

The Forest Preserves of Cook County
Conservation and Policy Council
Workshop Minutes for October 12, 2017
Camp Reinberg • 1801 N. Quentin Road, Palatine, IL 60074

Call to Order. Council chair Wendy Paulson called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. The following Council members and others attended:

Advisory Council Members	Forest Preserves Board	Forest Preserves Staff
Wendy Paulson, Chair	Commissioner Gregg Goslin	Arnold Randall
Mark Templeton, Secretary	Commissioner Timothy Schneider	Eileen Figel
Michael DeSantiago		Cathy Geraghty
Terry Guen		
Robert Castaneda		
Sylvia Jenkins		
Laurel Ross		

Peter Ellis did not attend. Falona Joy is on sabbatical and Linda Mastandrea resigned.

Other Participants

In total, 52 people participated in the workshop, including representatives from:

Barrington Area Conservation Trust	Forest Preserves Foundation	National Park Service
Chicago Botanic Garden	Forest Preserves of Cook County	North Branch Restoration Project
Commissioner Suffredin's office	Friends of the Forest Preserves	Openlands
Deer Grove Volunteers	Logan Square Neighborhood Association	U of IL Extension
Faith in Place		

Welcome & Workshop Goals. Commissioners Greg Goslin and Tim Schneider welcomed the Council and partners to Camp Reinberg and thanked them for their commitment to the Forest Preserves. The Commissioners noted the importance of programs that bring residents to the Forest Preserves and help them connect to nature. Commissioner Schneider noted that the Forest Preserves need more resources to meet long-term goals and suggested exploring the possibility of a future referendum.

Bob Megquier of Openlands presented the goals of the meeting as follows:

- INSPIRE AND BE INSPIRED by engaging with council members, partners, and volunteers in deeper, interactive discussions around opportunities and challenges
- ACCELERATE CHANGE by thinking broadly, collaboratively, and differently about accomplishing and funding our work. Conservation takes time. What are changes we can leverage to accomplish restoration more quickly and at a larger scale?

- IDENTIFY AND INTEGRATE specific, actionable strategies that will inform several scenarios related to the level of funding available over the next 5 to 10 years. There is a need to identify steps for collaboration that are concrete and credible.
- CREATE consensus-based steps for action that address restoration, land preservation, accessibility, and public support

Public Comments. There were no comments from the public.

Approval of Minutes. A motion was made by Wendy Paulson and seconded by Mark Templeton to approve the minutes of the 9.7.17 meeting; the minutes were approved unanimously.

Story #1. Jane Balaban, a volunteer at the Forest Preserves for over 35 years, described her work with the North Branch Prairie Project. When she began this work in the 1980s, little was known about restoring natural areas. With no recognized books or science on the topic, Jane described how she and the other stewards experimented with different approaches and honed their restoration techniques over time. She noted the importance of both experiential learning and of having a dialogue with the land.

Jane also provided background on the 1996 Countywide moratorium on restoration, and the resulting backslide she witnessed at restoration sites. At Bunker Hill, a site where Jane had been the steward since 1980, the ban was not lifted for over 10 years. Jane noted many positive changes in recent years, including a renewed focus on restoration and other initiatives of the Next Century Conservation Plan. Jane values the community she is part of as a FPCC volunteer, and considers it a privilege to help restore the forest preserves to health.

Breakout Discussions – Rounds 1 & 2. Participants divided into breakout groups to discuss the following topics:

- Restoration
- Land Acquisition/Lease/Sale
- Making Preserves Welcoming & Accessible

Two rounds of each session were held to give attendees an opportunity to participate in multiple discussions. Summaries of the topics discussed at each breakout session are included at the end of this document.

The History of Civic Leadership and the Forest Preserves of Cook County. Julia Bachrach, a local historian, presented a brief overview summarizing the role of civic leaders and advocates during the founding of the Forest Preserves. Julia described how the civic leaders built a broad community of public support by connecting with civic and business organizations and organizing Saturday walks and picnics throughout the region's natural areas.

Breakout Discussions – Rounds 3. Participants divided into breakout groups to discuss building a community of support. The following topics were included:

- Marketing & Outreach
- Legislative Strategies
- Engaging Civic Leaders and Other Stakeholders

Participants attended sessions on all three topics. Summaries of the topics discussed at each breakout session are included at the end of this document.

Approval of the 5-Year Implementation Strategy, 2017 Annual Report, and 2018 Budget Recommendation.

2018 Budget

Eileen Figel presented a summary of the updated budget strategy for 2018. Key points include:

- The projected budget gap for 2018 is \$5.5 million. This figure is largely driven by two factors: (i) The need to incorporate into the operating budget \$3.9M for restoration work, and (ii) Increased personnel expenses resulting from cost of living allocations, step increases, and rising employee healthcare costs.
- FPCC also faces a significant backlog of deferred capital maintenance estimated at \$30M. In 2019, FPCC plans to issue a modest capital bond which will provide approximately \$2M to \$3M per year for the next several years. FPCC hopes this will cover the most urgent capital needs (such as collapsing roofs, boiler replacements, and parking lot repairs). The bond does not provide adequate resources to assist with the capital needs of either the Brookfield Zoo or the Chicago Botanic Garden. FPCC will continue to work with these partners to seek additional resources.
- The 2018 budget will not include an additional \$500K previously recommended to increase marketing and outreach.
- To close the budget gap, FPCC proposes a range of cost reductions, increases to earned revenue, and other strategies. These include closing personnel vacancies, further reductions in non-personnel costs, and increased reliance on in-house maintenance activities such as parking lot repairs.
- Approximately \$150K in revenue is expected to be generated by new parking fees at Swallow Cliff.
- Partner organizations—including the Zoo and Garden—will also receive a reduction in funding in 2018.

Council members asked several questions and offered the following comments:

Q: The draft *Annual Report* includes a detailed evaluation conducted by the Steering Committee of seven operational priorities. Is this level of detail appropriate, or would a summary be more helpful?

A: Council members agreed that the input provided by the Steering Committee was helpful and should be included in full.

Q: Should there be a strategy in place for reassigning people in the event the goals they have been working on are no longer a priority?

A: Committee chairs have been asked to critically assess goals and potentially eliminate goals or defer that are no longer viable. Committee chairs will also explore potential revisions to the timeline for achieving goals.

Q: Some initiatives in Attachment 3 of the *Annual Report* note the need for additional authority. Who exactly is providing said authority?

A: These initiatives generally require legislation by the State of Illinois, unless otherwise noted.

Q: Are other locations being considered for paid parking? Is Swallow Cliff being singled out for a particular reason?

