

Goal 1: Leadership.

The District will be recognized as a model of organizational effectiveness and a leader in its field.

Priority 1: Invest in technology to improve its internal efficiency, enhance its ability to communicate with and serve citizens, increase accessibility and equip District personnel with the tools they need to effectively manage and maintain preserves as a benefit for all DuPage County.

- Implemented many technological advances like cloud computing, SharePoint, iSolved, iHire, electronic requisitions and tools for remote work and online collaboration.
- Made website updates aligning with user expectations like mobile readiness.
- Launched online permit reservation system.
- Instituted technological advancements for public safety like body cameras and license plate readers.
- Accelerated use of electronic documents.
- Implemented a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.
- Utilized software to track the progress and plan for natural resource restoration projects.
- Utilized online bidding platform.
- Deployed online safety training platform.

Priority 2: Improve governance systems. Develop better systems for orienting new Commissioners to the mission, vision and values of the District; transferring knowledge prior to Board and organizational leadership succession; facilitating greater communication and alignment between Board and Staff, among Board members and between Board and external stakeholders; and providing ongoing training and Board development.

- Created online and physical onboarding materials for board members.
- Ensured board members are notified of major events and newsworthy activities.
- Launched online system for submitting public comments.
- Updated the Organizational Ordinance.
- Enhanced livestreaming of board meetings.
- Migrated to electronic board meeting agenda packets.

Priority 3: Promote innovation & thought leadership. Articulate and proactively seek opportunities in key areas in which the District can position itself as an innovator and thought leader among environmental and conservation organizations.

- Partnered and hosted local conservation symposia.
- Attended and presented as subject matter experts at various conferences.
- Expanded social media presence and created digital content to promote cutting edge work of the District.
- Supported leadership development and participation in professional organizations.
- Obtained various awards for fleet, finance, capital developments, natural resources and marketing efforts.
- Lead regional conservation agency committees.

Priority 4: Create a culture of collaboration. Create an organizational culture in which District values are actively promoted, along with communication, respect, open-mindedness and collaboration.

- Updated or created numerous policies (Historical & Cultural Resources, Mosquito Management, Building Renewal, Grant Award, Wildlife, Investment, Housing, Retirement from Service of Horses, Adoption of Horses, Purchasing, Solar and Land Acquisition Policies).
- Improved seasonal employment process in response to staff input.
- Revamped employee e-newsletter and hosted internal All-Hands Meetings.
- Developed promotional materials and hosted events celebrating the District's Centennial.
- Deployed ERP system.
- Held monthly meetings to track Master Plan implementation.

Priority 5: Invest in staff training and professional development. Implement a professional development and training program for staff at different levels throughout the organization to foster a culture of empowerment and innovation.

- Created new leadership track positions to promote internal growth.
- Allocated additional resources for professional development training.
- Deployed supervisor, leader and other compliance and non-compliance related training.
- Provided various professional development opportunities (Midwest Leadership Institute, EQ-LEAD team, other seminars and in-house trainings).
- Administered MBTI assessments to supervisors.

Goal 2: Sustainability.

The District will operate in a manner that is both financially and environmentally sustainable.

Priority 1: Engage in organization-wide financial planning focused on ensuring sustainable funding, prioritizing current activities, and finding other areas of funding.

- Updated purchasing policy.
- Initiated Landfill Fund Analysis.
- Created Annual Reports and Citizens Guides to Financial Reports.
- Updated board on financial matters and provided budget training for senior staff.
- Analyzed fee structure.
- Grew the Friends of the Forest Preserve and created the Partnership and Philanthropy department.
- Aligned budget with the Master Plan and Strategic Plans through departmental goals and KPIs.
- Passed a referendum to support mission-based activities.
- Issued debt for capital projects, equipment and land acquisition.
- Completed compensation study and benefits evaluation.
- Implemented changes to health insurance options.
- Implemented process improvements to manage expenses.

Priority 2: Re-engineer and re-focus the organization (across the agency and by department) to align with the goals & priorities of the strategic plan to support sustainability.

- Implemented ongoing adjustments to departmental structure where needed.
- Conducted employee surveys related to wellbeing investments.
- Encouraged employees to practice consumerism in health plan choices and benefit selections.
- Expanded asset essentials work order system.

- Sharpened focus on prioritizing natural resource restoration and maintaining existing natural and physical assets.

Priority 3: Engage in ongoing, collaborative, organization-wide assessment and planning.

- Adopted the 2019 Master Plan.
- Created annual departmental goals and KPIs for the budget to align with the Master and Strategic Plans.
- Revised multiple policies.
- Presented to the Board about various organizational initiatives and accomplishments.
- Revised board summaries to indicate item alignment with the Strategic and Master Plans.
- Implemented ERP system providing immediate access to budget and expenditure information.
- Formalized the development of organizational strategy and tracking of strategic issues within the Executive Office.
- Issued monthly internal e-newsletters and hosted annual All-Hands meetings.
- Shared progress on master plan and other major capital and renewal projects at internal monthly meetings.
- Initiated Strategic Plan Update.

