



ROCKFORD PARK DISTRICT

STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR 2010

PRIORITY RESULT I:

Well maintained park space and recreational facilities meet the recreational needs of this and succeeding generations of District residents.

CEO INTERPRETATION:

"Well maintained" is interpreted as meaning that all current parkland and recreation facilities shall be maintained at the highest level for their intended use and the safety of users. While the District will maintain and repair existing assets, we will consider the retirement/closing of under-utilized or obsolete facilities.

"Park space and recreation facilities" is interpreted as land and amenities for the passive and active leisure pursuits of residents and visitors to the District.

"...meet the recreational needs" is defined by the Board in the subsequent provisions (A-C) of this policy, each of which is interpreted below.

"...this and succeeding generations of District residents" means that RPD will take a long-term view, including assessment of both population growth trends and geographic distribution, to ensure that both the array of amenities and their proximity help make park space and recreation 'essential for the quality of life' throughout the District, both now and in the future.

Acquisition and development of park space will be driven by:

1. The standards the Board has provided in A through C of this policy;
2. The recreational needs of District residents.

I-A. Park space growth priorities – Rock River, neighborhood parks, rec paths/trails

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: These are the District's three priority areas for expansion of park space and recreational facilities. Where the District is actively seeking to acquire land for open space along the Rock River, neighborhood parks, or rec paths, these areas will be minimally maintained and preserved for later development as resources allow.

With the exception of the three priorities listed above, the District is not seeking to add land or facilities at this current time. Any donation of land not meeting the criteria in A – C of this policy is subject to sale through the Foundation. The District is not obligated to hold it, develop it, or use it.

If any new land is acquired through donation, it may be preserved for future development and may require its development and perpetual maintenance to be completely funded with non-tax resources. Similarly, any recreational development shall be completely funded with non-tax resources.

Any new capital project must be totally funded for operations, development, and maintenance with non-tax sources.

Finally, my interpretation is that any parkland acquisition and/or capital projects that are in progress will be completed to comply with previously incurred obligations, e.g., grants, legislative initiative funds, donations, etc., within available resources.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Current capital projects previously committed to through grants, donations, and legislative initiatives will continue their development until completion, within available resources.
 2. Scheduled repair and replacement projects will have achieved 85% completion by the end of the year.
 3. The land plan will be updated annually in cooperation with municipalities for future park space and development needs identified in the three priority areas, including linkages for greenways for rec paths and trails.
 4. New revenue sources are secured for land purposes.
 5. Deferred maintenance will be reduced by 15%.
 6. Intergovernmental agreements will leverage financial resources to secure land for future park use.
-

I-B. Park space will meet residents' needs for active recreation

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: Active recreation" is interpreted to include high-use and highly organized parkland (sports fields, tennis courts, etc.) and facilities (ice facilities, golf courses, waterpark/pools, Indoor Sports Center, Lockwood Park, Atwood Environmental Center, etc.).

REPORT: Since the District has achieved the Board's standard in this area, the District will seek land only in the priorities listed in (A) of this policy.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Land acquisition and development will occur only in the three priority areas listed in Priority Result I.A, and only within available resources.
 2. Existing park acreage not needed for active recreation will revert to a natural condition with minimum management/maintenance.
 3. Any increase in acreage for park space or recreation facility development will be funded by non property tax resources.
 4. Existing assets will be maintained for patron safety, revenue enhancement, or decreased costs.
 5. Under utilized or obsolete facilities will be brought to the Board for consideration of retirement or closing.
 6. A 20-year comprehensive master plan will be developed for each major recreational facility or service area, which identifies future space needs, capital development, and program outlook based on participation trends and changing demographics. Two master plans will be completed and presented to the Board in 2010.
 7. District facilities and assets are well-maintained and positioned for long-term sustainability. Each has preventative maintenance systems in place, which will prevent any emergency repairs due to preventative maintenance systems.
 8. The 2010 Citizen Survey will indicate 85% or greater agreement that parks and facilities are well maintained.
-

I-C. Park space will meet residents' needs for passive recreation

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: Passive recreation" is interpreted to mean non-programmed areas, such as parks, recreation pathways, natural areas, and gardens. People use these areas for relaxation, reflection, and peaceful purposes.

The established minimum of 10 acres/1,000 population is self-explanatory. The acreage of non-active land will be restored into natural areas, prairies, woodland, and waterways to meet residents' current and future needs for passive recreation. The land holdings of other public/non-profit agencies are considered as fulfilling the standard for natural parkland for passive activities.

