



Land Acquisition and Disposition in the Forest Preserves of Cook County

**Position Paper – Review & Approval
Implementation and Advocacy Plan – Discussion
June 29, 2020**

Land Acquisition and Disposition Review and Discussion

AGENDA

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|-------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1:30 | Welcome and Public Comments | Wendy Paulson |
| 1:35 | Overview, Process, Revisions | Laurel Ross |
| 1:45 | Facilitated Discussion: Review
Background, Needs, Challenges – Improvements? Additions?
Recommendations # 1 - #5 – Improvements? Additions? | Debby Moskovits, All |
| 2:30 | Next steps
Approval, Implementation & Advocacy | Laurel Ross |
| 2:45 | Adjourn | |

1:45 – 1:55 Background, Challenges, Needs; Position Statement

Position Statement

To conserve 21,000 more acres by 2040 and to realize the inspirational goals for people and nature set forth in the Next Century Conservation Plan, the Forest Preserves of Cook County should ***increase the amount of land conserved in Cook County both by acquiring more land and by influencing conservation by others.***

In alignment with its mission, the Forest Preserves should **expand existing strategies, including taking a lead role in identifying opportunities for collaborative land conservation.**

Meanwhile, the **disposition of Forest Preserves land by sale or other conveyance should be completely halted through a moratorium**, until principles are agreed upon that make land disposition possible solely in rare and extreme instances. The **functional disposition** of land through the approval or tolerance of inappropriate land uses on Forest Preserves land **should be forbidden, with robust efforts undertaken to reverse this practice.**

1:55 – 2:05 # 1: Find creative ways to continue to buy more land.

Acknowledging the various degrees of the ecological quality of land that is available for purchase, the Council encourages the Forest Preserves to be more aggressive in acquiring land with available funds. The Forest Preserves has identified and prioritized lands for potential acquisition based on its own research, the Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning maps, and analyses of habitat corridors.

1.1 Explore aggressively the potential to secure funding for land acquisition through a voter referendum, a tax levy increase and other alternative strategies.

1.2 Review and revise the Forest Preserves' current land acquisition prioritization process, including determining whether different strategies would be needed for potentially varying annual budgets.

2:05 – 2:15 # 2: Expand conservation of sites by methods new for the Forest Preserves, incorporating models that do not include ownership.

The Forest Preserves mission is to acquire, restore and manage lands for the purpose of protecting and preserving public open space. Because of 21st century limitations on available land, the Forest Preserves should widen its mission beyond its own property to achieve its larger goal of ensuring adequate natural open space in Cook County.

- 2.1.** Explore aggressively alternative land acquisition strategies such as land banks, easements, and partnerships with other government agencies, park districts, non-profits, and other strategic partners not traditionally involved with land conservation.
- 2.2** Influence land conservation by others via tools such as site easements, strategic partnerships with private and public entities for collaborative land conservation, advocacy, and social media.

2:15 – 2:20 #3: Ensure that Forest Preserves' current land remains in the Forest Preserves and is maintained in accordance with its mission, including recreation that is compatible with nature.

- 3.1** Place a moratorium on disposition of land and empower a body led by the Conservation and Policy Council to review and develop a final disposition policy that make land disposition possible only in rare and extreme instances.
- 3.2** Clarify, rewrite, and improve both the current Land Use Policy of the Forest Preserves and the corresponding State Code provisions for consistency and clarity, including the creation of a comprehensive executive summary that reflects the material operative provisions.
- 3.3** Use existing knowledge of encroachment and misuse to design an aggressive plan to reclaim public land for the public good.
- 3.4** Coordinate approaches that are in line with the Council's Compatible Recreation Paper.

2:20 – 2:25 # 4: Continue to consider equity and access among the key factors when determining where to acquire land.

Because the preserves are not distributed evenly or equitably throughout the county, more emphasis should be placed on equity in the land acquisition prioritization process.

4.1 Coordinate approaches that are in line with the Council's Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) position paper.

2:25 – 2:30 # 5: Build public support for robust successful land conservation.

- 5.1** Clarify the Forest Preserves' intentions as part of acquisition process and clearly communicate the possibilities and timeframe for investment in each acquired parcel.
- 5.2** Create a Community of Support for the forest preserves by building awareness of the value of the preserves to the quality of life of our region. The success of all recommendations above depends on this.

2:30 – 2:35 Motion for Approval

2:35 – 2:45 Thoughts on Implementation & Advocacy

2:45 Adjourn