



FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION
STRATEGIC PLAN
2016-2018



OUR VISION:

All the people of Cook County
will be engaged with nature.



MESSAGE FROM THE LEADERSHIP

We are pleased to present the Forest Preserve Foundation's first strategic plan, the product of a year-long process supported by The Chicago Community Trust. This plan is designed to guide our commitment to engage private philanthropy on behalf of the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

The strategic plan documents our vision and our goals for growth over the next two years. It includes a refined organizational mission statement and targeted program goals, with the action steps, resources and leadership needed to realize each goal.

The content of this plan reflects insight gathered from the Forest Preserve Foundation and Forest Preserves of Cook County senior leadership, funding organizations and community partners. We would like to acknowledge the Foundation's Board of Directors, General Superintendent Arnold Randall, Deputy Superintendent Eileen Figel, and Director of Strategic Initiatives, Cathy Geraghty, for their hard work and thoughtful guidance throughout the plan's development.

We are now poised and ready to move ahead with implementing the directives outlined in this plan. We look forward to engaging more civic leaders as ambassadors for our cause, and to leveraging support from an expanded base of donors throughout Cook County.

We are grateful for the opportunity to support the goals of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and to continue our work of engaging people in the appreciation and protection of their natural surroundings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Stuart Cohn".

Stuart A. Cohn
Chair, Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Shelley A. Davis".

Shelley A. Davis
President and Executive Director



OUR STORY

The Forest Preserve Foundation story begins with its founding in 2006, with the foresight that tax dollars would need to be supplemented in order to realize the visionary goals of the Forest Preserves of Cook County. In 2012, the Foundation actively started raising private funds by hosting its first annual golf benefit, the Conservation Cup, and granted \$3,500 to the Forest Preserves. Our mission resonated so clearly with local businesses and community leaders and we were able to continually grow our grant making with their support. In 2015, we awarded nearly \$250,000 to increase and enhance meaningful experiences in nature for children, their families, and their mentors from a diversity of Cook County's communities. The resounding show of support for the Foundation's commitment to our forest preserves inspired our leaders to embark on a strategic planning process to help guide our growth and increase our impact.



OUR MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION

To engage in protecting and restoring the treasured natural habitats of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and to enhance the outdoor experiences of all communities.

We will do this by encouraging and administering private gifts to further the Forest Preserves' mission and goals.

VISION

All the people of Cook County will be engaged with nature.

VALUES

The Forest Preserve Foundation values:

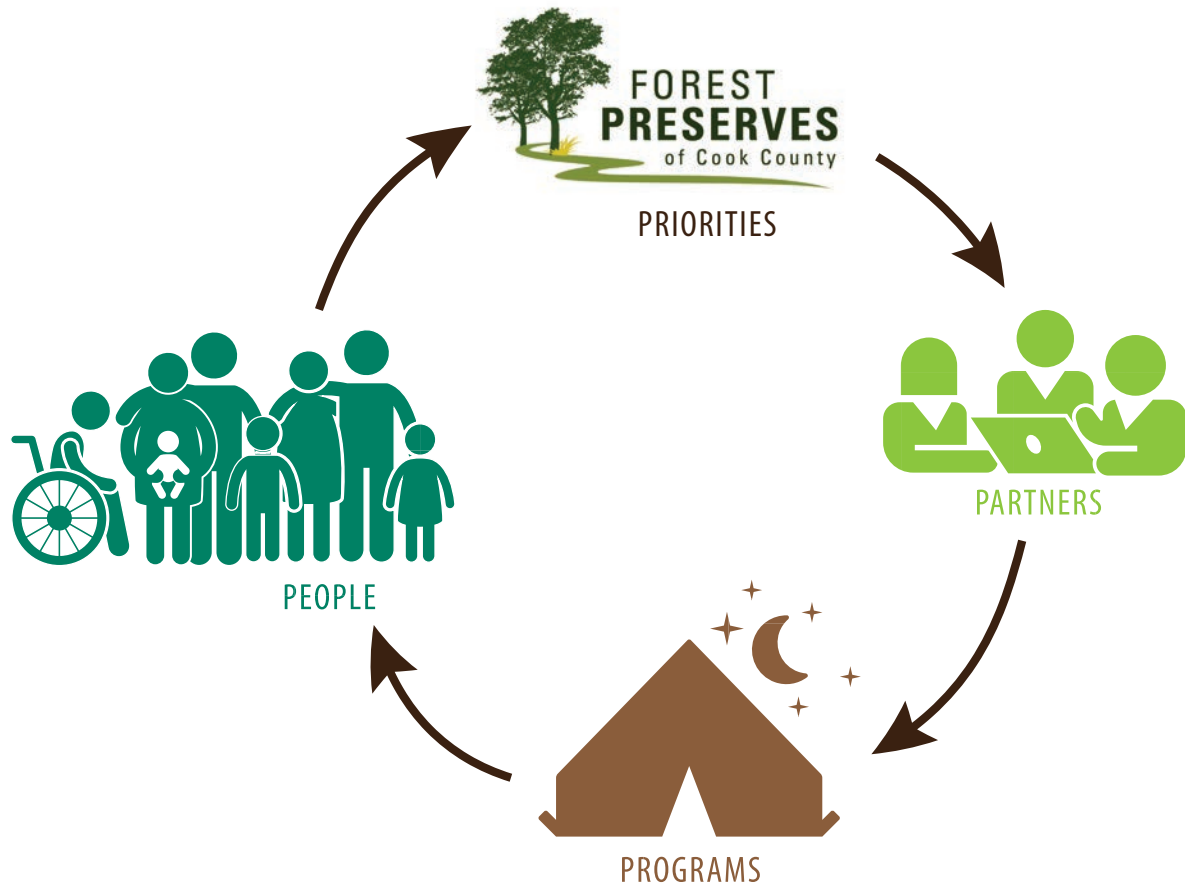
- The Forest Preserves of Cook County as a natural historical treasure and a commitment to supporting this legacy.
- The importance of nature and green open spaces to health and wellness.
- Full and affordable access to the Preserves for all communities.
- Lifelong learning about and engagement with the natural environment.
- The public trust and investment in our work and a commitment to delivering results and communicating our impact.
- High standards of accountability, responsiveness and transparency in all of our community relationships.
- Teamwork, collegiality, support and respect for one another's ideas, opinions, and contributions.





STRATEGIC INTENT

Over the next two years, the Forest Preserve Foundation’s strategic intent is to focus on the **PRIORITIES** of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and deliver **PROGRAMS** that enrich the lives of all **PEOPLE** in all of our communities by building a strong base of **PARTNERS** and supporters. Our leadership is committed to securing the resources required for these efforts.



ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The following four goal areas will guide the expectations and actions of the Foundation in 2016-2018. The goal statement, action steps, success metrics and leadership for each area are described in more detail in the following pages.

IDENTITY AND BRAND

Strengthen identity and build brand through focused and collaborative program initiatives that support the strategic priorities of the Forest Preserves Cook County.

Success metrics include:

- Marketing and communications plans are operational.
- Organization is better known in the community; initial recognition of identity is increased.

PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS

Increase access to the Preserves for a greater diversity of visitors and deepen their awareness, appreciation and commitment to the health of the Preserves.

Continue a proactive and responsive approach to grant making by proactively cultivating donors for priority programs, while being responsive to donors' interests.

Ongoing & proposed initiatives include:

- Expand Conservation Corps
- Increase access to Family Campgrounds
- Nature Gateways Site Plan Implementation
- Public Art Installation

RESOURCES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Seek significant monies from diverse sources. Expand and leverage existing community partner and donor relationships.

Success metrics include:

- Outgoing grants total at least \$1 million between 2016 - 2021.
- Increased funding from suburban Cook Co. totals \$100,000.

LEADERSHIP AND LEVERAGE

Leverage current leadership strengths, community partner support, and expand and enhance the Board of Directors.

Success metrics include:

- The Foundation's Board includes three to five new members.
- Tools and programs to engage supporters in long term relationships are being used.

ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

GOAL AREA: IDENTITY AND BRAND

GOAL STATEMENT

The Forest Preserve Foundation will strengthen its identity and build its brand through focused and collaborative program initiatives that support the strategic priorities of the Forest Preserves Cook County.

