

**THE PROBLEM**

- Managers had no easy way to monitor work that was done or labor and materials used
- The work recording system using Netbook computers was inefficient
- Location of assets not linked to Cityworks GIS maps

**THE GOALS**

- Compile timely, accurate data to allow managers to plan what work will be done and budget for materials and labor
- Make entering data easier for workers in the field
- Collect information in the field for Cityworks GIS maps

**THE SOLUTION**

- Data is compiled in real-time, allowing managers to better schedule work and plan for use of materials and labor
- Customizable drop down menus can allow recording of data in the field without typing
- GPS points of assets can be easily added to Cityworks GIS maps



# TOWN GETS POWERFUL PLANNING TOOL

**"This has forced me to think about our projects in terms of labor and cost, and I am now thinking of ways to find savings."** – Joey Hardin, Highland Village Parks crew leader

HIGHLAND VILLAGE, Texas – Running Highland Village's Parks and Recreation Department used to include a lot of guesses and anecdotes.

But decisions start with solid data now, since the town got Freeance Mobile for Cityworks, said Sunny Lindsey, GIS Applications and Development Administrator.

In December, parks department managers and crew leaders started using Freeance Mobile on Samsung 10-inch tablets for everything from scheduling restroom cleanings to recording the locations of sports fields.

Lindsey said the goal of the project was to make operations more efficient by helping managers better understand how financial and labor resources were being used.

"It started out just for documentation and now we're trying to segue it into

more of a management tool," she said.

"Instead of capturing what we've already done, we're looking to use the Cityworks and Freeance together to... actually project out the work that they will be doing throughout the week."

Lindsey said it is too early in the process to see concrete cost savings.

"That will come in time," she said "Right now, I really think it was just a documenting issue.

"If the parks department wanted to come back to the city council and say, 'We need another person; we're slammed all the time,' there wasn't adequate documentation saying where the labor was being spent."

"For example, there's a water line in the Corps park. And the parks

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## CONTINUED FROM FRONT

department has been complaining for years that the water line needs to be replaced because they are constantly repairing it.

“Now, we can actually say if we’ve spent more money fixing it than we would have replacing it,” she said.

Assistant City Manager Ken Heerman said the use of Freeance Mobile for Cityworks has brought a new level of professionalism to the way the parks department is run.

“I see this project as a turning point for parks management,” he said.

“They are beginning to see their tasks and jobs in terms of priorities and preplanning instead of the more common reactionary mode.”

Lindsey said the city’s resource management efforts endured some false starts before finding Freeance Mobile.

Attempts to use Excel spreadsheets and, later, Cityworks on Netbook computers both failed.

“With the Netbooks, you’re looking at your Cityworks server and there’s a lot to scroll through,” she said.

“The Netbooks have a very small screen... (Users) were spending more time writing up the work orders than actually doing the work... It was only through this product (Freeance Mobile) was I able to call this project a success.

“What Freeance allowed me to do was strip down all the unnecessary fields and gives me the flexibility to provide something more custom for what they wanted.”

Lindsey said it is easy for her to create and modify Freeance Mobile work order templates using Windows Form Designer.

And just as easy was training the managers and crew leaders how to use Freeance Mobile.

“You had some that were younger that were used to smartphones and used to tablet devices and took to it very quickly,” Lindsey said. “You had others

who weren’t as familiar with computers and/or that type of technology. And they took a little bit longer.

“We spent an entire two hours one day just going through the functions of the tablet, and where you changed your settings, and where you changed it if you wanted a bigger font, or if you wanted the screen time to last longer... That actually helped a lot.”

She said the users were given their personally-assigned tablets to explore on their own a week before Freeance Mobile was loaded.

Finally, there was another day of training with Freeance Mobile using an easy-to-set-up test database.

“We had the training on a Thursday or a Friday, and then we went live with it on the next Wednesday,” Lindsey said.

“I pulled a report 24 hours later and there were four or five work orders in there.”



**Joey Hardin**

In the field, crew leader Joey Hardin said the new technology has changed the way his team looks at their work.

“This has forced me to think about our projects in terms of labor and cost and I am now thinking of ways to find savings,” he said.

Lindsey said the Public Works Department is looking forward to trading their Netbooks for tablets loaded with Freeance Mobile this summer.

“What finance and city management have been really pleased with is the fact that we rely heavily on the equipment, labor and materials piece of it.

“Having to actually document the amount of hours, and the labor and the equipment has really put hard numbers into it.”

## GIS AND GPS MAKE A GREAT TEAM

How big a difference has Freeance Mobile for Cityworks made for Highland Village?

It is the difference between a smart tablet and a can of spray paint.

A contractor installing a new parking lot needed to know where the irrigation system sprinkler heads were.

“Prior to being able to use the tablets and combine the GIS, all we had was some guy walking around with a can of spray paint, trying to figure out where all the heads were,” said Sunny Lindsey, GIS Applications and Development Administrator.

A parks department irrigation specialist visited the work site armed with a tablet and a free GPS application.

“He GPS’d all the heads and brought them back to me,” Lindsey said. “I was able to put them into GIS and lay over the construction drawings and actually submit them back to the contractor in a very accurate format.”

Hear the story first-hand from Sunny. Scan or click the image to the right.

