

Forest Preserves of Cook County Conservation & Policy Council Meeting Minutes for June 12, 2019 - Annual Workshop at Camp Sullivan

Call to Order. Council chairperson Wendy Paulson called the meeting to order at 8:45 am. The following Council members and others attended:

Advisory Council Members

Wendy Paulson, Chairperson
Mark Templeton
Michael DeSantiago
Alan Bell
Emily Harris
Terry Guen
Laurel Ross
Sylvia Jenkins

Forest Preserve Staff

Arnold Randall
Eileen Figel
Cathy Geraghty

Presenters

Amy Boerman-Cornell, Calvin Christian School
Beti Guevara, Union League Boys and Girls Club
Delio Calzolari, FPCC
Jane Balaban, Scaling Up Volunteers committee
Karen Vaughan, FPCC
Kendra Freeman, MPC
Tracy Bishop, FPCC

Commissioner Stanley Moore, Maria Pesqueira and Shelley Spencer did not attend.

Commissioner Donna Miller and Michelle Harris from her staff attended. Cicely Fleming and Michelle Jordan from Commissioner Suffredin's office attended. Representatives from the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Chicago Zoological Society, Friends of the Forest Preserve, Openlands, the Forest Preserves Foundation, and the Metropolitan Planning Council also attended.

Call to order and welcome. Wendy Paulson called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. and introduced Forest Preserves Board Commissioner Donna Miller. Commissioner Miller welcomed the Council to Camp Sullivan and thanked the Council, advocates, and staff for their work to promote the Forest Preserves. Commissioner Miller is also promoting the preserves throughout her district. She recently hosted 30 women for a cookout and camping at Camp Sullivan to introduce them to the Forest Preserves.

Wendy explained that the purpose of the retreat is to discuss the position papers the Council is working on. "Everybody on the Council has put a lot of time in on this. Staff has put a lot of time in and we have a number of partners who have been helping us. We welcome all of you today. These sessions are designed to be an opportunity for very frank feedback. I know there have been frustrations and some confusion. We shouldn't get ourselves too strung out about these papers. We have imposed deadlines but if we need more time, we will take more time."

Wendy explained that the discussions have surfaced tensions and disagreements; adding that this is okay and the Council really wants to address these issues. The Council hopes the position papers will be thoughtful and express as well as possible a unanimous or nearly unanimous view.

Public Comment. Shelley Davis from the FP Foundation invited all participants to attend the Foundation's Spring Forum on June 14. Laurel Ross attended last year and said it was a fantastic event.

Approval of minutes. A motion was made by Mark Templeton, seconded by Laurel Ross, to approve minutes from the meeting of April 15, 2019. The minutes were approved.

Stories. Beti Guevara from the Union League Boys and Girls Club explained that many residents from Chicago's Humboldt Park community have never visited the forest preserves and are uncomfortable out in nature. Beti's mission is to bring these families to the Forest Preserves and show them how to enjoy nature. She also believes that the increasing diversity at the Forest Preserves is making her community feel more welcome. She explained, "I am making sure that Humboldt park comes here because I see a change. There are so many people from different backgrounds. This is tremendous what they have done."

Amy Boerman-Cornell teaches fourth grade at Calvin Christian School, just a few miles from Camp Sullivan. She takes her fourth graders and their families to Camp Sullivan. "I want them to see the outdoors as enjoyable—not scary," she explained. To make camping an easy and affordable option for the students and their families, Amy uses FPCC's gear library. Amy explains that "by taking away the need for them to have to bring all their own supplies, camping becomes a real option for them." Amy ended with the following "wish list":

- Would love to have night hikes on more Friday nights.
- Would love to stay 2 days.
- Want more moms to use the climbing wall. (They almost never do.)
- Expand climbing wall times.
- More camping locations.

Breakout Sessions 1 and 2. The first breakout session focused on scaling up volunteers, and land acquisition/disposition. The second breakout sessions focused on compatible recreation and land acquisition/disposition. Summaries of all breakout sessions are presented in Attachment B.

Updates from Superintendent Arnold Randall and Delio Calzolari, Director of Legislative Affairs. Delio and Arnold presented the following updates.

- **State Capital Bill.** Delio presented an overview of the capital bill recently approved by the state legislature. The bill includes \$33B for transportation projects, \$3.5B for education, \$4.3B for state facilities, \$1.9B for economic/community development, \$1B for healthcare/human services/broadband, and \$1.2B for environmental and conservation projects. The FPCC, the Zoo and the Garden worked together to seek funding within the capital bill for urgent capital needs; unfortunately, these efforts were mostly unsuccessful. (FPCC did receive \$225K for the Burnham golf course and repairs of Swallow Cliff stairs; the Garden received \$100K for capital improvements.) However, we will be able to apply for grants from IDNR, DCEO, and other state agencies that will receive funding from the capital bill. Chip O'Leary added that John Rogers, the former chair of Chicago Wilderness, will be the new Deputy Director at IDNR and John is a huge supporter of the forest preserves.
- **Referendum.** Delio explained that the FPCC, Zoo and Garden are working with the Friends of the Forest Preserves and Openlands to pursue a referendum in March 2020 or November 2020. The Trust for Public Lands is initiating a new round of polling to test likely voter support for additional revenue for the FPCC, Zoo and Garden.

Council members and participants discussed the following:

- What will it cost to run a campaign? If the polling shows high support, little campaigning is needed. If a full campaign is needed, it could cost \$1 million.

- How would the money be spent? How will we find the funding? We know we need to build the community of support to understand what the preserves are. What we have done is great, but it is just the tip of the iceberg.
- We will also have to explore what happens if we do not get more revenue. We will be developing scenarios for where we cut programs and services. People need to understand what they will lose if we do nothing, but we also need to talk about it in a way that doesn't create fear and chaos. This will be a delicate message to balance.
- What amounts are being considered? Several scenarios are being explored—including a 20-year capital bond and an increase above the current property limiting rate. For the various options being explored, the cost to the average homeowner ranged from \$4 per year to \$20+ per year.
- Arnold explained that efforts are gearing up and key partners are at the table. There is a path forward; it may not be an easy path, but we feel strongly we need to make the effort.
- The primary is shockingly close. Can we be ready? Because the governor is asking voters to approve a graduated income tax during the general election, it may (or may not) be better to run a referendum during the primary.
- We must be ready to mobilize.
- What's going on with Quentin Road? Arnold explained that the Department of County Highways is completing its analysis. We are not ready to make a recommendation to the President and Board, but expect to do so by end of year.

