

# Elmhurst Park District Strategic Plan 2013-2017



Heller and Heller Consulting, Inc.

Heller and Heller Consulting, Inc.

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## Acknowledgements

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### **ELMHURST PARK DISTRICT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Colette M. Kubiesa	President
Mary E. Kies	Vice President
Bob Howard	Commissioner
Patricia Morissette-Moll	Commissioner
Anthony Pelosi	Commissioner
Vince Spaeth	Commissioner
Carolyn Ubriaco	Commissioner

### **ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

James W. Rogers	Executive Director
Angela Ferrentino	Director of Parks and Facilities
Laura Guttman	Special Projects Coordinator
David Kenny	Director of Information Technology
Brian McDermott	Director of Enterprise Services
Cathy Medema	Director of Finance and Human Resources
Nimfa Melesio	Administrative Office Manager
Cindy Szkolka	Director of Recreation
Ginger Wade	Director of Marketing and Communications

### **PROJECT FACILITATORS**

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## Introduction

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The Elmhurst Park District (EPD) and Heller and Heller Consulting, Inc. (HHC) worked collaboratively to develop the Elmhurst Park District 2013-17 Strategic Plan. The Plan will be aligned with budget years beginning January 2013 through December 2017. The Strategic Plan's intent is to:

- Align the organization with strategic direction
- Continue the commitment to mission and vision
- Optimize space use for programs and services
- Ensure focus on community needs
- Focus resources on targeted strategy
- Drive innovation as part of the organizational culture through best practice approaches

Historically, the District has developed a culture that includes a rigorous commitment to strategy development and execution. As compared to other agencies, the Park District's level of commitment to strategic planning is excellent. It is the intent of this Plan to again ensure the District's commitment to a planning process and implementation of strategic recommendations. Furthermore, the District desired to engage employees and the Board in the strategy development and implementation process, resulting in a meaningful document for the staff. An intended benefit is to have a plan that is meaningful to the community as well and ensuring the "voice of the customer" is prevalent throughout the document.

The District, through its Vision Statement, aspires to be a customer centered organization through innovation and sustainability. As a result, these key words: customer centered, innovation, and sustainability are notably visible throughout the strategic recommendations.

The Plan results in the creation of future direction for focusing on the customer, financial agility, internal support and communication, and the capacity for learning and growth. All of these areas relate to one another as part of the Balanced Scorecard approach to strategy development. These elements are outlined in a later section of the Plan.

An important part of the process consisted of a review of organizational performance. This included a review of the existing Comprehensive Plan, 2009 Indoor Facility Study, 2011 Needs Assessment results, employee workshop comments, 2012 Strategic Plan Action Plan, and Organizational Planning Team feedback. In addition, Board members and key community decision makers were interviewed.

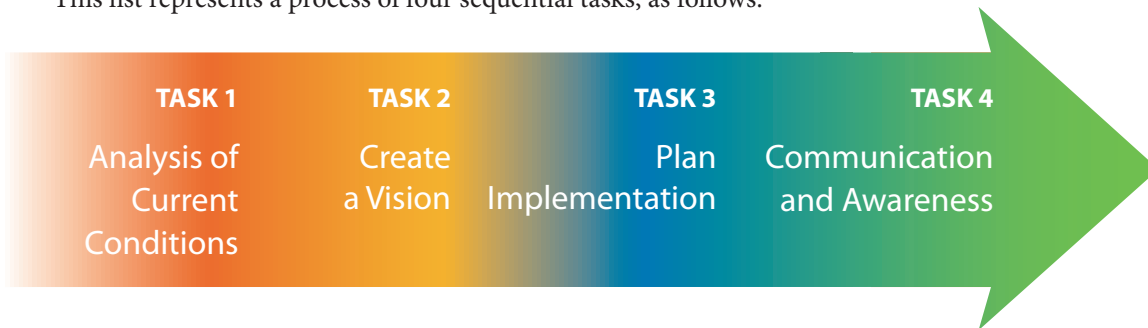
This process included a review of the mission statement, and the development of a vision statement. The Strategic Planning process included two workshops with Park Board members and Management Team members and supervisor workshops, and successive reviews of information. This iterative process provided opportunities for review and reflection.

The elements of the Plan include the major areas as follows:

- Revised mission and vision statements
- Board, staff, and key decision maker input

- Organizational performance review
- Notes from Board and staff workshops
- Information about the Balanced Scorecard framework for strategy
- Major Focus Areas
- Strategic Themes
- Objective Statements
- Strategy Maps
- Strategic Initiatives
- Guidelines for Implementation
- Strategic Plan Definitions

This list represents a process of four sequential tasks, as follows:



## Mission and Vision

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A good starting point for strategy is a review and development of mission and vision. This was achieved in successive Board and staff workshops, providing Board members and staff with an opportunity to reflect on the revised statements. The mission statement was shortened, but the essence of the statement remained the same. Mission statements define the business or purpose of the organization. Vision statements are more aspirational; what do we hope to become? The essence of strategic planning asks these three basic questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to go?
- How will we get there?

The intent of the Elmhurst Park District Strategic Plan 2013-2017 is to address these three time sequential questions.

## Mission Statement

We provide experiences for the lifetime enjoyment of people who live and play in our community

## Vision Statement

We aspire to be a customer centered organization through innovation and sustainability

Evidence of key words included in the mission and vision can be identified throughout the elements of strategy outlined in the Plan.

## Summary of Input Information

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As part of the Strategic Planning process, interviews were completed with individual Board members, the Executive Director, and Key Decision Makers in the community. Additionally, a staff workshop was held to give employees an opportunity to provide input as part of the planning process.

### **Board Member Interview Questions and Responses**

The following information includes a listing of all comments of the Board and Executive Director interviews held on May 7 and 8, 2012.

- 1. *What are the outcomes you are looking for in the strategic planning process?*** The overall theme for this area includes descriptive words such as continuing our innovative efforts, positioning for the future, and working with the new executive director in the development of a new plan. Other comments Included:
  - I have been on the board for 15 years and have a vested interest. The main focus of the process is the residents. The residents need to be assured they are getting a good bang for the buck
  - We can show the residents that we are interested in working with the community...we can show this is what we are here for
  - We are on the cutting edge
  - Keep our awareness out there
  - I don't have any expectations. The last plan was well done
  - A broad brush

- Innovative ideas
- New pathways for fitness, horticulture, volunteerism
- We are in a great position right now and we need to keep going forward
- Continue to build on our past successes and the macro achievements we have had
- The board aligned with a new director around a plan
- The new macro direction for the Board
- Find out the areas of concentration are
- Shared vision of who we are and what our values are and what we need to be doing
- We don't take the time to talk about the big issues, and this process will help
- Looking into the future about what's possible and having the courage to go for it
- We stretch when we think something is possible

**2. Tell me about the current strategic planning process. Do you have any ideas for what you want to continue and any improvements to the process?** Generally speaking, there was support from all of the Board members about the commitment to the strategic planning process. The Board appreciates the work done by the staff in implementing strategy. Other comments included:

- I wasn't here before, but I will say the last document was great
- I love to mix it up with a lot of different staff in our planning sessions
- It does work as a five year map
- We make it a working document
- We need to make sure we allow for flexibility to the plan
- There was no cohesiveness between staff and board a long time ago, but that has gone away
- Laura does a quarterly report and keeps us abreast of what we have completed. She also connects us with the budget
- We were with NEDSRA and now we contract with Gateway
- We always need to ask, is there a better way to do it?
- We need to stay ahead of the trends
- We do get a quarterly update; the process works well
- We should know the relative importance of items, and with our current plan we do not
- Are we doing the things we need to be doing?
- The goals are either too broad or too specific...more of staff tie in is needed
- The plan didn't cascade far enough into the organization
- Measurements, as most of our measures are qualitative
- We do have important initiatives that need to be carried forward

