neighborhoods and clean and maintained parks and this is a top priority of City officials and the Receiver
- Everyone recognizes that this is not happening right now and this must be addressed immediately. City officials and the Receiver's team are working together to develop a plan to correct the situation
- As you will see from the presentation that we are jointly making today, the amount of work that needs to be done is overwhelming and the City's public works department needs help from other governmental entities and from the public
- Because these issues are so large, we are focusing today on providing you with a basic understanding of the work that needs to be done regarding trash and basic parks maintenance/grass cutting. We will discuss ways to address these issues at the next MFRAC meeting
 - The Public Works Department also has other responsibilities such as street maintenance. Due to the urgency of addressing the trash and grass cutting issues, we are focusing on these areas today

Presentation Outline

- The presentation today is divided into four sections:
 - Overview of Chester's Public Works department
 - Trash issues
 - Parks maintenance and grass cutting issues
 - Next steps

Overview of Chester's Public Works Department



Public Works Department Duties

- Parks maintenance
- Grass cutting at Chester Redevelopment Authority (CRA) and Chester Economic Development Authority (CEDA) properties
- Bulk trash pickup
- Clean-up of illegal dumping
- Building maintenance
- Streets maintenance
 - Potholes
 - Signage
- Tree removal
- Street light bulb replacements
- Handicap parking spots
 - Signage
 - Line painting
- Animal/wildlife removal on City, CRA and CEDA properties



Who is Responsible for the Work Now?

Trash Responsibilities

Task	Responsibility
Residential Trash Pick-up	Contracted Out – J.P. Mascaro
Recycling	Contracted Out – J.P. Mascaro
Bulk Trash Pick-up	Public Works Department
Illegal Dumping on Private Land	Should be property owner, but Public Works Department often has to do the work
Illegal Dumping on Public Land	Public Works Department
Emptying Municipal Trash Cans	Public Works Department
Street Sweeping	Stormwater Authority
General Littering	Not Covered

Who is Responsible for the Work Now?

Grass Cutting Responsibilities

Task	Responsibility
Grass Cutting at Major City Parks	Public Works Department
Deshong Park	Delaware County Industrial Development Authority
Grass Cutting at Smaller City Parks	Public Works Department
Grass Cutting at CRA and CEDA Properties	Public Works Department
City Hall and Police Department	Public Works Department

Organization of Public Works Department

- Under the City of Chester's form of government, City Council members may serve as department heads
- Prior to Receivership, there was not a consolidated public works department. Instead, employees were in two departments:
 - Parks, Recreation & Public Property
 - Streets & Highways
- Last year, the Receiver directed that the employees in these two departments be consolidated into a public works department which is typical for a city like Chester. The Receiver made this decision for the following reasons:
 - Employees in these two departments performed similar functions and used similar equipment
 - Improve productivity through economies of scale
- The Public Works employees are unionized and part of Teamsters Local 312. The collective bargaining agreement for this unit expired in December 2020 and negotiations for a successor contract are ongoing.

What Happened in 2020?