Breakout Session 3. The final breakout session focused on racial equity. (Compatible recreation did not convene a breakout group in the afternoon.) Summaries of all breakout sessions are presented in Attachment B.

Wrap-up & Next Steps. Mark Templeton explained that the position paper committees are at different places along the journey. All groups will take the feedback from this workshop, assess where they are, and decide how long they need to complete their draft papers. Mark reiterated that it is important to get this right and we should take the time we need to do that. Once the drafts are completed, we will need a process to get the full Council to adopt the position papers.

The next step will be to take the papers to the President and Commissioners and ask them to adopt the position papers. Mark asked the Council to think about any other actions they will ask the board to take (such as adopting ordinances, etc.) to ensure the papers get implemented.

Mark asked participants to provide feedback on the day; participants offered the following comments:

- For breakout groups, it would be good to write down ideas and tell participants, "We want your feedback and we will incorporate it." *(Note: Flip charts were available for each breakout session and a note-taker attended each session to document input. The summaries are presented in Attachment B.)*
- If we want to drive a specific result—more funding to achieve goals—it would be great to adjust the workshop agenda and format to have a laser focus on the outcome we are trying to achieve.

- I came today to see if this resonated with the discussions of the position paper working groups. What I found was the conversation enriched our work. It ended up not being just a “check-off” day; it was enormously rich. That was a great outcome.
- It would be great to use some of the workshop time to talk about next year’s budget. And we should think about how the input from today will impact the upcoming budget.
- I didn’t know that there was so much back-up data available from the NCCP planning process.
- I am not really sure what the FPCC should do next in terms of engaging the public. We may need a follow-up session on community engagement.
- PRI used mixed-methods to get input for the Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan. This is also a resource that is out there.
- We need to make sure that REDI efforts are complementary and coordinated. We are talking about this in lots of different ways.
- Before we finalize the papers, we need to make sure they are cohesive and consistent with existing policies.
- We don’t have a hard deadline; maybe we need to have one session of representative stakeholders that will be impacted by these position papers to get their feedback on key findings.

Participants also offered comments related to logistics and scope, including:

- Check microphones prior to meeting.
- Provide a vegetarian option for lunch.
- Because the papers are limited to a few pages, we need a way to capture all this input so it doesn’t get lost.
- I wish I could have gone to the breakout discussions for all four position papers.
- We could all benefit from a deeper dive on REDI; we could have done ½ a day on REDI alone.

Mark reminded everyone that the final meeting for the year will be held on September 23. At that meeting, the Council will review the status of implementation efforts, approve its annual report, and formulate its recommendation on FPCC’s 2020 budget.

Adjournment. Emily moved to adjourn; Terry seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 pm.

Compatible Recreation

CONSERVATION & POLICY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

JUNE 12, 2019

AGENDA

1. “CR” Definition and Principles
2. CR Work Plan & Schedule
3. Evaluations - Update
 - A. Pools: Analysis and Preliminary Recommendations
 - B. Golf Courses - update
4. Guidelines for Stakeholder Engagement – Discussion
5. Next Steps: Position Paper Delivery, September 2019

1A. DEFINITION: “Compatible Recreation ”



Opportunities to enjoy the Forest Preserves of Cook County which support and further FPCC’s mission.

Educational and recreational experiences which foster wellness and a lifelong love of nature *while minimizing detriment to natural habitats.*

Furtheres FPCC’s mission of environmental awareness, open space advocacy, and active stewardship.

1B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES: "Compatible Recreation"



1. Do not harm nature.
2. 80% to remain undeveloped / 20% developed
3. Everyone has access to recreation and programs.
4. Facilities and programs are sustainable (economically, socially, and environmentally).
5. Residents must have an opportunity for input.

2. WORK PLAN & SCHEDULE: "Compatible Recreation"

MAY 21	JUN 12 (Council Workshop)	JUN 20	JUL 18	AUG 15
1. Divestment or other major changes should/should not be made to pools. Cynthia , Brian, Maria	2. Golf course evaluation Karen , Mike, Kristin, Benjamin 3. Pools evaluation Cynthia , Brian, Maria	4. FPCC facilities and programs are/are not distributed evenly throughout the forest preserves. Terry , Benjamin, Tim, Art 5. Establish guidelines for stakeholder engagement. Cynthia , Terry, Maria	6. Strategy/guidelines to shrink parking lots and service roads. Eileen , Aren, Mike 7. Vet draft with commissioners, other stakeholders. All (evaluation continued)	8. Position on exclusive uses (dog parks, etc.) AND eco-strategies Benjamin , Karen, Kristin

3. Evaluations: Pools & Golf Courses - Analysis and Draft Recommendations



Owner Input Sheet

Step 1: Owner (CCFPD) Identifies the Criteria that will be evaluated.

Step 2: Owner assigns a Weight Factor to each Criterion.

Criterion Weight

Attribute Weights

(1 - 5)

(1 - 5)

Criterion #1 Economic Impact

3

Attributes

Attribute 1	First Cost (Lower Cost = Higher Score)		5
Attribute 2	Operating Cost (Lower Cost = Higher Score)		2
Attribute 3	Financially Self-sustaining		5
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (If needed)		0

Step 3: Owner & Team determine the attributes of each criterion that will be scored by

Step 4: Owner & Team assign a Weight Factor to each Attribute. The more important, the higher the Weight Factor.

Criterion Weight

Attribute Weights

(1 - 5)

(1 - 5)

Criterion #2 Ecological Impact

5

Attributes

Attribute 1	Neutral or positive impact on natural area		5
Attribute 2	Neutral or positive impact on native species		5
Attribute 3	Poses no threat to endangered species*		3
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (If needed)		0

*Any program that negatively impacts threatened or endangered species is disqualified.

