



Making Reports Reader-Friendly

RACHEL CASTIGNOLI & CAMERON LAGRONE

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR

AUSTIN, TEXAS

August 11, 2017

Objective: ideas for report improvement

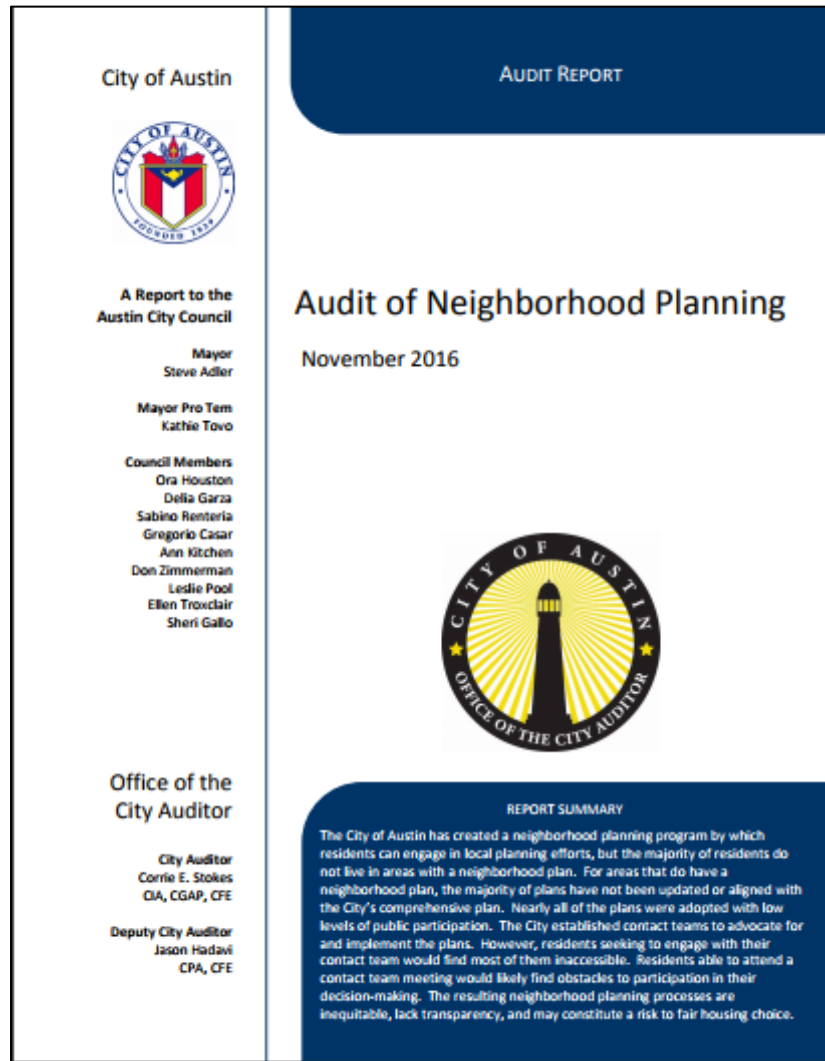


Figure out what you want

How to begin?

Get a team together and equip them with the time and resources to tackle report redesign.





¹ Unless otherwise specified, dollar amounts in this report are expressed in real 2016 dollars, assuming three percent inflation.



LONG BEACH CITY
AUDITOR

Report No. 16-10 / December 2016 1



Crowdsource ideas

Staff are your greatest asset. Their participation is crucial. Have them share report styles they like and brainstorm ideas for report design.

Link to Report	Report Title	Source	What you like about it
link	Disability Rates' and Workers Comp claims	Palo Alto Audit shop	I like the other-colored distillation of the facts/issues that runs on the left margin through the whole rept as well as the report highlights section.
fact sheet	Park Maintenance Audit	Long Beach Auditor	I like that they made a one-page graphic as a "fact sheet" for their report. The report itself I don't love but think is decent and has some good graphics. I like that the report is all one font but don't love the italics for findings. PJ: I independently found this one-pager and did not pay much attention to the report itself. I like that the fact sheet conveys a high level finding statement, includes report highlights that make the messages/impacts accessible to all (including the press), simply states how the recommendations can help address the issues, and tells the reader how to find the full report.
Link	Wastewater Capacity Charge: Unclear Whether Growth Is Paying for Growth	King County (WA) Auditor	I like the use of colors throughout the report and the headings on the left-hand side of the page (similar to Palo Alto, noted above). I also like the very clear separation of findings with summary. This format might lend itself to longer reports though. I <i>don't</i> like the mixing of serif and sans serif fonts, and the top bar on the cover page doesn't look great. None of their graphics have compression problems.
http://apps.urban.org/features/cost-of-affordable-housing/	The cost of affordable housing: Does it pencil out?	The Urban Institute	I like the visuals and the roll-over glossary feature; it makes it easy for the reader to determine the level of complexity they want to engage with.

What do your readers want?

- Highlighted text
- Bullets
- Making “What we Found” more concise and prominent
- Shorter findings

Q4

What about the Austin City Auditor audit reports do you think needs the most improvement?

Answered: 6 Skipped: 2

Export

RESPONSES (6)

TEXT ANALYSIS

MY CATEGORIES (0)

☐ Categorize as...

Filter by Category

Search responses

Showing 6 responses

☐ More depth on the findings or options for solutions to issues uncovered -I realize you have to be careful here.

1/14/2017 4:32 PM

View respondent's answers

Categorize as...

☐ Brevity, plain language, highlighting impacts, burying the mandatory legalese and (most importantly) including policy recommendations (no matter how hypothetical they may be) would certainly help

1/13/2017 3:45 PM

View respondent's answers

Categorize as...

☐ I am a Council aide so know about the audit reports but I don't think the general public does. It would be good to see more promotion of the findings. Also, there should be some way to track and see whether the recommendations have been implemented.

1/9/2017 8:53 AM

View respondent's answers

Categorize as...

☐ Having the "What we found" section upfront is great and necessary, but it could be useful if it was even more concise or had the findings bulleted.