A: The Swallow Cliff location is unique due to the volume of traffic and major capital investments have been made at the site. This site is consistently busy even during off-peak hours, and has spillover impacts on nearby preserves. Terry Guen emphasized the need to carefully communicate the changes in advance. (For example, consider installing signs which explain “Your parking dollars helped build xxx/xxx...”)

Benjamin Cox questioned the logic of investing in a site in order to attract visitors, then penalizing them

for coming. Benjamin emphasized the need to charge residents in a way that's equal for everyone. Arnold Randall was asked if FPCC could add parking at the site. Arnold responded that he is not supportive of building more parking lots; FPCC is trying to reduce its current parking lot footprint.

Q: Michael DeSantiago commented that most of the Next Century Conservation Plan budget is for land acquisition. He suggests removing this piece from the budget until it is financially viable.

A: Wendy Paulson responded that acquisition is a major challenge that is discussed in the report.

Annual Report and 5-Year Implementation Strategy

Eileen Figel presented the draft *Annual Report* and updated *5-Year Implementation Strategy*. Eileen explained that NCCP Committee chairs reviewed and updated progress reports and the 2018 priorities presented in the *5-Year Implementation Strategy*. Eileen added that:

- 83% of the priority goals included in the *5-Year Implementation Strategy* Document are moving forward or have been implemented. Five initiatives have been redirected, and six have stalled, largely due to a lack of resources.

A motion was made by Sylvia Jenkins and seconded by Michael Desantiago to delegate final approval of the *Annual Report* and the *5-Year Implementation Strategy* to the Council officers. The motion passed unanimously. Council members were asked to provide to Eileen by October 19 any additional feedback to be incorporated into the draft reports.

Inspirational Story 2. Lance Williams, Assistant Crew Leader, and Melissa Horther, Program Manager for the Forest Preserve Experience Program, outlined their experiences with the Conservation Corps this past summer. The Forest Preserve Experience Program was a 5-week summer program for high-school aged youth in partnership with Friends of the Forest Preserves and the Housing Authority of Cook County. The program consisted of 48 youth participants and 11 adult leaders who engaged with the Forest Preserves in a hands-on job skills and environmental education internship. Prior to the program, over 90% of participants had never been to the Forest Preserves or been formally employed. Youth and their parents praised the program for connecting them to nature, and creating a sense of importance for participants in what was--for many--their first job.

Council members asked the following question:

Q: Did the program include a component for future education and guidance for how to move forward in the conservation field?

A: Friends of the Forest Preserves conducts interview trainings and resume building sessions. Additionally, they provide letters of recommendations and host alumni events to promote job opportunities and other relevant internship programs. The Forest Preserves host an annual career fair and a conference for Conservation Corps participants that allows them to network with contractors and conservation professionals. However, there isn't the capacity for scholarship opportunities as of yet.

Wrap Up. Benjamin Cox from Friends of the Forest Preserves led an open discussion summarizing the day's accomplishments and progress towards addressing the four (4) goals outlined at the beginning of the meeting. Overall, participants felt inspired by the course of events and agreed that consensus-based action needs further work. Additionally, participants felt that the workshop format was conducive to productive discussions between the Council, internal groups, and external partners.

Suggestions for improvement included: 1) more time and/or fewer discussion topics, and 2) exercises that make it clear what resources each person is bringing to the table.

Adjourn. A motion to adjourn was made by Wendy Paulson and seconded by Sylvia Jenkins and the meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

10.12.17 CONSERVATION AND POLICY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
NOTES FROM BREAKOUT GROUP 1: RESTORATION
SESSIONS 1 & 2

Key Points:

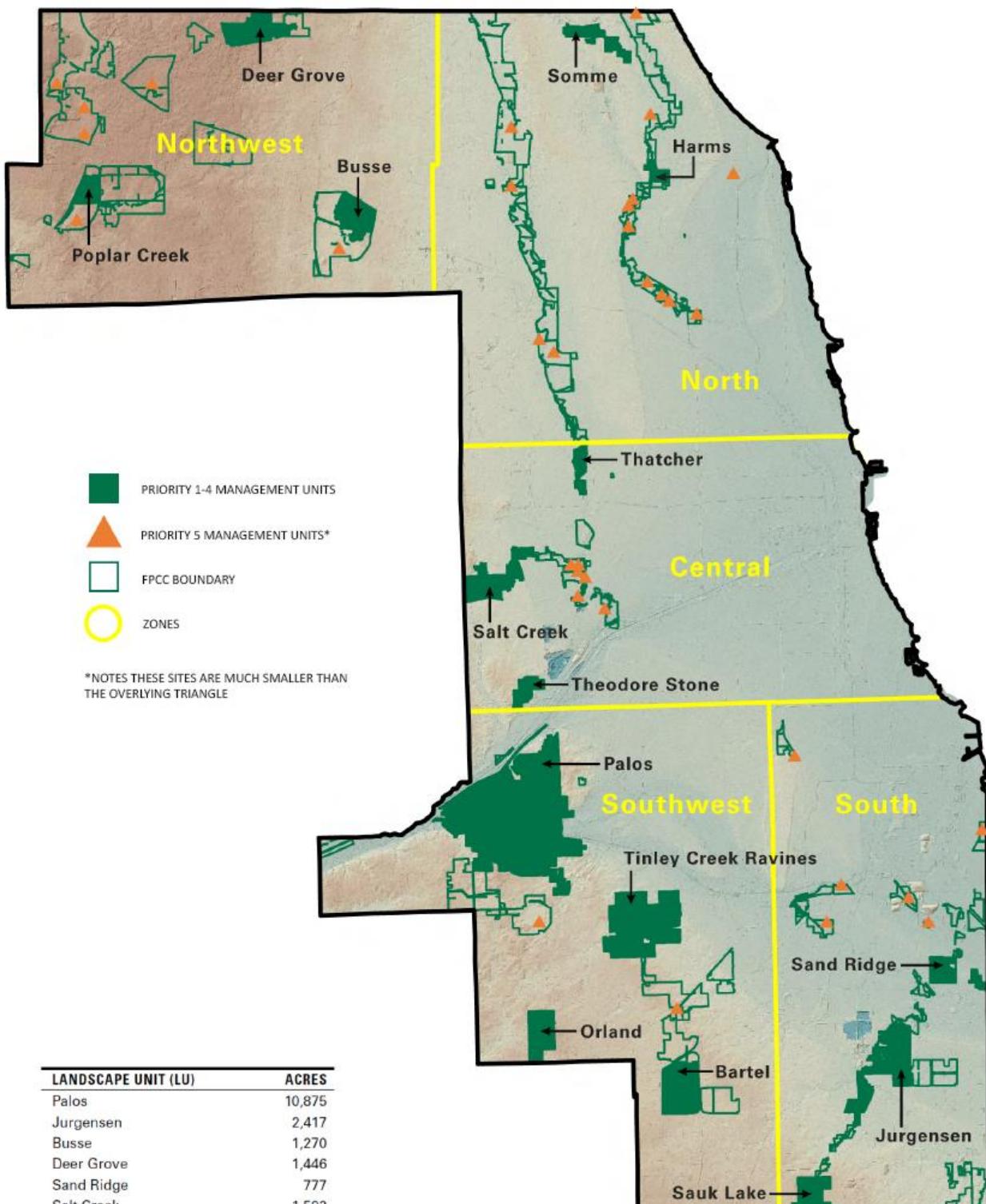
- One of the key issues surrounding restoration and scaling up the volunteer stewardship program is a lack of the next phase of leadership. How do we get volunteers to take the next step?
- The restoration sequencing chart provides a rudimentary outline for taking a de novo site to one that is ecologically functional. It is a continuum that changes depending on whether there is significant contractor investment at some point along the curve. The baseline starting point will shift depending on a site's quality and placement on the prioritization list. It is a tool for identifying where it makes sense to invest, for either increased efficiency or to speed up process.
- There is a potential for walking away from sites if there is a lack of resources. One suggestion is to aim to keep sites 80% restored versus 100% in order to make them easier to maintain with periodic fire.
- A poverty mindset is discouraging to partners. The focus should be on showcasing how we are successfully coordinating resources.
- The role of a volunteer steward has changed. Stewards are largely responsible for community building, and are key to mentoring and securing the next generation of stewardship leaders.
- Nurturing—not necessarily training or advertising—is what creates a new steward. However, the capacity for 1-on-1 interactions are limited due to the time commitment and the steward's focus on running the workday.
- The most successful volunteer sites have more than one leader. This relieves the burden of responsibility on the steward, and ensures multi-generational support.
- Partnerships with agencies such as the Shedd Aquarium to adopt a site have been successful on a small scale. We will be exploring the possibility of expanding these types of programs.
- Contracting stewarded volunteer sites to redistribute volunteers to other priority sites in need is generally not a viable option due to proximity and neighborhood buy-in. However, sites are re-evaluated when a steward leaves.
- Volunteer engagement is primarily driven by proximity, rather than programmatic outreach. Need to address language and geographic barriers to getting additional experienced leaders.
- To create a sustainable stewardship program, relationship building and camaraderie between volunteers and the neighboring community should be enhanced and made equivalent to the work being done on the land.
- Limitations of school outreach: low bus budget, availability of stewards during the week.
- Experienced individuals are not allowed to “test out” of training programs; this is to ensure that the individual's quality of experience and knowledge of policies is to our standards. However, training can be fast-tracked in certain instances, particularly for partners.