REPORT: Since the District has achieved the Board's standard in this area, the District will seek land only in the priorities listed in (A) of this policy.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Land acquisition and development will occur only in the three priority areas listed in Priority Result I-A, and only within available resources.
 2. Existing park acreage not needed for active recreation will be converted to a natural condition, which long term will decrease maintenance costs.
 3. Any increase in acreage for park space or recreation facility development will be funded by non property tax resources.
-

PRIORITY RESULT II:

Residents are involved in diverse and well-supported recreational activities for their health, well-being, and entertainment.

CEO INTERPRETATION:

“Residents are involved in diverse and well-supported recreational activities” is interpreted as meaning they have available to them a broad and varied range of park and recreational activities.

“Well supported” is interpreted as meaning that the District has systems and processes in place that provide the level of support required to deliver high quality park and recreation services to our citizens.

The District will focus its direct programming in service areas where there are major assets (parks and recreation facilities) to support, and where the financial resources exist and we have the expertise to provide the program.

In service areas where the District cannot directly offer the program, support is provided to a partner to offer the program. Priority is given to partnerships that support the District’s Priority Results and enhance the expected return on investment.

All partner provided programs will prominently identify and recognize the benefit of Park District involvement and support in their programs.

II-A. Diverse activities include a broad range of passive and active activities including sports, recreation, environmental ed, cultural, lifelong rec skills

Youth 5-15; 16-19; Adults 55+

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: “Diverse activities” will include instruction and skill building activities to equip residents with lifelong recreational skills, which I interpret to mean those activities that can be enjoyed for a lifetime that use existing RPD facilities.

Activities will also provide residents with pleasure and enjoyment, promote their health and well-being, and encourage recreational literacy through the development of their skills.

Activities will be available for all ages throughout all areas of the District.

Further, the District will continue to make available and actively promote free and low-cost activities for residents to enjoy as a direct benefit from their property tax investment. It is likely that participation in these free programs will increase and will require additional internal support and financial resources.

The District will give the highest priority to engaging youth ages 5-19 during non school hours that will include instruction and activities to develop lifelong recreational skills, thus equipping them to spend their leisure time in positive ways.

Activities for adults 55+ will be offered on a revenue generating (cost plus) basis. I also interpret it as a priority to cultivate volunteer opportunities with this age group.

The District will focus on maintaining high quality programs within available resources, while exploring new revenue generating activities.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Direct programs considered meet all of the following criteria:
 - located at major assets of the District (unless a strategic partnership is in the District’s best interest);
 - financial resources are adequate;
 - necessary expertise is readily available (instructors/coaches);
 - adequate participation exists (demand for service is demonstrated).
 2. Residents will account for 75% - 80% of overall participation in programs/services offered by the RPD.
 3. At least half of RPD program registrants in the priority target age groups will be registered in two different activities as quantified by RecTrac.
 4. Lowest priority programming reduced or eliminated.

II-B. Residents' recreational activities will be well supported and of high quality.

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: I interpret "well supported" to mean that District residents are participating and activity levels are high.
(EXTERNAL OPERATIONS) I interpret "high quality" to mean there is adequate demand to offer the service; it's safe, well organized, and accessible.

I further interpret "high quality" to mean park and recreation services are delivered by highly trained personnel, with appropriate staffing levels, deliver what is promised (customer satisfaction is high), and the appropriate caliber of instruction is provided.

i. Park and recreation facilities will be safe and secure.

I interpret "safe and secure" to mean that adequate safety and security measures are taken to protect and preserve District physical assets, citizens/customers, and staff.

ii. Emphasis will be on activities with adequate participation and attendance to be cost effective.

The District will give priority to programs with adequate participation to be cost effective. To address "cost effective", in determining priority for funding and support, the cost of providing the service will be reasonable for the District to bear. There must be demonstrated public demand and support to continue providing adequate internal support and ongoing resource allocation.

iii. Program priority is summer and non-school times.

The RPD directly provides or partners with others to offer programs for youth primarily during summer months, and as funds are available, after-school hours and during holiday breaks.

iv. Residents will benefit from coaching and instruction, as applicable.

I interpret "benefit from coaching and instruction" to include highly trained personnel, having appropriate staffing levels including teacher to student ratios, and a high caliber of instruction provided.

v. Activities will be well organized and accessible.

"Well organized" means what is promised is delivered to the satisfaction of the customer. I interpret "accessible" to mean accessibility as defined as price (it's affordable), locations, time, geographic location, availability of public transportation, and accommodating to people with disabilities.

vi. Activities will be available at times and locations that meet the needs of diverse demographic populations in a geographically balanced manner.