1/6/2017 1:46 PM

View respondent's answers

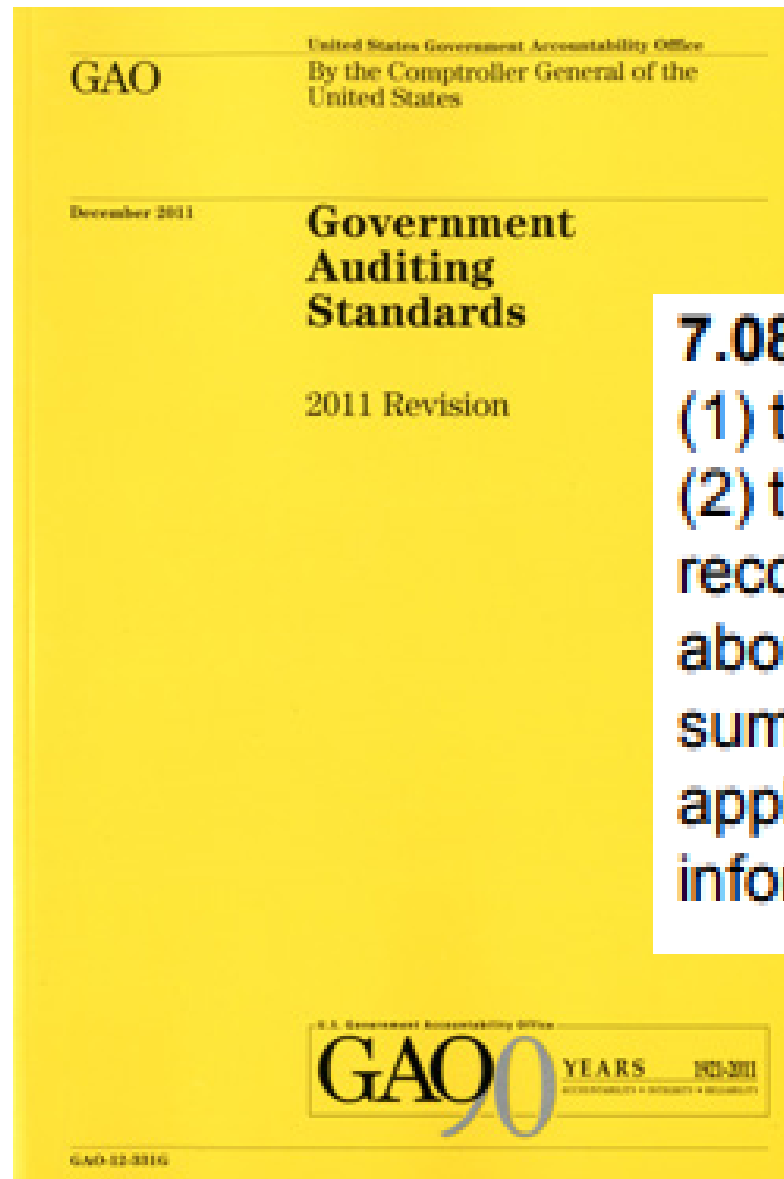
Categorize as...

☐ The reports are great- but I think the public needs to know more about them so Council feels support in using the reports in their work. Maybe more outreach and/or media after the reports are public.

1/5/2017 3:00 PM

View respondent's answers

Categorize as...



7.08 Auditors should prepare audit reports that contain (1) the objectives, scope, and methodology of the audit; (2) the audit results, including findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as appropriate; (3) a statement about the auditors' compliance with GAGAS; (4) a summary of the views of responsible officials; and (5) if applicable, the nature of any confidential or sensitive information omitted.

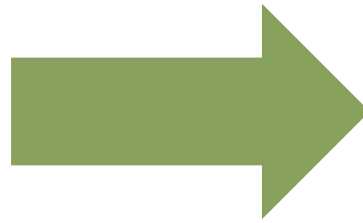
Design and redesign.

RINSE AND REPEAT.

Choose your software



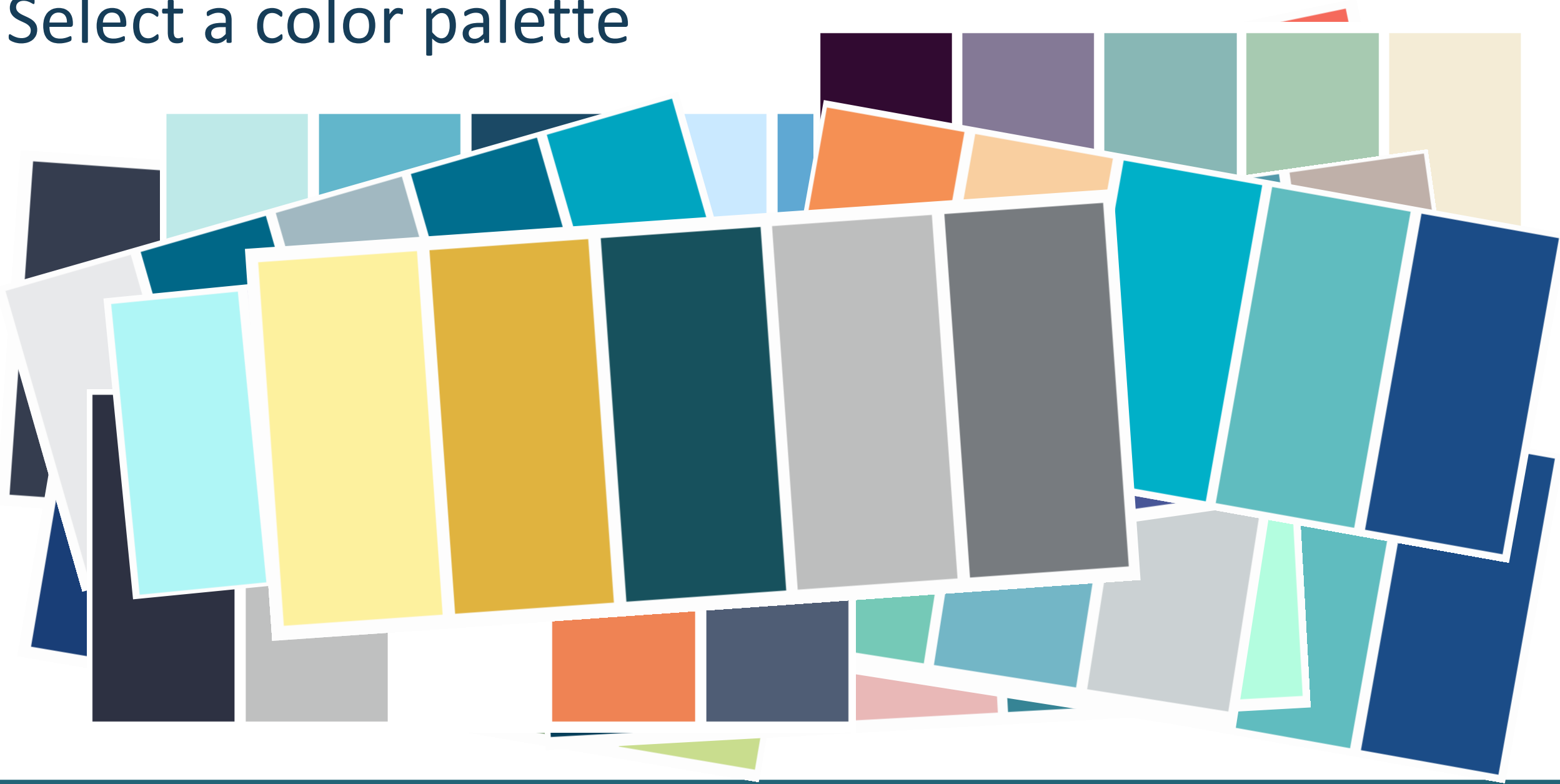
Microsoft Word



Adobe InDesign



Select a color palette



Select a color palette



Decide on fonts

Finding 1 (Cooper Hewitt Book)

Cooper Hewitt Book. The City bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridges which, overall, are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic; however, we found some limitations in the accuracy and completeness of information used to manage the program.

All body text fonts 12pt.

Alleron Regular. The foundations of a good bridge maintenance program is based on the availability of quality data on the bridge structures owned by an agency, including complete and accurate information on the bridge structures and their individual elements.

Gill Sans MT. The Federal government mandates specific maintenance requirements for large bridge structures, which are those bridges, culverts, and pipes that are more than 20 feet in length. The US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration requires all public bridge owners (state, city, and county) to routinely inspect their large bridges and report information, including bridge condition ratings, as part of their requirements in the National Bridge Inventory Standards.

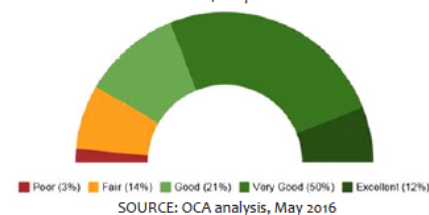
Century Gothic Regular. More specifically, these bridges must be inspected within 90 days of a bridge being open to traffic and every 24 months throughout the life of the structure. The results of these mandated inspections provide information on the structural safety of the bridges and assigns each bridge a specific a sufficiency rating that speaks to the overall conditions of each bridge.