Criterion Weight

Attribute Weights

(1 - 5)

(1 - 5)

Criterion #3 Community Impact

5

Attributes

Attribute 1	Recreational resource to impacted community		5
Attribute 2	Attracts community members to FPDCC		2
Attribute 3	Highly regarded by community		5
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (If needed)		0

Criterion Weight

Attribute Weights

(1 - 5)

(1 - 5)

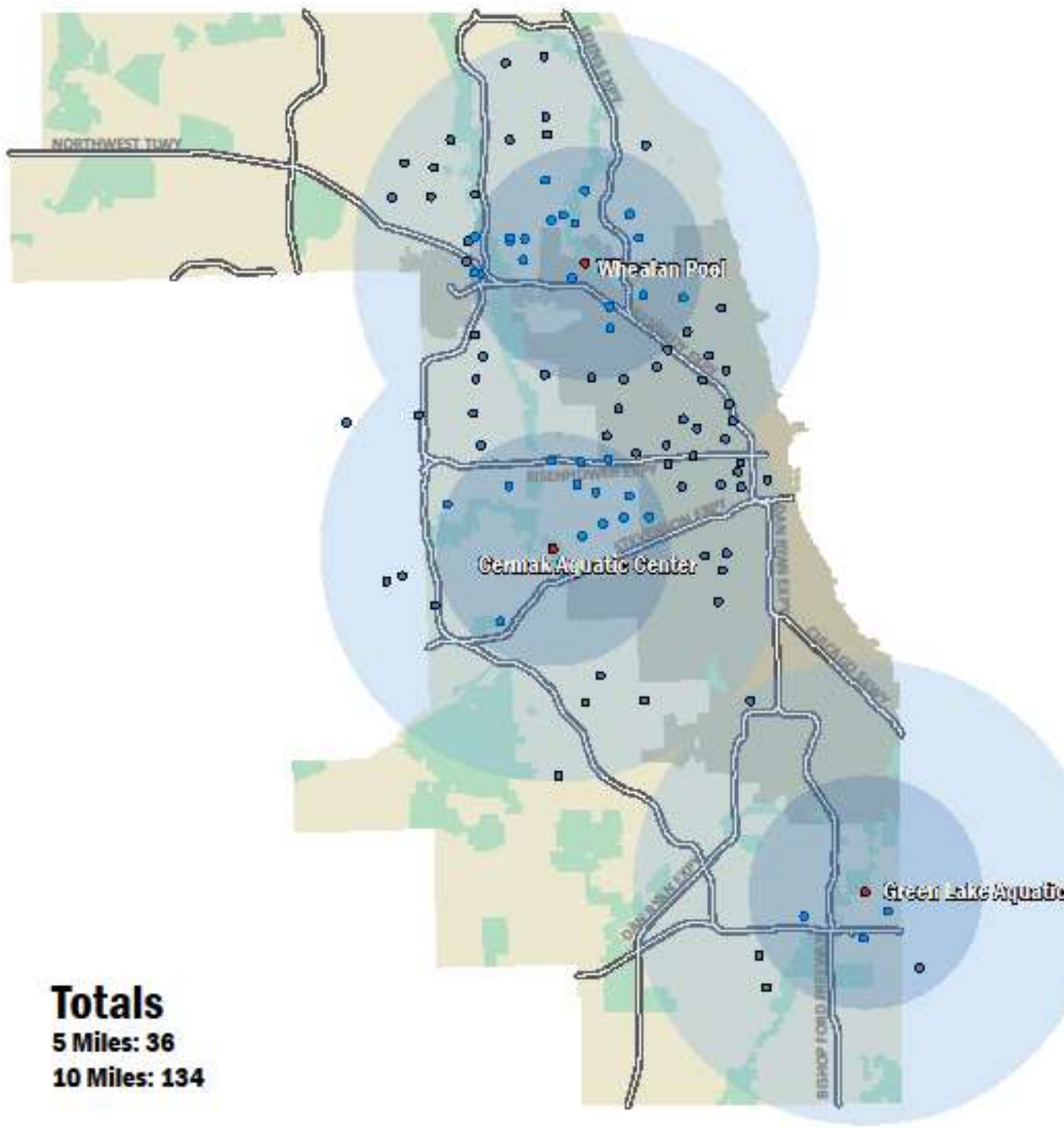
Criterion #4 Alignment with Mission

5

Attributes

Attribute 1	Consistent with Founders' vision		5
Attribute 2	Increases FPCC Size		5
Attribute 3	Adds restored acres		4
Attribute 4	Part of Nature Campus/Complements FPCC Assets		5

3. POOL A,B,C LOCATIONS: “Compatible Recreation”



3A. Pool A: Keep or Close and Re-purpose?

Criterion #1	Economic Impact	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	First Cost (Lower Cost = Higher Score)	5	7		35
Attribute 2	Operating Cost (Lower Cost = Higher Score)	2	0		0
Attribute 3	Financially Self-sustaining	5	0		0
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (If needed)	0			0
		Total Points			35
		Criterion Weight			3
		Total Weighted Score			105
Criterion #2	Ecological Impact	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	Neutral or positive impact on natural area	5	0		0
Attribute 2	Neutral or positive impact on native species	5	0		0
Attribute 3	Poses no threat to endangered species*	3	0		0
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (If needed)	0			0
		Total Points			0
		Criterion Weight			5
		Total Weighted Score			0
Criterion #3	Community Impact	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	Recreational resource to impacted community	5	5		25
Attribute 2	Attracts community members to FPDCC	2	3		6
Attribute 3	Highly regarded by community	5	7		35
Attribute 4	Attribute #4. (If needed)	0			0
		Total Points			66
		Criterion Weight			5
		Total Weighted Score			330
Criterion #4	Alignment with Mission	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	Consistent with Founders' vision	5	3		15
Attribute 2	Increases FPCC Size	5	0		0
Attribute 3	Adds restored acres	4	0		0
Attribute 4	Part of Nature Campus/Complements FPCC Assets	5	0		0
		Total Points			15
		Criterion Weight			5
		Total Weighted Score			75
<div>Step 6: Review/Compare Total Score for each Option.</div> <div>Note: While scores provide an objective means of comparing the Options, they should not be</div>					
Total Score for					510

Keep

Criterion #1	Economic Impact	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	First Cost (Lower Cost = Higher Score)	5	3	15	
Attribute 2	Operating Cost (Lower Cost = Higher Score)	2	5	10	
Attribute 3	Financially Self-sustaining	5	5	25	
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (if needed)	0		0	
		Total Points		50	
		Criterion Weight		3	
		Total Weighted Score		150	
Criterion #2	Ecological Impact	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	Neutral or positive impact on natural area	5	3	15	
Attribute 2	Neutral or positive impact on native species	5	3	15	
Attribute 3	Poses no threat to endangered species*	3	0	0	
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (if needed)	0		0	
		Total Points		30	
		Criterion Weight		5	
		Total Weighted Score		150	
Criterion #3	Community Impact	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	Recreational resource to impacted community	5	3	15	
Attribute 2	Attracts community members to FPDCC	2	3	6	
Attribute 3	Highly regarded by community	5	2	10	
Attribute 4	Attribute #4 (if needed)	0		0	
		Total Points		31	
		Criterion Weight		5	
		Total Weighted Score		155	
Criterion #4	Alignment with Mission	Attribute	Weight	Attribute Score (1 - 10)	Weighted Points
Attribute 1	Consistent with Founders' vision	5	10	50	
Attribute 2	Increases FPCC Size	5	0	0	
Attribute 3	Adds restored acres	4	3	12	
Attribute 4	Part of Nature Campus/Complements FPCC Assets	5	0	0	
		Total Points		62	
		Criterion Weight		5	
		Total Weighted Score		310	
Total Score for					765
Close & Re-use					