- The last process was a good one. There are so many good ways to get to go where you want to
- There was staff involvement, but I think they may have been reticent about speaking up
- We did a good job nailing down what was needed at the time
- Owe it to ourselves to be our best
- Involves self-reflection on the part of the commissioners and the staff
- Every single employee holds the identity of the District
- Strategic emphasis on a structured interface between customer and staff. There should be a certain level of energy by the staff person. Building a predictable model for customer interactions. Shared set of values are all important
- We are so proficient at reporting the information. It might be helpful to condense the information

**3. *What are examples of organizational strengths that we need to make sure we build on for the development of a strategic plan?*** Overall, there is a sense of pride about the District. The Commissioners feel as though the Park District has a good image in the community. Also, frequently mentioned was the success of partnerships and the quality of staff. There was also consensus about the financial performance and management. Other comments included:

- Good succession planning process
- Good development by Rich
- The staff
- Interacting with other agencies...and that is what the community expects from us
- The daily activities we do for the community, and we do them well...we offer a lot for the young families of Elmhurst
- Always focus on the things we do well and do them better
- The overwhelming number of residents see us in a good light
- Continue workshops and seminars and give staff the opportunity for training
- The biggest strength are our programs...from toddlers to adults and seniors ...quality, variety, and cost
- The way the District mixes enterprise with recreation
- Sharing resources, the strength of partnerships
- Camaraderie activities for staff is good that we do
- Strategic planning is a good thing because it helps us to be transparent
- Safety for the staff and the public, for people who come to Elmhurst from other communities
- We are risk takers and willing to try new things, though we may not take enough risk



- We need to continue to focus on getting really good staff here and then work on keeping them
- Our financial system is good; we are financially sound, gives us an opportunity to be flexible
- Our name and brand
- The survey results pointed to good performance
- Working with the other institutions.  
There is a new school superintendent, and the relationship should work well
- The school district uses our indoor facilities and we use their outdoor amenities
- Financial management; we do not enter things blindly
- Our top notch staff, passionate, intelligent, committed, and they treat residents really well with good follow up and the Board is kept apprised
- I am so proud of renovation of our two community pools and how great zero depth is
- I am so happy we are recycling playground equipment and sending it to other countries
- We do not extend ourselves financially
- We spend money wisely
- The Board has taken a fairly conservative stance in spending money
- The attention to detail in financial planning is excellent and engages every level of the District
- Use of cross functional teams are important to the District
- We engage our stakeholders on a regular basis, through the community wide survey and park redesign meetings
- It's great we have opportunities for our residents
- It's great seeing soccer played by all nationalities
- Acquisition of Wagner, Wilder Mansion, and the development of Berens



**4. What opportunities are there for improvement or areas of weakness the District needs to strengthen in order to effectively implement the plan?** Comments focused on indoor space needs and requirements, ensuring recreation programs are aligned with community needs, and infrastructure and maintenance concerns. Other comments included:

- More interactive with the community to make sure we are pro-active to make sure we are doing well
- Board rotation would be good, rotating the Board presidency
- Term limits would be a good thing
- There is always a need for checks and balances

- Impossible to create green space because we are land locked
- We may be weak on our facilities.....ability to use the space
- We just can't provide what everyone wants
- We don't have enough indoor gym space. We rely on SD 205. We need a lot more of it
- Tennis has lots of representation, yet basketball and volleyball have no space
- It would be good to have more indoor space either north or south in town
- Risk taking
- School district use, gymnasiums and Fieldhouse...their walking track should be open early and later in the day
- We don't do much sharing with private schools
- We don't have any major glaring weaknesses
- I wish we could communicate that we are a separate entity
- Field conditions are an issue
- We are challenged in the current economy
- We have been really aggressive about our enterprise services. We need to take a closer look at how we are performing. What is the future for these services?
- There are children in the north side of town who are economically underprivileged. I would like to see more free programs
- Would like to see more activities for families of special recreation families
- Sugar Creek Golf Course needs to produce more revenue. We need to get the word out about being able to use the facility
- Continue to reach out to our teens such as Battle of the Bands and evenings at the pool
- More teen sponsored activities
- Need to look at our programming mix; are we duplicating programs?
- Should we be more targeted in our programming?
- Aging facilities, some are inefficient
- Does it make sense to re-purpose facilities such as preschool?
- Park maintenance improvements
- Maintenance is a strength as well as a weakness
- We have so much to maintain and we can't rest on our previous efforts

**5. Are there any specific facility/park/program service improvement ideas that you did not mention in number four that you consider to be a strength or an opportunity for improvement?**

- Capital plan; we need to vet more with the community
- We need more indoor basketball courts
- Outdoor baseball fields
- Maybe purchase some of Immaculate Conception. There is some property for sale that we should look at
- The senior center, given its location, it could be massively improved if it were moved from its location. It's not accessible by walking. If the senior center were located here at Wilder, you could walk everywhere
- Maybe some business park property should be looked at
- Wilder Park...we have a master plan to possibly have a cultural campus. Maybe a joint administrative building...school, city and the district
- Courts Plus is great, but we need to continue to invest in it
- The interest in health and wellness areas is not going away. We need to be constantly vigilant in offering these types of programs
- I do hear about ice rinks. The YMCA has an outdoor rink
- We would like to put some gyms in Wagner Community Center
- We want to continue to buy land that is contiguous to our existing properties
- We would like to expand Courts Plus
- So glad we will allocate some resources for the Conservatory
- Wilder Park...would like it to be a flagship park, so leave it as it is
- Indoor facility that is turfed, maybe an ice rink too
- Senior Center still needs to be looked at as it needs to be updated
- Administrative offices need improvement. There may be an opportunity for a joint venture with the City for new space
- North side maintenance facility is needed. There may be an opportunity with the City
- Courts Plus is in a maintaining mode
- There is much less interest income to use for investment
- The golf course industry is challenging
- Recreation does a good job with innovating the program offerings
- Ice skating rink, outdoors, at a minimum. We do offer skating at Eldridge Park
- There is an opportunity for expansion at Courts Plus
- I like to take programs from other providers in the community such as yoga. I like to learn how we can do things better. I like to find out why people go to yoga studios

- There are pockets of underserved who are waiting for them to be shown how they can access the Park District. It's not all about families with kids
- We need to find a way to make things happen; we can probably do more in the area of arts. For example, if there is a need for community led programs such as needlepoint, for example, we should lead that effort

**6. What do you consider to be the three major issues facing the Park District in the future?**

How would you prioritize the District's efforts to tackle the issues? Areas most frequently mentioned included financial sustainability, taking care of infrastructure needs, and communicating with residents. Comments included:

- Availability of amenities
- Being land locked
- We have serious flood control in the City; the District could possibly help with this
- If we keep our levy steady, our rate will go up; we need to justify the increase
- We are doing a good job increasing our revenue stream. How do we maintain our level of service?
- We need to keep attracting good people. We have a fairly motivated staff
- We need to sell our value to residents. We will need to continue to increase our non-tax revenue. We need to make sure we prove up what we do. There is so much anti-government sentiment. Justifying the tax levy will be important to do
- We can't keep building parking lots. Our patrons need to start learning how to economize, HOV parking lots as an example
- We have trash cans all over the place...we could have trash free parks. We need to be at the forefront of this
- Budget resources/financial/living within our means
- Offering quality programs
- Continue to preserve land, open space, and environmentally conscious approaches
- Recycling has been difficult because of needing to sort
- Obesity epidemic
- Land and water conservation....water is going to be the next problem area as much as oil
- Lift the tax cap
- Staff development and our colleges developing staff
- Conservation of our resources
- We could do more with bicycles
- Maintaining the balance sheet
- Maintaining the facilities...keeping up

- Sugar Creek has some difficulties
- The continuing challenge with aligning our financial resources with community need
- Aging facilities...the Abbey, the outbuildings, the administrative buildings
- Financial
- Facilities and grounds...we have a lot and it takes a lot to keep them out their best
- Communication with the community, both macro and micro encounters: we are in an unprecedented time to communicate in so many ways. We can be such a significant value for the community. Immediate communication to announce something like a pool closing because of weather. There should be real time updates news you can use right now
- Our athletic fields are really good. I would put them up against anyone as far as the quality of turf. It would be great to have an app like SeeClickFix
- Ongoing replacement for playgrounds exists, but there are other infrastructure needs
- It will continue to be a struggle to balance our funds, and in light of the tax cap



