

3.0 Strategic Planning

3.1 Introduction and Methodology

In July 2008, the Wheaton Park District Leadership team began the journey of building a highly effective leadership group. The initial goal was to renew and further develop the strategic direction of and for the future of the Park District. The team has completed this process and is now focused on the implementation of its plan.

Tim Buividas, of the Corporate Learning Institute an organizational change consulting firm, assisted the team. A core team was established to set direction. The core group consists of:

Michael Benard, Executive Director
Andy Bendy, Director of Special Facilities
Larry Bower, Director of Parks and Planning
Mary Beth Cleary, Director of Recreation
Ellen Huber, Executive Assistant
Rita Trainor, Director of Finance
Margie Wilhelmi, Marketing and Fund Development Manager

In September 2008 the group held a retreat to begin achieving the following objectives:

1. To build a strong, unified Leadership Team
2. To develop a clear Mission, Vision, Value and Culture Statement
3. To develop a Strategic Alignment Plan and Timeline
4. To establish a consistent meeting and communication process
5. To develop additional leaders within the Park District
6. To engage the Board and Park District employees in the planning and implementation process

In February 2009, an all day Leadership Team meeting (Board members and Team members) was held to engage and enroll Staff into the future direction of the Park District. Following this successful event, the core leadership team was expanded to include additional members who are passionate about creating change and alignment within the organization (new members listed in bold):

Michael Benard, Executive Director
Andy Bendy, Director of Special Facilities
Larry Bower, Director of Parks and Planning
Mary Beth Cleary, Director of Recreation
Karen Donisch, Community Center Day Supervisor
Ellen Huber, Executive Assistant
Terra Johnson, Lincoln Marsh Program Manager
Dan Novak, Superintendent of Special Facilities
Kristina Nemetz, Catering Manager
**Deb Seymour, Superintendent of Horticulture, Turf and
Natural Resources**
Rob Sperl, Director of Planning
Rita Trainor, Director of Finance
Jim Waterson, Superintendent of Trades and Capital Projects
Margie Wilhelmi, Marketing and Fund Development Manager

From mid February, through the end of April, 2009, the Leadership Team worked diligently to add depth to the strategic plan and alignment process. Their work is the foundation of this document. It is also the foundation for the future of the Park District and the Residents it serves. Further expansion of the Leadership Team will occur as this plan moves forward.

3.2 **One Team, One Goal**

Vision: The Leadership Team pulling together as a catalyst for the park district to become the best in the country.

3.3 **Mission, Vision, and Core Values**

Mission: To enhance the quality of community life through a diversity of healthy leisure pursuits and heightened appreciation for our natural world.

Vision: We, the Wheaton Park District team, commit to service excellence, financial stability and an enriched quality of life for our stakeholders. We accomplish this through continuous improvement of people and systems while living our values.

Values:

Integrity, through the Character Counts Program
Integrity (definition) adherence to moral and ethical principles:
soundness of moral character: honesty.

Integrity is an important value with which the Wheaton Park District Team believes strongly in associating itself. Words associated with integrity are honesty, truthfulness, values, and character. Integrity is something we will strive for every day not only for ourselves but also for our stakeholders.

Character is a synonym for integrity. That is why we embrace “Character Counts” in our core values: Citizenship, Respect, Trustworthy, Caring, Fairness, and Responsibility.

- ~ Example – Our athletics department instills “good character” from coaches to athletic participants by practicing good sportsmanship
- ~ Example – Our staff is responsible for their department budgets
- ~ Example – We respect our customers by listening to their requests and ideas and then acting on those requests and ideas
- ~ Example – It is important for our staff to come to work with a positive attitude

Have and create ***Fun***

Fun is defined as something that provides mirth or amusement; enjoyment or playfulness. This value emphasizes that the Wheaton Park District is about providing recreational, leisure and social opportunities for the community. Our customers will think of the Wheaton Park District as their first choice for fun. It is important as advocates of fun and life balance that we practice what we preach. Fun is contagious!

- ~ Example – The WPD provide playgrounds that give people the opportunity to play
- ~ Example – The WPD Team takes time to do fun things together, staff outings, white elephant exchange at Christmas time, sharing funny stories
- ~ Example – The WPD provides parks and natural areas that provide opportunities for hiking, walking a dog, and being balanced

Adaptability and Growth

The Wheaton Park District team does not view change as a means to an end, rather as Avenues or Leadership Key Accountability Areas, on our journey to a more positive and successful future. The district continues to cultivate and develop team members in their work areas allowing each employee to grow personally and professionally

- ~ Example – The WPD Team takes people off the waiting list by adding classes or expanding classes to provide more space
- ~ Example – The WPD helps team members develop professionally by attending conferences, seminars/workshops, and educational classes (Adult Ed classes)

- ~ Example – By continuing to provide popular classes and adding new classes to keep up with current trends, The WPD serves our patrons by offering a well-rounded variety of activities. Allowing staff to continue to grow professionally and personally not only benefits the team, but our residents

Commitment

We, as a park district, are committed in many ways. First and foremost we are committed to serving our residents in an excellent manner. We are committed to being good stewards of the environment, to helping each other, to working as a team, to being the best Park District.