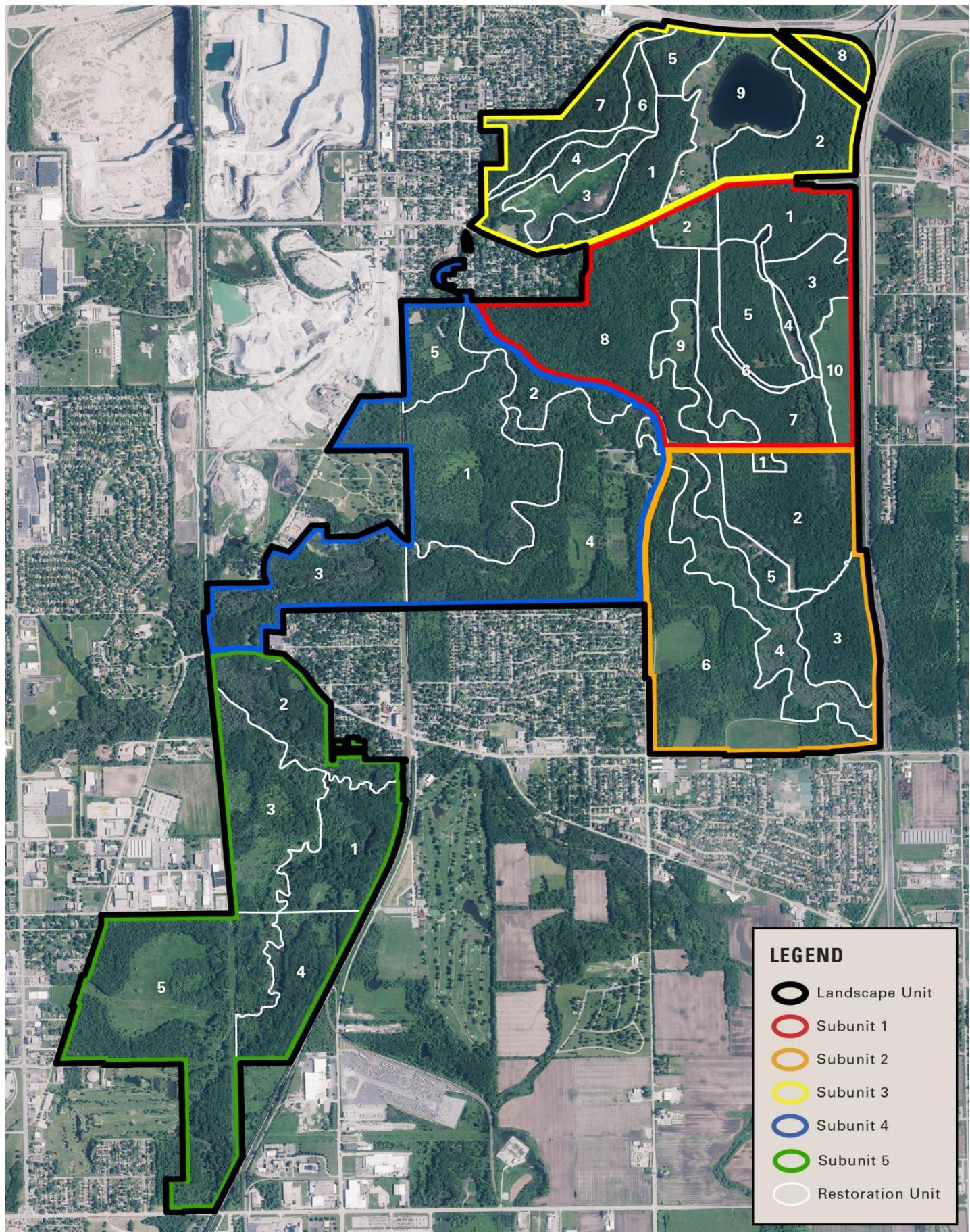
Potential Next Steps/Action Items:

- Increase opportunities for offsite training in urban areas.
- Investigate relationship mapping within the context of existing priority maps and partnerships.
- Emphasize and establish strategies for intentional mentorship between Conservation Corps members, volunteers, and others.
- Develop strategies for embedding relationship building into volunteer workdays.
- Gauge the interest of stewardship groups to meet to develop best practices and engagement strategies.
- Pursue online training programs for basic volunteer courses.