Table 1: Summary of Preliminary Analysis for Pools

	Keep	Close & Re-use	Preliminary Recommendations
Pool A	510	765	<i>Keep open for medium term; divest or re-purpose in future.</i>
Pool B	825	745	<i>Keep open.</i>
Pool C	471	930	<i>Develop strategy to divest or re-purpose.</i>

Pool A

- Serves several impacted communities
- Some public pools within 5 miles
- Significant capital investments made in 2009; still in good shape

➡ *Keep Open for medium term*

Pool B

- Serves many impacted communities
- Few public pools within 5 miles
- Significant capital investments made in 2009; still in good shape
- Part of FPCC "nature campus"

➡ *Keep Open*

Pool C

- Serves few impacted communities
- Many pools w/i 5 miles
- Requires \$1M+ repairs
- ➡ *Develop divestment alternatives*
 - ✓ *Investigate long term local park district lease*
 - ✓ *Plan site transition to CR uses*

Council Bluffs' Fairmount Park restoration plans include water playground



By Jon Leu // World-Herald News Service Nov 21, 2014 0



3. Golf Update



NGF Phase 2 Report:

- Transform South Side Golf:
 - Repurpose Burnham Woods to passive Forest Preserve use
 - Convert River Oaks to golf training facility (BCG recommends scaled back approach)
 - Invest in Joe Louis
- Build Banquet Facility at George Dunne
- Invest in Chick Evans

Millions of dollars required for these projects

Small group has run the matrix for each course but more public input is needed

Plan to release the report to Board of Commissioners later in 2019 and develop public input plan.

Total Points - Summary - River Oaks

Repurpose to Forest Preserve	1,600
BCG Transformation	1,396
NGF Transformation	1,229
Repair As Is	1,030

Total Points - Summary - George Dunne

Invest in Banquet Facility	1,121
Leave As Is	1,061

Total Points - Summary - Burnham Woods

Repurpose to Forest Preserve	1,174
Repair as Is	741

Total Points - Chick Evans

Leave As Is	1,421
Invest in Repair	1,256
Close	1,029

4. COMPATIBLE RECREATION PLANNING: Stakeholder Engagement



Part A:

Identify Cook County Municipal Stakeholders and engagement process for future policy/budget decisions

Part B:

What level of GENERAL PUBLIC stakeholder input is appropriate for future policy/budget decisions? What is the engagement process?

Will this vary per specific issues?

Part C:

Is it helpful to build a FPCC SYSTEM WIDE IDENTITY? And play down the historic viewpoint of community program 'ownership' based on proximate geographic location?

Part D:

Other input needed to finalize this position paper?

5. Next Steps



MAY 21	JUN 12 (Council Workshop)	JUN 20	JUL 18	AUG 15
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DISCUSSION

1. Are we on the right track?
2. Do we have the right guiding principles?
3. Have we incorporated racial equity appropriately?
4. Are we using the right criteria to evaluate programs & facilities?
5. Do we have an adequate plan for stakeholder engagement?
6. Did we miss anything?
7. Any suggestions or concerns?



Land Acquisition and Disposition Position Paper

Conservation & Policy Council Workshop
June 12, 2019

Outline

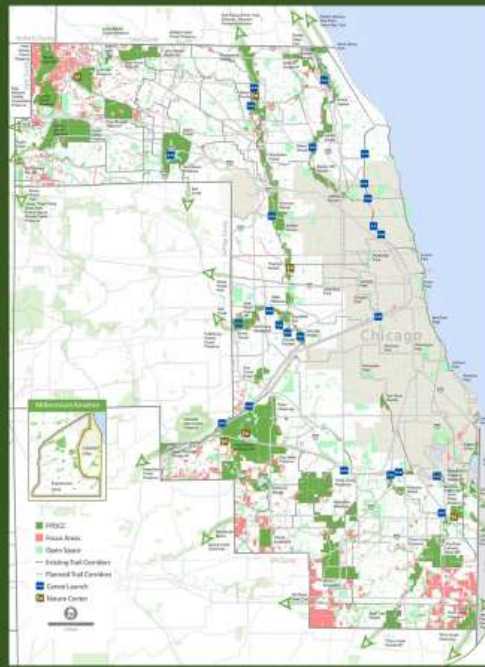
1. Why acquire more land?
2. Land acquisition opportunities in Cook County
3. Land acquisition challenges
4. Proposed position statement: How will we protect more land
5. Other goals and strategies to consider
6. Selection criteria to consider
7. Non-traditional strategies: SE Cook Plan
8. Questions for consideration



Why Acquire More Land?

1. Protect the best of what's left.
2. Enhance ecological value of what we already have through buffers and connections
3. Address distributional imbalances and inequities
4. Climate change benefits

Land Acquisition Opportunities



Challenges

1. 21,000 Acre Goal

Assumes we can buy every available opportunity.

2. Limited Funds

Available funds cannot support the goal. Currently we can acquire approximately 100 acres by fee simple acquisition (based on \$50k per acre average acquisition cost). There may be insufficient funds to complete assemblages or connections.

Challenges cont.

3. Low Ecological Value

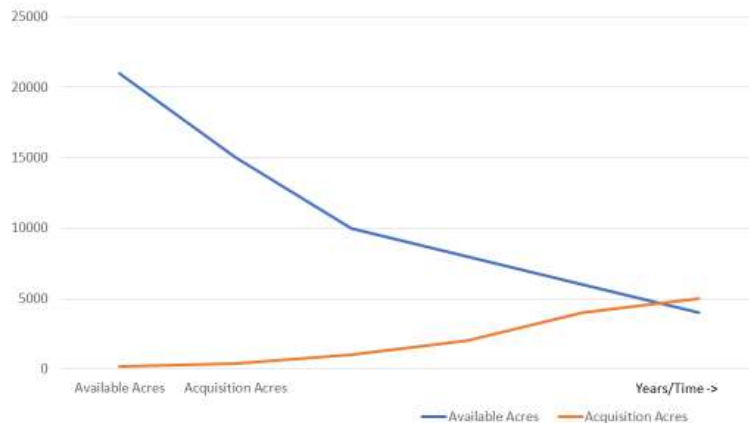
The ecological value of most remaining opportunities is relatively low. Potential for future ecological value through restoration is considered. Buffers and connections are priorities that may have low value.