**7. Any ideas how the District can strengthen or build new partnerships?** The overall consensus showed significant satisfaction toward the District's partnership efforts. Responses included:

- We are doing a good job communicating. The business world has done a good job in contracting out services. We need to look at contracting services.
- We have a great relationship with the City
- Our new school superintendent is great. We cooperate so much. There are no turf wars among governmental agencies
- We do work with the College, but we seem to give more than we receive, but they really don't have anything to give us
- We have good partnerships, but we are always looking to work better. The relationship with the school district, city, college are all good
- We had the hospital in Courts Plus, but they have since moved
- We do have corporate relationships
- The staff does a good job reaching out to other agencies
- There could be some cross functionality between the City and the District

- We are doing a good job. We have an ongoing parks/schools committee which has been very effective. It's important to have ongoing dialogue
- Elmhurst Historical Museum may be underutilized, so we could help drive more use
- We also support the Art Museum
- Anytime we can lower our overhead, it's great, such as the maintenance facility with the City
- We offer a lot of programs in the schools, and we are pretty good at sharing resources. It seems like the new superintendent will be great to work with

8. ***How would you assess the District's efforts in communicating with its residents?*** Any ideas for improvement? How would you assess the District's brand and image? There were many positive comments about the direction of marketing and communications. The District is headed in a much more sophisticated direction. Though, this was also seen as an area that is challenging, such as creating awareness of the District being a separate taxing body. Additional comments included:

- I think we are doing better. It is still a challenge. The new efforts have been good
- We need to benchmark other communities to see what best practice agencies are doing
- We do a good job and we are now doing a better job. Ginger is doing a great job
- The brochure is really important
- Ginger is talking about branding...more sophisticated approaches
- We do rely on the program guide. The brochure is online
- School packet information is helpful
- We need to keep doing awareness creation
- Bringing Ginger on was great. David too. The marketing department has taken a big step up
- David Price is really great
- Definitely going in the right direction. Love the direction of marketing. There should be a strategic plan for just marketing
- There can always be improvement in awareness
- We do a really good job in this area
- We do want to reach out more to those residents who do not use the Park District
- Active adults are using the District, though they may not be considered as participants...they do not take programs, but they do use trails and play golf
- I think we do really well here. We have a staff member who has a partnership with Gateway. Our staff members are involved in many service organizations
- Involvement with the youth commission and character counts
- I love our brochures. Marketing is putting together eye popping information
- The ability of people to go on the internet for information is very important



9. *When you think of social/recreation/economic trends in the market place are there any opportunities you can think of the District should take advantage of and determine if they should pursue it?* General themes in this area included fitness and wellness activities and sustainable practices. Responses included:

- Trying to get everyone healthier. We do have a pretty good message
- Kids need to get out and stay active. Anything we can do to help would be great
- Eating healthy programs would be good and partner with schools
- As a suburban Park District, we need to be a utilitarian park district. We need to go where the community wants us to go. We need to concentrate on what we do best
- The green component
- Parking lots take up so much space
- Sports fields will continue to be important. We may need to have 4 artificial sports fields
- We need to be at the forefront of reducing noise pollution
- Try a trash free park
- Technology programs, computer classes
- Fitness and wellness
- However, technology is making people lazier
- Smart equipment and technologies
- Grant opportunities and funding for green technology
- New exercise programs
- Yoga and kickboxing
- I heard that it was difficult to get into preschool; it is no longer the case
- Canoeing
- Cycling
- Walking
- Our weather is changing and we may not need as much in the way of winter sports



- Dancing such as ballroom
- Another facility in the southern part of the city
- Sustainable practices
- Bocce tournament for seniors in an indoor facility
- Active adult market
- Expand to other markets such as emoms
- Addressing the trend of inactivity...technology is great, but it can result in inactivity
- Keep an eye on the lifecycle of programs
- I want the District to be on the leading edge of creating services that are safe and desirable
- Try to bring out the ideas from the residents
- The staff do a great job scanning the environment to get new ideas
- Lighting systems to allow for longer hours of use

**10. Do you have any ideas for how the District can successfully implement the Plan?** How do we ensure the Plan becomes a document that is meaningful to the District and the community?

- I think it already is. There is the regular use for it, but there is some political reality to it
- We need to have some flexibility
- We need to do some analysis about earmarking money for a project, and if we do it, what impact will it have on other projects
- Go to the old plan and look through it because it works. Don't re-create the wheel. It's a good framework. We don't want to over-plan. Sometimes the plan is worded in too general of a way
- Be more transparent.....advertise it, roll it out in the program guide
- Regular updates
- Give staff free reign to do these things
- Laura does a good job updating the board but it could be simpler
- There are areas you want to hit such as parks and facilities, etc.
- As long as there is a good vision going forward, there will be no problem with implementation
- I am not sure how open the community is to big change...people reacted strongly about Wilder Park path improvements
- Getting the division managers involved will be helpful
- The key ideas are shared and understood and have shared understanding
- Listening by the consultant is an important trait
- Being able to prioritize and knowing what to walk away with



**11. Can you think of any questions I have not covered or any additional information you would like to share?**

- The District is doing a pretty good job. Jim knows the system well. I am proud of what they do
- I really like having 7 board members
- Having a plan is so beneficial
- It's all about the community and moving the District forward
- Be receptive to other ideas
- Stay on the best practice path
- Stay financially and fiscally sound
- Keep hiring good staff
- Board to stay on top of things
- Measurements are important
- I want to leave the Park District in as good as shape as I found it
- Do right by the taxpayers
- We need to hire the best and expect the best
- We need to make sure that we develop the staff
- Our staff and Board are really critical to the operation. As Board Members, we need to extend ourselves to ensure we continue developing our skills. We need to attend special events. We need to walk the talk. We need to go the extra mile to understand who we serve. We need to keep up with Park District information in terms of educating ourselves. We need to dialogue in non-mission critical information. We need to set an example.
- Access to parks: there are two areas of town that are lacking parks between North and First Street and West Avenue and York Road as well as South of Butterfield Road. They do not have a park to walk to. There are opportunities in the Butterfield Road area for a neighborhood park.

**Key Decision Maker Interview Questions and Responses**

As part of the process, Key Decision Makers were interviewed for their perspectives about the future direction of the Park District. This group included the following individuals:

- James Grabowski, *City Manager*
- John Quigley, *Director of the Elmhurst Chamber of Commerce*
- Dr. Alan Ray, *President of Elmhurst College*
- Peter Daniels, *President of Elmhurst Memorial Healthcare*
- Mary Beth Campe, *Director of the Elmhurst Public Library*
- David Pruneau, *Superintendent of School District 205*
- Maureen McCarthy, *Executive Director Elmhurst YMCA*

**1. Tell me about your future direction, your interest in how the Park District can align its strategic plan with yours?** Ideally, shared services and strategic plans are win/wins and benefit everybody. Specific agency responses are below.