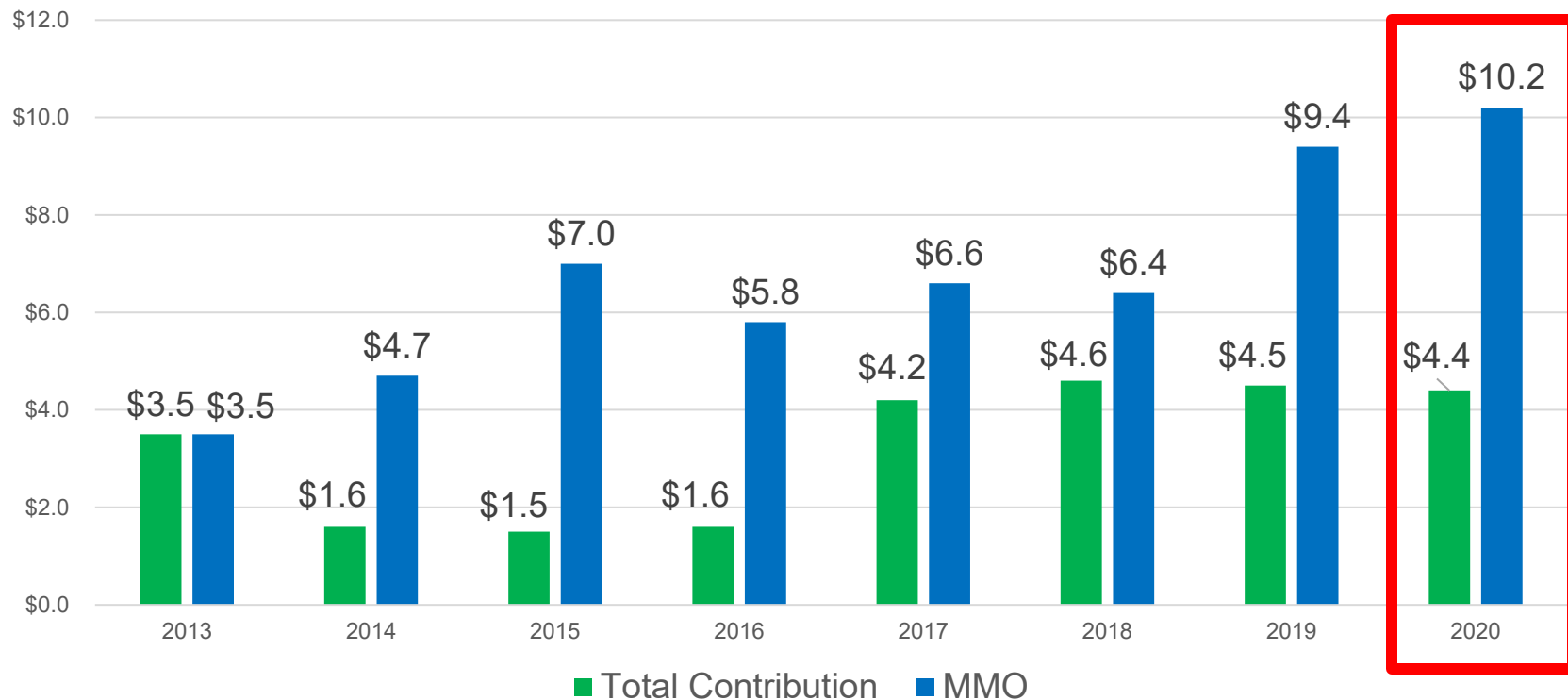
- Prior to the Governor's declaration of fiscal emergency in April 2020, the City had 31 full-time and 6 part-time seasonal positions performing public works functions across the two departments
- In April 2020, in order to avoid running out of cash, the City furloughed most of these employees and effectively switched to part-time public works services by operating with only 2 full-time employees and several part-time employees
- In November, the Receiver recalled 18 employees to full-time into a new consolidated public works department with a complement of 20 employees
- The 2021 budget carried over the public works department at a complement of 20 full-time employees

Why Don't You Have More People in the Public Works Department?

Because the City needs to make its full pension payment and cannot afford to hire more people. The City's annual payment for 2021 is \$10.8 million.

In a May 25, 2021, presentation to MFRAC, we noted that the City has not made its full annual pension payment (MMO) since 2013 (graph below). Even last year, when operating with a part-time public works department, the City was \$5.8 million short

City Contributions Relative to MMOs (\$ Millions), 2013-2020



How Labor Laws Affect City's Ability to Complete Work

- The City's non-supervisory Public Works employees are all unionized by Teamsters Local 312
- Much of the work that needs to be completed in Chester is bargaining unit work. Therefore, the City cannot simply assign it to non-union personnel or have other governments or individuals perform the work without the union's agreement
 - This also applies to volunteers
- The Teamsters collective bargaining agreement expired at the end of last year and negotiations for a successor contract are ongoing

Key City Elected Officials and Staff Responsible for Public Works Duties

- Councilwoman Portia West – Councilmember over Streets
- Councilwoman Elizabeth Williams – Councilmember over Parks and Public Property
- Interim Chief Operating Officer – Cyrise Dixon
- Director of Public Works – Rodney Robertson
- Street & Highway Supervisor – Mark Alexander
- Recycling Coordinator – Richard Knox
 - Responsible for overseeing the residential trash contract, recycling, taking bulk trash requests, illegal dumping calls and other public works requests from the public

Trash Issues



Trash Issues

- Trash issues can be subdivided into the following areas:
 - Residential trash collection and recycling
 - Bulk trash service
 - Illegal dumping on private land
 - Illegal dumping on public land
 - Emptying of municipal-owned trash cans
 - Street sweeping
 - General littering

Residential Trash Collection

- In Chester, residential trash collection is provided by J.P. Mascaro
- J.P. Mascaro was selected by the City through an RFP process and in December was selected again by the City through an RFP process to provide residential trash and recycling collection services for a five-year period
 - Only two companies bid in December. J.P. Mascaro was the lowest bid. However, its fees increased by approximately \$520,000 per year or 57.8% over the last contract for the same level of service as the prior contract. The other bid was \$616,032 more per year than J.P. Mascaro's bid
- City residents are assessed an annual rubbish fee of \$200 per household
- Recycling Coordinator Richard Knox manages the enforcement of the contract with J.P. Mascaro
- Trash is collected once a week on either Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday based on the map on the next slide. Recycling occurs weekly on Wednesdays for the entire city.



