

SUSTAINING THE GLORY

"I present to you, the people of St. Louis, this large and beautiful Forest Park for enjoyment of yourselves, your children and your children's children forever."

Chauncey F. Shultz, June 24, 1876
Opening ceremony for Forest Park

From its inception more than 130 years ago, Forest Park has been a glorious place, beautiful and serene, full of excitement and discovery. It has been called the soul of St. Louis, the community's gathering place, and our regional backyard. It is a place to escape the bustle of modern society with a stroll through green meadows; a place to celebrate great moments with thousands of neighbors or intimate occasions with a few special friends; and a place to experience an Old World masterpiece, an endangered species and new world technology.

Forest Park is where many St. Louisans caught their first fish, skated on a frozen pond, hit a softball out of the park, and discovered the joy of outdoor recreation. Within its 1,300 acres, St. Louis has experienced wonders great and small, natural and man-made. The variety and totality of experiences to be found here are unmatched anywhere else in the region, and perhaps beyond. Where else can we do so many things... or nothing at all?

Most important, Forest Park is a place which we share, and for which we share responsibility. No other place in St. Louis is so universally loved; no other destination as cherished. The park plays myriad roles in our lives: fostering good health; providing a safe place to relax and recreate; helping to revitalize surrounding neighborhoods; demonstrating and encouraging environmentally safe practices and behaviors; educating curious generations; and engaging millions each year in so many ways.

The central role of Forest Park and its importance to all St. Louisans was emphatically demonstrated over the past decade, when Forest Park Forever, in partnership with the City of St. Louis, successfully completed a \$100 million restoration of the park. People of all ages have stepped forward to lend financial, volunteer and other assistance to ensure that the park could be returned to its historic glory. More than 10,000 donors answered the call for support, from school children donating their pennies to corporations and foundations with multi-year contributions. All they asked was a quality outcome, and we delivered.

The park today is a dramatically different place than the park of a decade ago. From the majesty of the fountains in the Emerson Grand Basin to the newly planted meadows and wetlands; from the wildly popular Boathouse and the Visitor Center to the rejuvenated path system and athletic fields used by thousands; from the beautiful new gardens and restored Jewel Box to the new sidewalks, streets and roadways, Forest Park has been reborn. It is a shining example of what is possible in the St. Louis region, the most prominent example of our civic pride.

The Challenge of Sustainability

Now we are entering the "forever" phase of our stewardship. Our challenge now is to sustain the park at its renewed heights of grandeur and to conserve its size, beauty and quality for future generations.

To realize this vision will once again require a commitment from the entire community. Much like the dedicated citizens who toiled so hard more than a decade ago to produce the Forest Park Master Plan, we must have the courage to think big and the wisdom to recognize that what has been so carefully restored must never again be left to chance.

For much of the past year, Forest Park Forever has undertaken an intensive and comprehensive organizational planning process to ask constituencies what the future needs of the park will be, what options exist to address these needs, and what role Forest Park Forever, the City, the park's cultural institutions and all other park stakeholders should play in ensuring the long-term sustainability of this unique community asset.

In seeking these answers, we have talked with hundreds of community leaders, donors, members, leaders of cultural institutions, park neighbors and others. We have consulted with leading business, government and philanthropic groups. We have engaged consultants to analyze funding options, both public and private. Board and staff members have traveled to New York City to tour Central Park and meet with the head of the Central Park Conservancy to learn how their highly regarded public-private partnership operates.

After months of discussion and deliberation, we have identified a clear and achievable plan that will ensure the long-term sustainability of Forest Park to maintain and operate the park as well as fund additional capital projects. While much of our focus will be on devising a new model to support the maintenance and operations of the park, we will continue the capital improvement model that is already in place to address needed capital projects.

Our plan calls for a new spirit of cooperation and collaboration among those within the park and throughout the larger community. We will forge a new alliance with the City that will be a model for urban parks. Our goals will require a significant investment of financial resources, which will be used to create an endowment fund that will enable us to maintain the park's beauty, infrastructure and programming. At the same time, we will work to maximize all other current funding streams and remain open to all viable options that enable us to make the park more accessible and appealing to the entire community and continue to invest in capital improvements.

The restoration of Forest Park is, without a doubt, the most significant success story in the St. Louis region in recent memory. It was, however, only a beginning. The community has declared its commitment to a world-class urban, public park – now we must accept the mantle for sustaining this amazing community asset... forever.