- The Park District is a member of the Chamber in hopes of better access to businesses for sponsorships and partnership opportunities
- If taxes are going to be changed, communication to the Chamber needs to be clear and open since there will be a direct effect on the businesses who pay those taxes
- Be sure to communicate athletic improvements
- Avoid duplication of services
- Anything that would increase traffic on Prospect Avenue should be communicated. It is important to maintain the beauty along Prospect Avenue
- Park district and library overlap to some extent. The digital age will result in the use of more library space, space for small business owners, non-profits, more and more creative space with computers
- Economic development opportunities
- Elmhurst Memorial would like to discuss possibility of Senior Community Center for future – possibly use the old Elmhurst Hospital Site
- Elmhurst Memorial and the Park District have a goal of “healthy community” – the Park District should work with other community groups and civic organizations to promote this platform and partner for programming and services
- Would like to update the intergovernmental agreement to reflect the current state of the school and park district
- Visit the possibility of combining services as a way to save dollars – i.e. field and turf maintenance
- Would like to know what the future of the Park District is and how does the school district fit into this plan

**2. What are examples of organizational strengths that we need to make sure we build on for the development of a strategic plan?** High praise for the expertise of staff involved and a historically strong leadership has developed a great reputation for the District. Response to community needs is a strong strength, among others:

- Park District has control over green space – keep it that way – nice parks
- I hear about Courts Plus being a nice facility
- They have presence in the community
- I do like Jim
- I recognize their logo when I am around town
- Good financial base

- Good facilities that have potential to be great and good job maintaining what they have
  - Recreation programs that are available seem strong
  - One of many organizations within the community that keeps the fabric of the city together
  - People seem satisfied with the value for their dollar
3. What opportunities are there for improvement or areas of weakness the District needs to strengthen in order to effectively implement the plan? At times, the public is confused as to what the Park District can/cannot do. While at the same time, the District needs to ask the public what it would like to see the Park District improve upon or what they value as important. Specific ideas are:
- Need updating of facilities
  - Open space opportunities and partner with the Forest Preserve to gain the space
  - Need storm water facilities
  - A challenge will be to stay proactive and responsive with limited funds
4. ***Are there any specific facility/park/program service improvement ideas that you did not mention in number four that you consider to be a strength or an opportunity for improvement?*** There were a variety of responses to this question. Some of the Key Decision Makers are users of the Park District services while others are not. This influenced their ability to offer responses.
- Dog Park
  - Potentially a gap in programming for teens, anything additional that would help the young age
  - Update the bleacher area at Berens Park
  - Stairs need improvement and access to different levels at the Courts
  - I do a spin class, and they added more bikes which is great
  - Could develop a Water Park type pool
  - Focus on quality, safety, and the community experience when residents use the facilities
  - Would like to look at ways to combine services – possibly work with school to provide enrichment services within the community (i.e. schools and Elmhurst College).
  - Use facilities within the community versus building new as long as it is a win-win for both parties

**5. *What do you consider to be the three major issues facing the Park District in the future?***

How would you prioritize the District's efforts to tackle the issues? General themes were: how to cater to all ages, maintaining good services, offering services with a stagnant tax base, and the need for infrastructure improvements. Other responses included:

- Tax issue – justifying increased taxes is tough; make sure taxpayers know what they are getting
- Connecting with pre-teen and teen groups when technology is so prevalent
- 18+ programming might be lacking as there is some disconnect
- Continue to partner with surrounding stakeholders and routine engagement with college and their personnel
- How do we make parks and resources available to all ages
- How to integrate existing infrastructure within Wilder Park and create a single vision within the park
- Government needs to continue to prove themselves
- Declining tax base and the ability to maintain what they have
- Update as they can to keep up with competition
- Aging population
- Continue to improve level of services when already doing so well
- Goals and objectives are different compared to five years ago – funding is now an issue and therefore more difficult to prioritize
- Focus – use the strategic plan to prioritize needs and focus on those and communicate the priority well to staff and community
- Aging community – will need to increase programming services for active adults, weekend warriors, and seniors
- Continuing to provide services at good value during difficult economy
- Keeping up with the trends
- Maintaining facilities as well as they have in the past

**6. *Any ideas how the District can strengthen or build new partnerships?*** Partnerships are important to all Key Decision Makers. Responses address more about whom the District should partner with, including learning best practices from other park districts.

- Try to understand what other agencies are doing and avoid reinventing the wheel – instead partner and share resources
- Is there a way for the YMCA, College, and Park District to build an indoor pool or renovate the YMCA
- Continue partnering athletics
- The library would love to work more with the District and am not sure how, but I am really open to it

- They host their meetings here. Library may meet at Wilder
  - We need to make sure we are not duplicating programs (library)
  - White board technology to attract corporate clients
  - We have talked about everything, I think, maybe a shared office building in the future
  - Seem involved and open to partnering
  - Work with other social service organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanis
  - Use the “Healthy Community” platform and focus on how partnerships within the community can work toward this common goal
  - Work with school district to provide programs that currently each organization is providing on their own
  - Work with the City to merge some park operations in order to save on vehicles and employees
  - Consider partnerships around childcare facilities – would be nice if there were childcare resources so that parents can watch older siblings in sports/activities (Behrens Park is a good central place for this). Large food court at Berens Park that creates a destination for families would be nice
- 7. *How would you assess the District’s efforts in communicating with its residents?*** Any ideas for improvement? How would you assess the District’s brand and image? Responses were mostly positive, praising the brand and communication efforts; hoping it continues. Specific remarks:
- Fairly good – challenge is that all communication is no longer a “one size fits all”
  - Mixed image of Park District
  - Could use better communication with other media in order to refresh the image within the community
- 8. *When you think of social/recreation/economic trends in the market place are there any opportunities you can think of the District should take advantage of and determine if they should pursue it?*** Look to the partnerships and see the gaps in programs for elementary and teen kids. Other responses included:
- I work out at a club that includes all programs
  - Bar workouts, which is a good workout, some yoga
  - Employee fitness program
  - There are a lot of programs already being offered – sometimes it is difficult determining why people are not taking advantage of everything that is offered within the community
  - Possibly senior programming opportunities with Elmhurst Healthcare
  - Utilize other organizations other than Elmhurst Memorial for cooperative programming opportunities

- 9. Do you have any ideas for how the District can successfully implement the Plan?** How do we ensure the Plan becomes a document that is meaningful to the District and the community?
- Starts with stakeholders and the planning process. Important to get buy in from community members and staff
  - Continue to engage community members
  - Keep people updated year to year of progress
  - Periodically meet with stakeholders and communicate to staff
  - I would be interested in an annual report of their progress
  - Get a balanced mix of input from the community. Different parts of town have a different feeling. The North side of town feels like the step child of the community
  - How do we engage the community more?
  - Don't rely solely on public input
  - Build effective tools into the plan of how the plan will be implemented and performance measures that will be taken to ensure that goals are being achieved
  - The Park District will need to determine how they will prioritize the goals and maintain focus in order for the plan to be effective
  - A challenge will be how the Park District will bring together constituents that do not normally work together
  - Will need to communicate to community in a clear and concise report that easily outlines goals and objectives
- 10. Can you think of any questions I have not covered or any additional information you would like to share?**
- Good cross section of the community, there are a lot of smart people in the community

#### **EMPLOYEE MEETING NOTES**

The employee meeting consisted of a facilitated discussion through a series of topic areas. This meeting was different than the one on one meetings held with Board members and Key Decision Makers. This session included discussion and comments from approximately 40 staff members. The following information includes the comments from the employees in each of the topic areas.

#### Strengths to build on

- Employees
- Program variety
- Continue the use of native plant materials in new designs, park improvements
- Provide adequate staffing as we grow in managed landscapes and higher standards

### Opportunities for improvement

- Communicate the value of our natural areas and our efforts toward sustaining them
- Goal: gather great support from the community
- Develop a tree and shrub maintenance schedule
- Commit to and support athletic turf maintenance: soil amendments & irrigation
- Drop “lifetime” committee assignments – people need to refresh
- Registration system

### Opportunities to pursue

- Doing something with aging facilities
- Internal and external communication
- Administration Building – Bathroom
- Pay structure for staff
- Customer Service
- Software
- Social Media
- Interdepartmental Communication
- Internal competition of programs
- Office Space
- Gym Space

### Major Issues in the Next Five Years

- Money and Budget
- Demographics
- Technology and Data - How to analyze and use
- Aging facilities, parks and equipment
- Space
- Duplication of job responsibilities
- Outdoor Pool support – Separate from indoor pool support
- Recreation Fund
- Land locked

### Partnership Ideas

- School District – with new staff – difficult to coordinate
- Constantly bumped from space
- Facilities are small and rundown and difficult to program
- Utilize other Park Districts for Co-op on Senior and Teen Center
- Other partners could assist with park maintenance
- Utilize volunteers more effectively
- Scout Groups
- Support, train and equip those groups volunteering their time and energies
- Prairie, adopt-a-park looking for new ways for participation
- Community wide environmental cleanup day (garlic mustard – buckthorn)
- Research a youth environmental group (service project/social activities: hikes. Campouts, canoeing, social participation based on service)
- Greater use of county sheriff's SWAP program and community service participants