The sufficiency rating is a numerical rating between 0 and 100 given to each highway bridge. The value is based on the bridge's structural adequacy and safety, essentiality for public use, and its serviceability and functional obsolescence.

Gill Sans MT Condensed. Public Works bridge maintenance program focuses on maintaining large bridge structures and, in coordination with TxDOT, conducts routine inspections to collect information on the condition of large City bridges. Based on the available information from the 2014 inspections, the vast majority of City bridges has a sufficiency rating of good or better. This indicates that these bridges are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic.

Montserrat Light. Also, Public Works maintains an inventory of its large bridge structures, including information on the location, structure classification, and condition assessments of each bridge. However, we found some limitations in Public Works inventory information for large bridges. While Public Works reported a total of 450 large bridges under its jurisdiction, we only found condition assessment information on approximately 390 bridges.

EXHIBIT 1
City of Austin Large Bridge Conditions Based on
TxDOT 2014 Inspections



4

AU15118 BRIDGE SAFETY AUDIT

Open Sans Regular
Open Sans Semibold
Open Sans Bold

Lato Regular
Lato Semibold
Lato Bold

Oswald Regular

Oswald Regular. The Federal government mandates specific maintenance requirements for large bridge structures, which are those bridges, culverts, and pipes that are more than 20 feet in length. The US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration requires all public bridge owners (state, city, and county) to routinely inspect their large bridges and report information, including bridge condition ratings, as part of their requirements in the National Bridge Inventory Standards.

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Develop mock reports


Present options to management for all elements of the report.

Front Cover

A

City of Austin
Office of the City Auditor

Public Works Department:
Acceptance of a Favor from a Direct
Report
Investigation Report
February 2016



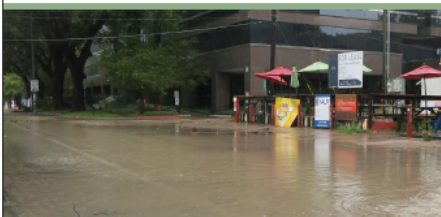
Report Summary

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B

City of Austin
Office of the City Auditor

Watershed Protection
Department (WPD)
Flood Buyout Program
Audit Report
January 2017



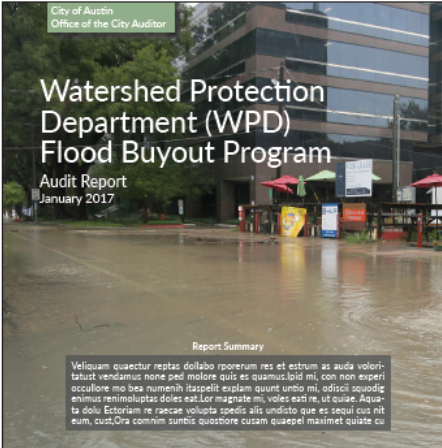
Report Summary

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City of Austin
Office of the City Auditor

Watershed Protection
Department (WPD)
Flood Buyout Program
Audit Report
January 2017



Report Summary

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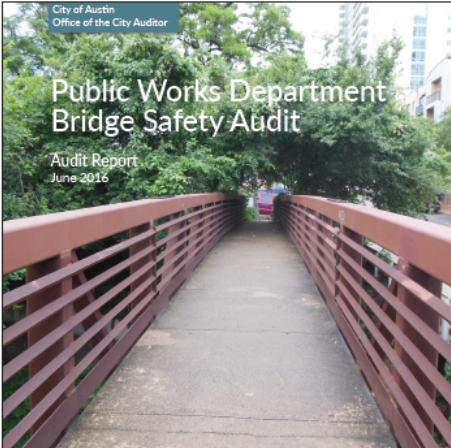
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City of Austin
Office of the City Auditor

Public Works Department
Bridge Safety Audit
Audit Report
June 2016



Report Summary

The City's bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridge
structures. Based on 2014 State inspection information, overall, City large bridge struc-
tures are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic. However, we found some limita-
tions in the accuracy and completeness of information used to manage the program. Also,
the City's ability to effectively manage and maintain small bridge structures and pedes-
trian bridges is limited by a lack of complete and accurate information on their locations
and conditions.

AUGUST 2017

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR

14

Back Cover

A

Audit Team
Neha Sharma, CIA, CPA, CISA, Acting Assistant City Auditor
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Cameron Lagrone, Auditor
Bobak Reihani, Audit Intern
Kimberly Benson, Audit Intern

City Auditor
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Deputy City Auditor
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Copies of our audit reports are available at <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/archive-auditor-reports>


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B

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Two columns

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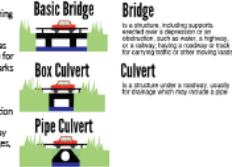
Objective

The City bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridges which, overall, are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic; however, we found some limitations in the accuracy and completeness of information used to manage the program.

Background

The City's Public Works Department (Public Works) is responsible for repairing and maintaining all municipally-owned bridge structures that are located within the City's jurisdiction. Such structures include bridges, culverts, and pipes, as defined below. Public Works is also responsible for all pedestrian bridges, including those in City parks and those that are part of the City's urban trail system.

There are also bridges within the City's jurisdiction which the City is not responsible for repairing and maintaining. These include Federal Highway bridges, State-owned bridges, and private bridges, such as railroad bridges.



AUGUST 2017 Department Program Audit

2

Office of the City Auditor

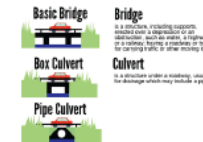
Side bar

Objective

The objective of the audit was to evaluate City's efforts related to the safety of bridge structures as compared to laws, regulations, policies, practices, and industry practices.

Background

The City's Public Works Department (Public Works) is responsible for repairing and maintaining all municipally-owned bridge structures that are located within the City's jurisdiction. Such structures include bridges, culverts, and pipes, as defined below. Public Works is also responsible for all pedestrian bridges, including those in City parks and those that are part of the City's urban trail system.



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AUGUST 2017

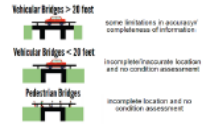
2

Office of the City Auditor

What we found

The City's bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridge structures, which are vehicular bridges that are 20 feet or more in length. Based on 2014 State inspection information, City bridges overall, are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic. We found, however, some limitations in the accuracy and completeness of information maintained by Public Works to manage large bridges. We also found that Public Works currently does not have a complete inventory nor conduct routine inspections for pedestrian bridges or small bridge structures (those that are less than 20 feet in length). As a result, Public Works lacks current information on their condition assessments and maintenance needs. Finally, data limitations noted in this audit have also impacted the City of Austin's Controller's ability to

accurately account for and estimate the monetary values for this type of infrastructure assets, as required by accounting standards.



Finding 1: The City bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridges which, overall, are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic; however, we found some limitations in the accuracy and completeness of information used to manage the program.

The foundations of a good bridge maintenance program is based on the availability of quality data on the bridge structures owned by an agency, including complete and accurate information on the bridge structures and their individual elements.

The Federal government mandates specific maintenance requirements for large bridge structures, which are those bridges, culverts, and pipes that are more than 20 feet in length. US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration requires all public bridge owners (state, city, and county) to routinely inspect their large bridges and report information including bridge condition ratings as part of their requirements in the National Bridge Inventory Standards.