This plan represents our promise that Forest Park will be as memorable for future generations as it has been for the past 130 years. A February 1996 story in *The Economist* noted, "Forest Park shows how the people of St. Louis, in one of their more optimistic moods, would like to see themselves." Now, it is time for all of us to ensure that our children and their grandchildren will be able to share in that optimism.

BACKGROUND

Forest Park Forever is a private, not-for-profit organization, founded in 1986 to work in partnership with the St. Louis City Department of Parks, Recreation and Forestry to make Forest Park the finest urban park in the nation.

Initial efforts by Forest Park Forever were focused on raising private dollars to repair and improve existing facilities within the park. Money raised by Forest Park Forever was earmarked for specific park projects, including reparation of the Victorian Bridge, renovation of the Nathan Frank Bandstand, and re-lighting and renovation of the statues in the park. Private funds were used to landscape and re-grade the Rugby Field, install new park benches and family picnic pavilions, plant hundreds of new trees, and fund emergency maintenance needs.

“Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land.”
Aldo Leopold

In 1995, the City of St. Louis adopted a master plan for Forest Park that would conserve its size, beauty, and quality while satisfying the needs of its users. A public/private partnership was formed. Forest Park Forever and the City embarked on a campaign to raise \$94 million in public and private funds for sweeping improvements to the Park's infrastructure, environment, landscapes, athletic facilities, and historic buildings.

Forest Park Forever successfully raised \$50 million over 10 years for this campaign. This money was donated by school children and many others through the Pennies for the Park campaign; by individuals who supported a specific tree or purchased a brick to honor someone; by corporations and foundations who recognized the unique importance of this public park; and by generous benefactors who provided multi-year contributions. All segments of the community made restoration of the park a priority.

This first phase of Park improvements was completed in 2003. The success of this public/private restoration of Forest Park became an award-winning national model for urban park renewal.

Even while the capital campaign was underway, Forest Park Forever and the City recognized the need to increase private annual support and launch an endowment fund to sustain the park. To that end, Forest Park Forever has continued to build on the momentum created by the Campaign for Forest Park. The Forest Park Forever Annual Campaign raised \$3,050,000 in 2007 compared to \$325,000 in 1997 – an 838% growth in support. The Forest Park Trust, an endowment for the long-term maintenance of Forest Park, was launched in 1999 with a gift of \$200,000 from the Lila Wallace Fund; \$3 million from Anheuser-Busch was added later that year. At the end of October 2008, the Trust was valued at \$18,352,000 with an additional \$4 million in pending pledges.

There are now 750 members of the Leffingwell Society (donors of \$1,000 or more to Forest Park Forever) – which was launched in 1997 with seven members.

The organization has been without a permanent president/executive director since December 2007. Now that the strategic priorities have been identified, the board of directors has launched a search for a president/executive director with a clear understanding of the skills and experience necessary to lead the organization through the implementation of this strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning Process

Forest Park Forever set out to develop a new organizational strategic plan for 2009-2013 on July 1, 2008. The planning process was led by a Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by **Jim Mann**, executive director, Taylor Family Office, and former Forest Park Forever executive director and current Forest Park Forever board member.

Other committee members included:

Gary Bess	director of parks recreation & forestry, City of St. Louis	designated director, Forest Park Forever board
Sue Clancy	former executive director of Forest Park Forever	emeritus director, Forest Park Forever board
Allan Cohen	president/general manager of KMOV-TV	director, Forest Park Forever board
Todd Epsten	chief executive officer, Major Brands Inc.	chairman, Forest Park Forever board
John Ferring	president, Plaze Inc.	vice chairman, Forest Park Forever board
Sam Hayes	retired bank executive	emeritus director, Forest Park Forever board
Dee Joyner	senior vice president and director of organizational development and community relations, Commerce Bank	vice chairman, Forest Park Forever board
Michael Loynd	attorney at law, Dunn & Miller	director and member of the executive committee, Forest Park Forever board
Peter Sortino	president, Danforth Foundation	
Barbara Taylor	community volunteer	director and member of the executive committee, Forest Park Forever board
Larry Thomas	partner, Edward Jones	director and member of the executive committee, Forest Park Forever board
Hank Webber	executive vice chancellor for administration, Washington University	director, Forest Park Forever board
Lucie Springmeyer	interim executive director	Forest Park Forever

The process was facilitated by **Lynn Courier** of Resolved Consulting.