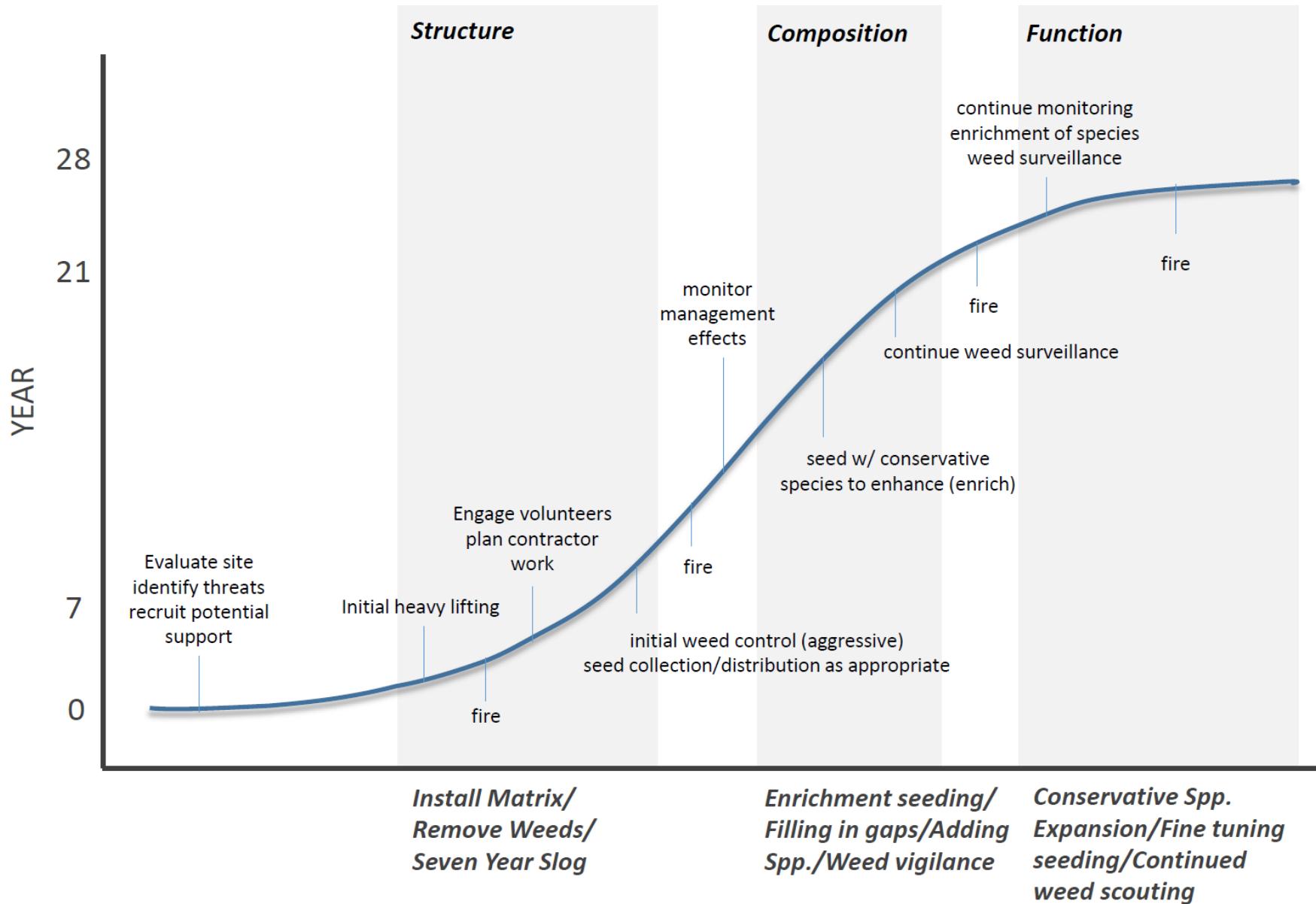
ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Priority Landscape Units (map)
- 2) Prioritization Subunit Example (map)
- 3) Restoration Sequencing Chart
- 4) Goals Chart





RESTORATION SEQUENCING



How do we best use a limited amount of dollars and staff time across multiple goals?

Not all sites can be champions of all 4 goals

GOAL:

PUBLIC VISIBILITY & EDUCATION	COMMUNITY CONNECTION & ADVOCACY	GRANTED or GIFTED DOLLARS & REQUIREMENTS	ECOLOGICAL VALUE – Plant diversity & preservation, animal habitat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically low ecological value • Ideal place to engage youth, families, schools, community groups; easy entry – just drop in • Visible to public • Leaders do not need strong science knowledge so entry into leadership ranks is quicker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer driven • Community building within volunteer group – strong bonds for existing members; difficult entry for new members • Mixed ecological value – site is selected based on volunteer interest, proximity, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More bang for the buck • Site selection limited by funding source • Typically long term requirements for maintenance, public engagement are borne by FPCC. What happens after grant is done? • If existing volunteer group, how does the grant piece work in? • If no existing volunteer group, how can we fast track establishment and how does the new volunteer group meld into regional volunteer groups? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to justify big contractor dollars spent at these sites • Contractor dollars can jump start restoration to get site to a monitor and maintain phase • Site is not appropriate for novice volunteers nor for workday leaders • If existing volunteer group, do volunteers' skills and abilities progress as the site progresses? • If no existing volunteer group, how do we attract leaders and skilled volunteers from other sites to move to these sites?
<u>Current Examples</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dan Ryan • LaBagh • Irene Hernandez <u>Growth Sites</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 6 Nature Centers • Campgrounds • Busy Picnic Site • Near FPCC trails • Near public roads and highways 	<u>Current Examples</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bunker Hill, Linne, Watersmeet, Blue Star • Poplar Creek, Schaumburg Road Grasslands <u>Growth Sites</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None planned 	<u>Current Examples</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orland Grassland • Bartel Grassland <u>Growth Sites</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where opportunity appears 	<u>Current Examples</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zander • Cranberry Slough • Deer Grove West <u>Growth Sites</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any of the 30,000 acre sites

10.12.17 CONSERVATION AND POLICY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
NOTES FROM BREAKOUT GROUP 2: LAND ACQUISITION/LEASE/SALE
SESSIONS 1 & 2

Group 1

Present: Terry Guen, Sylvia Jenkins, Karen Vaughan, Lisa Woolford, Chris Adas, David Kircher, Chris Slattery, Alice Brandon, Bob Megquier, Delio Calzolari, Dennis White, and Anthony Tindall

Top Concerns:

- Concern public does not value and totally comprehend the important of having 70K acres.
- Concern county residents don't understand why we would want to add land. Forest Preserves should market "why" we want to expand, how it benefits nature and residents.
- Tension between acquiring land in the City vs. Suburbs
- 21,000 acre NCCP goal is not linear
- FPCC needs to have a better presence in the city, in order to get City residents to support the Forest Preserves.