More specifically, these bridges must be inspected within 90 days of a bridge being open to traffic and every 24 months throughout the life of the structure. The results of these mandated inspections provide information on the structural safety of the bridges and assigns each bridge a specific sufficiency rating that speaks to the overall conditions of each bridge. Based on the available information from the 2014 inspections, the vast majority of City bridges has a sufficiency rating of good or better. This indicates that these bridges are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic.

Also, Public Works maintains an inventory of its

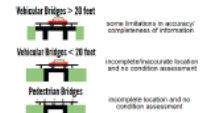
AUGUST 2017 Department Program Audit

3

Office of the City Auditor

WHAT WE FOUND

The City's bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridge structures, which are vehicular bridges that are 20 feet or more in length. Based on 2014 State inspection information, City bridges overall, are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic. We found, however, some limitations in the accuracy and completeness of information maintained by Public Works to manage large bridges. We also found that Public Works currently does not have a complete inventory nor conduct routine inspections for pedestrian bridges or small bridge structures (those that are less than 20 feet in length). As a result, Public Works lacks current information on their condition assessments and maintenance needs. Finally, data limitations noted in this audit have also impacted the City of Austin's Controller's ability to accurately account for and estimate the monetary values for this type of infrastructure assets, as required by accounting standards.



Finding 1
The City bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridges which, overall, are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic; however, we found some limitations in the accuracy and completeness of information used to manage the program.

The foundations of a good bridge maintenance program is based on the availability of quality data on the bridge structures owned by an agency, including complete and accurate information on the bridge structures and their individual elements.

The Federal government mandates specific maintenance requirements for large bridge structures, which are those bridges, culverts, and pipes that are more than 20 feet in length. US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration requires all public bridge owners (state, city, and county) to routinely inspect their large bridges and report information including bridge condition ratings as part of their requirements in the National Bridge Inventory Standards.

More specifically, these bridges must be inspected within 90 days of a bridge being open to traffic and every 24 months throughout the life of the structure. The results of these mandated inspections provide information on the structural safety of the bridges and assigns each bridge a specific sufficiency rating that speaks to the overall conditions of each bridge. Public Works bridge maintenance program focuses on maintaining large bridge structures and, in coordination with TxDOT, conducts routine

AUGUST 2017

3

Office of the City Auditor

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendation:** The Director of the Public Works should ensure that the City creates and maintains a complete inventory of the location and condition of all bridge structures within the City limits. Such information should be periodically validated and shared with all relevant parties and departments.

Management Response: Concur

Proposed Implementation Plan: Public Works has sent a list of bridges that are missing to the TxDOT area bridge engineer to reconcile with their files. The result of the reconciliation would identify and complete the list of bridges, with spans greater than 20', and will ensure that Public Works receives all the required bi-annual inspection reports from TxDOT. Subject to funding, staff will be hired to perform inspections on a periodic basis. In the interim, a Memorandum of Understanding between Public Works and the Watershed Department regarding each department's responsibility for inspection and maintenance will be prepared.

Proposed Implementation Date: FY2018
- Recommendation:** The Director of the Public Works should:

 - develop and implement a bridge maintenance program that applies a risk-based approach to all bridge structure classifications, and
 - monitor the program's effectiveness.

Management Response: Concur

Proposed Implementation Plan: Public Works will secure a comprehensive bridge maintenance program that includes Bridge Management Information System (BMIS). The data collected from TxDOT inspection reports on large structures as well as those collected in-house for small structures shall be included in the BMIS and a risk-based approach will be developed. The BMIS shall enable the Department to better manage and monitor the assets.

Proposed Implementation Date: January 2021

For more information on this or any of our reports, email scs_auditor@cityofaustin.gov

Recommendations

Additional Observation

Bridges are infrastructure assets and as such, according to government accounting standards, their value needs to be reported in the City's financial statements. However, we noted that the lack of a complete inventory of all City bridges have also resulted in incomplete information being provided to the City of Austin's Controller's Office, thus impacting their ability to accurately estimate the monetary values for this type of infrastructure assets. While we were unable to quantify the exact discrepancy and its relevant value, we estimated that the Controller may be missing information on as many as 1,000 bridge structures.

Recommendations

- 1. The Director of the Public Works should ensure that the City creates and maintains a complete inventory of the location and condition of all bridge structures within the City limits. Such information should be periodically validated and shared with all relevant parties and departments.**

Management Response: Concur

Proposed Implementation Plan: Public Works has sent a list of bridges that are missing to the TxDOT area bridge engineer to reconcile with their files. The result of the reconciliation would identify and complete the list of bridges, with spans greater than 20', and will ensure that Public Works receives all the required bi-annual inspection reports from TxDOT. Subject to funding, staff will be hired to perform inspections on a periodic basis. In the interim, a Memorandum of Understanding between Public Works and the Watershed Department regarding each department's responsibility for inspection and maintenance will be prepared.

Proposed Implementation Date: FY2018
- 2. The Director of the Public Works should:**

 - develop and implement a bridge maintenance program that applies a risk-based approach to all bridge structure classifications, and
 - monitor the program's effectiveness.

Management Response: Concur

Proposed Implementation Plan: Public Works will secure a comprehensive bridge maintenance program that includes Bridge Management Information System (BMIS). The data collected from TxDOT inspection reports on large structures as well as those collected in-house for small structures shall be included in the BMIS and a risk-based approach will be developed. The BMIS shall enable the Department to better manage and monitor the assets.

Proposed Implementation Date: FY2018

For more information on this or any of our reports, email scs_auditor@cityofaustin.gov

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. The Director of the Public Works should ensure that the City creates and maintains a complete inventory of the location and condition of all bridge structures within the City limits. Such information should be periodically validated and shared with all relevant parties and departments.**

Management Response: Concur and plans to implement by FY 2018

Public Works has sent a list of bridges that are missing to the TxDOT area bridge engineer to reconcile with their files. The result of the reconciliation would identify and complete the list of bridges, with spans greater than 20', and will ensure that Public Works receives all the required bi-annual inspection reports from TxDOT. Subject to funding, staff will be hired to perform inspections on a periodic basis. In the interim, a Memorandum of Understanding between Public Works and the Watershed Department regarding each department's responsibility for inspection and maintenance will be prepared.
- 2. The Director of the Public Works should:**

 - develop and implement a bridge maintenance program that applies a risk-based approach to all bridge structure classifications, and
 - monitor the program's effectiveness.

Management Response: Concur and plans to implement by FY 2020

Public Works has sent a list of bridges that are missing to the TxDOT area bridge engineer to reconcile with their files. The result of the reconciliation would identify and complete the list of bridges, with spans greater than 20', and will ensure that Public Works receives all the required bi-annual inspection reports from TxDOT. Subject to funding, staff will be hired to perform inspections on a periodic basis. In the interim, a Memorandum of Understanding between Public Works and the Watershed Department regarding each department's responsibility for inspection and maintenance will be prepared.

For more information on this or any of our reports, email scs_auditor@cityofaustin.gov

Executive Summary

Bridge Safety Audit

Executive Summary

June 2016

Objective

The objective of the audit was to evaluate City's efforts related to the safety of bridge structures as compared to laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and industry practices.

What We Recommend

Public Works should create, maintain, and share with relevant parties, a complete inventory of the location and condition of all bridge structures within the City limits. It should also develop and implement a bridge maintenance program that applies a risk-based approach to all bridge structure classifications.

