



## STRATEGIC PLAN NOVEMBER 2018

NATURE DOES THE INVITING  
WE JUST BRING THE GUESTS.







WOLF ROAD PRAIRIE



# Introduction

## Our mission charts our course.

The Forest Preserve Foundation is a dedicated fund- and friend-raising partner to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, one of the oldest and largest forest preserve systems in the nation.

Since the Forest Preserve Foundation was established, we have granted more than \$1.1 million to support conservation, education and recreation in the Forest Preserves of Cook County. In each of the past five years, we have increased the amount of money we have raised and granted to support innovative and impactful programming and resources for the Forest Preserves.

We have made undeniable progress on our objectives. We are ready to think bigger and do more.

The next phase of our strategy must build on our significant strengths and leverage the full potential of our collective resources, including leadership and financial capital. The Forest Preserves are 70,000 acres, representing 11 percent of Cook County land, and are beautiful, natural spaces to showcase, celebrate and help protect. We invite you to join us in our efforts.

The Forest Preserves of Cook County are for everyone. The Forest Preserve Foundation is a welcoming organization, investing in programs and opportunities that are proactively inclusive and reflective of the diversity of Cook County. Our mission is 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 do this by encouraging and administering private gifts to further the Forest Preserves' mission, goals and programming.



The 2018 Conservation Corps Dan Ryan crew members with development manager Clarmarie Keenan (far left) and board member Stu Cohn (far right). A grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation underwrote the crew for the six-week program.

# Our theory of action is clear.



The Forest Preserve Foundation inspires and engages committed private donors and supporters to raise funds for programming and conservation efforts in the Forest Preserves of Cook County. We are the non-profit partner to the Forest Preserves – an independent collaborator and partner for conservation efforts in our region.

Together with the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Forest Preserve Foundation sets annual priorities to encourage broad and varied use and appreciation of the Forest Preserves by the residents and visitors of Cook County. With support from our committed private donors, and in partnership with our Forest Preserve colleagues, the Foundation's investments allow the Forest Preserves of Cook County to enhance their conservation, service, and engagement-focused program offerings for the benefit of all residents of Cook County.

Those programs include supporting organizations dedicated to providing paid internships to youth from underserved communities who work in preservation and restoration projects in the Forest Preserves.



Forest Preserve Foundation board and Conservation Cup Committee members with General Superintendent Arnold Randall and Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.

*Storch Photography*

# Defining Our Role

## We focus our efforts in key leverage areas.

In partnership with the leadership and staff of the Forest Preserves, we make strategic investments in programs and initiatives that support engagement with the Forest Preserves, particularly by underrepresented groups, broadening access to all residents of Cook County.

The Foundation is a trusted, non-profit partner of the Forest Preserves, aligned with its mission and values and collaborative in establishing annual grant making priorities, and independent in our operations and governance.

Three key priorities anchor our work:



The Forest Preserve Foundation works purposefully and collaboratively on behalf of residents of and visitors to Cook County, and in support of the mission and priorities of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, to ensure continued and broad access to well preserved green spaces throughout our county.





2018 Conservation Corps/Dan Ryan  
crew members

# Defining and Measuring Success

## We employ targeted strategies that lead to measurable outcomes.

**Objective #1:** Raise funds from committed private donors and supporters and increase the amount and size of philanthropic gifts received annually.

| STRATEGIES   | MEASURES OF SUCCESS  |
|--|--|
| Pursue grants from local foundations for both general operating and program-specific needs.                                  | Maintain the percentage of annual revenue coming from foundations at approximately 65 percent of total annual revenue annually.  |
| Cultivate and solicit individual donors to contribute to general operating and program-specific initiatives.                 | Secure at least two new donors annually at the \$10K level or above.<br><br>Achieve an annual donor retention rate (previous year to current year) of at least 50 percent, with donations at or above previous year’s level.<br><br>Secure 10 percent increase in total dollars raised each year from individual donors, aiming to increase the number of donors at all gift levels.   |
| Increase the size and giving capacity of the Forest Preserve Foundation Board of Directors.                                  | Increase membership on the Board of Directors by at least one net new member each year, building a Board that reflects diversity in gender, age, race, professional background, and giving capacity.<br><br>Achieve a rate of 100 percent of board members meeting or exceeding their Give/Raise commitment to the Forest Preserve Foundation.<br><br>Achieve a rate of 100 percent board participation in at least two key initiatives each year (e.g. Conservation Cup golf outing and annual appeal). |
| Increase the size of the overall donor base by introducing the Forest Preserve Foundation to a wider, more diverse audience. | Host at least 2-4 “friend raiser” events each year, prioritizing a diversity of audiences and event structure.<br><br>Raise at least \$25K across all friend raiser events annually.   |



**Objective #2:** Elevate the profile of the Forest Preserves through innovative and nature-centric efforts that educate and engage the public about the Forest Preserves and amplify the mission of the Forest Preserve Foundation.