4. Limited Non-Traditional Opportunities

A limited number of acres have been acquired to date through non-traditional methods including donations, partner purchases, easements and leases.



Land Acquisition Challenge: Conceptual Available Acres vs Acquisition



How can we slow the rate of decline of available acres and increase the rate of acquisition?



Proposed Position Statement

The Forest Preserves of Cook County should increase the amount of land protected in Cook County both by acquiring more land and by influencing protection by others, to realize the people and Nature goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan.

In alignment with its mission, it should prioritize opportunities and expand existing strategies, including taking a lead role on identifying locations for collaboration.

The disposition of land should be considered only in extreme instances.

DRAFT – SUBJECT TO CHANGE - MORE TIME NEEDED FOR STATEMENT ON DISPOSITION

Goals and Strategies for Consideration

	STRATEGIES				
GOALS	Buy Land	Restore Existing	NeighborSpace	Conservation Easement	Other?
Protect Nature					
Engage People					
Engage Disadvantaged Communities					
Ecosystem Services					
Other?					

Goals and Strategies for Consideration

GOALS	STRATEGIES				
	Buy Land	Restore Existing	NeighborSpace	Conservation Easement	Other?
Protect Nature	M	H	L	M	
Engage People	L	H	H	L	
Engage Disadvantaged Communities	L	H	H	L	
Ecosystem Services	H	H	L	M	
Other?					

Selection Criteria

- Ecological value or cultural significance
- Greenway link, buffer
- Recreational need
- Willing seller, reasonable price
- Grant, donation, leveraging
- NEW CRITERIA: Racial & social equity



Case Study: Non-traditional acquisition strategies





Some Non-Traditional Strategies

- Economic Development Partners – require open space and mitigation solutions for large-scale development
- Agricultural Land – lease back for farming to generate revenue
- Cooperative management with “good neighbors” (golf courses, cemeteries, institutions, etc.)
 - Solar development partnerships
 - Stormwater management partnerships
 - Other?

Group Questions

Should the FPCC wait for a high quality parcel to become available before it spends remaining acquisition funds?





Racial Equity Position Paper

Conservation & Policy
Council Workshop
June 12, 2019

AGENDA

1. Building a Community of Support
2. Equity begins from within
3. Engaging communities to help shape their future
4. Applying a racial equity lens to other position papers
5. Other issues/concerns we are hearing

1. Building a Community of Support

This is about Race and Equity

AND it is about building
support

How will we do this?

Position Statement

The Council will work with FPCC and its partners to promote racial equity in order to connect more people to nature and better protect nature.

We will do this by giving greater voice to communities that are impacted by racial inequity throughout the planning and decision-making process, and by applying a racial equity lens to major policy and budget decisions.



2. FPCC's Internal REDI process


Equity begins from within

How can we create an authentic and impactful community engagement process?

3. Community Engagement

- MPC's site-based planning workshops in Woodlawn with CCLBA
- Chicago United for Equity (CUE) racial equity impact assessment for the National Teachers Academy

4. Applying a racial equity lens

- 
1. Does it benefit an impacted community?
 2. Does it burden an impacted community?
 3. Did we seek input?
 4. How will we reverse cycles of disinvestment?



Compatible Recreation

- Direct investment to ensure equity
- Explore new CCC for major repairs
- Partner with Zoo, Garden, others working with impacted communities



Land Acquisition

- Meet ecological goals AND serve impacted communities
- Create better connections to FPCC sites



Scaling up Volunteers

- Explore new models for nature-based volunteerism
- Address barriers (time, transportation, etc.)
- Measure success and continually increase engagement

5. Other suggestions & concerns

1. Are we creating expectations we can't fulfill?
2. Should racial equity be given a higher weight than ecological value?
3. Is racial inequity the primary issue, or is it economic inequality?
4. Other suggestions or concerns?

SCALING UP VOLUNTEERS POSITION PAPER

Conservation & Policy Council Workshop – June 12, 2019

Committee Members

Cathy Geraghty, FPDCC

Nicole Pierson, FPCC

Sylvia Jenkins, Council

Jane Balaban, NBRP

Radhika Miraglia, FOTFP

Wendy Paulson, Council

Joanna Huyck, FPCC

Daniel Suarez, AGL

Purpose of the Paper

Provide Commissioners, staff and the public a compelling case for a) continuing and b) scaling up, the volunteer program. To that end, we

- Explain why volunteers are important – in the past, now, and for the future
- Suggest additional opportunities where volunteers can make a difference
- Strongly advocate for volunteer engagement throughout FPCC
- Commit to engaging the public more broadly, with a specific focus on underserved communities
- Identify barriers to volunteer participation
- Provide case studies and best practices that demonstrate successful strategies
- Suggest specific actions to expand volunteer involvement and contribution, e.g. strategic partnerships with groups that have successful volunteer programs



Are these the right goals? Where could we do better? What's missing?

Resolving tensions

Our position states that: *Volunteers should be integrated broadly throughout the Cook County Forest Preserves organization.* Forest Preserves staff is a critical audience affecting our efforts. While we are convinced that wider volunteer involvement will help forge a stronger, more effective organization, as well as advance the Next Century Conservation Plan. We also recognize that there may be internal reservations about some of the recommendations. We want and need support from the staff for our proposals. What will help us attain unified support for this position paper?



Council members most likely have had their own professional experiences dealing with tensions in their workplaces over issues that needed unified support. **Sharing those experiences with us – especially what approaches to resolving tensions were tried, what worked, and what didn't work – would help us.**

Attachment B – Breakout Session Discussion Summaries

Compatible Recreation (Breakout Session 2)

Terry Guen and Mike DeSantiago presented an overview of the committee’s preliminary recommendations. (See Attachment A for full presentation.) Terry asked participants for feedback. The following issues were discussed:

- **Slide 1A: Definition:**

- Reminder of the 80/20 rule. Benjamin stated that the current breakdown is closer to 85% undeveloped/15% developed.
- The definition aligns with mission, scope, NCCP, etc.
- Is there a strategy of inclusion? How are you defining impacted community? Mike responded that inclusion is incorporated into the evaluation criteria.
- How does climate resiliency play into this? How do you incorporate being welcoming and inclusive?
- How do we encourage greater participation among people who do outdoor recreation? How do we engage people who don’t come to the forest preserves and show them this serves their interests?
- Once you acquire land, will you develop the appropriate recreational activities based on community interests?