Rules for Residential Trash Pickup

- Garbage must be in a receptacle with a lid and residents may have up to four receptacles (maximum 55 gallon) out
 - Garbage must be residential (as opposed to commercial)
 - City inspectors can issue a \$50 dollar citation if these rules are not followed
 - Many residents are not using receptacles, but instead simply put out bags which attracts animals
- Garbage may not be put out earlier than 4:30pm the day before pickup
 - There are also problems with residents putting out garbage earlier
 - Also a \$50 fine if not followed
- Holiday pickup: If holiday falls on a Monday, then typical Monday pick-up will occur on Tuesday and typical Tuesday pickup will occur on Wednesday. Typical Thursday and Friday remain the same. There is no recycling pickup during holiday weeks.
 - Thanksgiving pick up for normal Thursday pickup occurs on Wednesday.

Rules for Recycling

- Recycling occurs every Wednesday City-wide, except on a week where there is a holiday
 - No recycling on weeks where there is a holiday
- Recycling will only be picked-up if it is placed in a blue bucket
 - Residents can get a free blue bucket by calling City Hall at 610-447-7888 and can pick it up from City Hall between the hours of 9 am and 4:30pm to pick it up
- The City is having a lot of trouble with residents not having blue buckets or residents using blue buckets for regular trash



What Should Residents Do If They Have a Complaint About Residential Trash Pickup?

- In recent months, the trash contractor has missed pickups in areas of the City. City elected officials and staff have met with the trash contractor to make sure that this does not occur going forward
 - The contract has penalties for subpar service
- If your trash was missed, call the City at 610-447-7742 and make your complaint. Your complaint will be documented and will be forwarded to J.P. Mascaro
 - The City has had some issues with calls being incorrectly routed to the desks of individuals who have been furloughed