ACTION STEPS

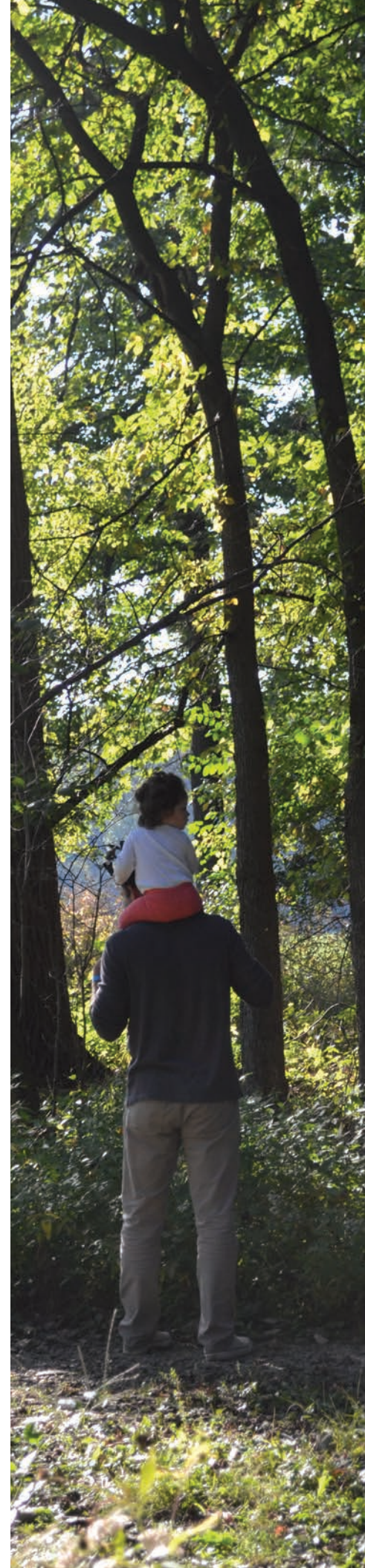
- Pursue resources to develop comprehensive communications plan, including social media.
- Pursue resources to develop a comprehensive marketing campaign and materials.
- Post mission, vision and values appropriately on website and other media.
- Include mission or vision in signature line on all communications.
- Post values in office and rollout to all staff.

SUCCESS METRICS: SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE...

- Marketing and communications plans are operational.
- Clear and compelling messages are crafted and expressed consistently by Foundation Board, staff and Forest Preserves staff.
- Organization is better known in the community; initial recognition of identity is increased.
- Organization is highly differentiated; its “uniqueness” recognized and expressed.
- Budget growth is achieved through broadened base of supporters and funders.
- Expanded and higher profile Board of Directors in place; service seen as an attractive opportunity.

LEADERSHIP:

- Foundation and Forest Preserves Leadership (Chair, Executive Director, General Superintendent)
- Forest Preserves of Cook County Development Committee





ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

GOAL AREA: PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS

GOAL STATEMENT

The Foundation is committed to increasing access to the Preserves for a greater diversity of visitors and deepening their awareness, appreciation and commitment to the health of the Preserves.

The Foundation will continue to have a proactive and responsive approach to its grant making. It will proactively cultivate donors to selected priority programs, while being responsive to donors' interests.

CURRENT STATUS/ACHIEVEMENTS

The Foundation aligns its annual funding priorities with the goals of the Forest Preserves of Cook County. The Foundation will consider ongoing and additional initiatives for the years 2016-18.

ACTION STEPS

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Expand Conservation Corps
- Increase access to Family Campgrounds

Proposed Initiatives:

- Support Nature Gateways Site Plan Implementation
- Support Public Art Installation

SUCCESS METRICS: SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE...

- Proposed initiatives in place.
- Diversified grant programs, with two grant cycles per year.
- Diversified donor streams.
- Visitation increased; baseline established, monitored, reported out.
- Positive impact of programs measured; metrics set and met.

LEADERSHIP

- Foundation Program Committee
- Forest Preserves of Cook County Development Committee

ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

GOAL AREA: RESOURCES AND RELATIONSHIPS

GOAL STATEMENT

The Foundation will seek significant monies from diverse sources. It will expand and leverage existing community partner and donor relationships.