Next Steps:

- Identify opportunities to have a presence in the City. (Ex. Collaboration/Partnership with Chicago Park District & MWRD)
- Consider opportunities to license land. Do not sell.

Group 2

Present: Wendy Paulson, Cathy Geraghty, Eileen Figel, Rich Gamble, Rob Castaneda, David Kircher, Chris Adas, Lambrini Lukidis, Benjamin Cox, Dan Huntsha, and Anthony Tindall

Top Concerns:

- Grow vs. Restore (What is the Priority)
- Window of Opportunity
- Presence in the city?
- Additional Acres align with Voter/Strategy

Next Steps:

- Prioritization of acquisitions
- Biggest opportunities (offensive and defensive)
- Develop strategy for next 5K acre acquisition
- Major Donor Campaign

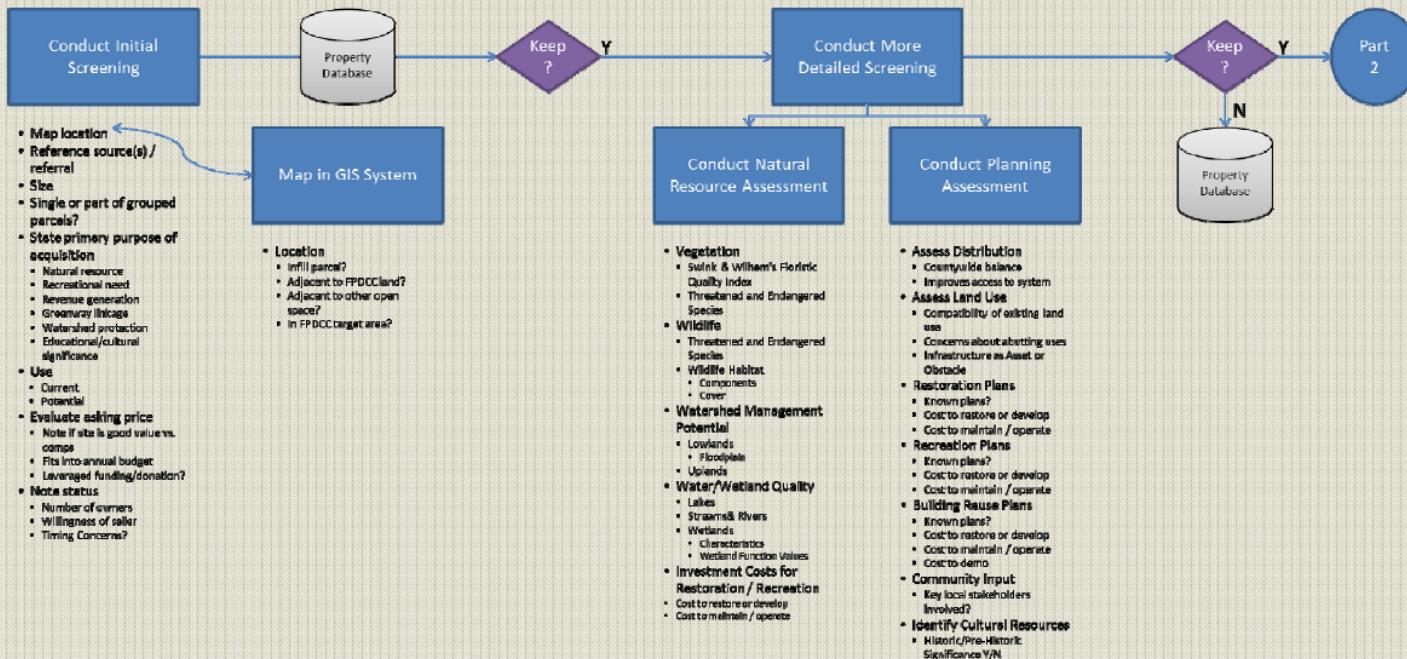
ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) 2012 Land Acquisition Plan (<http://fpdcc.com/downloads/FPDCC2012LandAcquisitionPlanFinal.pdf>)
- 2) Land Acquisition Current Evaluation Process
- 3) Matteson Development Opportunity



Current Evaluation Process

FPDCC Land Acquisition Plan / Evaluation Guidebook (Proposed Revisions) Part 1: Property Screening