### Any thoughts on how to make the Strategic Plan a meaningful part of the organization?

- Employees generally satisfied with strategic planning commitment of the District
- Communicate information beyond leadership groups
- Explain Reasons/Benefits when things change
- How do we balance the Business side with the recreation side of the operation?
- Consider subsidized programs – cost recovery
- No Clear Cost Recovery Goals
- Increase efficiency with technology

### Describe the Organizational Culture

- Relaxed
- Family Atmosphere
- Staff is disbursed so we do not always communicate well
- Enterprise vs. Recreation/General Funds
- Need to strengthen communication across the organization

### Specific Facility/Park/Program Improvements

- Nature Center



- Dog Park
- Limited Indoor swim lessons
- Partner facilities need updating
- More space in Senior Center
- Green initiatives and sustainability
- Technology improvements at many sites Example B+A
- Registration systems
- New Park on Northeast side
- North side Maintenance Garage
- Outdoor Permanent Structure at Hub
- More picnic pavilions
- Indoor Tennis Courts (need more)
- Permanent Band Shell
- We should have our own bus
- Policies/Procedures
- Encroachment issues
- Parking at Administration Building
- Office space/storage
- Enhance the natural habitat around Eldridge park for future environmental classes, explorations and community enjoyment and critters
- Measure support for an environmental facility and if there is, commit to it

## Summary of District Previous Planning Efforts

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Previous planning and community and staff engagement efforts were reviewed as part of the Strategic Plan process. The following information provides details about the results of these initiatives.

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In 2011, Richard Day Research, Inc. completed an Attitude and Interest survey for the Elmhurst Park District. The survey studied overall attitudes toward the Park District, local issues, facility and program usage, reasons for non-usage and improvement ideas, demand for facilities, and willingness to pay. Overall, the Park District is regarded favorably by the residents in which 91% are satisfied with the Park District. Additionally, 70% of the household respondents feel that the Elmhurst Park District offers a good or excellent value given the level of service. When households were asked what they dislike about the Park District or what it could do better, the most common response, 38%, was “nothing.”

Park District residents tend to be very satisfied with what the Park District provides. Ninety-four percent (94%) of households surveyed are satisfied with the amount of parks and open space while 88% are satisfied with access to recreational programs and facilities. While satisfaction is strong with these two areas, household respondents identified a high demand for walking/biking trails, open space, and natural areas. One major local issue is the tax sensitivity for older (ages 50+) residents who tend to have no children and are non-users of the Park District. A challenge for the Park District will be to connect with these residents to build and maintain a positive relationship.

The primary means that Elmhurst residents learn about programs and facilities are through the Park District website (48%) and the program guide (38%). Forty-one percent (41%) of household respondents participate in Park District programs. Programs most often used are: youth athletics, non-sports programs for children, and adult athletics. Those residents that do not participate in programs attributed their reasons to a lack of need or interest versus a lack of awareness or cost.

When household respondents were asked to identify their level of support and/or willingness to pay additional tax dollars for new facilities one third (32%) responded “none.” Residents unwilling to pay for any new initiatives were age 50 and older, long-term Elmhurst residents, live alone and are non-users of Park District parks or programs.

### COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Elmhurst Park District completed a Comprehensive Master Plan in 2007 which included a series of chapters that provides information about park and recreation trends, a look at the Park District and the community of Elmhurst, a description of the visioning and community input process, a detailed classification of parks and facilities, a comparative analysis with surrounding park and recreation agencies, and recommendations for the future. During the visioning and community input process, a majority of the respondents felt satisfied with the services being

offered by the Park District. However, the Park District has a mission to create a “Lifetime of Enjoyment” for its residents and users. Based on this philosophy, a series of goals were presented in regards to Park District management and operation. These goals were developed in the following categories:

- Administration
- Interagency Cooperation
- Financial Resources
- Board/Staff Education
- Customer Service
- Communications
- Public Awareness
- Volunteers
- Acquisition
- Program Access
- Programs
- Health
- Environmental Education
- Maintenance and Planning
- Image
- Open Space and Historic Integrity
- Park & Facility Enhancement
- Capital Projects

#### **STRATEGIC PLAN**

As part of the 2007 Comprehensive Master Plan, the Elmhurst Park District completed a Strategic Plan. A list of priorities and goals were developed by staff to provide direction for decision-making. These include: Maintain Current Facilities; Create Green Space; Comprehensively and Strategically Optimize Current and Future Facility Space; Ensure Organizational Health; Optimize Relationships with Organizations Individuals, and Community; Forecast, Evaluate and Implement Best Practices. For each of these priorities a specific goal was set to assist staff with completing each priority. Park District staff utilized the 2007 priorities and goals as a measurement tool of success for the creation of the 2013 Strategic Plan.

#### **INDOOR FACILITY STUDY**

In 2009, an indoor facility study was completed for the purpose of translating the Elmhurst Park

District's Community Survey and Comprehensive Plan into an actionable and prioritized Facility Master Plan that strategically addresses the District's short and long-term programmatic service needs and locates the need for facility improvements in a geographically appropriate manner.

The guidelines included expansion of program space; improvement of support spaces including offices, workspaces, and storage space; technology improvements, while considering parking, customer services, "greening" facilities and aesthetics. Facility improvements/additions recommendations included:

- Relocating Senior Center and Administration Facility
- Expanding Wagner Community Center
- Rebuilding several preschool facilities
- Maximizing expansions at Courts Plus Fitness Center
- Adding a North Side Supplementary Storage Garage
- Reconfiguring space at Sugar Creek Golf Course clubhouse and constructing a new golf maintenance facility

#### **ORGANIZATIONAL PLANNING TEAM FEEDBACK**

As part of the 2012 strategic planning process, the Park District Organizational Planning Teams (Administration, Operations, and Programming) met, developed, and voted on a list of priorities for the District. These priorities were separated into three categories based on the number of votes received from staff. Priority A received over 14 votes, Priority B received 8 to 14 votes, and Priority C received 1 to 7 votes.

The list of priorities (A) that were highest on the list for staff included:

- Evaluate the coordination of similar program areas
- Establish a central office location for the Administration staff
- Add a northerly located maintenance facility
- Implement "green" practices such as solar panel powered lights, water capture system, and other alternative energy sources
- Provide a district wide customer service training program
- Use space more efficiently across departments and programs
- Replace the Hub tent structure

Priorities B and C listed several ideas based around a few common themes. The need for additional programming space and/or better utilization of space ranged from athletic fields to more storage space. The improvement of facilities like Berens Park and the Sugar Creek maintenance facility were another area addressed. Staff also voted for better training ideas and for support programs to improve their work experience and to help them provide the highest quality of service.

## Board and Staff Workshop Information

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The initial Board and staff workshop on May 14, 2012 included facilitated discussion relating to organizational performance and identification of major issues. The organizational performance discussion included a review of previous planning efforts and an organizational SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). These included the following.