| STRATEGIES  | MEASURES OF SUCCESS   |
|---|---|
| Host annual Conservation Cup golf outing benefit to raise at least \$185K each year from area companies and donors.   | <p>Renew previous gifts and increase the number of new Title Level supporters, while maintaining donor numbers and totals at lower giving levels.</p> <p>Increase the total funds raised (including cash and in-kind support) by at least 3 percent annually.</p> <p>Increase membership on the Conservation Cup committee by at least 2 net new members each year.</p> |
| Explore and test the feasibility of a signature event that blends engagement with nature and a social theme to appeal to a broader range of potential supporters and participants.                        | <p>Event exploration committee convenes and develops proposal for full board review in 2019.</p> <p>If event concept is viable, design and launch event in 2020.</p>  |
| Manage an annual social-media campaign that encourages visitors to the Forest Preserves to learn and donate.  | <p>Propose and confirm campaign concept by the end of Q1 each year.</p> <p>Launch campaign in Q2 each year.</p>   |
| Explore and test the feasibility of an ongoing public relations presence that leverages local radio or print formats to educate the public about the Forest Preserves and the Forest Preserve Foundation. | <p>Develop an annual public relations plan by the end of Q1 each year, including identified paid and unpaid opportunities to promote the Forest Preserve Foundation in local publications and/or radio spots.</p> <p>Meet goals of annual plan.</p>   |



**Objective #3:** Support high-impact and high-quality programs and initiatives that provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn about, appreciate, and participate in the conservation of nature throughout Cook County.

| STRATEGIES  | MEASURES OF SUCCESS  |
|---|--|
| Continue to engage with organizations that provide Forest Preserves-based work opportunities to young people. | Maintain lead investor status in Conservation Corps, providing work and educational opportunities for young people in the Forest Preserves.  |
| Strengthen strategic partnerships within the conservation and environmental education community.              | Meet quarterly with peer organizations (e.g. Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden) to network and share insights.  |
| Manage memorial gift programs for Forest Preserves of Cook County.  | Increase the number of donors to “Benches and Trees” initiative by 20 percent annually.  |
| Support strategic ecological restoration and conservation initiatives throughout the Forest Preserves.        | <p>Cultivate a list of innovative ideas annually and prioritize list with input from the Forest Preserve Foundation Board and Forest Preserve staff.</p> <p>Make at least one substantial investment to support a restoration or conservation priority annually.</p>   |
| Identify and champion innovative opportunities to broaden access to the Forest Preserves for all.             | <p>Cultivate a list of innovative ideas annually and prioritize list with input from the Forest Preserve Foundation Board and Forest Preserve staff.</p> <p>Move at least one idea from concept to pilot stage each calendar year, actively inviting participation from underrepresented groups and communities.</p> |

# Prioritizing Sustainable Success

## We have a vision for excellence.

The next phase of growth for the Forest Preserve Foundation will require:

### **Visionary leadership**

Strengthening our board will strengthen the organization and raise the visibility of the Foundation; increasing its numbers and diversifying its members is a top priority.

We aim to provide our staff with adequate resources to do their jobs well, with a focus on sustainable roles with plans to support professional growth and learning.

### **Genuine collaboration**

The success of the Forest Preserve Foundation rests on the continued mutual trust and collaboration between Forest Preserve Foundation leadership staff and the leadership of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and staff. We are a good and trusted partner.

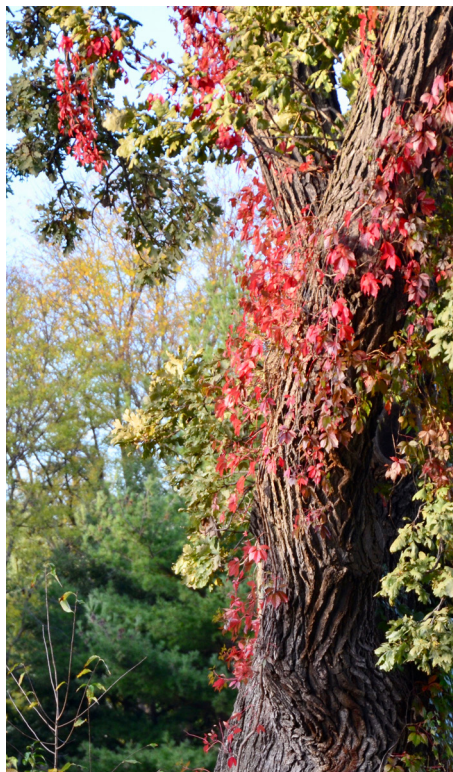
When possible, the Forest Preserve Foundation will have a seat at the table among organizations working together in and on behalf of the Forest Preserves to advocate for mutual priorities and to ensure alignment among like-minded organizations.

### **Mission inspiration**

The Forest Preserve Foundation seeks to grow and learn as an organization, finding inspiration in the beauty of the land, and the opportunity to play a role in protecting and restoring the treasured natural habitats of the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

### **Operational sustainability**

The Forest Preserve Foundation aims to sustain its operations with general operating funds that come from public and private sources, directing philanthropic dollars to support programming and initiatives that benefit the public.







**The Forest Preserves are a treasure and legacy worth protecting for this and future generations.  
We need your help.**

**Participate:** Sign up to play in our annual Conservation Cup golf outing, and get your company involved as a sponsor.

**Volunteer:** Join our board or one of its committees such as Conservation Cup or Young Professionals or participate in one of many restoration projects happening throughout the Preserves.

**Spread the word:** Introduce the Foundation to your employer, or your family and friends. Invite them to visit the Preserves with you.

**Leave a legacy:** Make a gift to advance the work of the Forest Preserve Foundation via a bequest or honor a loved one by making a donation that supports planting a tree or placing a bench in the Preserves.

**Make a donation:** Share your own resources and make a gift at any level.

**And get out there:** Take a hike, sit by the river, challenge yourself to a ropes course, or camp out under the stars. It's all there waiting for you.



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At the Forest Preserve Foundation, we support the programs and activities that give everyone access to the natural treasures of Cook County. With your support, these efforts will make life better for us all.

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