Background

- The Public Works Department is responsible for repairing and maintaining all municipally-owned bridge structures within the City limits. Bridges within the City's jurisdiction that the City is not responsible for include Federal Highway bridges, State-owned bridges, and private bridges.
- Bridge structures that fall within the responsibility of Public Works include vehicular bridges, culverts, and pipes. Public Works is also responsible for all pedestrian bridges, including those in City parks and those that are part of the City's urban trail system.

What We Found

The City's bridge maintenance program focuses on the structural safety of large bridge structures, which are vehicular bridges that are 20 feet or more in length. Based on 2014 State inspection information, City bridges overall are structurally sound and safe for vehicular traffic. However, we found some limitations in the accuracy and completeness of information maintained by Public Works to manage large bridges.

Also, Public Works does not currently have a complete inventory nor conduct routine inspections for pedestrian bridges or small bridge structures (those that are less than 20 feet in length).

Finally, data limitations noted in this audit have also impacted the City of Austin's Controller's ability to accurately account for and estimate the monetary values for this type of infrastructure assets. While we were unable to quantify the exact discrepancy and its relevant value, we estimated that the Controller may be missing information on as many as 1,000 bridge structures.

What We Found

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Watershed Protection Department

Flood Buyout Program

Audit Report Executive Summary

February 2016

Flood buyout process

- City gets appraisal to determine value of original home
- City makes offer on original home and helps owner buy a new home
- City buys original home and helps owner move into new home
- City demolishes original home and maintains land as open space

The City adopted a model for flood buyout projects to provide consistent relocation assistance to displaced owners and has developed policies and procedures for implementing the adopted model. However, the adoption of this model may result in higher costs to the City.

Williamson Creek

63 homes
\$18M city funding
33 homes bought
\$49,000 additional assistance over \$31,000
85% within \$31,000
Total replacement housing assistance: \$322,000

Onion Creek

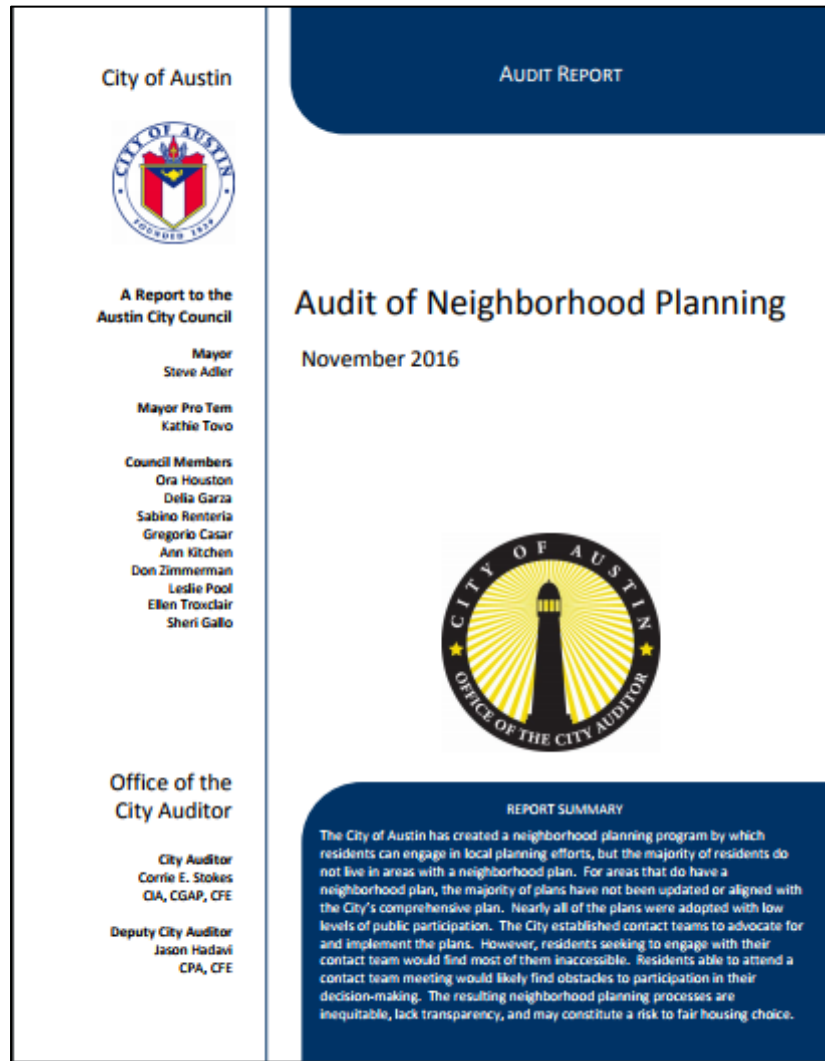
372 homes
\$95.5M city funding
272 homes bought
\$6.8 million additional assistance over \$31,000
42% within \$31,000
Total replacement housing assistance: \$11.8 million

Replacement housing assistance is available up to \$31,000 for owners to find and move to a new home. Additional assistance over \$31,000 is available if a comparable home cannot be found within the cap.

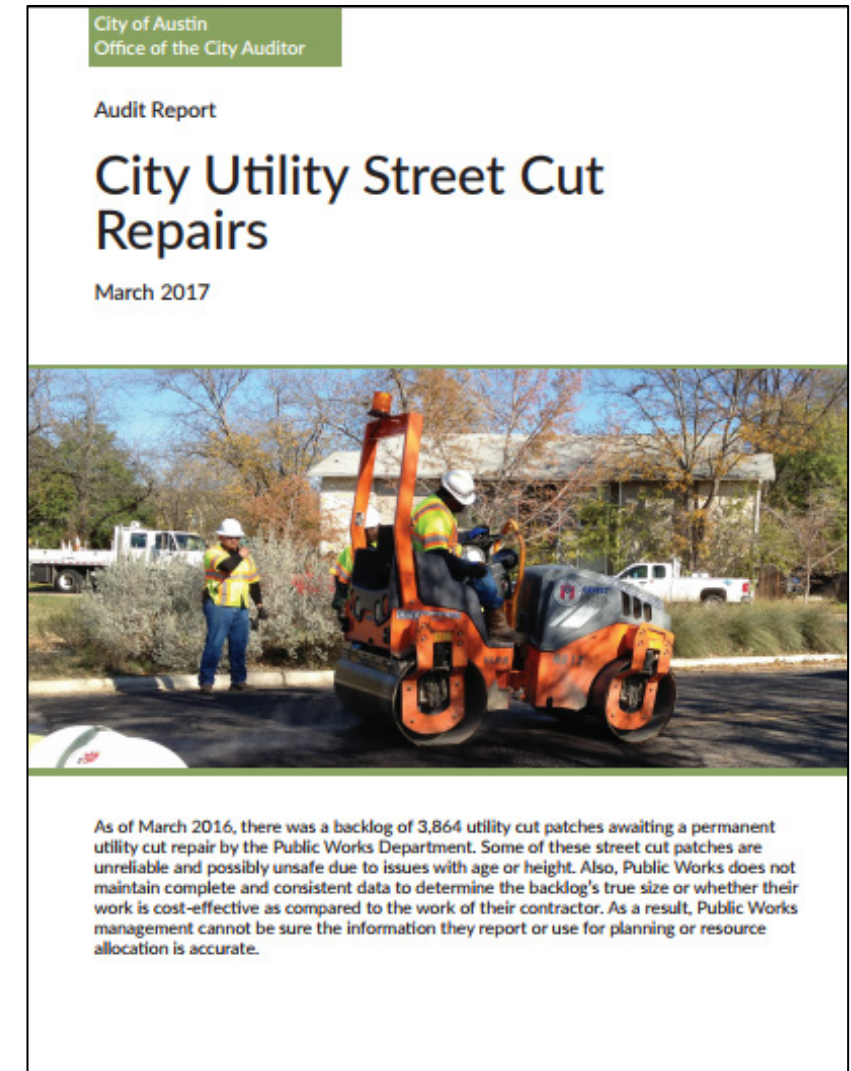
For more information on this or any of our reports, email scs_auditor@cityofaustin.gov

Put it all together

BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE

AUDIT NUMBER: AU16103
RELEASE DATE: September 28, 2016

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GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS COMPLIANCE


We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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Cover: Photo of a Public Works Department crew on 51st Street, City of Austin.