### **Strengths**

- Program diversity
- Image
- Strong fiscal health
- Innovative
- Functional
- Planning
- Asset and replacement planning
- Skill sets of staff
- Personal commitment
- Strong ethics
- Strong board commitment
- Technology
- Safety

### **Weaknesses**

- Rule heavy; we have rules for everything
- Aging infrastructure
- Somewhat landlocked
- Decreasing state funding
- Customer service consistency
- Technology
- Will be hard to “sell” a new building
- We have too much of a mindset of doing things because we have always done things a certain way

### **Opportunities**

- New communication opportunities
- New park district way – more business way
- Citywide storm water management
- Partnerships

- Lead and educate on fitness
- How to connect with families without children
- Untapped customers
- Community wide events
- Growing minority population
- Become mobile/virtual
- Provide support areas historically done by the schools
- Educate the community on sustainable practices
- Continue partnering with other agencies for efficiencies
- Strengthening the use of volunteers
- Continue to pursue alternative revenues such as grants and sponsorships

### **Threats**

- Competition from neighboring park districts
- There is a limit to what we can do
- State's perception
- Anti-government
- We need to keep doing things well
- Competition for grants
- Competing with schools for resources
- Downward property values
- Is youth population decreasing?
- The community isn't very "green" or environmentally conscious
- The use of technology can be good, but it may also may take people away from our services
- Private enterprise

The follow up Board workshop on May 29, 2012 involved further refinement of the mission and vision as well as initial work on the development of strategic themes. The Board approved the strategic themes on June 25, 2012. Subsequently, the Management Team and division managers met three times in June and July, 2012 to develop strategic objectives and initiatives. A final staff workshop on July 12, 2012 included Management Team members, division managers, and supervisors. This workshop included training on the new plan and provided direction on the development of tactics.

## Major Focus Areas

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In addition to discussion of the issues identified in the SWOT exercise, the Board and staff members were asked to brainstorm ideas about major areas the District should focus on during the next three to five years. After the review of organizational performance, the Board and Management Team discussed what they considered to be the key areas of focus based on these results.

The Major Focus Areas (MFAs) consist of several key areas of organizational direction. The significance of the MFAs list is to ensure elements of the Strategic Plan address these areas. The seven areas identified included:

- Internal and external customer service
- Environmental stewardship
- Develop/nurture partnerships
- Physical/Human infrastructure
- Financial sustainability
- Internal and external communication
- Product mix/offerings

## The Balanced Scorecard

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The Elmhurst Strategic Plan is based on the Balanced Scorecard, a strategy framework that emphasizes the cause and effect relationships among distinct yet interrelated perspectives: customer needs, financial performance, internal support processes, and organizational learning and growth. The Scorecard also includes a measurement system that monitors organizational performance. The Scorecard focuses on the key drivers of success that lead to the achievement of mission and vision.

Robert Kaplan and David Norton developed the Scorecard in the early 1990s. At the time, they believed that knowledge based assets were becoming increasingly important. Yet, most organizations at the time measured financial results while not measuring employee capabilities, information systems, quality and innovation.

Since that time, both private and public sector organizations have implemented the Balanced Scorecard. The Scorecard has evolved from a metrics process to a strategic planning framework. The premise of the Scorecard is to develop a strategy-based measurement system that becomes the foundation for the development of strategy.

The Balanced Scorecard framework includes four themes:

- Customer: To achieve our mission and vision, how should we appear to our customers?
- Financial: To succeed financially, how should we appear to our taxpayers?

- Internal business: To satisfy our customers, which business practices must we do extremely well?
- Learning and growth: To achieve our mission and vision, how will we sustain our ability to change and improve, and develop leaders among the staff and Board?

Basic tenets of the four themes are outlined more specifically below. This list includes specific examples of areas for consideration within each theme.

### **Customer**

- Product/service attributes such as price, programs, quality, availability of services
- Customer relationships
- Service qualities such as access mechanisms, service standards, customer requirements and encounters
- Partnerships

### **Financial**

- Revenue growth
- Productivity
- Financial results
- Cost recovery
- Efficiency
- Tax versus non-tax revenue percentages

### **Internal Business**

- Operations Management (maintenance practices, program development, park design)
- Customer management processes (support systems and technology)
- Innovation processes
- Regulatory and social processes (safety and environmental)

### **Learning and Growth**

- Human capital (competencies)
- Information capital (organizational knowledge)
- Organization capital (culture, work environment, leadership)

The strategic recommendations included in this Plan outline future efforts and resource allocation relating to these four themes. This approach ensures a focus on the customer, continuous improvement to internal support processes such as marketing, financial and human resources support, financial sustainability and supporting organizational learning and growth in support of strategic direction.



## Strategic Plan Hierarchy

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The Plan includes a hierarchy of elements that starts with the most macro level of strategy and moves to a more micro level (moving from strategic to tactical). The starting point for any strategic planning process is the review of the mission and vision. The mission and vision statements were changed from previous wording, simplified, and made more meaningful and memorable. Great care was given to discussion about “customers.” The word customer describes not only Park District residents, but non-residents as well. In addition, customers are not only users of services, but taxpayers in general.

Subsequent to the development of mission and vision by the Board, themes and objectives were developed by staff. Themes are very broad brushed descriptions of strategic direction. Objectives describe what the District needs to do well in support of the themes. For example, one of the objectives for the theme: Customer Centered is: “Customer Experience.” Therefore, the District must identify ways to build excellent customer experiences.

Strategic initiatives, developed by staff, support the strategic objectives at a more micro level. Following along with the Customer Centered Theme, an example of an Initiative is: Create a cross-departmental team to identify, evaluate and improve current customer service system practices. As evidenced from the sequence listed above, the initiatives are more specific than the objectives, and the objectives are more specific than the themes.

A measurement system of key performance indicators follows the themes and objectives. The measurement system reflects the District’s progress in completing the Strategic Initiatives. More specific than initiatives are tactics. The tactics are detailed action steps that outline how each initiative will be accomplished. Tactics are very specific, lengthy in number, and are best developed year to year. As a result, tactics are not included within the Plan. They will be developed each year by staff for the current year Initiatives.

The Balanced Scorecard hierarchy is presented by the pyramid shown here.



## Strategy Maps

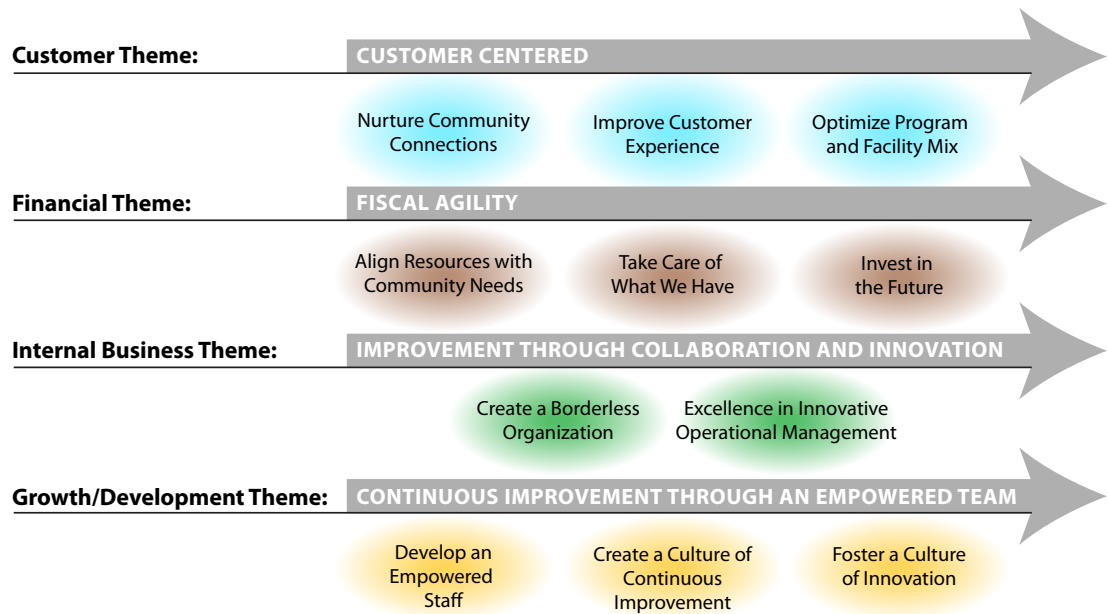
The District’s mission and vision provide the framework for the strategic recommendations. In addition, the recommendations include references to the previously mentioned Major Focus Areas.

- Internal and external customer service
- Environmental stewardship
- Develop/nurture partnerships
- Physical/Human infrastructure
- Financial sustainability
- Internal and external communication
- Product mix/offerings

The MFAs are not explicitly a part of the scorecard. Their intended purpose is to ensure efforts are made to strategically address those areas of paramount importance to the agency.