- **Other slides:**

- What is criteria for scoring and weighing? Is there a range of scores that indicate an option is acceptable? Eileen Figel responded that the evaluation matrix focuses on the costs and benefits of each option, then compares results of different options for each site. For example, what are the costs and benefits to keep pool A open versus to close pool A and repurpose the site? Karen Vaughan added that we need to make sure we have the right people in the room during this process—including those from impacted communities so they have input into the evaluation process and help bring legitimacy to the proposals. Carl Vogel warned that we cannot make this solely about numbers. We should be clear with audiences that this is a good process for evaluation, but the score is not the end.
- I am confused about the scoring of community impact. The language should be clearer in terms of equity/inclusion. Does the weighing make sense?
- How do the summary scores resulting from the preliminary analysis align with the definition of compatible recreation? Did you assume all existing facilities are compatible because they exist? Shouldn’t we ask first whether the FPCC should operate pools? Can you adjust the weighted attributes to really assess whether a use is consistent with the definition of compatible recreation? Eileen responded that the process does not assume existing uses are compatible. In fact, the existing process recommends closing pools unless they can be positioned to complement FPCC programs or facilities which are clearly aligned with its mission. (For example, Green Lake pool is being incorporated into a nature campus as an amenity to the adjacent campground and nature center.)
- A public engagement process will be important to Commissioners.
- You need to listen to your customers, but you can’t allow community input to drive inappropriate business decisions.
- You also need to recognize that communities may come to this from very different perspectives. Their priority may not be protecting nature.

- It is important to hold genuine public stakeholder meetings and sincerely seek input. Otherwise it is a waste of the community's time.
- It is also important to have broad participation and to consider long-term impacts to a community. For example, what if we close a pool in a community that may be in danger of losing other public pools in the region? Will this be considered? Eileen responded that we will never be able to collect and analyze every piece of data, so we have to figure out what is realistic.

Land Acquisition (Breakout Session 1)

Mark Templeton explained that the draft position paper answers both “Why” we should acquire more land, and “How” we can acquire more land.

The committee recommends maintaining the goal to protect 21,000 acres through acquisition and/or collaboration.

Mark provided an overview of the committee's preliminary recommendations (see Attachment A) and asked participants for feedback. The following issues were discussed:

Why acquire more land?

- Open space improves all our lives.
- You might acquire land which has high ecological value OR you might acquire land that has high social value.
- We also have a need to expand upon our history; don't use the existing lands as a constraint; see them as a baseline.
- Past advisory papers focused on fragmentation and the ability of the forest preserves to connect to a system of trails and greenways.
- There is economic value in having protected open space. Many communities embrace this.
- Some might think about other ways to spend that money: safety, jobs, health, environment, education. We need to show that this is also a solution to several of these issues—it generates jobs, it promotes healthier lives AND it protects the environment.
- Partnerships and collaborations are important and the FPCC is best positioned to drive this agenda—whether just in Cook County and/ or in regional partnership with other forest preserves. You are in the lead; you can drive this.

Land acquisition opportunities and challenges

- There is land available in northwest, some in Palos, some south, and lots of acres in southeast.
- This also can plug into bigger regional planning efforts such as the Millennium Reserve, Chicago's watershed plan, and the proposed Calumet Heritage corridor. Consider adding these overlays to this map.
- There is a sliding scale from high ecological value to high social value. You may need to think about acquiring high social value sites, even if they have low ecological value.
- Need to be careful about how you present challenge #3, “remaining sites have low ecological value.” You can restate it to say you can do great good for few dollars by focusing on connections and buffers.
- We won't be able to buy our way out of social challenges with land acquisition. How do we use programs to connect all residents to nature?
- A few well placed “Disney stores” in the city could go a long way.
- People support acquisitions because they expect a new trail, a parking lot, etc. They will want these sites to be developed so they can use them.

Position Statement

- Is there a way to use zoning or other regulations to strengthen “protection” of the land?
- Just say “accomplish goals of NCCP”; it really accomplishes all four goals.
- But some people have no idea what NCCP is so it may be important to explain why it is important to protect nature and connect people to it.
- Whether this is addressed in position statement or not, it has to be addressed in how we tell the story.
- How do we ensure land protected via easements is restored to health? What happens if a partner agency responsible for protecting land goes away?
- Limit the FPCC’s role as advocate; they still need to focus on acquisition and restoration. In fact, the enabling act clearly states FPCC’s mission is to acquire and restore. We are often asked to get involved in broader policy statements to protect nature, but we have to look at what we are authorized to do.

Other goals and strategies

Mark stated that the committee is also considering how other goals relate to land acquisition, including goals to protect nature, engage people, engage disadvantaged communities, and provide ecosystem services. There was not enough time for participants to provide feedback on this section.

Selection criteria

Chris Slattery explained that the FPCC currently uses a range of selection criteria including high ecological value, providing greenway connections/buffers, and serving a recreational need. FPCC also considers pragmatic factors such as a willing seller and a reasonable price. And increasingly FPCC is looking at new opportunities through grants, donations and leveraging limited funds. Assuming equal ecological value, the committee recommends giving preference to sites which improve access for impacted communities.

Participants offered the following comments:

- With no new revenue, this is all a pipe dream. And to get the resources, you have to address racial and social equity issues. What is the biggest social need we can address? What will address the biggest barrier to participation?
- There are many things we need to do; which of these things does land acquisition address best? There is a programming layer that doesn’t take \$2B. As we think about how to allocate scarce resources, we need to think about these other tools.
- Do we buy more expensive land in Barrington versus less expensive land in Thornton Lansing? Which is more threatened to be developed? Is this a consideration? Homes in Barrington are built on 5 acre lots; could there be a policy to limit development to X% of site and protect the rest?
- Think about people with different abilities. Do you have spaces for all abilities? Do you have land that needs to be acquired to protect cultural assets? And then how do you use this land in a socially equitable way?
- Science should lead the way. The land we acquire has to take that into consideration . . . will it be able to adapt as we become hotter?
- Land acquisition is one tool to meet our goals; it may not be the best or most cost-effective tool. Think about how Beti Guevara connects families from Humboldt Park to nature via our CLIC program. That is a far more cost-effective way to connect these families to nature versus trying to buy land in or near Humboldt Park.

Non-traditional strategies

The plan attempts to connect opportunities and provide direction on where land acquisition efforts should focus. There are many plans for this area: MWRD, Ford Heights, etc. The hope is to collaborate and make sure these plans work together. There was not enough time for participants to provide feedback on this section.