Objective

The objective of the audit was to determine whether:

• street cut repairs were completed in an effective and timely manner to minimize safety impacts to the public, and

• the current model is cost-effective.

Background


Cold mix asphalt is a material used in temporary patches and is not allowed to be in place longer than 90 days. Hot mix asphalt is a material used in permanent repairs on streets with an asphalt surface.


In an average month, Austin Water makes 185 utility cuts and patches, and Public Works makes 89 repairs.

Many street cuts made by Austin Water are due to water leaks or breaks in infrastructure. When Austin Water needs to repair a utility component under a street, they cut into streets to make repairs and then patch the street with a temporary repair made of cold mix asphalt. Austin Water is responsible for maintaining the patch for 30 days. After 30 days have passed, Public Works is responsible for maintaining the patch.

Based on data from Public Works, Austin Water makes an average of 185 utility cuts and patches per month and tracks these in its work order management system. After Austin Water patches a street cut, they send a work order to Public Works who then inspects Austin Water's temporary patch to plan the dimensions of the final repair according to the City Code Standards Manual. Public Works then completes the repair using hot mix asphalt or concrete. Public Works makes an average of 89 repairs per month. Exhibit 1 below shows a summary of the street cut repair process.

Exhibit 1: Street Cut Repair Process


Temporary Patch
The Austin Water Utility cuts into a street to repair infrastructure and then patches the street cut.


Street Cut Repair
The Public Works Department makes the street cut repair.

SOURCE: Office of the City Auditor analysis of street cut repair process, December 2016

City Utility Street Cut Repairs

2

Office of the City Auditor

AUGUST 2017

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR

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BEFORE

WHAT WE FOUND

Code violation investigation, documentation, and resolution practices vary across cases, due to a lack of management oversight. Inconsistency may also result from gaps in procedural guidance provided to field staff. The Office of the City Auditor reported similar issues in its 2010 audit of the department. Moreover, investigation and resolution practices relating to City-owned properties often differed from established Austin Code policies and procedures, which may allow violations on City-owned property to persist and negatively affect citizen safety.

Lastly, not all field staff and management meet the minimum qualifications specified by the department because the department has not established an effective system to ensure staff at all levels acquire and maintain these qualifications. Staff and management lacking minimum qualifications may increase the risk of inconsistencies in code interpretation and enforcement.

Finding 1: Code violation investigation, documentation, and resolution practices vary across cases due to a lack of management oversight. Consequences may include reputational damage, difficulty enforcing violations, and safety risks to residents.

During our review, we saw several examples of detailed case documentation and field staff working closely with residents to overcome language barriers and connect residents to community organizations. We also noted that field staff appeared to prioritize community education and customer service, and strove to secure voluntary compliance from residents. However, overall we reviewed 306 Austin Code complaints, and found issues with approximately 77%. We identified eight patterns of inconsistency in our analysis of Austin Code complaint cases (for detailed statistics, see Appendix B, Table 1). These patterns include:

- 1. A Notice of Violation – a formal written warning – is not always issued to the property owner, even when violations are confirmed by field staff.**
Specifically, we found that Notices of Violation were not issued 47% of the time after staff had confirmed a violation existed. Notices of Violation include a description of the code violation and a deadline for the property owner to remedy the issue. While we noted instances where inspectors followed up on violations even when a Notice of Violation was not issued, a written warning provides residents with a record of the violation and the amount of time they have to resolve it. Similarly, without a written warning, Austin Code does not have proof that there was a set timeline to address the violation. Finally, field staff may find it difficult to enforce compliance if violations are not documented via a written warning.
- 2. Property owners are given different deadlines for the same type of code violation.** For example, to screen a recreational vehicle, different residents received deadlines of 2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 14, 15, and 21 days. We also noted that citizens were given different deadlines ranging from 7 to 30 days to correct work without permit violations. Inconsistent deadlines to remedy code violations may mean that different residents are subject to different enforcement and expectations by field staff.

Departmental policies state:
A. Non-dangerous conditions: Not later than (3) days after confirming violation(s), investigators shall complete the necessary research and submit required documents to administrative support for mailing of violation notice(s).
B. Dangerous conditions: Not later than the next business day following the date of confirmation of a dangerous condition(s), investigators shall submit required documents to administrative support for mailing of violation notice(s)."

Office of the City Auditor 2 Consistency of Austin Code Investigations and Resolutions Audit, April 2016

AFTER

What We Found

Summary

As of March 2016, there was a significant backlog of utility cut patches awaiting a permanent repair that could take several years for the Public Works Department to address. Some of these utility cut patches are unreliable and may pose a safety hazard due to issues with age or height. Public Works does not maintain complete and consistent data to determine the backlog's true size or whether their work is cost-effective in comparison with the work of their contractor. As a result, Public Works management cannot be sure the information they report or use for planning or resource allocation is accurate.

Finding 1

There is a large and growing backlog of temporary utility cut repairs on Austin roads that may be unreliable and possibly pose a safety hazard while awaiting a permanent resurfacing.

If Austin Water did not make any more cuts, it would take Public Works 3.6 years to bring the backlog of utility cut repairs to zero.

According to data provided by the Public Works Department, there was a backlog of 3,864 patches awaiting a repair as of March 2016.¹ Patches are the temporary repairs put in place to cover a cut into a street prior to completion of the final repair. The data showed a growing backlog since the beginning of the audit scope period, October 1, 2013, and a backlog was also noted in a November 1998 audit report from the City Auditor. The average completion time for a repair was 357 days, or about a year, and completion times ranged from one month to over a year and a half. If Austin Water made no additional cuts, it would take Public Works 3.6 years to bring the backlog down to zero.

Some temporary street cut patches are unreliable and possibly unsafe. Auditors reviewed ten randomly sampled street patches from the March 2016 backlog. As seen in the exhibit below, all ten were in place longer than 90 days, which violates the City Code Standards Manual.² In addition, three patches were more than 1/4" higher than the surrounding street surface, a result of problems in the initial temporary repair by Austin Water. Two patches also had loose gravel on the street surface, which appeared to be due to the delayed repairs.

Exhibit 2: Temporary Street Cut Patches are Not in Compliance



SOURCE: Office of the City Auditor analysis of sampled temporary street cut patches, November 2016

¹ This figure includes repairs on streets as well as driveways, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters.
² Series 1100 – Trench and Street Repair, 1100-S4 Temporary Trench Repair-Asphalt Surface.

BEFORE

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This audit on how APD handles complaints was conducted as part of the Office of the City Auditor's Fiscal Year 2016 Strategic Audit Plan, as presented to the City Council Audit and Finance Committee.