CURRENT STATUS/ACHIEVEMENTS

The Foundation raises its grant making funds from two sources: The annual Conservation Cup golf outing and CSX Transportation. Additionally, the Foundation receives seed funding and in-kind support from the Forest Preserves of Cook County to support its operations. All Directors contribute to giving and/or raising funds for the Foundation.

FUTURE PLANS/EXPECTATIONS

- Giving Campaign
- Special Events

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- The Foundation will revise its Board member agreement to include expectations on giving and raising funds.

ACTION STEPS

- Develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy and expectations.
- Clarify Board member giving/expectations.
- Identify new prospects, including those in suburban Cook County.
- Build on Centennial Celebration; host one “signature event” beyond golf outing.
- Identify opportunities for large-scale contributions and naming rights, e.g., on campsites.
- Build awareness of best practices involved in major donor campaigns.

SUCCESS METRICS: SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE...

- Outgoing grants total at least \$1 million by 2021.
- Increased funding from suburban Cook Co. totals \$100,000.
- One Premier and two additional Title Sponsors for Conservation Cup are secured.
- Board give/raise policy successfully established and implemented.
- Fundraising strategy developed and implemented.
- Award-type event implemented for approximately 200 guests in 2017.

LEADERSHIP

- Board Development Committee
- Forest Preserves of Cook County Development Committee

ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

GOAL AREA: LEADERSHIP AND LEVERAGE

GOAL STATEMENT

The Foundation will leverage the strengths of its current leadership, leverage support from its community partners, and expand and enhance its Board of Directors.

CURRENT STATUS/ACHIEVEMENTS

- The Foundation has a Board of Directors of 12 members, a Conservation Cup Committee of six members and a Young Professionals Association of 20 members.

FUTURE PLANS/EXPECTATIONS

- The Foundation will expand and enhance its partnerships and leadership.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- The Foundation will continue to cultivate appropriate grantee partners to further the programmatic priorities of the Forest Preserves of Cook County. The Foundation will work to raise its visibility in the conservation and donor communities.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- The Foundation's Board will be expanded by three to five members. Board composition will include corporate and civic leaders.
- The General Superintendent of the Forest Preserves of Cook County will be added to the Foundation's Board of Directors as an Ex-Officio member.

ACTION STEPS

- Identify potential strategic partners; create value in partnership.
- Identify prospective new Board members; develop specifications.
- Create tactics to engage supporters; seek long term relationships.

SUCCESS METRICS: SUCCESS WILL LOOK LIKE...

- The Foundation's Board is expanded by three to five new members.
- Board members consists of corporate and community leaders.
- The General Superintendent is added to the Board of Directors.
- Tools and programs to engage supporters in long term relationships are being used.
- Board members will be actively engaged in programs and fundraising.

LEADERSHIP

- Foundation Executive Committee
- Foundation Governance and Nominating Committee

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The success of this Strategic Plan will require the following implementation goals and outcomes.

ENGAGING LEADERSHIP

The Foundation will revitalize its vision and mission and actively engage the Foundation Board, the Forest Preserves of Cook County leadership and the civic community in the achievement of its strategic goals. The Foundation intends to build on its historical identity, strengthen its brand, increase its capacity, expand its partnerships, and strive to be recognized as the charity of choice in the philanthropic conservation community.

SECURING RESOURCES

The Foundation will secure and steward the resources required for the successful achievement of its strategic goals. The Foundation will develop and implement a comprehensive and diverse fundraising strategy, and provide the leadership, organizational infrastructure, workspace, technology and systems to support the Foundation's continued growth and increased capacity. Increased capacity will ensure the Foundation's ability to grant at least \$1 million by 2021.

BUILDING AND NURTURING TALENT

The Foundation will attract, develop, support and nurture talent at all levels of the organization. It will enrich its Board with prominent civic and corporate leaders, invest in the next generation of leaders, cultivate new and productive partners, and develop a robust organizational plan to drive its growth goals forward. The Foundation intends to establish a practice of lifelong learning, invest in professional growth and development, and demonstrate its values of service, stewardship, responsiveness, accountability and transparency in all of its relationships. The Foundation commits to operating consistently at the best practices level and to working toward recognition as one of Chicago's best workplaces.