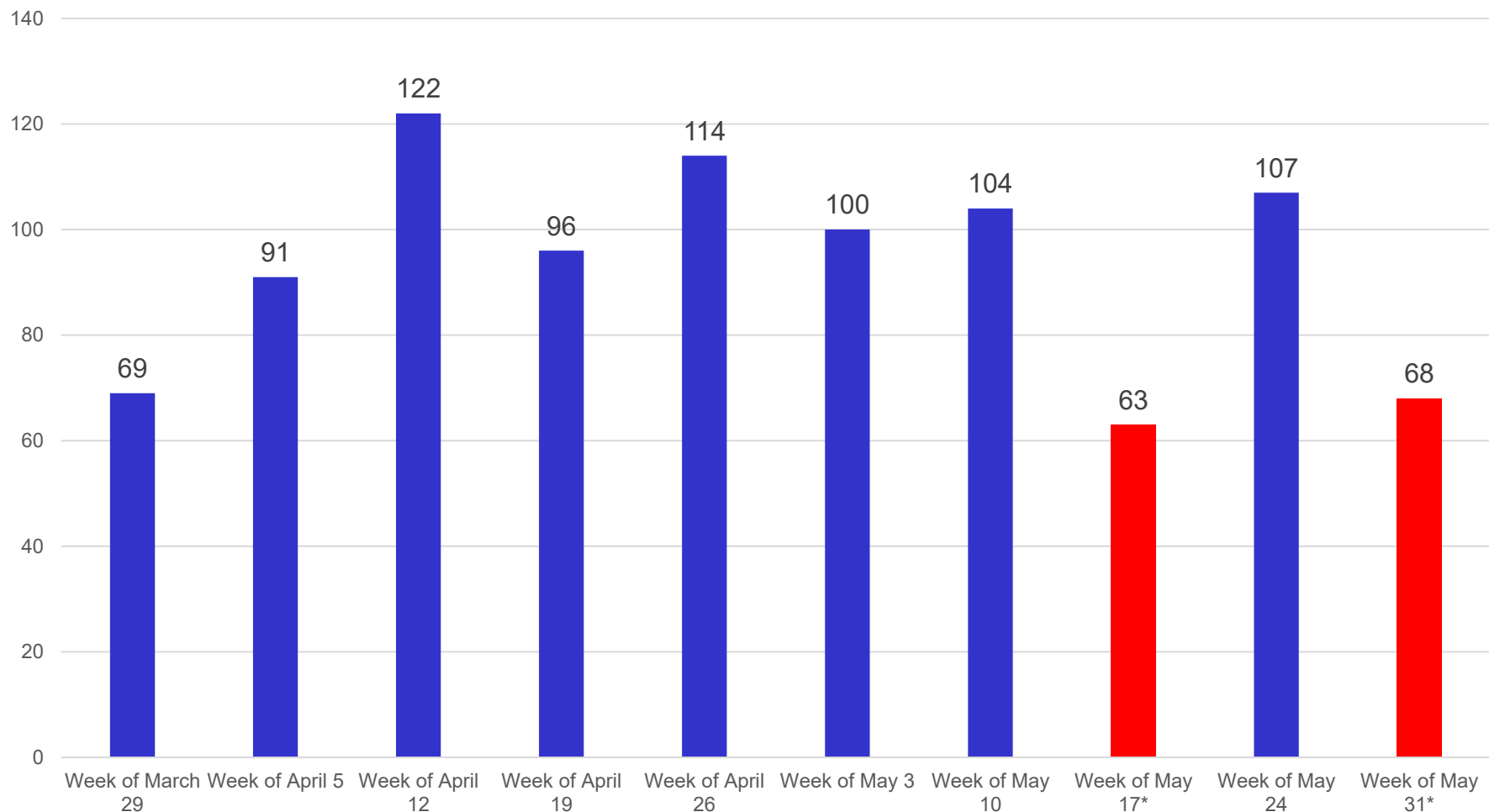
Bulk Trash Pickup

- Bulk trash are larger items such as appliances and furniture
 - Building materials are not acceptable
 - The City's Public Works Department, not J.P. Mascaro, picks up bulk trash.
- Currently, a Chester resident may put out 6 items of bulk trash per week without a charge
- Residents request bulk trash pickup by calling 610-447-7888 Monday thru Wednesday
 - Resident provides name, phone number and items being put out
 - City is having problems with people putting out much more than what was originally called in
 - These items generally appear to be residential, not dumped
- Over the last two months, the City is averaging around 100 bulk calls per week
 - Previously, the City had four trucks dedicated to bulk trash service. Now, it has one.

City Bulk Trash Calls

The City averages around 100 bulk trash calls per week during non-holiday weeks. Most of the calls for pickup are for furniture.

Weekly Bulk Trash Pick-Up Requests from March 29 - June 2, 2021



* Denotes weeks in which holidays fell and City Hall closed.



Bulk Trash Disposal Process

- In addition to the sheer volume of bulk trash calls, the Public Works Department must also deal with how to dispose of the bulk trash
- Bulk trash may only be transported to Covanta in large trucks which have tarps. The City has three such trucks but they are not all in operation at the same time and require CDL licenses to drive
 - Additionally, wait time at Covanta to drop off trash can take 1 hour or more
- Public Works employees therefore take bulk trash to a City transfer station that is known as “The Pit” (2nd & Dock Street – Public Works HQ)
 - There, they unload it and will eventually have to load it back onto larger trucks to be taken to Covanta
 - Public Works staff tries to takes garbage from illegal dump sites directly to Covanta

The "Pit"



Top 5 Illegal Dumping Locations

- The City is also facing a severe crisis of individuals illegally dumping garbage throughout the City on both private and public land
 - Most of the items dumped are building materials or apartment clean-outs
 - The Public Works staff responds to these dumping sites – even sometimes on private property – in order to address the mess
- While the City has always had a problem with illegal dumping, it has gotten much worse recently
 - Recently, someone dumped an apartment in the parking lot of Memorial Park
- The City has used some cameras in the past, but they have required batteries which would run out
- We need the public's help to catch people who are illegally dumping and disrespecting the residents of Chester

Top 5 Illegal Dumping Locations

- The Public Works staff knows the top locations of where items are illegally dumped and provided the following “top 5” places:
 - 22nd & Howard (behind the gas station) (#1)
 - 2300 block of Mary Street (alleyway)
 - 800 block of Elsinore
 - 700 block of Grace Street (alleyway Pulaski school)
 - 1000 and 1100 block of McDowell
 - 300 block of Montgomery
- After a meeting on Friday, June 4, 2021 where we were preparing for this presentation, Public Works staff drove by those sites and took the following pictures

Howard Street Between 22nd & 23rd Streets (Behind Gas Station)



Photo taken 6/4/2021.