Priority 4: Exceed standards for reducing the District's environmental footprint, energy efficiency and waste management.

- Completed identified landfill projects and implemented green practices and beneficial uses of byproducts.
- Completed Clean Energy, Resiliency and Sustainability Plan.
- Created a Solar Policy.
- Utilized alternative fuels in 95% of District's fleet vehicles.
- Implemented energy efficiency, solar and NetZero projects and initiatives.
- Purchased renewable energy offsets for energy consumption.
- Shifted to electronic documents and records.
- Deployed solar powered golf car fleet.
- Used green products for repairs, paint, parts cleaners, janitorial supplies and employee events.

Priority 5: Achieve a state in which all assets are revitalized, with a plan for meeting the future maintenance/infrastructure needs for each asset.

- Continued preventative and routine maintenance program.
- Adopted Building Renewal Policy and created Building Renewal Fund.
- Initiated Asset Management Plan to evaluate current assets, identify needs and align priorities with long-term financial planning.
- Removed numerous structures with no identified use.
- Invested in projects addressing inefficient, outdated and deteriorating structures.

Goal 3: Community/Public Outreach and Engagement.

The District will proactively provide and promote opportunities to engage communities, affinity groups and individuals in ongoing dialogue to foster greater collaboration, trust, accountability and alignment among the District, the public and its partners.

Priority 1: Build strategic partnerships with mission-aligned municipal, corporate and academic organizations to further the District's reach, impact and efficiency.

- Established a Strategic Framework to evaluate existing and develop new programming.

- Refined program mix, offerings and rentals through data gathering and pilot initiatives.
- Refined large event offerings.
- Added a new education site and expanded hours, improved infrastructure and increased operational capabilities at existing sites.
- Reorganized internally to more effectively deliver programming.
- Outreach to academic and public resource organizations to support recruitment.
- Created role within Partnership & Philanthropy department to cultivate external relationships.
- Expanded corporate workday programs.
- Refined and deployed programs for schools and teacher development.
- Participated in many local and regional conservation groups.
- Enhanced relationships with regional law enforcement agencies.
- Approved an agreement with DuPage County for shared services.
- Negotiated favorable license agreements to provide more benefits.
- Secured many sponsorships.
- Actively monitored grant programs and cultivated relationships with regulators and granting organizations.
- Hosted Legislative Breakfasts to communicate priorities to elected officials.
- Hosted donor cultivation and recognition events.
- Provided regular volunteer training and hosted appreciation events.
- Leveraged relationships with frequent visitors and participants to advocate for the District.
- Outreach to DuPage County Health Department to provide mental health resources and services for employees.
- Utilized community groups to advocate for Willowbrook capital campaign.

Priority 2: Improve opportunities for public interaction and dialogue. Improve existing opportunities and provide innovative ways for two-way interaction and dialogue between the public and the District to improve understanding, trust and accountability.

- Tracked and evaluated data from programs, internet and social media to ensure Strategic Framework alignment and to inform decisions.
- Performed a countywide attitude and interest survey.
- Gathered public input regarding projects and initiatives.
- Provided more avenues for the public to provide feedback electronically.

Priority 3: Proactively provide community education related to District initiatives & services focused on helping the community become better educated about the value of the District.

- Gained support through outreach regarding prescription burns and deer management.
- Inventoried interpretive signs and initiated ongoing evaluation and refinement.
- Utilized traditional and social media to educate the public about natural resources issues and other programming.
- Worked with school groups to encourage engagement and advocacy in youth.
- Hosted in-house job fairs.
- Expanded nature programming at golf preserves.
- Generated interest and visits from new users through social media content.
- Installed new exhibits at DuPage Wildlife and Conservation Center and prioritized upgrades at remaining sites.
- Quantified ecosystem services in the Clean Energy, Resiliency and Sustainability Plan and highlighted them in various presentations to the board and the public.

- Increased awareness of the public regarding budgets and the District's funding sources.

Goal 4: Natural & Cultural Stewardship.

The District will continue to maintain and improve upon its legacy as responsible stewards of DuPage County's natural and cultural resources through effective resource management, responsible and strategic acquisition, proactive maintenance and appropriate allocation of financial and human resources.

Priority 1: Evaluate current assets, infrastructure and environmental footprint, including an assessment of the financial impact on the agency of each natural asset, in order to effectively prioritize resource management projects based intended use and accurately plan for long-term maintenance and management.

- Adopted Land Preservation Plan and Policy.
- Issued new debt to acquire land and fund capital reinvestments.
- Passed a referendum to support mission-based activities.
- Initiated Districtwide Natural Areas Habitat Improvement Services Project.
- Directed additional funding to Natural Resource Restoration Projects.
- Managed natural areas at The Preserve through enterprise funds.
- Initiated updating Preserve Master Plans.

