



River Forest Park District

2020-2022 Strategic Plan

Board of Commissioners:

- Ross Roloff, President
- Lynn Libera, Vice President
- Mark Brown, Treasurer
- Cheryl Cargie, Commissioner
- Dennis Healy, Commissioner

Senior Staff:

- Michael Sletten, Executive Director
- Karen Stille, Superintendent of Recreation
- John Beto, Superintendent of Parks

Mission: To enrich the community through acquisition, development, management, and preservation of parks and open spaces, while providing fun, meaningful, and safe recreation opportunities for the residents of River Forest.

Vision: The River Forest Park District is our residents place for fun and community.

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to guide the capital improvements, parks and facilities planning and development, and programs and services development in the near future.

Strategic Initiatives:

- **Parks:** Meet community needs for parks, open spaces, and outdoor amenities.
- **Facilities:** Meet community needs for new and existing indoor/outdoor recreation space.
- **Programming:** Meet community needs with innovative programming.
- **Internal Operations:** Employee growth and development.
- **Communication:** Exceptional and consistent guest experience.
- **Finance:** Sustainable revenue strategies and funding options.

Process: The River Forest Park District Board of Commissioners draft and approve a new Strategic Plan on a 3-year cycle. The Board solicited community involvement through a Community Survey, program evaluations, and patron engagement; as well as the use of financial data and recreation trends to prioritize the goals for the plan. In June, 2020, the Board was presented with the results from the latest Park District Community Survey.

Parks

Year 1:

1. Convert the Keystone Softball infield to a 60' multipurpose synthetic turf infield.
 - Hire an Engineering Service to design and draft bid documents for the site development and synthetic turf installation.
 - Design and draft bid documents for the fence, concrete pad, and dugout portions of the project.

- Award bids for site development, turf installation, concrete pad installation, backstop and sideline fence installation, and dugout installation.
 - Serve as Construction Manager to coordinate the multiple contractors for this project including; site development, synthetic turf installation, backstop and sideline fence installation, concrete pad installation, dugout installation, and restoration.
2. Explore the need to install a shade structure at the Priory Park playground.
 3. Utilize technology and apps to assist in park inspections and tracking of labor activities.
 - Purchase tablets for park inspections.
 - Purchase tablets to log in maintenance activities from the maintenance garage.
 4. Formalize a written park design guideline.

Years 2-3:

1. Redevelop the Washington Commons playground. Review the option to design/build as an all-inclusive playground.
2. Replace all asphalt paths in Priory Park that were installed during original park development.
3. Conduct a feasibility study to replace the Keystone Baseball infield with synthetic turf.
4. Review Park District Integrated Pest Management Plan with Sustainability Commission and amend if needed.
5. Expand the wildflower plantings footprint.
 - Washington Triangle and the retention swale at Priory Park.
 - Explore a partnership with Union Pacific to convert the railroad embankments at Keystone Park, Washington Commons, and Washington Square to wildflower plantings.
6. Explore the closure of Keystone Avenue between Lake Street and Central Avenue to bridge Keystone Park into one continuous park.
 - Hire a traffic consultant to evaluate the traffic/parking impact from the street closure.
 - Hire an architect to draft a proposed site plan.
 - Survey METRA commuters on the proposed street closure.
 - Host a public hearing for resident feedback.
 - Present proposal and traffic study to Village Board for consideration.
7. Pursue acquisition of property to increase open space.

Facilities

Year 1:

1. Conduct a feasibility study to:
 - a. Add a 5th and 6th platform tennis court and a paddle hut.
 - Hire an Engineer Service/Architect to draft a site plan and probable costs for the project.
 - Draft a financial plan.
 - Survey platform tennis membership to gage financial support.
 - Host a public hearing for resident feedback.
 - Present proposal to Village Board for consideration as a Planned Development Ordinance Amendment.
 - b. Relocate the 5 tennis courts and 4 batting cages at Keystone Park to maximize park space. Over lay 5 pickle ball courts over the tennis courts.
 - Hire an Engineering Service to design and draft bid documents for site development, the court installation, and fence installation.

- Work with lighting contractor to draft bid documents for the installation of a new athletic field light system for 4 tennis courts.
 - Work with RFYBS to select an alternate location for the batting cages and possibly amend the number of batting cages.
 - Host a public hearing for resident feedback.
 - Award bids for site development, tennis court paving, fence installation, athletic field light installation, and batting cage installation.
2. Support the Village in their efforts to conduct a feasibility study to build a recreation center through collaboration with all Village governmental agencies.
 3. Explore facility partnerships with other Village organizations to meet indoor facility space needs.
 4. Review 2015 The Depot Gymnasium Addition Plan as an indoor space option.

Years 2-3:

5. Explore expanding the Priory Center to accommodate a 1,000 SF program space.
6. Explore the use of solar energy for The Depot and the Keystone Center.
7. Evaluate Park District spaces as possible off-leash dog parks. Explore possible partnerships with the Forest Preserve of Cook County or adjacent park districts for the use of their off-leash dog parks.

Programming

Year 1:

1. Review costs related to our athletic affiliate agreements. Amend athletic affiliate agreements to reflect the actual costs.
2. Prioritize program offerings with a focus in the areas of youth sports; adult fitness, wellness, and sports; summer camps; and tot special interests.
3. Develop a partnership with the River Forest Township to coordinate the offering of senior fitness and wellness programs.
4. Review currently used recreation software to better utilize data and tracking features that the software offers.

Years 2-3

1. Align program schedules to better meet the availability schedule of participants and families.
2. Explore programming partnerships with organizations that offer the same or similar services to maximize resources.
3. Develop a Community Outreach Plan to increase resident awareness of the River Forest Park District.
4. Review, develop, and implement a pricing structure to draw more non-residents.
5. Maximize the use of volunteers in the River Forest Park District by developing a formalized volunteer program, with appreciation benefits.
6. Expand Sponsorship Programs with a target of 100% of all special events supported by a sponsor.

Internal Operations

Year 1:

1. Create a response document to address a pandemic outbreak.
2. Revise the Parks Foundation by-laws and create a Parks Foundation Plan.

3. Review and amend staff job descriptions to streamline and improve efficiency of administrative staff functions.
4. Apply for the National Gold Medal Award annually.

Years 2-3:

1. Create a training policy allowing for professional development and cross training of staff.
2. Increase Board exposure to the community.
 - Review Board Member Hand Book to more clearly define Board Member public involvement expectations within the community.
 - Host annual or bi-annual President's coffee or happy hour to solicit ideas and comments from the community.

Communication

Year 1:

1. Review and update Marketing Plan.
 - Evaluate Park District's website with the goal for it to be the most used source of information on Park District activities.
 - Research the best practices to incentivize all program registrations to occur online.
 - Review social media practices to maximize community outreach. Evaluate the use of social media outlets and prioritize which has the highest value.
 - Develop a banner program to communicate the Park District's message.
 - Repair all Park Sign Boards and update with program and marketing information monthly.
2. Develop a clear and concise branding of park district programs and facilities. Align logo/brand on all external communication, signage, and marketing.

Years 2-3:

1. Work with Village to consolidate all community calendar information on the Village website.
2. Review Sponsorship Packet to increase sponsorship awareness and opportunities.
3. Develop a plan for the taking and storing of Park District pictures.

Finance

Year 1:

- Continue funding support for an indoor recreation space fund of \$2.5M for the development of new indoor recreation space.
- Draft a 3-year Capital Improvements Plan to align with the annual budget
- Maintain fund reserves for emergency allocations and repairs.

Years 2-3:

- Pursue funding through use of grants, including OSLAD, PARC, CBDG, and Sun Club.