I interpret meeting the needs of diverse participants to mean that fee assistance will be offered at an adequate level to ensure all qualifying residents may access services through scholarships (addressed in PR IV). Citizen requests and trends will be considered in determining services. The District will provide services with consideration of changing community demographics, including geographic locations and language.

-
- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
(EXTERNAL OPERATIONS)
1. All services will have a cost/benefit analysis done and documented (including all District food service operations with a revenue/expense analysis).
 2. Fewer injuries or accidents because our assets are well maintained and in good repair.
 3. Risk management standards are achieved with a Level B or higher rating (93-96%).
 4. 2010 Citizen Survey will indicate a greater sense of perceived safety at parks and facilities with a 5% improvement.
 5. Patron satisfaction improves as measured through Service Improvement and Quality Assurance refunds.
 6. Citizen Survey will indicate an improvement in maintenance of parks/facilities as excellent/good by at least 85% of respondents.
 7. Fee assistance is adequately available to residents in accordance with program criteria within available resources, and is partially funded by designated donations made to the Foundation (\$10,000 goal) (also in PR IV).

8. Citizen awareness of Park District programs and services will improve by 10% as measured in the 2010 Citizen Survey.
 9. The ADA physical accessibility plan is implemented.
 10. Facilities will be configured and in appropriate locations for providing services to people with disabilities, and citizens can easily navigate through Park District facilities and parking lots.
 11. Greater numbers of people with special needs are accessing services.
 12. Park Police can quantify proactive security measures with reduced crime, graffiti, incidents, and complaints.
 13. Criminal activity will be reduced by 10% in highest crime zones (measured by annual report that includes data on complaints/arrests/citations issued).
-

CEO INTERPRETATIONS:
(INTERNAL OPERATIONS)

I interpret “well supported” to also mean that the District’s internal operations departments are strong, empowered, cooperative teams delivering high quality systems and processes that are essential to providing the external results we desire to achieve.

I further interpret “well supported” to mean that systems and processes in place provide the level of support required to deliver high quality park and recreation services to our citizens, such as high quality financial services, human resources, risk management, security, and marketing activities necessary for citizens and visitors to participate in District services.

SUCCESS INDICATORS:
(INTERNAL OPERATIONS)

1. Internal department success indicators will demonstrate efficient/effective service delivery through measurements and customer satisfaction.
 2. Wellness Committee initiatives show improvement in health and well being of District employees as measured by a decrease in health care costs.
 3. There is an increase in participation by 10% for the Wellness Incentive Program.
 4. There will be improved scores in the Employee Interest and Attitude survey for the five areas that were identified as needing additional input from our employees. The five areas are Employee Recognition, Employee Involvement in Decision Making, Employee Communication Systems, Employee Orientation, and Performance Management.
 5. RPD wins statewide recognition from IAPD for No Employee Left Behind.
 6. Internal systems are fully maximized to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, including use of existing and new technology to reduce cost, improve efficiency, streamline systems, and improve accountability.
 7. Internal service departments will seek opportunities to support and partner with facilities and programs to offer support and technical expertise.
 8. Internal control systems are sound with proper internal control structures implemented.
 9. Internal service departments are in compliance with industry best practices, regulations, legislation, etc.
-

PRIORITY RESULT III:

Residents value recreation as essential for a healthy life.

CEO INTERPRETATION:

“Value” in this statement indicates that District residents believe that recreation is vital to their health and well being. Residents are aware of recreational opportunities at the District and understand the value and benefits of park and recreation services in their lives.

It is my interpretation that “residents” to be targeted are those of all ages.

I interpret a key demonstration of “value” to be that residents participate in leisure pursuits including:

- Recreational activities or sports to promote wellness and fitness;
- Appreciation of passive recreational pursuits, such as beautiful parks, gardens, and natural areas;
- Visits to the District’s museums and cultural programs.

III-A. Residents recognize leadership role of parks & rec play in a balanced, healthy lifestyle: leisure skill development, beautification, environmental education; Reduce unhealthy behaviors, build healthy families, healthy community

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: I interpret “recognize the leadership role” to mean that elected officials (national, state, and local) recognize and regularly promote the RPD benefits to the community. Further, that citizens cite one of the top reasons they live and work in the Rockford area is due to the park and recreation amenities they enjoy using.

“Residents recognize leadership role” means that citizens are realizing the importance of a healthy lifestyle on their quality of life, and are well aware of the strength of the RPD brand in programs and services.

A “balanced, healthy lifestyle” includes a work/life balance that includes taking time for regular exercise, for family activities, and for improving personal health, fitness and wellness.

“Leisure skill development” means that the District offers introductory programs for people to try out different activities to fill their free time. The objective is to draw interest in Park District assets that will be appreciated and supported in the future with fees.