The charge to the committee was as follows:

With input from donors, other key stakeholders and staff, guide the board's work to set strategic programmatic, preservation and financial goals for Forest Park through our partnership with the City of St. Louis.

The planning process began with the committee's review of the organization's mission and articulation of its vision and values. The committee also identified the data and information needed to make informed decisions for the future.

A wide array of research reports, case studies and best practices was compiled for review by committee members. These included:

- Forest Park Access, Circulation and Parking Study, February 2008 conducted by Crawford, Bunte, Brammeier
- Forest Park Forever, City of St. Louis Cost Analysis of maintenance costs and capital and maintenance funding sources, conducted by Public Financial Management (PFM) and presented on January 7, 2008.
- Civic Progress/Regional Business Council assessment of possible funding strategies
- National research/case studies on urban parks and green space.

To ensure that all park stakeholders were engaged in this process...

- Individual interviews were conducted with 60 community leaders, donors, members, leaders of cultural institutions in the park, park neighbors and others.
- Three planning sessions were held with 18 Forest Park Forever staff.
- Two Focus groups, totaling 60 participants, were conducted with donors, key constituents, and CEOs and board representatives of the cultural institutions in the park.
- A separate meeting was held with members of the Forest Park Advisory Board, a group of citizens appointed by the mayor of the City of St. Louis (approximately 25 people participated)
- A meeting with the City Parks Department's staff and maintenance crew included 10 participants.

In addition, committee members spent one day in New York City touring Central Park and meeting with Douglas Blonsky, President and Central Park Administrator of the Central Park Conservancy to learn more about how their public-private partnership operates. Mr. Blonsky also visited St. Louis to consult with the Forest Park Forever staff.

The planning process provided valuable insights into the park and Forest Park Forever's strengths, opportunities and challenges to continue to expand its role as a strong, active partner with the City of St. Louis in sustaining the park for the future. These included:

Strengths of Forest Park

- The location, size and amenities offered in the park
- The park's current condition (beauty, quality of restoration, safety)
- The concentration of cultural institutions in the park

Strengths of Forest Park Forever

- The organization's reputation as a credible entity that does good work with high quality and its visibility in the community
- Its track record of success, both in raising money and in the quality of its projects
- The board, staff and volunteers of the organization

Opportunities

- Expand strategies to actively engage the community/citizens from all walks of life (age, race, interests) in the value of this community asset.
- Provide education and programs to promote ecology and the importance of preserving our environment.
- Continue to pursue the possibility of additional public funding.
- Provide a clear plan for the future that will continue to excite and engage the community.
- Clarify Forest Park Forever's role in the park and continue to strengthen the organization's model relationship with the City of St. Louis.
- Continue to deepen relationships with cultural institutions, including pursuing the possibility of the cultural institutions contributing to the cost of maintaining the park.

Challenges

- Achieve the financial security needed to continue to maintain the park at current standards.
- Recruit the next president/executive director of Forest Park Forever and stabilize the staff.
- Finalize the next partnership agreement with the City of St. Louis.
- Determine who/how to manage the use of the park (events, traffic, parking, etc.).
- Build community awareness and understanding of the need for maintenance, the cost of maintenance and who provides what (the work and the money) to maintain the park.
- Change the board membership, structure and practices, as needed, to fit the needs of the organization going forward.

Once the research phase of the project was completed, the committee met five times to review the findings, set draft goals and identify strategies. Subcommittees also met numerous times throughout the process, focusing on specific areas of the plan. The strategic planning committee submitted an early draft of the plan to the executive committee and to the staff in November for their review and comment. Input generated through this process was reviewed by the strategic planning committee and incorporated into the final draft submitted to the executive committee on December 15, 2008.

The recommended Strategic Plan was presented to the Forest Park Forever board for its review and approval on January 26, 2009.

Focusing on the Future

Sustaining the world-class public asset that is Forest Park is the key theme of Forest Park Forever's strategic plan.

The plan concentrates on five focus areas deemed essential to the park's long-term sustainability and the ability of Forest Park Forever to support this vision. These focus areas include:

- Visitors' Experience
- The Role of Forest Park Forever
- Financial Stability and Sustainability for the Future of the Park
- Forest Park Forever's Internal Organization, Governance and Leadership
- Public Awareness and Understanding

Within these five focus areas, nine goals and their corresponding strategies are established.