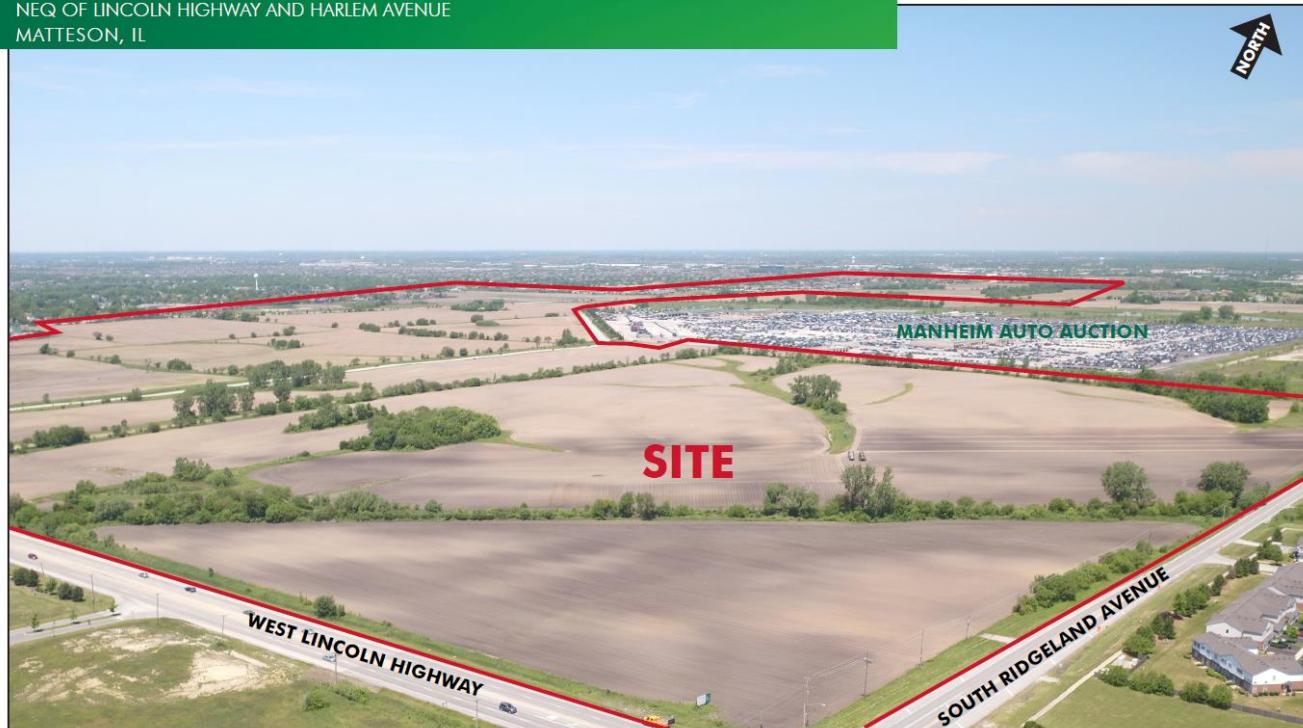
DRAFT 11/16

FOR SALE

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

MANHEIM BUSINESS PARK

NEQ OF LINCOLN HIGHWAY AND HARLEM AVENUE
MATTESON, IL



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Matteson, IL



PROPERTY HIGHLIGHTS

- + ±531.92 acres (Divisible)
- + Zoning is a combination of C-4 Highway Commercial and I-1 Service District (heavy commercial and light industrial)
- + Close proximity to I-80 & I-57
- + Tax incentive package in place
- + Existing user is the Greater Chicago Auto Auction located on 244.23 acres in the center of the property
- + Majority of the property is currently being farmed
- + Acreage, Parcel Numbers and Taxes:
 - ±179.81 Acres, 31-18-102-001, Taxes (\$15,271.35)
 - ±92.55 Acres, 31-18-302-001, Taxes (\$3,834.98)
 - ±112.60 Acres, 31-19-102-004, Taxes (\$4,974.44)
 - ±131.63 Acres, 31-19-201-003, 31-19-201-010,
31-19-201-009, Taxes (\$379,477.98)
 - ±15.33 Acres, 31-19-201-006, Taxes (\$660.58)
- + Asking \$35,000 per acre
- + Please call for additional information



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CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN



AVAILABLE PROPERTY

- COMMERCIAL (Orange)
- RESIDENTIAL (Red)
- INDUSTRIAL (Yellow)

NOT INCLUDED

- RESERVED/DEVELOPED PROPERTY (Yellow)



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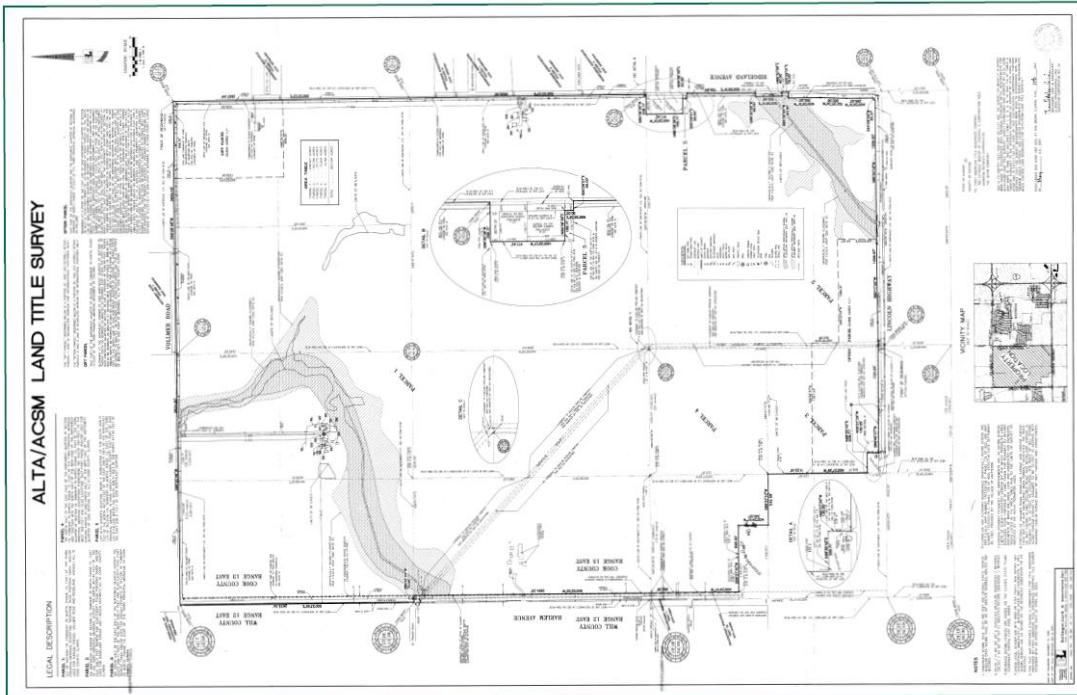
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ALTA/ACSM LAND TITLE SURVEY



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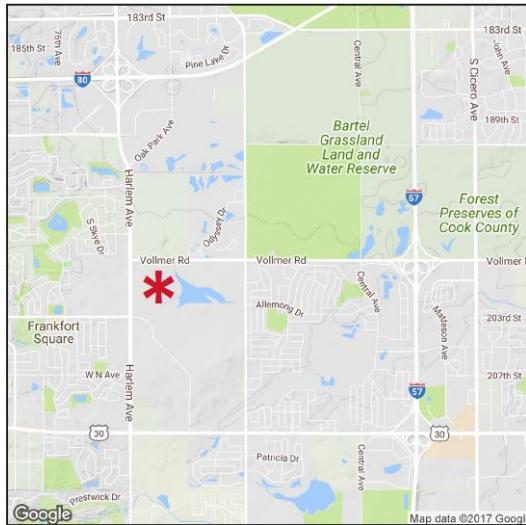
FOR SALE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY

MANHEIM BUSINESS PARK

NEQ OF LINCOLN HIGHWAY AND HARLEM AVENUE

Matteson, IL

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT	3 MILES	5 MILES	7 MILES
Population	44,136	147,624	305,480
Average Household Income	\$93,312	\$92,638	\$89,816
Average Housing Value	\$255,459	\$254,615	\$249,930



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10.12.17 CONSERVATION AND POLICY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
NOTES FROM BREAKOUT GROUP 3: MAKING PRESERVES WELCOMING & ACCESSIBLE
SESSIONS 1 & 2

Key Points:

- When measuring outcomes we need to have both quantitative and qualitative metrics, we want to tell a compelling narrative to drive more people to action and capture people's attitudes and how they appreciate and value the preserves and what their ecological literacy is.
- Term 'users' is too broad, there needs to be a component of diversity so we can reach all populations. Define what users are by different categories which will make it easier to measure and drive outcomes (i.e. parents, families, volunteers, students...etc.). Should consider replacing the term 'users' with participants or other word.
- In order to reach a diverse group of users the Preserves and partners need to be more intentional and sensitive about communicating **why people need the Preserves and why the Preserves need them** while balancing the needs of people with the needs of the Preserves.
- People's time and attention is constantly being competed for, do we know who our competitors are and can we make competitors into collaborators?
- Work on defining outcomes and prioritizing strategies based on the best return on investment and measures of success. Dollars are driven by the number of participants that will be impacted.
- In order to better connect communities with the Preserves there needs to be more consideration in making the Preserves accessible outside of just physical barriers including language, location of events, and volunteer classes.
- Instead of focusing on more users, advocates, funding and qualitative measures the focus should be on making more people aware of the Preserves, whether or not they are actual users and communicating the key role the Preserves play in our communities and the positive impact they have on our region (i.e. climate change, ecosystem services, value proposition).
- In order to measure awareness of the Forest Preserves we need to be part of regional opinion/attitude surveys and insert the Preserves into region's vocabulary.
- "Picnics are a great gateway drug" you do not want to disparage picnic goers you want to embrace them and know that it is enough that people know about the Preserves, they just need a level of pride and ownership. #my/your/ourforestpreserves.
- How do we help recognize the Preserves as an institution like the Art Institute or an iconic element of Chicagoland like the Lakefront? Should we consider a mascot to create more awareness?
- Using the Cook County identifier as a brand has many negative connotations and people are not always aware of jurisdictional boundaries, should we be utilizing 'Chicago' in our advertisement of the Preserves or focus on just 'forest preserves'?
- Consider creating itineraries/staycations or better define how different users can find their adventure in the Forest Preserves, need to appeal to all types of users.
- Need to think more about place making and meeting people where they are through pop-up prairies, bus stops, vacant lot conversions (Neighborspace).

Actions/Next Steps:

- Provide a document or summary on ADA plans and progress as a reference to determine what we are accomplishing and what the milestones are.
- Give Council members tasks that connect their communities to the Forest Preserves through awareness and direct access to sites (i.e. elevator speech, leading tours, communicating to networks).
- Use gateway sites as a tool to create awareness of the Forest Preserves so users can share their experience, pride and adventure with others.
- Discuss and define welcoming, awareness, diversity, audience – what does it mean, how is it defined, where do we start.
- Formalize process for inviting and encouraging #myforestpreserves bloggers, nature ambassador volunteers, pop beauty patch announcements.

10.12.17 CONSERVATION AND POLICY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
NOTES FROM BREAKOUT GROUP 4.1: MARKETING & OUTREACH
SESSIONS 1/2/3

Potential Next Steps/Action Items:

- Social Media Filters & Hashtags
- Focus on Local
- Connects to larger Cook County
- Celebrate locally to connect globally
- Meet with influences locally
- Local storytelling/media market
- Church Group Outreach
- Celebrate those users of the Forest Preserves in a public way (ex. Celebrate picnic goes that have been reserving the same location for 20 years.)
- Endorsements from Cubs/Blackhawks/Bulls
- Metra Advertisements
- Libraries are hubs for families
- Calendars that go to schools
- Road Show

ATTACHMENTS:

4) Messaging house

DRIVERS: Learning Strategies & Principles

used to foster connections to the Forest Preserves

Understanding and valuing connections between you, your life, and your environment

Empathy for living things

Taking action that leads to a sustainable relationship with nature

First-Hand Experience: Provides opportunities for direct exploration with nature, real animals, and/or the scientific process.

Learner Centered: Empowers the learner as an active participant.

Relevant: Ensures relevance to people of all cultures and backgrounds.

Fun and Engaging: Provides messages in a fun, engaging way.

Creative: Provides opportunities for guests' creative expression

Aesthetic Connections: Connects to people's sense of wonder and beauty in our programs, site experiences and facilities.

Scientific Excellence: Ensures scientific excellence and exploration as a foundation for our programs, exhibits and sites.

Builds Competence: Builds confidence in the ability to make a difference.

Conservation Literacy and Action: Empowers people and communities with knowledge, awareness and skills that encourage taking action on behalf of the environment.

DRIVERS: Assets

accessible resources

Bring the Preserves to People	Bring People to the Preserves	Teach People	Civic Leaders/Advocates	Community Assets
Ministers Breakfasts Tabling events in communities Programs/Activities in communities In School Programs Conference Presentations Staff expertise re: Nature (Wildlife, disease, fun facts, wow facts, how do I deal with this facts, etc.) Documentary Partner Programs in Community Chicago Zoological Society Chicago Botanical Gardens	Ecosystems (Forest, Prairies, Savannahs, Woodlands, Rivers, Lakes) Nature Centers Public Programs School Programs Youth Programs Campgrounds Trails Picnic Groves Aquatic Centers Golf Courses Tree Top Course Paddling Fishing Seasonal Special Events Volunteer Activities Outdoor Adventure Activities Mighty Acorns Partner Activities Cultural Events (Pow Wow/ Rendezvous) Chicago Zoological Society Chicago Botanical Gardens	Camping Leadership Immersion Course Community Leadership Workshops Stewardship Training Restoration Training Trail Watch Conservation@Home Nature Ambassador Conservation Corp. Youth Outdoor Ambassadors Citizen Scientist	NCCP Plan NCCP Council Board of Commissioners Community Leaders Mayors Council members	Park Districts County Agencies Volunteers (Stewards & Nature Ambassadors) Chicago Zoological Society Chicago Botanical Gardens Youth Development Groups Jobs Programs Tourism Bureaus Chambers of Commerce Media outlets Neighborhood Organizations