All of the strategic themes, objectives, and initiatives are aligned with the four Balanced Scorecard perspectives: customer, financial, internal business support, and learning and growth. These are represented in the following strategy maps. The first map provides the list of the four perspectives and their supporting objectives.

### *Elmhurst Park District Strategy Map*



## Strategic Themes

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In using the scorecard, the District has developed Strategic Themes that are broad-brushed organizational descriptions that provide direction. The themes are defined to ensure common understanding of their intent. They include:

**Customer:** Customer Centered Customers are defined as resident and business taxpayers, resident and non-resident users of services, and partners. Centering on the customer implies that decisions will be focused on customer needs. Elements of the theme include engaging customers for long term marketplace success through listening to the voice of the customer, building relationships, and using customer knowledge to improve services.

**Financial:** Fiscal Agility This theme suggests the District's ability to respond nimbly and quickly to ever changing business demands, to re-prioritize agency resources to meet customer demands for service, and the ability to take advantages of opportunities as they arise. This also requires the District to have just in time financial information and results for good decision making.

**Internal Business:** Improvement through Collaboration and Innovation The District's tenet of pursuing operational excellence will be achieved through an inclusive and participative team based environment. In addition, the District, rather than make decisions based on the status quo, will rely on best practice approaches founded on innovative techniques that result in sustainable organizational improvement.

**Learning and Growth:** Continuous Improvement through an Empowered Team Continuous improvement is an ongoing effort to improve products, services, and processes. These improvements will be accomplished through both Board members and staff by providing the tools and opportunities necessary to work together as a team and make decisions in the best interest of the District.

The Themes, along with the Major Focus Areas, provide the over-arching framework for the Plan's implementation. The Balanced Scorecard also includes a measurement system to measure the progress and outcomes of the strategic themes and objectives. The following exhibit lists the strategic themes with examples of supporting measures. The staff will discuss measures and finalize them at a later date, previous to the Plan's implementation. Typically, the number of measures is between 12-20.

*Examples of potential measures to track progress toward Strategy*

<b>Customer Theme:</b>	<b>CUSTOMER CENTERED</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% Space utilization per season - Quarterly</li> <li>Partner satisfaction - Annually</li> <li>Program success rate - Quarterly</li> <li>Overall customer satisfaction - Quarterly</li> <li>Market penetration of programs and services - Quarterly</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Theme:</b>	<b>FISCAL AGILITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost recovery goals - Quarterly</li> <li>Annual cost savings - Annually</li> <li>% of non-tax revenue - Quarterly</li> <li>Revenue growth - Quarterly</li> <li>Return on investment for new facilities - Annually</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Business Theme:</b>	<b>IMPROVEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Borderless survey satisfaction - Annually</li> <li>% of key processes improved - Annually</li> <li>Carbon footprint - Annually</li> </ul>
<b>Growth/Development Theme:</b>	<b>CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT THROUGH AN EMPOWERED TEAM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee satisfaction - Annually</li> <li>Quantified savings from improvements - Annually</li> <li>Innovation assessment - Annually</li> </ul>

## Objective Statements

The following section outlines the intended meaning of the Strategic Objectives. Similar to the narratives listed above for the Strategic Themes, the objectives have written statements to define their intended meaning and common understanding of terms.

### Customer Centered Objectives

**Objective A: Nurture Community Connections:** The District will continue its strong orientation toward community connections and partnership development. This will also assist in augmenting service delivery. Important to this objective will be identifying the goals, costs, and benefits of existing and future partnerships and to evaluate their effectiveness.

**Objective B: Improve Customer Experience:** An important element in operational excellence includes the ability to improve the customer experience. Building a systems approach

to service delivery will be achieved through a cross functional service team. This includes development of standards, implementing District wide service training, knowledge of customers, and measuring customer satisfaction.

**Objective C: Optimize Program and Facility Mix:** The District wants to ensure the delivery of the “right” array of services and programs. The “right” array is determined by matching customer needs, demand, marketplace trends and District capabilities. This also includes reviewing service and facility offerings to optimize facility space.

## Fiscal Agility Objectives

**Objective A: Align Resources with Community Need:** The District will rely on statistically valid survey information and ongoing resident feedback in deciding capital priorities. Decisions will be based on providing for the strategic greater good of the community rather than randomly selecting tactical approaches in response to special interests. This objective also emphasizes the importance of using sophisticated pricing approaches based on financial targets and market demands.

**Objective B: Take Care of What We Have:** The Elmhurst community expects the District to adequately care for current assets before investing in new parks and facilities. As growth and unmet user needs are addressed, the District will also ensure continued maintenance and investment in the existing infrastructure. This includes identifying the operating and maintenance costs for proposed new facilities and developing plans for replacement of existing assets.

**Objective C: Invest In The Future:** The District desires to be flexible and nimble in order to take advantage of opportunities that arise. The goal is to position the agency in its ability to meet future demand and customer preferences. At the same time, there will be continued effort in identifying efficiencies throughout operations, such as utility consumption.

## Improvement through Collaboration and Innovation Objectives

**Objective A: Create a Borderless Organization:** Effective communication across the organization results in efficient internal service, in support of providing excellent external service. Internal seamlessness and ongoing communication is vitally important and requires identification of workplace barriers and standard operating procedures to guide staff in working effectively with others.

**Objective B: Excellence in Innovative Operational Management:** The District will efficiently and effectively leverage labor resources in operations. Furthermore, the District will identify and continuously improve key processes and work toward adopting industry best practices.

## Continuous Improvement through an Empowered Team Objectives

**Objective A: Develop an Empowered Staff:** Leadership competencies will include a participative leadership style and team based approaches.

In addition, leaders will define empowerment and provide guidelines and boundaries for employee decision making.

**Objective B: Create a Culture of Continuous Improvement:** A continuous improvement environment requires all staff and Board members of the District to play a role in improvement efforts. It also requires knowledge of process improvements, or having knowledge about waste and errors in work methods and how to streamline them. This culture suggests the need to question status quo thinking.

**Objective C: Foster a Culture of Innovation:** Innovation requires a work culture that embraces change and is supported by encouraging staff to try new processes and services. Alignment exists between agency systems such as recruitment, hiring, reward and recognition, and performance feedback in support of adopting innovation. Changes in programs and services result from knowledge of industry trends and future customer requirements.

## Strategic Initiatives 2013-2017

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The following are the themes, objectives, and initiatives for the next four years, 2013-2017. Time period priorities are attached to each Initiative as follows:

- Short Term Initiatives to be accomplished between January 2012 and December 2014
- Mid Term Initiatives to be accomplished between January 2015 and December 2016
- Long Term Initiatives to be accomplished between January 2017 and December 2017
- Ongoing Goals are repeated continuously during the next five years

## Elmhurst Park District Themes, Objectives, and Initiatives

### **Customer Theme: Customer Centered**

#### **OBJECTIVE A: NURTURE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

1. Create a process for a review of existing and potential partnerships according to established criteria such as return on investment, District workload demands, alignment with mission, and fulfilling community need *Short Term*
2. Develop, nurture, and evaluate existing affiliate and partner programs *Continuous*
3. Develop and identify new opportunities based on strategic plan, program plan and facility needs *Mid-term*

#### **OBJECTIVE B: IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

1. Create a cross-departmental team to identify, evaluate and improve current customer service system practices *Short Term*
2. Enhance and develop technological solutions to communicate with customers to provide greater access and communication (web, e-newsletter, etc.) *Continuous*

#### **OBJECTIVE C: OPTIMIZE PROGRAM AND FACILITY MIX**

1. Develop a District Program Plan based on the attitude and interest survey, competition, current needs, future trends, and organizational resources *Short Term*
2. Create a process for review of the external market to determine duplication, opportunities, needs, pricings, etc. *Mid Term*
3. Optimize Current and Future Facility Space *Mid Term*
4. Implement findings from Comprehensive Plan and Indoor Space Study, where appropriate *Continuous*
5. Identify and implement sustainable practices *Continuous*