Highlights of the plan include:

- New events, programs and volunteer opportunities that will attract people to the park and maximize the park's appeal and usage by the entire community.
- Continued enhancements to park facilities and amenities to provide visitors with positive and memorable experiences, free of problems related to circulation, directions, parking or inaccessible facilities.
- Adoption of a new public-private partnership agreement between Forest Park Forever and the City that focuses on clearly defining the roles and responsibilities each will play in managing and sustaining the functions, programs and geographic areas of the park, and serves as a model for urban parks across the country.
- Launching a campaign to build Forest Park Forever's endowment to a level that will provide ongoing financial stability for park maintenance and sustainability and capital project priorities.
- Continued identification and pursuit of additional strategies to diversify the funding streams to support the park in addition to an endowment and capital projects campaign.
- Hiring of a new president/executive director for Forest Park Forever and continued development and support of the organization's board, staff and volunteers.
- A comprehensive public communications and outreach effort designed to educate the community about the value of the park, the importance of sustaining what has been restored, and the need for broad-based support and stewardship.

The following plan presents the most realistic and achievable way for Forest Park Forever to ensure that the glory that has been restored to Forest Park will be sustained for generations to come.

Forest Park Forever

Our Mission:

To restore, maintain and sustain Forest Park as one of America's great urban public parks, for the enjoyment of all – now and forever.

“A great public park can express, and may even encourage, a basic civility in people.”

The Economist
February 24, 1996

What We Value:

A Strong Partnership with the City of St. Louis

We help make possible a beautiful, safe, public park that is common ground and free to all.

Operational Integrity

We are open and transparent with the public, donors and our partners in all aspects of our stewardship, park advocacy activities and operations.

Achievement of Excellence

We deliver the highest quality park operations, safety, maintenance, preservation, events and educational programs.

Relevance and Excitement

We ensure a vibrant public park that continues to attract, engage and excite the entire community.

Sustainability

We are a model for a public park utilizing the highest standards and best practices to support sustainability and preservation of the environment.

**Forest Park Forever
Goals 2009 – 2013:**

A. Focus Area: Visitors' Experience

Goal: To provide visitors and park users with consistently positive and memorable experiences.

“Forest Park is one area in the region that all citizens think of as their own — I can’t think of anything in the region that is comparable.”

Robert Archibald
President
Missouri History Museum

B. Focus Area: Role of Forest Park Forever

Goal 1: To clarify and expand our formal agreement with the City of St. Louis to maintain and sustain Forest Park at the highest standards of excellence.

Goal 2: To expand and strengthen relationships with each of the cultural institutions and organizations operating in the park, as well as other agencies, community institutions, businesses and neighbors.

C. Focus Area: Financial Stability and Sustainability for the Future of the Park

Goal: To seek greater financial stability and sustainability for Forest Park Forever to ensure its ability to deliver quality maintenance, operations and future capital projects in the park.

D. Focus Area: Forest Park Forever’s Internal Organizational Governance and Leadership

Goal 1: To attract and inspire an effective and engaged board of directors to lead the organization.

Goal 2: To recruit and retain the best staff and volunteers to realize the mission and achieve the goals of the organization.

E. Focus Area: Community Awareness and Understanding

Goal 1: To build community awareness and understanding about the benefits of sustaining Forest Park at its current high level of restoration.

Goal 2: To establish a clear and compelling brand for Forest Park Forever to convey the excitement of the expanded mission for Forest Park.

Goal 3: To build a deeper sense of commitment to Forest Park by the public.

A. Focus Area: Visitors' Experience

Background/Rationale:

Forest Park is a gathering place for everyone in the St. Louis region. Its comprehensive restoration has brought millions of people back to the park, to enjoy its beauty, learn about nature, patronize its institutions, and celebrate at events large and small. Forest Park has been reestablished as the community's most unique and important resource, a place that is accessible to all, with new experiences and opportunities to learn, recreate and be entertained.

"The unprecedented public/private partnership between Forest Park Forever and the city of St. Louis has turned the park into a true urban jewel."

St. Louis Business Journal Editorial
October 11, 1999

To ensure that all visitors and park users – present and future – have consistently positive and memorable experiences, the strategic plan seeks to address every aspect of those experiences, from the information that is available about park resources, events and activities, to the educational and environmental stewardship programs that are offered, and the quality and customer service focus of the employees and volunteers visitors encounter.