800 Block of Elsinore



Photo taken 6/4/2021.

700 Block of Grace Street #1



Photo taken 6/4/2021.

700 Block of Grace St. #2



Photo taken 6/4/2021.

1000 & 1100 Block of McDowell Streets



Photo taken 6/4/2021.



1000 & 1100 Block of McDowell Streets



Photo taken 6/4/2021.

Parks Maintenance and Grass Cutting Issues



Grass Cutting Issues

- In addition to the trash responsibilities discussed earlier, the Public Works Department is also responsible for parks maintenance. We will focus this section on grass cutting
- Public works cuts grass in the following areas
 - Major City parks
 - Note that Deshong Park is owned and maintained by the Delaware County Industrial Development Authority
 - Smaller City parks
 - CRA and CEDA properties
 - City buildings
- Due to lack of upkeep and simply a need to clean up eyesores that are along major thoroughfares, the Public Works Department will also sometimes clean on/off ramps from I-95 and properties along 291 that are the responsibilities of other governmental agencies (PennDOT) or privately owned

Grass Cutting Issues (continued)

- The City has 29 parks covering 212.11 acres (excludes Deshong)
 - The City's largest 6 parks comprise 195.95 of those acres
 - Chester Park is 82.74 acres
 - Crozer Park is 51.17 acres
 - Sun Village Park is 21.58 acres
 - Veterans Memorial Park is 21.13 acres
 - Eyre Park is 11.24 acres
 - Washington Park is 7.09 acres
- The City has a Parks, Trails & Open Space Master Plan which contains an inventory and description of all the City parks and covers 2018-2027. It can be found at: [https://www.chestercity.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Resilience Through Recreation Plan 111218.pdf](https://www.chestercity.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Resilience_Through_Recreation_Plan_111218.pdf)
- In addition to parks, the Public Works Department also maintains over 90 CRA and CEDA properties with the list growing each year