**Financial Theme: Fiscal Agility**

**OBJECTIVE A: ALIGN RESOURCES WITH COMMUNITY NEED**

1. Identify return on investment of future capital projects *Short Term*
2. Develop a systematic approach to pricing of services *Mid Term*
3. Evaluate costs and benefits of green initiatives *Mid Term*
4. Utilize technology for efficiency, customer service, and reporting (data mining and analytics, financial software, registration, customer self-service) *Continuous*
5. Ensure transparency by communicating ethics and values to community and internally *Continuous*

**OBJECTIVE B: TAKE CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE**

1. Complete a work analysis/staffing review to determine the best allocation of labor dollars *Short Term*
2. Develop a process to best position core services and programs in the marketplace *Mid Term*
3. Create a comprehensive asset management plan that is linked to Capital Plan *Long Term*

**OBJECTIVE C: INVEST IN THE FUTURE**

1. Seek new opportunities that will positively impact this District's finances *Mid Term*
2. Continue to seek creative cost saving opportunities *Mid Term*

**Internal Business Theme: Improvement through Collaboration and Innovation**

**OBJECTIVE A: CREATE A BORDERLESS ORGANIZATION**

1. Create systems to measure internal business performance *Mid Term*
2. Develop and utilize cross-functional planning teams *Continuous*
3. Evaluate and enhance communication among District employees *Continuous*

**OBJECTIVE B: EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATIVE OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

1. Develop a methodology to identify key processes and develop a systematic approach to improvement (examples include hiring process, registration process, etc.) *Long Term*
2. Develop a dashboard of key performance indicators to assess and improve organizational performance *Long Term*
3. Research and implement best practices *Mid Term*
4. Institutionalize sustainable internal operations *Continuous*



**Learning and Growth Theme: Continuous Improvement through an Empowered Team****OBJECTIVE A: DEVELOP AN EMPOWERED STAFF**

1. Strengthen internal communication practices *Short Term*
2. Develop leaders *Mid Term*
3. Reinforce team based approaches throughout the District *Mid Term*

**OBJECTIVE B: CREATE A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

1. Consider a board assessment process to continuously improve Board governance *Mid Term*
2. Provide education to all staff in support of continuous improvement *Long Term*
3. Formalize a process for management of organizational knowledge *Long Term*

**OBJECTIVE C: FOSTER A CULTURE OF INNOVATION**

1. Research industry trends and identify ways of integrating new ideas into programs, facilities, and services *Mid Term*
2. Establish organizational systems to promote innovation *Long Term*
3. Implement techniques to support innovative practices *Mid Term*

## Implementation Guidelines

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The following is a listing of suggestions for successful implementation of the Strategic Plan. It represents the commitment and discipline required to institutionalize the process.

- The Plan becomes the guidepost for the District. When decisions or responses to the community are needed, the Plan becomes the reference point for decision making and whether or not new issues or responses to the community are of higher importance than what's been established as existing direction.
- Include Strategic Plan information as part of the new Board member and employee orientation program.
- Post a summary or shortened version of the Plan on the Website and track results on the site as well. It may also be helpful to print a short summary of the Plan's progress to distribute to interested partners and community members.
- A staff person or team should have responsibility of being the project manager of the Plan's implementation to ensure successful implementation.
- Regular reporting of the Plan's progress should occur. Break the Plan into separate fiscal years and report one year at a time, as an ongoing annual work plan. Each initiative for the year should include a list of tactics that support the goal's completion. The tactics are developed prior to each year. It is the project leader's responsibility to report on his/her goal, included in a monthly or quarterly report. A suggestion is to input each year's data on a spreadsheet that lists the Themes, Objectives and Initiatives start date and completion date, and which staff person is responsible for the Initiative's completion.
- At the end of the year, perform an annual review and documentation of the initiatives.
- Update major stakeholders on the Plan's implementation and results on an annual basis.
- Conduct staff meetings on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to review the Plan's progress and results and report the Plan's progress to the Park Board on a quarterly basis.
- The performance appraisal process should reflect the completion of the Strategic Plan Initiatives as an evaluation criterion. Also, performance criteria should be aligned with values of the District such as innovation, teamwork, and accountability.
- Track the measurement system on a quarterly basis. Some of the measures will be calculated annually. Provide an annual narrative about the results. Review the inventory of measures on an annual basis and make adjustments as necessary to ensure the measures continuously add value to decision making. Include a combination of lagging and leading indicators. (Lagging indicators or outcomes measure past performance; leading indicators or performance drivers assist in establishing future performance.)
- After completion of the first year of the Plan and baseline results are quantified, targets should be initiated for the measurement system.
- There should be an annual just-in-time review of the next year's Initiatives to determine if priorities have changed. This can be included at an annual retreat in which successive years' Initiatives are discussed as part of the annual budget process. Initiatives should tie into the budget process.
- Post a chart of each year's initiatives on office walls in administrative areas with a check-off column designating completion as part of a visual management program. Staff meetings

should regularly include discussion of strategy. This is a part of the visualization process to emphasize the Plan's importance and the District's commitment to execution.

- After each year of the Plan, the staff should review the Plan's process and re-tool any parts of the process that need improvement.
- If there are ideas for new strategies that arise throughout the year, include them on a written "parking lot" and review them as part of the annual just-in-time review to determine if they supplant any existing initiatives.

## Summary

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The Elmhurst Park District Strategic Plan 2013-2017 represents the District's commitment and continued road to success in strategic planning endeavors.

*We aspire to be a customer centered organization through innovation and sustainability*

In order to succeed in achieving the aspiration of being customer centered, driving innovation, and continuing organizational sustainability, the District will focus its efforts in aligning the four theme areas with the vision, as follows:

- Community Centered
- Fiscal Agility
- Improvement through Collaboration and Innovation
- Continuous improvement through an Empowered Team

The Strategic Plan is the start of continuous improvement through an empowered team. Board members, Key Decision Makers in the community, Management Team, division managers, and supervisors all played an integral role in developing strategy. It was through this collaborative effort, including diverse thoughts and perspectives, which results in organizational excellence. This, in turn, provides Elmhurst Park District customers with value added services and an excellent return on investment in taxpayer dollars and fees for programs and services. Additionally, the successful pursuit of these strategies will further build the District's sustainable practices and its leadership role in the community.

## Definitions

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The following list of key words describes the definition of the terminology used for the Strategic Plan.

**Mission**—describes the business of the organization. The mission also defines the core purpose of the organization and why it exists.

**Vision**—desired future of the organization. The vision should be a “stretch” for the organization, but possible to achieve in approximately five years. It should state a measurable achievement.

**Balanced Scorecard Perspectives**—the four perspectives include Customer, Financial, Internal Business Process, and Learning and Growth. They demonstrate cause and effect relationships in the completion of strategy. All of the Strategic Initiatives are aligned with these four perspectives.

**Major Focus Areas**—as part of the planning workshop, Board and staff members were asked to brainstorm ideas about areas of major focus the Department should concentrate on during the next five years. While the focus areas are not part of the strategy map, they do become an important part of strategy formulation. Within the list of objectives and initiatives, references are made throughout the Plan to ensure focus on the most critical areas.

**Strategic Themes**— broad brushed, macro-oriented organizational sense of direction that relates to the four Balanced Scorecard perspectives of customer, financial, internal business, and growth and development.

**Strategic Objectives**—concise statements describing the specific elements an organization must do well in order to execute its strategy.

**Measures**—a standard used to evaluate and communicate performance against expected results. Measures are normally quantitative indicators and capture numbers, dollars, percentages, etc. Measures assist the staff with the ability to determine organizational performance.

**Strategic Initiatives**—the specific programs, activities, projects, or actions an organization will undertake in an effort to meet performance targets. The strategic initiatives are specifically detailed with specific tactics, which are not included within the body of the Strategic Plan, but will exist in separate documentation.

**Tactics**—Tactics are not included as part of the Plan. The development occurs after the Plan’s implementation. Tactics are subordinate to the initiatives and detail the steps necessary to complete an initiative. Staff members will identify the tactics for the initiatives before the start of each fiscal year.