Even as we work to maximize the park user's experience, we remain mindful of the need to protect the considerable investment the community has made in the park. We must examine and understand the long-term impact of all activities and develop a new set of guidelines to clarify how and when the park may be used for large events. Such guidelines must balance the needs and desires of the entire community with the requirement that the park be preserved and maintained in consistent and positive ways.

Achievement of the following goal and strategies will draw new people to Forest Park and help build the next generation of park stewards.

Goal: To provide visitors and park users with consistently positive and memorable experiences.

Strategies:

1. Improve all aspects of a visitor's experience in Forest Park.
 - a. Establish a comprehensive source for information on all activities and events within the park and make this information easily accessible both physically (through the Information Desk at the Visitors' Center) and electronically.
 - Expand awareness of all park amenities.
 - Provide detailed site maps and other literature about the park, the cultural institutions, and other resources.
 - Develop and make accessible a master calendar of all events/activities throughout the park.
 - Develop a web site about the park and park activities
 - b. Develop excellent programs and educational opportunities for all ages.
 - Offer environmental and ecology programs focusing on the importance of "living green" to preserve our environment.
 - Promote healthy living and wellness through formal and informal park activities.
 - Provide educational and entertaining experiences to engage families and future generations in supporting the park.
 - Assist in developing educational programs for use in schools and by scout troops and other community groups that use the park as an experiential learning lab.

- c. Establish a clear and informed philosophy for managing the use of the park.
 - Create guidelines and processes for all park events and activities, including a balance of public demand and park capacity.
 - Apply park usage guidelines consistently in partnership with the City of St. Louis.
 - d. Facilitate park access and circulation for all visitors.
 - Provide clear and visible signage for way finding, institutions and amenities.
 - Implement an effective access, circulation and parking plan, including the possibility of offering convenient shuttle/public transportation.
 - Utilize park guides/ambassadors to assist visitors/park users as needed.
 - Address the needs of recreational users, including runners, walkers, bicyclists and pedestrians.
 - Improve accessibility for people with disabilities.
2. Train all staff and volunteers who work in the park to deliver consistently outstanding, positive customer service to support visitors' experiences.

B. Focus Area: Role of Forest Park Forever

Background/Rationale:

Forest Park Forever is committed to maintaining the park as a welcoming place for all citizens of the St. Louis region and as a benefit to the cultural institutions housed within it. Forest Park Forever has a track record of working successfully with the City to acquire the resources needed to invest in the park and enhance its beauty and sustainability. This collaboration has become a model for urban parks across the country.

“More and more cities are realizing the value of marrying the strengths of the public and private sectors to restore, program and maintain important parks. Forest Park Forever is at the forefront of this movement, well-positioned to advance the work locally and contribute to the national efforts as well.”

Holly Sidford
Lila Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund

As the organization’s focus now shifts to park maintenance and sustainability, a new public-private partnership agreement must be developed, one that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of both Forest Park Forever and the City, but also engages other entities with a vested interest in the long-term viability of Forest Park. Only with the participation and cooperation of all of the park’s many stakeholders will it be possible to maintain the park at the highest standards of excellence at all times.

Goal 1: To clarify and expand the formal partnership agreement with the City of St. Louis to maintain and sustain Forest Park at the highest standards of excellence.

Strategies:

1. Specify the roles and responsibilities, including financial commitments, for the City and Forest Park Forever in maintaining and managing Forest Park.
 - a. Appoint a small group of board and staff members to develop the next partnership agreement between Forest Park Forever and the City of St. Louis.
 - b. Create a matrix to determine an appropriate management structure and clarify responsibility for ongoing work functions within the park, such as the one illustrated below:

THE WORK	City of St. Louis	Forest Park Forever
Functions		
• Maintenance (trees, horticulture, structures, etc.)		
• Utilities, police, street maintenance, trash, waterways, paths, parking, statues, etc.		
• Vendor contracts/leases		
• Capital projects		
• Operations		
• Public input (Forest Park Advisory Board)		
Programs		
• Education		
• Park-wide event coordination/information dissemination		
• Visitor services		
• Special events permits/oversight		
Geographic (by zones in the park)		

B. Focus Area: Role of Forest Park Forever (continued)

2. Create uniform standards for the quality of the work
3. Establish a regular process to assess results.

Goal 2: To expand and strengthen relationships with each of the cultural institutions and organizations operating in the park, as well as other agencies, community institutions, businesses and neighbors.