Priority 2: Develop a natural resource plan for the District that will identify priority initiatives, areas of focus and long-term investment, based on financial resources and intended use of natural assets.

- Identified priority projects in the Master Plan.
- Presented informational items to the Board on natural resource policies and regional natural resource planning.
- Created short- and long-term goals for wildlife and plant propagation.
- Partnered with external groups to fund and accomplish large natural resource restoration projects.
- Tracked progress and planning of natural resource restoration activities.

Priority 3: Develop a cultural resource plan for the District that will identify priority initiatives, areas of focus and long-term investment, based on financial resources and intended use of cultural and historical assets.

- Adopted Historical and Cultural Resources Policy.
- Identified Cultural Resources Plan as a Master Plan Initiative.
- Adopted Building Renewal Policy including a process for financial forecasting.
- Developed agreements with allied agencies for the preservation and use of historical structures.
- Performed Cultural Resource Evaluations of historic structures.

Priority 4: Create a plan for strategic acquisition of land in DuPage County taking into consideration financial resources.

- Adopted Land Preservation Plan and Policy.
- Updated Property Rating System.
- Board identified priority properties and initiated acquisitions.
- Issued new debt for land acquisition.

Goal 5: Connecting People to Nature.

The District will actively engage people of all ages, backgrounds, and walks of life in opportunities to connect with nature, in order to improve the quality of life and health in DuPage County and foster a lifelong appreciation of nature among its citizens.

Priority 1: Improve access to the District and its programs, services and sites by fostering a sense of approachability, and removing barriers to accessing and enjoying the District's resources.

- Improved accessibility of trails and other various facilities.
- Created a Recreational Accessibility Plan.
- Deployed equipment to increase accessible recreation opportunities.
- Launched online registration system.
- Redesigned website to improve accessibility.
- Adopted Master Plan, certified projects and initiatives in progress.
- Expanded non-golf recreational and educational opportunities at golf preserves.
- Evolved communication strategy to reach new audiences.

Priority 2: Promote the health benefits of being in nature. Through its marketing and communications, the District will promote the image of a health-conscious organization as well as the health benefits of an active, outdoor lifestyle.

- Integrated health, wellness and quality of life into District messaging.
- Established wellness committee and refocused it on employee wellbeing.
- Provided a variety of wellness related events and opportunities like wellness screenings, lunch and learns, and employee events.
- Hosted employee health screenings annually.
- Distributed wellness materials to staff from health insurance providers monthly.
- Tracked anonymized health metrics to determine trends over time.
- Partnered with regional law enforcement agencies to promote mental health resources.
- Promoted the health benefits of being in nature through an awareness campaign.
- Participated in regional health related initiatives with partners to promote District sites as places to be physically active.

Priority 3: Strengthen District branding and marketing to better distinguish the District and its assets from other similar nonprofit or municipal organizations in support of increasing visibility, awareness and, ultimately, loyalty to the District.

- Received numerous awards at the national, state and local level for marketing initiatives and educational digital media content.
- Participated in numerous community, trade and professional events to promote the District's work.
- Celebrated the District's 100-year anniversary.
- Refined and expanded positions to develop digital and online content.
- Increased awareness through traditional & social media, monthly external e-Newsletter and networking.
- Increased visibility throughout the county through physical improvements like standardized signage, banners and vehicle wraps.
- Leveraged relationship with DuPage Convention & Visitors Bureau to expand reach.

Priority 4: Integrate a customer/visitor-service mindset throughout the organization. Throughout each department the District is operating with a customer-centric mindset focused on creating a positive overall visitor experience.

- Piloted new open hours and adjusted accordingly at multiple sites.
- Launched online registration platform.
- Added content to job descriptions and performance reviews to support a customer service focus.
- Focused resources to improve customer service of frontline staff.
- Redesigned the website to increase user friendliness and utility.
- Expanded opportunities for citizens to share concerns and provide feedback electronically.

Priority 5: Redefine and re-invigorate the District's approach to educating, inspiring and engaging the public through multiple learning disciplines (i.e. classroom, experiential, new technologies, etc.).

- Developed and implemented Strategic Framework to promote alignment of program offerings with mission.
- Expanded the production and deployment of digital educational content across multiple platforms.
- Created the ranger adventure trailer as a mobile resource to engage with users.
- Networked with external agencies to extend reach.

Priority 6: Provide programs & recreation that respond to audience interests and needs, within the context of its mission.

- Refined program offerings and special events to align with mission and generate greater impact.
- Internal departmental restructuring to be responsive to needs of education centers, sites and programming.

Priority 7: Engage and empower volunteers by establishing training opportunities for residents and volunteers to participate in natural and cultural resource management projects, administrative functions, and public engagement programs.

- Refined volunteer policies.
- Expanded and increased volunteer opportunities.
- Created and executed a volunteer training program.
- Partnered with external agencies to advance volunteerism across the county.
- Obtained awards for volunteer efforts.