The audit was included on the plan in response to a request from the Police Chief, as well as local and nation-wide focus on interactions between police officers and members of the public.

Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to determine if:

- the complaint process is accessible;
- internal and external complaints are processed consistently; and
- appropriate and consistent corrective actions are taken.

The audit also sought to determine how Austin's complaint process compares to similar entities.

This audit did not assess the quality of any investigations done by Internal Affairs, nor did it assess whether APD reached the appropriate conclusions regarding the legitimacy or validity of complaints.

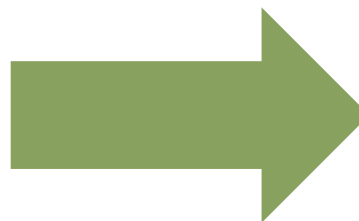
Scope

The audit scope included administrative investigation activities related to internal and external complaints between 10/1/2013 and 12/31/2015.

Methodology

To accomplish our audit objectives, we performed the following steps:

- interviewed APD and Police Monitor staff;
- interviewed a random sample of 40 people who filed a complaint or contacted the Police Monitor and/or APD;
- interviewed six community groups that serve at-risk populations or have experience with the complaint process;
- interviewed a random sample of 23 APD supervisors;
- reviewed media reports to identify incidents likely to have resulted in complaints or investigations;
- visited various City facilities to determine what information about the complaint process was available;
- interviewed employees from other cities involved in the process of handling of complaints for their organizations;
- analyzed the investigation process for a random sample of complaints;
- researched criteria related to complaints about police officers and police oversight functions;
- obtained and analyzed access lists for information technology systems relevant to the complaint process;
- reviewed records related to the repair of vehicle audio and visual recording equipment; and
- evaluated internal controls related to the collection, investigation, and disposition of complaints.



AFTER

Scope

The audit scope included street cut repair activities from October 1, 2013 through March 31, 2016. The scope also included costs related to the contract the Public Works Department executed with a private company on June 23, 2016 for street cut repairs. Some information in this report relates to utility cuts on streets, driveways, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters; the audit focused on repairs made in streets

Methodology

To accomplish our audit objectives, we performed the following steps:

- interviewed Austin Water and Public Works Department employees;
- reviewed repair standards used by Austin Water and Public Works;
- analyzed Public Works' information system data to assess the backlog of repairs;
- reviewed Public Works' information system user access controls;
- analyzed Austin Water's information system data to compare with Public Works' data;
- visited a random sample of temporary repair locations and assessed their safety with the help of Public Works staff;
- reviewed right-of-way permits for a random sample of completed permanent repairs;
- evaluated the cost-effectiveness of the City of Austin's utility cut repair process;
- reviewed service request data related to street cut repairs provided by Austin 311; and
- evaluated internal controls related to street cut repairs.

Audit Standards

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

BEFORE

APPENDIX A

Austin Water Central Stores Inventory Management Audit – Action Plan

Recommendation	Concurrence and Proposed Strategies for Implementation	Status of Strategies	Proposed Implementation Date
1. The Director of Austin Water should strengthen the inventory count process by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing policies and procedures for the inventory count Establishing accountability for ensuring the process is followed 	Concur <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director will review inventory management best practices and ensure improvements to inventory count process. Will evaluate stock item dollar sales volumes to ensure highest volume dollar sales items are counted more frequently. Will work to establish specific policies and procedures for specific timelines for counts, research and corrections to inventory. Assistant Director of Financial Services will continue participation on inventory management project team to discuss strategies and ensure implementation of audit recommendations. 	Currently underway.	Expected implementation date: March 31, 2017
2. The Director of Austin Water should ensure that central stores staff comply with established policies and procedures for inventory management.	Concur <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistant Director of Financial Services will continue efforts to complete the hiring process for division manager over Central Stores. As inventory management policies and procedures are reviewed and revised to best practices, the Assistant Director of Financial Services will establish review procedures to ensure accountability. More specific requirements for inventory management will 	Underway	Expected implementation date: December 31, 2016

AFTER

Recommendations and Management Response

- 1 The PARD Director should identify ways that technology and/or process changes can be used to independently determine expected revenue at PARD sites and eliminate the need for the "over-ring" practice at municipal pools.

Management Response: Agree

Proposed Implementation Plan: The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) is collaborating with the Austin Transportation Department to increase the installation and distribution of pay stations that accept cash, as well as, credit cards at municipal pool sites. The Aquatics staff and supervisors will be provided additional training on the importance of avoiding "over-rings." Also, the expected increase in use of pay stations will reduce cash register errors. PARD is also exploring the option of installing more credit card terminals system-wide to reduce the amount of cash being handled and to improve the safety of those handling the cash. Other solutions are being explored subject to adequate funding/resource redistribution. When additional resources become available, increased managerial oversight of "over-rings" will be implemented.

Card reading turnstiles, e-ticketing, people-counters and other options are being explored with Communications and Technology Management (CTM) to improve the recording of attendance that can be directly traced to fees charged and projected revenue. All technology changes are dependent upon adequate funding/resource redistribution.

Proposed Implementation Date: June 30, 2018

- 2 The PARD Director should identify ways that technology and/or process changes can be used to reduce or eliminate the acceptance of paper money at a department or site level.

Management Response: Agree


Proposed Implementation Plan: Plans are underway to streamline the credit card handling capabilities at PARD facilities, as well as adding credit card processing at more sites. The Department's top priority is to add credit card processing at City swimming pools where an entrance fee is charged. The Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) is collaborating with the Austin Transportation Department to increase the installation and distribution of pay stations that accept cash, as well as, credit cards at municipal pool sites.

PARD is also investigating having PARD personnel equipped with hand-held units that scan barcode entrance slips at the entrance to pools, special events, etc. These entrance slips can be generated by users at home, through online purchase; at kiosks mounted outside of pool and other facilities; and over the counter at various sites. These hand-held units can also be used by summer camp personnel to "check in" participants each morning to provide an accurate count of attendees and traceable record each day. These units would also serve as cell phones for emergency purposes.

Proposed Implementation Date: June 30, 2018

BEFORE

April 2016



Report Highlights


Why We Did This Audit

This audit was conducted partially due to resident feedback regarding inconsistent messages received from Austin Code.

What We Recommend

We recommend the Austin Code Department Director:

- revise policies to clarify expectations concerning compliance timelines, work without permit cases, and investigations of City-owned properties;
- develop and implement a more rigorous case monitoring process;
- work to integrate the AMANDA and 3-1-1 systems and ensure case prioritization tools are used; and
- ensure employees acquire and maintain the required minimum qualifications.



For more information on this or any of our reports, email oca_auditor@austintexas.gov

CONSISTENCY OF AUSTIN CODE INVESTIGATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS AUDIT

BACKGROUND

The Austin Code Department's mission is to provide education and enforcement of the City Land Development Code. The department's field teams investigate potential code violations typically following a resident calling 3-1-1 to file a complaint about a suspected code violation. Common violations investigated by Austin Code include tall weeds and grass, illegal dumping, construction without permit, improper land use, and unlicensed short term rentals.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

The objectives of the audit were to determine whether the Austin Code Department was consistently receiving timely and accurate complaints regarding code violations, and to determine if reported code violations are consistently interpreted, investigated, and resolved across the City. The audit scope included code-related complaints, investigations, and resolutions between 10/1/2012 and 4/7/2016.

WHAT WE FOUND

Code violation investigation, documentation, and resolution practices vary across cases, due to a lack of management oversight.