Strategies:

1. Expand the dialogue between Forest Park Forever and the park's cultural institutions and other stakeholders on common interests and goals.
 - a. Meet with the leadership of the cultural institutions to share their strategic plans, find mutual priorities and establish coordinated solutions.
 - b. Convene regular meetings with staff at the cultural institutions to coordinate opportunities for shared strategies that will benefit the entire park community.
 - c. Establish similar communications and meetings with other organizations and businesses operating in the park.
2. Explore the participation of cultural institutions and other organizations operating in the park in the ongoing maintenance of the park.
3. Establish and implement regular communication strategies with the major institutions, businesses and neighbors that surround the park.

C. Focus Area: Financial Stability and Sustainability for the Future of the Park

Background/Rationale:

Forest Park Forever recognizes that, without a stable, dependable funding stream, it cannot maintain the quality achieved through the park's restoration. In discussions with Civic Progress, the Regional Business Council and others, Forest Park Forever has explored myriad options to determine the most viable approach to maintaining and enhancing the park. Financial models developed by the accounting firm Rubin Brown have shown that an endowment and capital campaign, supported by a renewed emphasis on maximizing and diversifying all other current and future funding streams, is the most fiscally responsible and realistic strategy for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the park.

"For every thousand dollars previously invested in a park, dividends to the second generation of citizens possessing it will be much larger than to the first, the dividends to the third generation much larger than to the second."

Frederick Law Olmstead

Goal: To achieve financial stability and sustainability for park maintenance, operations and future capital projects.

Strategies:

1. Identify projected maintenance costs and future capital projects.
 - a. Reach agreement with the City concerning the costs and assumptions in the Forest Park Forever, City of St. Louis Cost Analysis, conducted by Public Financial Management (PFM), January 7, 2008.
 - b. Reach agreement with the City concerning cost estimates and priorities for remaining capital projects.
 - c. Require maintenance funding as part of the budget for all future capital projects.
2. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to secure funding for the maintenance of existing improvements.
 - a. Educate the board, donors and the general public about the options that Forest Park Forever, Civic Progress and the Regional Business Council explored in a study for such funding.
 - b. Develop a financial model projecting expenses and revenues for use in determining the endowment and capital campaign goal and other sources of revenue to close projected gap.
 - c. Implement the recommended endowment and capital campaign.
 - d. Ensure that dedicated funds for maintenance are secured prior to launching a capital project.
3. Continue to explore other new options (including potential sources of public funding) to diversify funding or to offset any campaign shortfall.
 - a. Maximize current efforts, such as annual giving/memberships, Leffingwell luncheon and planned giving.
 - b. Secure agreement with the City about its participation with regard to annual support, including utilities, security, and general revenue, in addition to the already secured BJC funds.
 - c. Create a model for concession contracts and public events that considers financial and park capacity implications.
 - d. Create guidelines for park leases.
 - e. Secure an agreement to guarantee that revenue generated in and taxes dedicated to the park for either capital and/or maintenance uses remain for its benefit, and may be accessed, through mutual agreement, by the City or Forest Park Forever.

D. Focus Area: Forest Park Forever's Internal Organizational Governance and Leadership

Background/Rationale:

Effective governance must be in place for any organization to succeed. Forest Park Forever has benefited greatly from a strong and dedicated board that has provided careful stewardship and effective leadership as the organization has grown in its responsibilities and prestige. At the same time, the organization has experienced a year-long leadership transition in its top staff position. The board determined to delay its search process for the executive director position until the strategic planning process could be completed and the organization's needs and priorities clearly identified.

"Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you."

Frank Lloyd Wright

With newly defined goals and strategies in place, Forest Park Forever is now better positioned to identify and attract a leader with the appropriate skills and experience to guide the organization going forward. A redesigned structure and operational processes will also help ensure the efficient and effective use of all resources entrusted to the organization.

Goal 1: To attract and inspire an effective and engaged board of directors to lead the organization.