“Beautification” includes appreciation and support for beautification, environmental, and conservation initiatives.

The role of “environmental education” in District initiatives is to educate target markets of their responsibility in maintaining a sustainable environment by conserving resources, recycling, and caring for the natural world.

I interpret “reducing unhealthy behaviors” and “building healthy families” as the District’s role in helping people make better choices when it comes to food, exercise, and building stronger relationships within our community.

I interpret the District’s role is to provide places where people can spend time together in enjoyable activities that improve their lives and create a stable environment for our community. I further interpret the importance of a healthy community to be one of physical, social, and economic stability.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Participation increases for free programs due to greater awareness and enjoyment (they keep coming back for more).
 2. More citizens participate in recreational activity to improve health and well-being, with 5% improvement in the reasons given in the 2010 Citizen Survey.
 3. The RPD is recognized locally, regionally, and nationally.
 4. RPD is the community expert and resource on recreation.
 5. Improvement in healthy lifestyles tracked – improved youth fitness and reduction in youth and adult obesity as reported by Health Systems Research annual community health report.

6. Food choices in our programs/concessions offer healthy alternatives.
7. Expanded neighborhood participation for City of Gardens and beautification initiatives with volunteers, donations, and area greenhouses/garden centers.
8. There will be an increase in positive media reports.

III-B. There is an increase in the number of residents demonstrating support for the advancement of District priorities and defined benefits for PD residents through: Volunteer support, financial support, and community organizations forming partnerships with RPD

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: More people giving their dollars, time, and support to the District will both demonstrate and build the value that residents place on recreation in their lives. Success will be reflected in:

- Increased support from user groups to advance Park District programs and facilities or partner programs and facilities.
- Increased support through the District's fund development division, and volunteers and partners who advocate on the District's behalf to gain public support (adopt a park, adopt a program).
 - a. Donations
 - b. Grants
 - c. Sponsorships
 - d. Volunteers
 - e. Awards and Recognition
 - f. Other – citizen advisory groups (i.e., Financial Advisory Committee, Audit Advisory Committee) and user groups (i.e., Golf Advisory Committee, Friends of Lockwood Park)
 - g. Community organizations will demonstrate support through forming new partnerships that reduce costs, increase volunteers, and provide non-District locations for service delivery

SUCCESS INDICATORS: Support continues to be leveraged from Fund Development activities:

1. Gifts/Donations – seek and increase donations for capital projects and operational expenses.
 2. Grants – greatly expand our research into potential grants and double the number of grant applications.
 3. Sponsorships – 20% increase in cash and in-kind donations .
 4. Volunteer recruitment and coordination continues with volunteer hours increasing 10% District-wide.
 5. More groups, organizations, and advisory committees are formally partnering with the District in strategic ways to reduce expenses, increase revenues, or improve participation and provide valuable feedback.
 6. Growing numbers of citizens are involved in Adopt a Park/Adopt a Program, and Friends of Parks programs, providing both volunteer labor and advocacy.
 7. Awards and recognition increases, and RPD is Gold Medal Finalist in 2010.
 8. Board and team members will reach out to key stakeholders and improve communication and relationships, forming new strategic partnerships and gaining more support for District issues.
-

PRIORITY RESULT IV:

Residents have exceptional parks and recreational facilities, services, and programs at a reasonable cost.

CEO INTERPRETATION:

Achievement of this end would indicate that residents value the RPD as a good return on their investment through taxes and fees paid.

My interpretation of “residents” is all residents of the District in a geographically balanced manner.

“Exceptional” means that each and every District park, facility, service, and program offered will be of the highest quality possible as measured by our citizens and customers with more than 50% rating as “excellent,” or 80% as “excellent/good” combined in program evaluations and user surveys.

“At a reasonable cost” directs that services will be priced at a level to be affordable for residents, with levies and fee structures at or below the average of comparable park districts and fees charged in the marketplace.

IV-A. Priority results achievement is to reflect a high return on available tax resources.

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: I interpret “currently available tax resources” to mean those which have been approved by District taxpayers. There will be no request for voter approval to increase the District’s tax rate during the next several years, or until the economic conditions of our community vastly improve.

The District will leverage available tax resources with a variety of other means, including donations, grants, strategic partnerships, sponsorships, and ‘other people’s money’ for future growth and expansion opportunities.

“High return” is interpreted as being that, as a result of efforts to leverage resources, reduce costs, seek alternate revenues, increase partnerships and use of volunteers, the array of services and recreational offerings available to residents will continue to make RPD recognized as one of Illinois’ premier park districts, even in light of the limited tax resources available.