Land Acquisition (Breakout Session 2)

Mark Templeton presented a set of slides to walk participants through the committee's journey. Mark asked participants for input on the general frame and structure, and relative weighing of criteria. Participants offered the following comments:

Question: Why acquire more land

- A suggestion was made not to use the word protect more land, maybe say: acquire land to save plants and animals, prevent flooding, provide recreational opportunities etc.
- Include health benefits, and environmental benefits such as clean air clean water; broaden people reasons (health and recreation, quality of life, enhance interaction with the natural world, and balance inequities that are related to open space).
- Forest preserves provide space for pollinator species to thrive and they in turn pollinate crops.
- Add more information about ecosystem services. Economic value to communities. Property Values should be called out even if we don't have specific data.
- Disney Store idea - all kinds of collaboration opportunities with different tradeoffs.
- Say something about safety, and jobs
- The FP is in the best position to acquire more land – so we can't wait for others to do so. String it together, people feel better if we don't do condemnations.
- The FP is lagging peer agencies and we need more land to maintain our status as a leader.
- Is it enough to just cover the WHY we need more land, without saying how we will do it? Maybe, yes.

Land Acquisition Opportunities

- Suggestion to purchase land which is most vulnerable to development, and those are the properties to the north.
- If the goal is just to have more greenspace then go with the cheapest. If the goal is to conserve the diversity of native plants and animals, then go with the most ecologically significant. Might be a combination?
- Need to think about all the other agencies that own land. MWRD, park districts, TNC, Municipalities, Millennium Reserve.
- The poor planning of municipalities near preserves does not mean the FP has to pick up their slack. It's not fair to the millions of Chicago residents who pay taxes toward the preserves.

Challenges

- We don't have the money, but even if we did, would we want the 21K. The available land is low ecological value. General agreement that what we own is of the best quality. Should we consider potential future ecological value of the parcel (ex. farmland)
- Consider hiring someone whose job it is to acquire land via non-traditional methods.

Position Statement

- Should there be something in there about rates (increase the pace – acquire it before it's gone) It's a function of capacity and funding, faster you do it the cheaper it is.
- Should we say the FPCC should find the resources? It's the 800-pound gorilla and needs to be pushed. How do we influence protection without becoming an advocacy organization?
- How do we protect existing land from uses that are not consistent with our mission? Should we suggest more stringent ordinances?
- All papers being created will raise awareness about the NCCP. There has to be a communication strategy among all four papers.

Selection Criteria (additional considerations)

- Cost for operations and development of purchased land.
- Can someone else do it?
- Overlap with a partner interest.
- The first three on our list seem to be a screening lens and the bottom three meshes in some way. But not a screening.
- Popularity may also be a criterion. To get the votes – it may be counter to our mission.
- Threshold criteria and Balancing Criteria. Public responsiveness.

Land Acquisition – Notes from Flip Charts (Breakout Sessions 1 & 2)

Why Acquire More?

- Tie to 5 biggest issues for community (ex.- safety, jobs, health.. Rich Gamble); benefits of clear criteria to persuade the public
 - Enhance quality of life
 - Buckets
 - Ecological – address fragmentation, connect greenways, plants & animals (pollinators), climate change, easier to manage
 - Social – health benefits, recreation, open space more generally
 - Economic – value for surrounding properties (ex. – Orland Grassland), flood protection/ecosystems services
- Best positioned to drive the agenda, maintain our leadership
- Where we are is our base; where do we want to go? How? Collaboration needed (Vision issue - Terry G.)
- People understand progress toward the goal (Benjamin Cox)
- Leverage other resources
- Natural growth vs. “NIMBY”
- Why \$ to acquisition vs restoration?

Challenges

- Disney store/Disney land (presence & partnership opportunities)
- “Tension” between ecological and social equity objectives
- Do we publicize low ecological value? Different frame (even low ecological value can be valuable – ex. buffers – Justin Pepper) Consider future eco value
- How measure ecological value? Highest “return” on the investment?
- Operating funds also needed for the 21,000 acres (more land means more \$ needed for O & M)

- Get to restoration when we can
- Current culture, understanding
- Development expectation with people (more capital funds also needed to improve acquired land) – Chris

Position Paper Statement

- Protection – policy-oriented (related to goals or values)
- Better definition (of protection needed – what do we mean by protection?)
- Conserve vs. protect vs save
- Goals of the NCCP – all 4? (omit reference to NCCP? – Cecily)
- Articulate them [goals?] instead - sell community better
- Relationship of restoration to other's protection
- Longevity of other organizations, of their priorities (concern about becoming an advocacy org.- Emily)
- Enabling Act (mission is to acquire and protect land – Delio)
- Relative weight of these activities
- Pace of protection (depends on capacity & resources)
- Find resources, definition of resources? (Laurel: need dedicated staff to pursue non-traditional strategies)
- Cheaper now
- Limits on influence, definition of influence?
- Protection in disposition - are we adding open space or shifting it around?

Selection Criteria (missing any? Weights?)

- Elderly/Abilities
- When collaborations strong/big things happen
- Weight related to the funds
 - Get ____ and fulfillment
- Relationship between acquisition and restoration
- Of the many things to do, what is land acquisition land best for? Not just a geographic issue/programming layer
- Don't generalize communities
- Which land is more "threatened"?
- Where is the most need? Definition of need?
- Natural/Cultural Resource Plan
- As compared to what alternatives? Marginal difference
- Definition of equity
- Projections climate, population

additional Session 2 notes that don't tie to Session 1 comments:

- Popular will (is there popular political support?)
- Overlap with partner interest + plans
- How easy, soon to develop?
- O&M, additional investment capital
- Do what no one else can do - regional scale (can someone else protect it?)
- Threshold vs prioritization - Top 3 /Bottom 3 , must have some eco value

Map (session 2 only)

- Ratio of developed vs preserved land
- Is goal just # of acres or something else?

Racial Equity (Breakout Session 3)

Emily Harris, Tracy Bishop and Kendra Freeman presented an overview of the REDI committee's preliminary recommendations. These include:

We believe we should apply a racial equity lens to the work of the Forest Preserves because fundamentally it is the right thing to do. In addition, if we want to build a community of support, we need the support of *everyone* in Cook County.

We also know that equity starts from within. The work of the REDI committee is complemented by the work of FPCC's staff REDI team which is analyzing internal processes and policies and developing strategies to advance racial equity and promote diversity and inclusion throughout the district. The staff REDI team is focusing its initial efforts on: (a) HR/hiring process, (b) training and development, and (c) outreach.