Strategies:

BOARD:

1. Based on the new partnership agreement with the City of St. Louis, define how Forest Park Forever will interact going forward, with the Forest Park Advisory Board, cultural institutions, other park entities and park neighbors.
2. Implement strategies to ensure an effective and engaged board of directors for this specific type of public/private partnership.
 - a. Identify the skills and experiences needed on the board to achieve success.
 - b. Recruit and retain directors in accordance with identified needs.
3. Establish appropriate structures and systems to support the board's work.
 - a. Assess and change board structure if necessary.
 - b. Form and utilize committees.
 - c. Assess and adjust meeting schedules and processes (frequency, length and content of board meetings and committee meetings) to support effectiveness and efficiency.

Goal 2: To recruit and retain the best staff and volunteers to realize the mission and achieve the goals of the organization.

STAFF:

1. Establish an effective process to attract and hire a president/executive director in the first quarter of 2009.
2. Align the staff structure with the future direction of the organization.
3. Implement strategies to fill positions needed to support the organization.

VOLUNTEERS:

1. Develop and expand a volunteer program and structures to support all aspects of the organization.
 - a. Recruit community members to serve on board committees, as appropriate.
 - b. Establish advisory committees to support the work of the board and staff.
 - c. Engage volunteers in all aspects of the organization's educational programming.
 - d. Recruit park maintenance volunteers for both regular, ongoing zone work and episodic, sponsored work days in the park.
 - e. Train park ambassadors to support visitors' experiences.
 - f. Seek volunteer support for Forest Park Forever fundraising events and activities.

E. Focus Area: Community Awareness and Understanding

Background/Rationale:

While strong community support of Forest Park has been clearly demonstrated in recent years, even more work is needed to build ongoing community ownership of this world-class, urban public park and its long-term sustainability. A new story must be told, one that reflects Forest Park's position as both a destination and as the leading source of community pride throughout the region.

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught."

Baba Dioum
Senegalese Conservationist

To achieve this, Forest Park Forever must develop a broad-based communications strategy that attracts visitors to the park, promotes the unique experiences they can only find here, offers meaningful opportunities for people to engage with the park, and builds a region-wide sense of stewardship for the park.

Goal 1: To build community awareness and understanding about the benefits of sustaining Forest Park at its current high level of restoration.

Strategies:

1. Implement a comprehensive public communications plan.
 - a. Convey the value of a world-class urban park as a significant public asset.
 - b. Educate the public on the importance of sustaining this world-class park and the required commitment needed to accomplish this.
 - c. Publicize the roles of Forest Park Forever, the community and the City of St. Louis in maintaining the park, including:
 - Financial resources.
 - Relationships/engagement with the community, park cultural institutions and entities, and park neighbors and stakeholders.
 - Stewardship of the park by the entire community.
2. Promote the availability of excellent programs and educational opportunities for all ages, including:
 - a. Environmental and ecology programs focusing on the importance of "living green" to preserve our environment.
 - b. Educational and entertaining experiences to engage families and future generations in supporting the park.
 - c. Educational opportunities for schools, scout troops and other community groups that use the park as an experiential learning lab.
3. Publicize Forest Park and community events and activities held in the park, including:
 - a. The need for a balanced approach to park management that will draw people to the park while protecting the community's investment in the improvements.
 - b. Forest Park Forever's comprehensive sources (electronically and through the Information Desk at the Visitors' Center) for the public to access up-to-date information about all park events and activities.
4. Foster meaningful opportunities in the park to involve volunteers in park maintenance, education and programming, events and activities, and visitor services.

Goal 2: To establish a clear and compelling brand for Forest Park Forever to convey the excitement of the new direction for Forest Park.

Strategies:

1. Establish a comprehensive and fully integrated brand identity to convey the desired messages and role of Forest Park Forever.
 - a. Emphasize the “Forever” statement in the name of the organization to provide a link to the organization’s mission and values and the need for park sustainability.
 - b. Communicate the brand through all aspects of park operations and visitor experiences.
 - Incorporate the brand in all signage related to way finding, institutions and amenities.
 - Display the brand on uniforms worn by park workers and volunteers.
 - Emphasize training of park workers to serve as ambassadors in creating a positive visitor experience.
 - Maintain an image that presents a consistently high quality look and feel to the park and all organizational components.
2. Secure a formal agreement with all institutions and entities in Forest Park to cross-promote Forest Park in their materials.

Goal 3: To build a deeper sense of commitment to Forest Park by the public.

Strategies:

1. Research best practices/emerging trends in urban parks and share this information with the public.
2. Develop mechanisms for ongoing public input and suggestions.
3. Build this role of interacting with and engaging the community into the new partnership agreement with the City of St. Louis.