<p>Don't you sometimes just want to escape?</p> <p>Explore the natural beauty of Cook County for an hour, a day or even a night.</p> <p>When you're surrounded by 70,000 acres of wild and wonderful, there's no better place to feel free.</p>		
KEY MESSAGES – THE ROOMS		
It's a place where you can create your own adventure.	It's a place where plants and animals thrive.	You won't find a more peaceful place to make ourselves and our communities healthier.
FOUNDATION NARRATIVE		
In our Forest Preserves, you can boldly explore more than 300 miles of trails or join a group learning archery – the adventure is yours to create within 70,000 at six Nature Centers, five campgrounds, rivers and lakes, and 10 golf courses.	We protect native species and their homes. Volunteers help us conserve, preserve and restore – and no, those are not all the same. Enter this world of prairies, woodlands and wetlands, and see why we're so committed to nature.	The Forest Preserves are more than a getaway. Whether you exercise here, or just breathe the fresh air, they can make you stronger. Across cities and suburbs, they help keep the air, water and ecosystem in balance.
FOUNDATION PROOF POINTS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biking • Boating • Camping • Celebrations • Fishing • Golf • Nature Centers • Pavilions • Picnics • Traditions Zip Lining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation • Biodiversity • Restoration • Animal Habitat • Migratory Corridor • Preservation Professional Expertise Rare & Endangered Species Stewardship & Volunteerism 	Personal Health Economic Value and Quality of Life Regional Health (clean water, stormwater retention, air quality) Agency Health (fiscal, & resource management) Proximity
MESSAGING PRIORITIES		
Adventures We help visitors create adventures in nature through learning and playing.	Nature We connect visitors with the local and global relevance of a diversity of ecosystems and wildlife.	Health We promote healthy local ecosystems and communities and the wellness of Cook County residents.
Learning We serve as a one of a kind educational (formal and informal) resource for Cook County educators and students.	Action We inspire residents to become stewards, conservation leaders, environmental advocates and life-long learners who take actions on behalf of nature, influence others to do so, and achieve positive outcomes for the local and global environment.	Safety We nurture visitors' sense of safety and comfort as they experience the Forest Preserves
Culture We foster people's connections with the Forest Preserves' cultural significance in Cook County's past, present and future.	Science We are a sound resource for current and accurate scientific information.	Pride We nurture a sense of pride and ownership of the forest preserves amongst Cook County's residents through transparency and good governance.
		Inclusion We value and support diversity, accessibility and relevance, and meet people where they are along the wide spectrum of relationships with the Forest Preserves.
		Friendliness We help our visitors feel comfortable and satisfied through courteous, positive and helpful interactions.

10.12.17 CONSERVATION AND POLICY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
NOTES FROM BREAKOUT GROUP 4.2: LEGISLATIVE STRATEGIES
SESSIONS 1/2/3

Key Points:

- A property tax freeze would be negative for any potential Forest Preserve budget initiatives and should be opposed.
- Potential legislative options being investigated include:
 - 1) Levy increase by referendum
 - 2) Levy increase by statute
 - 3) Bond on behalf of the FPCC
 - 4) Bond on behalf of the Chicago Botanic Garden
 - 5) Bond on behalf of the Brookfield Zoo
 - 6) Break out Zoo and Garden
 - 7) Exclude pension from levy
- Bonds can be issued collectively, or can be separated by organization (i.e. Zoo, Garden). Bonds must be used carefully, as they may actually increase the operating budget depending on how they're spent.
- The State of Illinois currently utilizes a constitutionally-prescribed flat tax, rather than a progressive income tax which would give the Forest Preserves and other organizations more flexibility. The Forest Preserves are not a home rule organization, and thus have less freedom to change tax rates. Home rule units are the ones expanding the taxes to inappropriate levels.
- Staff are not permitted to directly solicit political support for any particular legislative option. The Forest Preserve Foundation, the Council, and other PR firms may be able to engage with constituents on the FPCC's behalf.
- The FPCC makes up 11% of the County, but only receives 1% of the tax revenue.
- Building a coalition with other regional forest preserves to push for a statutory revision is an option, as coordination between many parties generally gets more attention from lawmakers. However, doing so would also attract any pre-existing opposition from other counties were we to coordinate with on a larger scale.
- Need 51% of the voting body to pass a referendum. Rather than wasting resources on general marketing campaigns, it may be more efficient to invest in statistics on registered voters and turnout so we can get a more accurate idea of what areas need more targeted advocacy.
- People support forest preserves overwhelmingly, but they won't vote to increase taxes. 88% approval already, how many additional people (22%) will actually join? Need to focus on changing peoples' attitudes towards taxes, rather than support for preserves.
- Messaging is key. With all the recent weather events, we need to advertise the stormwater and disaster prevention benefits of the Forest Preserves. Additionally, there are different messengers for different groups.

Potential Next Steps/Action Items:

- Establish a plan for rallying and establishing solidarity amongst partners in the event of a referendum
- Investigate and brief on rules for advocating for legislation
- Investigate the viability of establishing a coalition of forest preserves for a statutory revision.
- Develop a legislative plan, communicating probabilities and timelines for various legislative options.
- Provide the Council with talking point on the politics of forest preserve legislation (i.e. actual annual tax contributions, % comparison to other counties, benefits of the FPCC, etc.) so they can be more informed advocates.

10.12.17 CONSERVATION AND POLICY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
NOTES FROM BREAKOUT GROUP 4.3: ENGAGING CIVIC LEADERS & OTHER STAKEHOLDERS
SESSIONS 1/2/3

Key Points:

- People do not have to visit the Forest Preserves to recognize the value in them, regardless if they are active users, volunteers or supporters. Comparable to the National Parks model.
- The Preserves are part of the fabric of the region, there is a strong environmental argument for people in the City of Chicago with the heat island effect. Without the Forest Preserves what would be in there place? Many people understand the value of water as a resource, but do not understand the importance of the Forest Preserves and conservation.
- To build awareness you should consider having information sessions about the Forest Preserves and bring in different groups, bloggers, and others who can spread the word.
- Council members can keep reminding their representatives and commissioners about the importance of the Forest Preserves, act as cheerleaders for the Preserves.
- Council members can take friends and members of their networks on tours of the Forest Preserves, potentially supported by Preserves' staff members.
- Provide a presentation, talking points, consolidated messaging and elevator speech to Council members and other partners to use. Presentations should show results overtime and what has been accomplished by the Forest Preserves historically.
- Consider presenting to civic groups like the City Club of Chicago, Union League Club, and Rotary Club.
- Council members, partners and staff should provide free tours to commissioners, elected officials, tourism representatives, faith groups, doctors, and their networks of the Preserves.
- Consider being part of Openhouse Chicago or host something similar in the Preserves.
- Need to build a foundation of influencers and determine what the general ask is as well as smaller more specific asks. Different messages should be used for different groups.
- Utilize Nature Ambassadors to build awareness about the Preserves, encourage Council members to be trained as Ambassadors.
- Council members, partners, and others should consider adding something to their email signatures, signing people up for the Forest Preserves' newsletter, or commit to tell at least five people about the Preserves.
- Target picnic goers by offering a discount (5%) off the cost of a permit if they sit through a 15 minute presentation/film about the Preserves. They could receive additional discounts if they pass out or email literature/info on the Preserves, or provide a list of emails from their picnics to be added to the Newsletter. Need to think creatively about how to reach people.
- Consider 'micro-preserves' in City of Chicago locations to serve as gateways to the Forest Preserves for people who are unable to travel.

Actions/Next Steps:

- Develop talking points, presentation, and pitch/elevator speech to provide to Council members, partners and staff so everyone is using the same messages in building awareness.
- Ask Council members and partners to deliver messages to elected officials and their communities.
- Ask Council members and partners to lead a set amount of tours or presentations per year to their networks.
- Develop a strategy for communicating these messages through Council members and partners.