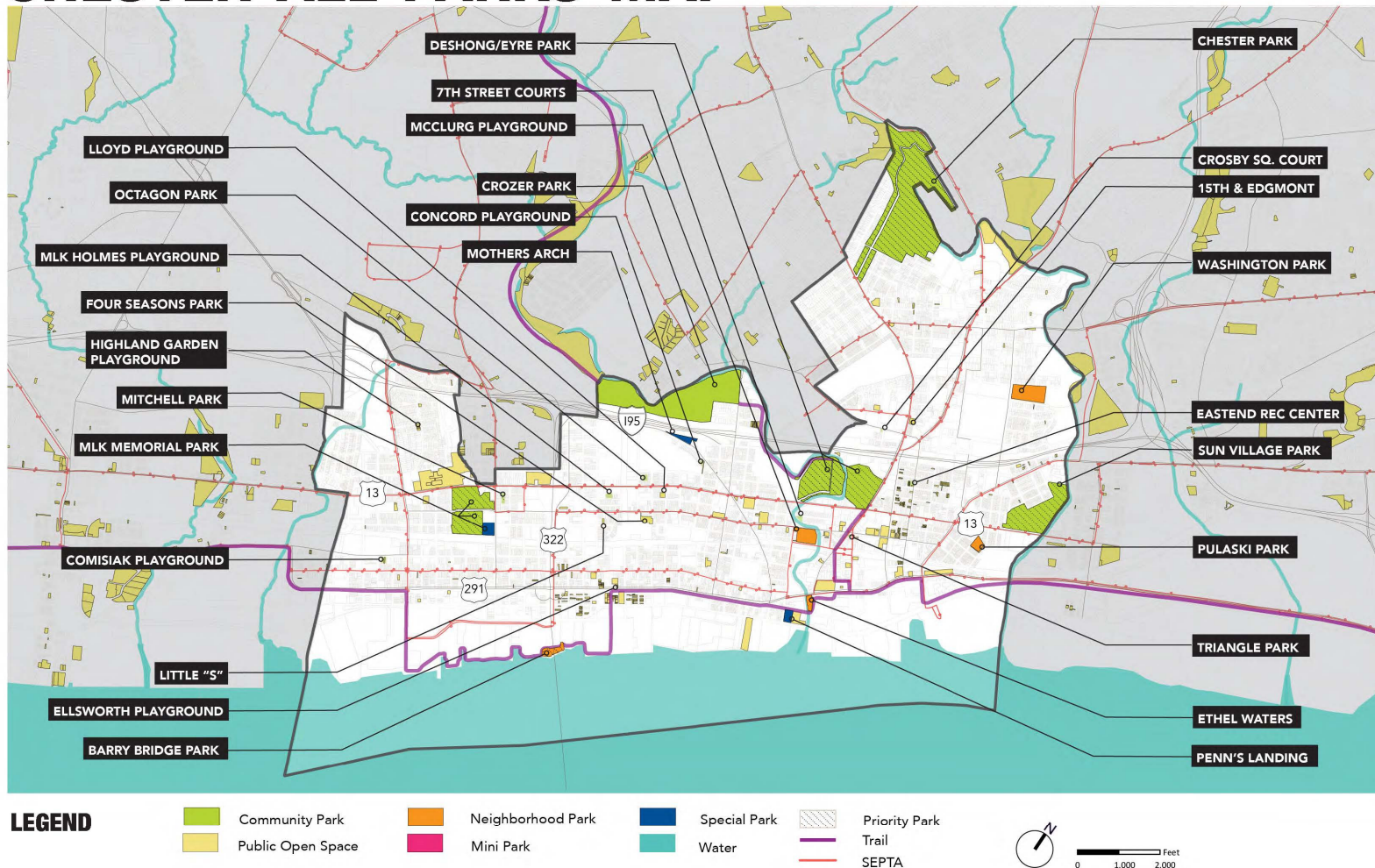
Parks to Maintain

Park	Acreage	Type
Chester Park	82.74 acres	Community
Crozer Park	51.17 acres	Community
Sun Village Park	21.58 acres	Community
Veterans Memorial Park	21.13 acres	Community
Eyre Park	11.24 acres	Community
Washington Park	7.09 acres	Community
7th Street Courts	3.94 acres	Neighborhood
Barry Bridge Park	1.66 acres	Neighborhood
Pulaski Park	1.56 acres	Neighborhood
Mothers Arch	1.52 acres	Special Use Park
MLK Memorial Park	1.45 acres	Special Use Park
Penn's Landing	1.34 acres	Special Use Park
Ethel Waters Park	1.12 acres	Public Space
Four Seasons Park	1.04 acres	Mini Park
Mitchell Park	0.49 acres	Mini Park
Eastend Rec Center	0.43 acres	Mini Park
Octagon Park	0.43 acres	Mini Park
15th & Edgmont	0.42 acres	Mini Park
MLK Holmes Playground	0.39 acres	Mini Park
McClurg Playground	0.37 acres	Mini Park
Lloyd playground	0.33 acres	Mini Park
Highland Gardens Playground	0.28 acres	Mini Park
Comisiak Playground	0.21 acres	Mini Park
Triangle Park	0.18 acres	Mini Park
Concord Playground	0.17 acres	Mini Park
Little "S"	0.12 acres	Mini Park
Crosby Square Court	0.10 acres	Mini Park
Ellsworth Playground	0.04 acres	Mini Park
Swedish Graveyard/Columbus Monument		Monument
TOTAL	212.11 acres	29



Chester Parks

CHESTER ALL PARKS MAP



CHESTER CITY PARKS, TRAILS, + OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN UPDATE: RESILIENCE THROUGH RECREATION
 MERIDIAN LANDSCAPE STUDIO | ANNI TOOLE RECREATION | NATURAL LANDS | PENNSYLVANIA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Map from p. 6 of Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan.



CRA and CEDA Properties

- In addition to parks, the Public Works Department also maintains over 90 Chester Redevelopment Authority and Chester Economic Development Authority properties throughout the City with the list growing each year
- These properties are more difficult to cut than parks because litter and other debris must be taken care of first



Next Steps



Next Steps

- As can be seen from this presentation, the job of the City's public works department is overwhelming and we need help
- Need trash vendor to perform their contracted services
- Need the public's help to
 - Follow the trash and recycling rules
 - Call in people who are dumping
- Need help from other governments and groups
 - Job is too big and City staff is doing some work that others should be doing
 - City cannot afford to hire more people
- Develop a plan to address the situation to be presented for discussion at next MFRAC meeting
 - Plan must prioritize what has to get done
 - Identify whether certain services can be provided by groups other than the City