The REDI committee has begun to explore best practices for authentic and meaningful community engagement. Kendra Freeman shared lessons learned from various community engagement strategies. These include:

- ✓ Start by talking early-on to the people who are most impacted (as opposed to starting with proposals).
- ✓ Think about what you can give, not just what you need.
- ✓ Offer an event you can plan together as an activity to engage the community.

(The REDI committee's full presentation is presented in Attachment A.)

Emily asked participants for feedback. The following issues were discussed:

- How do we have an honest discussion about what is and is not realistic? What if the community wants something we simply cannot afford? Kendra explained that if it is really a process of inquiry, it starts with sharing data. She urged honesty and transparency. She suggests being frank. For example, tell the community, "These are the assessments we did; this option is not financially feasible long-term," and provide an explanation of how we reached this conclusion. Let the community know that we don't want to identify options in a silo and we want them to understand the constraints.
- The land acquisition committee added equity as one criterion to consider in selecting sites for acquisition. How much do we focus on serving impacted communities through programs, versus buying land? Terry Guen responded that the Compatible Recreation committee is working with CEP to explore this. Laurel asked that the results be shared so they can help inform the land acquisition strategy.
- I think we could buy land in Chicago if we decided that was important. But for what that would cost, are there better and more cost-effective ways to achieve the objective of connecting people to nature?
- How committed are we? If we are committed to racial diversity and we think programming is the way to achieve it, do we set up an endowment to fund programs, instead of acquiring more land?
- It is great to sit here and listen to different voices talk about what we need to do.
- It has been educational and exciting to engage in this conversation. We come into it humbly, admitting we have a lot to learn.
- I think this subject is a little bit like the ocean. Sometimes we try to boil the ocean. It is important to narrow our scope. We must be transparent about how decisions will get made and how those in need

might rely on those who have access to resources. We must make sure the scope is achievable. There is some low hanging fruit we should pick, celebrate some successes and use that to gain momentum. One of the worst things you can do to an underserved community is to make another promise that can't be delivered on. Keep a record of positive impact. Remind the community that we said we were going to do this and we did. This is an iterative process.

- You don't always have to start with a list. Sometimes you start by admitting you don't have all the answers and inviting the community into the process to help figure it out. It is about making that commitment and living that commitment and figuring out together where the boundaries are.
- FPCC is working with MPC to apply these lessons to a community engagement process at Beaubien Woods.
- How do we make sure we have the right stakeholders at the table? This can be very hard. You start with the "usual suspects" and tap them to connect to others. And you must provide multiple ways to engage people. Not everyone can come to meetings, so MPC also uses on-line surveys. MPC also helps foster and support social networks to help engage communities. And MPC includes a stipend to help community organizations hire a student or other organizer to help with outreach.
- It is important to talk about the collective efforts of FPCC, the Zoo, and the Garden. For example, more than 50% of non-member guests at the Zoo are people of color; this has grown significantly. The Garden has locations in Lawndale, Garfield Park, and other impacted communities. Thousands of people participate in programs at these sites each year. NeighborSpace has gardens across the city. Youth Outdoor Ambassadors connect to impacted communities across the County. The Garden has the Farm on Ogden and other sites and programs serving impacted communities.

Scaling Up Volunteers (Breakout Session 1)

Wendy Paulson began the discussion by asking: Is the position paper clear? Does it have a declaration that's compelling? And she gave some background: volunteerism has been a component of the forest preserves since its beginning. It became prominent in the 70's and we want to make the case for why volunteerism is important and that it's a very intentional strategy for involving people at the nexus of nature and people. We want to provide Commissioners, staff and the public a compelling case for a) continuing and b) scaling up the volunteer program.

Discussion points, suggestions, and questions posed included:

- Is there buy-in throughout the agency? Can staff trust the skills of volunteer botanists for example?
- Paths are unclear. Who will reach out to a school-group and plug them into the system that can ultimately lead them to be involved in the volunteer system? Example: Laurel's 15-year-old nephew is volunteering at Trailside but he doesn't get a volunteer badge, and isn't clearly part of the larger VR system
- There seems to be a communication gap between some departments and volunteer resources.
- We need concrete strategies with outcomes – pick one thing – restoration, could be a focus to engage communities in each part of the county. Figure out what success would look like. Need to know where we are doing well and where we need help. Benchmarks are important.
- Add something on the website - offer something – volunteer five times – get a free camping night.
- Recognize that a lot of volunteers are ephemeral how can we sustain them or how do you cast a wide enough net and allow people to come and go and still feel like part of the team.
- Call out and amplify all the great things that already are happening and scale it up!
- Focus on inclusivity, provide something for everyone and capitalize on different skill-sets.
- Do we all agree that volunteers are important? An opportunity to merge CEP and Volunteer programs. Is there a disconnect? CEP is already doing everything with volunteers: outreach, teaching, recreation.

- it takes seven touch points to go from learning about volunteering to volunteering. We have a stellar volunteer opportunity, you cannot do what the volunteers do in Cook County anywhere else. Need more signs – to invite volunteers
- It's a position paper so we are not going too far in the weeds – think about next level up.
- Make sure volunteers have the appropriate coordination, the available resources, trainings etc.
- Make sure that within the recommendations there are some subsets that would help get there. Very robust to say the staff and volunteers working on this have a compass – that's really helpful. Suggest a committee to work across departments to make sure volunteers are integrated? Maybe let staff decide how to coordinate communication (one level back)
- Don't forget that another audience is commissioners and external partners In fact they are the primary target, not internal staff.
- There will be a lot of supporting appendices. Zoo and Garden will add case studies.
- Pathway for Zoo volunteers to move to the Forest Preserves.
- REDI – how can we commit with a focus on underserved communities – maybe include a framework point, underserved communities want to be active (health, economics, finance). Ex: Reach out to science teacher in underserved communities
- Uncomfortable with the statement that we are focusing on underserved communities to volunteer - drop it!
- Do we have enough information to identify barriers?
- WE can tell where people are from by zip code. Skews younger. Strategies change depending on where you are in the county. Be careful not to pigeonhole people. Rules are outlined in the REDI paper. Helpful to provide baseline data on volunteers. Include our map, too.
- Do a better job of recognizing volunteers – bring them all together.
- Some volunteers don't enjoy recognition opportunities. Maybe do different events or things for different regions. Maybe have a speaker come in.
- Consider having a volunteer and staff event/meeting.
- **Add a call out box from the Tribune Article that describes the FPCC as having the Best Volunteer Program anywhere.**
- Involve volunteers in all programming – Volunteer Involvement in the Path to Stewardship (Case Study).
- Include volunteer opportunities in signage.