Commitment is a value that we must live in our journey to: **One team, one goal!**

- ~ Example – The WPD maintains the Lincoln Marsh Natural area, Arrowhead Golf Course, and our parks to keep open space available to our community
- ~ Example – The WPD is committed to each other as employees by smiling and helping out when needed
- ~ Example – The WPD is committed to excellence in the manner we maintain our parks and the pride we show in doing so

Kindness

Kindness is demonstrated by Commissioners, Staff and Volunteers on a daily basis. Through living this value, The Team makes a positive impact on the lives of those served by the Wheaton Park District.

- ~ Example – when someone has forgotten something in the park, we do our best to get it back to the person
- ~ Example –when a team member is going through hard times and we show concern and understanding
- ~ Example – when the Team completes work in support of other service providers, we demonstrate kindness

Service

Service is an act of help or aid (to do someone a service); the performance of duties.

The Wheaton Park District provides valuable and essential services to the Residents, our customer. Our team is service driven through our programs, special events, partnerships and facilities. Our service to the community is our readiness to live up to their expectations!

- ~ Example – as a Park District our purpose is to serve people
- ~ Example – when working in a customer touch area – we stop what we are doing to greet our customers
- ~ Example – we meet our fellow Team members’ needs as internal customers

3.4 **Avenues of Accountability**

1. ***Sustainability Makes Sense***
For the District to continue its mission, it is imperative to ensure that services contribute to financial success.
2. ***Investing in People***
Making sure the Team has the opportunity to participate in professional development activities, has the opportunity for professional growth, and personal wellness.
3. ***Doing Things Better and Smarter***
Being efficient in the use of time and systems and maximizing our resources.
4. ***Ensuring Excellence and Satisfaction***
Committing to providing excellent service for stakeholders and assuring that the expectations of our community are met.

3.5 **Strategic Objectives**

1. Avenue of Accountability - Sustainability Makes Sense
 - ***Strategic Direction*** - Aim the Wheaton Park District toward financial self sustainability.
 - ***Strategic Objective*** - From fiscal year end 2009 to fiscal year end 2014, reliance on property taxes for Corporate and Recreation Fund operations will be reduced by 10%. Our focus is not simply to cut service and related expenses, but to identify and secure operating revenue from sources other than property taxes. This will be accomplished primarily through the development and execution of Operational/Service Plans as outlined in the business plan model charter. This strategic objective will be articulated in the “Business Case” narrative of each applicable agency charter. This will also be accomplished through strategic partnerships.
2. Avenue of Accountability - Ensuring Excellence and Satisfaction
 - ***Strategic Direction*** – Aim the Wheaton Park District toward becoming an environment where stakeholders are highly engaged and very satisfied.
 - ***Strategic Objective*** – From year end 2009 to year end 2014, internal and external awareness and satisfaction ratings will be improved with each measurement. This will be accomplished primarily through developing and executing a consistent data collection and measurement system related to Wheaton Park

District awareness and satisfaction for the following stakeholders:

- Board of Commissioners
- Residents
- Customers
- Employees
- Partners
- Sponsors
- Donors
- Vendors

3. Avenue of Accountability - Investing in People
 - **Strategic Direction** – Aim the Wheaton Park District toward becoming a happy, healthy, professionally developed and value driven Team.
 - **Strategic Objective** –By year end 2010, the Wheaton Park Team will have identified criteria for and begun measurement of “Best in Class” among Illinois Park Districts in the following categories of internal services:
 - Wage & Benefits - Full and Part Time Staff
 - Training and Development
 - Wellness
 - Formal Education Support
 - Professional Development
 - Recognition

By year end 2014, the Wheaton Park District will be a leader in providing internal services among Illinois Park Districts.

4. Avenue of Accountability - Doing Things Better and Smarter
 - **Strategic Direction** –Aiming the Wheaton Park District toward becoming a highly effective and efficient place of public business.
 - **Strategic Objective** –By year end 2012, A District wide Business and Operations Plan will be completed by rolling up division plans into departmental plans, and then departmental plans into one Master Operations Tool. The completion of the rolled up plan will “arm” the Agency for effectiveness and efficiency. This will be accomplished primarily through developing and executing agency operational plans as outlined in the business plan model charter. Success will be measured as part of the data collection program referenced above in the “Ensuring Excellence and Satisfaction” Avenue of Accountability.