A variety of basic programs will be open to all residents and will continue to be free and supported by property taxes. I expect participation in these programs to increase, and this may require additional support.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Serve more people with less cost.
 2. The District’s financial prudence and sound practices will be validated through independent advisory groups such as the Financial Advisory Committee, independent Audit Advisory Committee, the District’s auditing firm, CAFR, and GFOA.
 3. Residents believe they are receiving a good return for their tax investment.

IV-A-i. Residents participate in a broad array of “core” recreational activities and services for no additional fee.

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: I interpret a “broad array” to include a couple from each area defined in PR II A (sports, passive and active recreation, environmental education, cultural activities, lifelong recreational skills) as our core free services.

“For no additional fee” is interpreted to mean other than the taxes citizens already pay.

I interpret this to include free services that are geographically balanced, for all ages, and offered on a seasonal basis.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. A core group of free basic programs are offered and participation increases by 10% in these free offerings.
 2. A higher percentage of residents know what’s available to them for their tax investment.
 3. Frequency increases for people accessing free programs.

IV-A-ii. District residents receive discounted user fees on all programs and services.

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: Residents will continue to receive discounted user fees for all programs and services as a benefit for supporting the District through property taxes.

All recreation programs that are not in the core free/low cost category should reflect an attempt to cover our direct costs.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Resident discount or equivalent (value-add) is offered for every District program.
 2. The District will focus on three-tier pricing:
 - Free/inexpensive
 - Resident rate
 - Non-resident rate
 3. Fee assistance is adequately available to residents in accordance with program criteria within available resources, and is partially funded by designated donations to the Foundation (\$10,000 goal).
 4. Residents believe they are receiving a good return on fees paid for services.
-

IV-A-iii. Non-resident user fees are comparable with those charged for like programs and services in the marketplace.

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: My interpretation of “comparable user fee” is that, whenever feasible, fees will correspond with those of comparable services for current and potential customers at places and facilities they use.

I also interpret our efforts to attract non-residents to use our facilities and services after residents are first given the opportunity to participate.

Fees will be priced in accordance with current economic conditions.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. There will be higher use by non-residents where appropriate.
 2. Costs related to non-resident programs will be self-funded.
 3. Fees are competitive with comparable services in the marketplace.
-

IV-B. There is growth in the tourist use of RPD assets that complements and enhances the District’s ability to achieve Priority Results affordably for residents.

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: My interpretation is that the community will receive a high return on investment from the tourism use of Park District assets in the form of visitor spending that supports District facilities, area business, and economic development.

Residents and community leaders will recognize that maximizing the use of District facilities and programs through tourism not only ensures that quality amenities are available and used by residents at discounted rates, but also contributes significant resources to the entire community.

- SUCCESS INDICATORS:**
1. Tourist use of RPD facilities increases by 10% in 2010.
 2. All product offerings should be developed and cultivated in tourism areas.
 3. Feasibility study completed on regional indoor sports complex with next steps developed by June.
-

IV-C. There is growth in the use of activities in the Rock River corridor.

a. Fee based (revenue generating)

b. Free/Passive

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: My interpretation is that the completion and opening of our major investments in new and expanded facilities along the Rock River (Discovery Center, Burpee, Riverwalk, and Nicholas Conservatory) will result in a major increase in offerings and increased attendance when they are completed.

I further interpret “growth and activities” to be increased by existing facilities and parks along the Rock River, including Riverview Ice House (Forest City Queen, Trolley, hockey training facility), Sportscore One, and so forth to develop and implement revenue-generating, increased attendance initiatives.

“Fee based” is to charge comparable fees for like services in our marketplace, and generate adequate revenue to cover expenses.

“Free/Passive” includes parks and natural areas.

SUCCESS INDICATORS:

1. There will be more activities offered at our existing riverfront parks and facilities.
2. We will investigate and evaluate new fee-based activities and opportunities along the Rock River.

IV-D. Residents value RPD as a good return on their tax investment.

CEO INTERPRETATIONS: My interpretation is that residents will respond ‘yes’ when asked if they feel their investment in the RPD through property taxes and fees paid for services is a good return on their investment.

Further, residents and partners comprehend the District does not have unlimited resources and there are funding challenges for maintaining existing assets and recreational services, and that we cannot add new properties, programs, and facilities at this time.

SUCCESS INDICATORS:

1. The response is consistently “yes” when a citizen is asked if they receive a good return on their tax investment.
2. 2010 Citizen Survey indicates that 85% of people perceive they are receiving a good return on their investment of taxes and fees paid.
3. At least 100 citizens participate in community forums/public meetings on RPD operational/fiscal challenges and communicate their support and concerns, participating in budget reductions.