COACHING AND SUPPORTING TEAMS

The Foundation will create and nurture a team-based work environment aligned with its values of "teamwork, congeniality, support and respect for one another's ideas, opinion, contributions." It will demonstrate its policy of inclusion and diversity – internally, with the selection and support of its staff, and externally, with the selection and engagement of its community partners. The implementation plan will be executed through collaboration on work teams, consisting Foundation staff, Forest Preserves staff, and community partners. Members will be selected for specific expertise, experience, influence and representation and they will provide the tools, techniques and processes required for their success. It is the intent of the Foundation to create a team-based culture that demonstrates the merits and results of high-performance, high commitment, high impact teams.



MEASURING SUCCESS: IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

A Progress Against Goals (PAG) Evaluation Team will provide oversight and support to the working teams engaged in the implementation plan.

Evaluating and reporting protocol will be established to include the following:

- Clear measurable outcomes and milestones for each goal area.
 - Tools to support working teams' planning, executing and reporting activities.
 - Informal, monthly PAG reporting process and tools for leadership.
 - Formal, quarterly PAG reporting process and tools for leadership.
 - Ongoing coaching to ensure desired results.
 - Consistent, focused communications to internal and external stakeholders that stress impacts and outcomes to drive desired results.
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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

The Foundation will engage in strategic communication to support its work and strengthen its brand.

Specifically, it will develop and implement a marketing and communications plan to include website, newsletters, social media, and online calendar and listings.

The priority will be to develop a Forest Preserve Foundation communications toolkit so that all working teams, partners, staff and leadership will have the messages and materials to effectively communicate its brand.

SUPPORTING OUR STRATEGY: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The Foundation invites staff, leadership, partners and community to support its good work through active engagement.

Opportunities include:

- Introduce the Foundation to your employer for corporate participation.
- Introduce the Foundation to your family and friends.
- Donate your talent through volunteering for the Preserves.
- Share your resources and make a gift at any level.
- Leave a legacy via a bequest.
- Join the Foundation leadership via a Committee that suits your interests: Young Professionals Association, Conservation Cup, or the Centennial Campaign.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people offered their time, talent and thoughtfulness to support this strategic planning process. The Forest Preserve Foundation leadership acknowledges their value and thanks them for their efforts.

FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stuart A. Cohn, Law Offices of Stuart A. Cohn
Dr. Thomas Fisher, University of Chicago
Eleanor Grumman, Grumman Development
Nickol R. Hackett, Cook County Pension Fund
Leigh Jones, Ambra Salon
Jim Law, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance
Howard Learner, Environmental Law & Policy Center
Tom Livingston, CSX Transportation
Jackie Loewe, Sheridan Park Consulting
Albert Pritchett, Cook County Board (Retired)
Dr. Stuart Strahl, Chicago Zoological Society
Ewa Weir, Jones Lang LaSalle

STRATEGIC PLANNING AD HOC COMMITTEE

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Dr. Thomas Fisher, University of Chicago
Tom Livingston, CSX Transportation
Jackie Loewe, Sheridan Park Consulting

FOREST PRESERVE FOUNDATION STAFF

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Radhika Miraglia, Development and Communications Associate
Christina Salesberry, Office Administrator

FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY LEADERSHIP

Arnold Randall, General Superintendent
Eileen Figel, Deputy General Superintendent
Cathy Geraghty, Director of External and Strategic Initiatives
Cynthia Moreno, Director, Dept. of Conservation and Experiential Programming

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Gerald Adelmann, CEO, Openlands
Stuart Cohn, Chair, Forest Preserve Foundation
Benjamin Cox, Executive Director, Friends of the Forest Preserves
Eileen Figel, Deputy Superintendent, Forest Preserves of Cook County
Cathy Geraghty, Director of External & Strategic Initiatives, Forest Preserves of Cook County
Mary Jo Herseth, National Head of Banking, BMO Private Bank
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Justin Pepper, Executive Director, Bobolink Foundation
Arnold Randall, General Superintendent, Forest Preserves of Cook County
Monica Schwarm, Co-Chair, Young Professionals Association, Forest Preserve Foundation
Sophia Shaw, CEO, Chicago Botanic Garden
Commissioner Robert Steele, Cook County
Dr. Stuart Strahl, CEO, Chicago Zoological Society/
Brookfield Zoo
Commissioner Larry Suffredin, Cook County Board of Commissioners

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