- Overall, we reviewed 306 code complaints and found issues with about 77%.
- We noted: field staff did not always issue a notice of violation even when violations are confirmed, property owners were given different deadlines for the same type of code violation, delayed initial and follow-up inspections, partial investigation of complaints, and a lack of an effective process to prioritize response to high-risk complaints to promptly address potentially dangerous cases.
- Inconsistencies may also be caused by gaps in procedural guidance provided to field staff and because Austin Code management does not conduct regular record reviews or other comprehensive monitoring of field actions.
- Consequences may include difficulty enforcing violations and safety risks to residents.
- The OCA reported similar issues in its 2010 audit of the department.

Investigation and resolution practices relating to City-owned properties often differed from established Austin Code policies and procedures, which may allow violations on City-owned property to persist and negatively affect citizen safety.

- We noted: investigative delays, less extensive review of City-owned property than what is called for in policy, lack of awareness of all reported and confirmed violations on City-owned properties, and inconsistent communication of violations on City-owned property to the responsible departments.
- These discrepancies exist, in part, because management is not enforcing Austin Code's policy on City-owned properties and because management does not provide oversight of investigation and documentation activities, as mentioned.

Not all field staff and management meet the current minimum qualifications specified by the department, which may increase the risk of inconsistencies in code interpretation and enforcement.




AFTER

City of Austin
Office of the City Auditor

Audit Highlights
March 2017

City Utility Street Cut Repairs



Objective

The objective of the audit was to determine whether:

- street cut repairs were completed in an effective and timely manner to minimize safety impacts to the public, and
- the current model is cost-effective.

What We Found

As of March 2016, there was a significant backlog of utility cut patches awaiting a permanent repair on Austin roads. It could take several years for the Public Works Department to address the backlog. Some of these patches may be unreliable and possibly unsafe. Ten randomly sampled patches were in place longer than 90 days, in violation of the City Code Standards Manual. The City relies on residents to report issues with patches, so Public Works is not aware of which or how many patches may be unsafe.

The backlog is likely a result of how the City allocates resources. Austin Water has 107 employees available to repair utilities under streets and place temporary patches, while Public Works has 53 employees to complete the permanent repairs. The lack of documented policies and procedures for performing street cut repairs may also cause inefficiencies in addressing the backlog.

Inconsistent and incomplete data on street cut work orders prevents the City from knowing the true size of the backlog of temporary utility cut patches or how cost-effective Public Works is at performing the repairs. As a result, the City cannot be sure that a street cut repair has been completed or that all repairs are accounted for, meaning that management cannot be sure the information they report or use for planning or resource allocation is accurate.

Public Works' cost data is incomplete and may not reflect actual labor and equipment expenses. As a result, Public Works cannot determine if their street cut repairs are cost-effective as compared with the City contractor's street cut repairs.

Background

- Austin Water makes street cuts mostly due to water leaks or breaks in infrastructure. After they repair the infrastructure, they place a temporary patch on the street surface. The Public Works Department replaces these patches with permanent street cut repairs.
- Austin Water makes an average of 185 utility cuts per month, and Public Works makes an average of 89 permanent repairs per month.

What We Recommend

The Public Works Department Director should:

- evaluate options for eliminating the backlog of utility cut repairs,
- develop, implement, and monitor written policies and procedures, and
- assess the cost-effectiveness of the Utility Excavation Repair activity.

The Austin Water Director should ensure temporary patches meet the requirements of the City Code Standards Manual.

For the full report, visit <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/audit-reports>.

Implement and Train Staff

Update Reporting Procedures

Create new templates for report drafts and revise reporting procedures to include new process.

DRAFT Reporting Procedures for TM

Develop Draft

1.
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[Audit Title]
[Month Year]

Report summary
Insert a summary

4-6.

Photo Credit
Cover: [Description]

Objective
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Background
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What We Found
Insert a summary

Finding 1:
Insert Finding 1
Insert finding 1 in sidebar. Place

SOURCE: Enter source here

Last updated: April 2017

AUDIT TEMPLATE

INVESTIGATION TEMPLATE

[Investigation Title]
[Month Year]

Report summary
Insert a summary of your findings here.

Photo Credit
Cover: [Description of photo, owner/source.]

Allegation
Insert an allegation summary here.

Background
Insert background here.

Investigation Results / Summary
Insert a summary of results here.

Finding 1:
Insert Finding Header text here.
Insert finding 1 body text here. [Bracket and highlight yellow text to be placed in call-out boxes in sidebar. Place them within text where you would like them to be in the report.]

EXHIBIT #
[Title of Exhibit]
SOURCE: Enter source here, including Month and Year of review/analysis

Last updated: April 2017

Train Your Staff

Create opportunities for group and individual training.

InDesign Tips

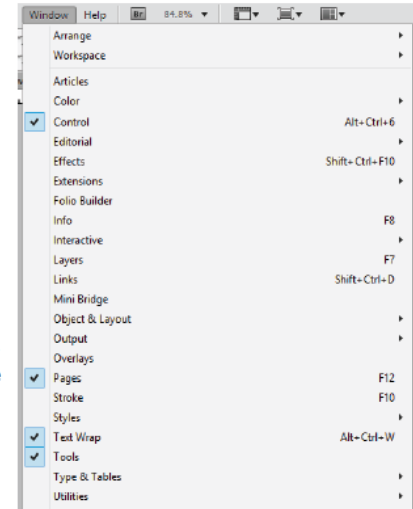
1. **Getting Started.** Open template (Audit Template, Investigation Template, or Special Report Template). This will automatically load in paragraph styles, color swatches, "master pages", and report pages.

NOTE: On Master Pages. The pages created for this report are labeled as C, B, and A. C for Cover pages. B for pages used in the Body of the report. A for pages used in the Appendix of the report.

2. **Tools.** Use Window tab at top of the sheet to customize which tool boxes are available on screen.

Helpful tools to add to your screen, top bar, or side bar:

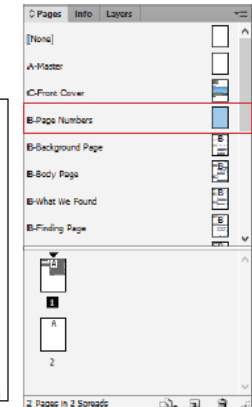
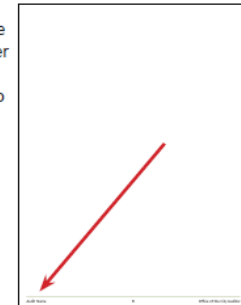
- Object & Layout>Align,
- Text Wrap,
- Color > Swatches,
- Styles > Paragraph Styles.



3. **Viewing Modes.** When no object is selected, press W to switch from Normal View or Preview Mode. Normal View allows you to see the outline of all objects. Preview Mode displays how the report will look in PDF form.

4. **Audit Title in Footer.** In top right corner, double click on B-Page Numbers "master page" in Pages Panel. Add audit title to text box at bottom of page (this should update all pages, but check before final draft).

IMPORTANT NOTE: When you open the template, do this before making any other changes to the document! This will save you from having to add the report title to each page manually.



Continuously revise the process

The templates and procedures will undergo many changes over the implementation period. Always be open to feedback from staff who are implementing the new reports.

How to do this in your office

Survey and
brainstorm



Design and
redesign



Implement
and train

- Put together a team
- Save reports that you like
- Survey stakeholders
- Review Standards

- Select software
- Select style elements – colors, fonts, etc
- Mock reports and select preferred format for each section

- Modify reporting procedures
- Train staff
- Continuous improvement