

NORTH BERWYN PARK DISTRICT

North Berwyn Park District

Strategic Plan

Developed
with
the assistance of

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from

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Acknowledgments

This strategic plan is the result of the combined efforts of many people. We have received strong support from the Commissioners and staff throughout this project. Their continuing willingness to ask questions and to contribute ideas and suggestions throughout the process has been significant.

We have received significant support from Joe Vallez throughout the process. Nancy Woods has been invaluable to the ESC Team as she was making arrangements, contacting people, duplicating materials and reports, scheduling interviews and space. All staff have been most friendly, encouraging and delightful.

Many in Berwyn gave generously of their time as they participated in interviews and focus groups. Their perspectives were significant.

Key participants in the process have been:

North Berwyn Park District Commissioners

Ann Mackin, President*

Mark Sladek

Alice Konopasek*

Michael Phelan

Jeanmarie Hajer

North Berwyn Park District Staff

Joe Vallez, Executive Director*

Nancy Woods, Administrative Assistant*

**Members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee
See Appendix for Work Groups*

Goals and Key Issues

Prior to the data gathering in Step One of the project the ESC Team and the Steering Committee identified several key Issues related to the original objective of the project. Based upon this initial review, data was collected and examined. Many of these are complex. Often they are interactive. For those reasons it is important to recognize that the final plan must give consideration to all relevant operational, organizational, structural and financial issues.

The ESC Team found political issues in Berwyn which are beyond their purview. Though these political issues influence many decisions for the Park District, they are not addressed in the development of this plan.

These findings led the ESC Team to make a series of recommendation to the Steering Committee. It was the Team's recommendation that these Key Issues be the focus for the development of the long range plan.

North Berwyn Park District Strategic Plan Key Issues Explored

Initially, the client desired a strategic plan for the next 3 to 5 years which will provide a sound basis for decisions in a future filled with both known and unknown changes. The objectives of this plan are:

1. to determine the most appropriate recreational programs for a changing population;
2. to find space to deliver the desired programs;
3. to find alternative sources of support for current and future programs;
4. to achieve a stable revenue stream.

Though the basic focus was retained, additional issues emerged during the data collection phase and were determined by the Steering Committee to be of significant concern. The final set of issues to be addressed are:

Communications

- Internal - clarity, timeliness, openness
- External - with whom, to whom, for what purposes
- Improving - planning for

Communications

Key Issues Identified:

- Internal - clarity, timeliness, openness
- External - with whom, to whom, for what purposes
- Improving - planning for

Internal

Goal: Develop and maintain a team spirit through internal communications.

Objectives	Resources Needed	Responsibility	Begin	Complete by
Hold monthly staff meetings, by department.		Program Supervisors		ongoing
Develop a seasonal staff newsletter		Marketing Supervisor		ongoing
Create a staff lounge / meeting place with access to web site	room equipment computer terminal	Executive Director		ongoing
Conduct orientation program for commissioners	IAPD's Get on Board: Essential Wisdom for Board Members and Executives	Board President & Executive Director		ongoing as needed

Note: Please see "Communications - Internal Work Group Retreat Notes" in the Appendix. It contains some significant concepts and some specific suggestions which will be useful as these objectives are addressed.

Community Involvement

Key Issues Identified:

- benefits/drawbacks from use of volunteers
- business community
- building and maintaining involvement
- mutual benefits for the community and the park district
- cooperation among agencies and with other governmental bodies

Goal: Offer people opportunities to enhance our and their resources to mutually help each other

Objectives	Resources Needed	Responsibility	Begin	Complete by
Develop programs and events with other agencies		Program Supervisors		ongoing
Create a sponsorship program outlining ways for business leaders to become more involved with the Park District throughout the year		Marketing Supervisor and Executive Director		
Have regular contact with community partners for input and feedback		Executive Director		ongoing
Create a specialty program for residents to serve as teachers of an art or skill they are good at, ie. knitting, crocheting, woodwork, calligraphy, cards, etc.		Arts Supervisor		ongoing

Marketing (continued)

Objectives	Resources Needed	Responsibility	Begin	Completed by
Enhance the NBPd web site and use it to market programs and services		Administrative Assistant and Executive Director		
Promote the NBPd web site on everything from day camp t-shirts to stationery to brochures		Marketing Supervisor		ongoing
Expand the use of the <i>Hotline</i> for more programs		Program Supervisors		ongoing
Capture contact information to create databases and market appropriately to each audience		Executive Director		ongoing
Develop a <i>District-at-a Glance</i> calendar on the web site.		Marketing Supervisor		ongoing
Conduct festivals to showcase programs offered by NBPd		Executive Director		ongoing
Hide hidden messages / clues in brochures to encourage readership with prizes for the first ones to find the message / clue		Marketing Supervisor		ongoing
Create and maintain information displays to inform the public about NBPd and market programs	Portable, wall-mounted units with pockets	Executive Director		ongoing

Program (continued)

Goal: 2. Have arts programming to increase access to and awareness of the arts.

Objectives	Resources Needed	Responsibility	Begin	Complete by
Provide art publications for staff and public use	Acquisition budget Shelving	Arts Supervisor		ongoing
Form relationships with schools and arts organizations		Arts Supervisor		ongoing
Establish NBPD as a recognized venue for quality performances		Arts Supervisor		ongoing
Work with schools and art organizations for cooperative arts programming		Art Supervisor		ongoing
Offer cultural arts programming for adults		Art Supervisor		ongoing

Financial (continued)

Objectives	Resources	Responsibility	Begin	Complete by
Compare NBPD program costs with similar park districts	Neighboring park districts Illinois Assn. of Park Districts National Recreation and Park Association Rockford, IL, Park District	Executive Director		
Explore ways to maximize the tax base and revenue stream	Township treasurer Illinois Assn. of Park Districts Local tax experts	Executive Director		

Description of the Planning Process

ESC contracted with North Berwyn Park District in September, 2005 to assist in the development of a strategic plan using a Six Step Planning Process.

Step One - Planning to Plan

called for a review of the Park District's current operation and practices. The Board of Commissioners established a steering committee composed of two Commissioners, the Executive Director, the Administrative Assistant, and the ESC Project Manager and two Consultants.

The ESC Team Members on the Steering Committee adapted the standard ESC Strategic Planning Survey Questionnaire for use in interviews. With the Steering Committee, the Interview Questions set was modified for the various groups to be interviewed, as recommended by the Park District representatives on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee identified 31 people connected to the Park District or Community Leaders to be interviewed. The Steering Committee identified 4 groups to participate in focus groups.

The three members of the ESC Team on the Steering Committee interviewed the following:

A. Park District Board

5 current
1 immediate past member

B. Park District Administration & Staff

Executive Director
Administrative Assistant
Program Director
Police Officer
Preschool Teacher
Music Teacher

C. Community Leaders

Mayor
Aldermen - 2

A study of the above has lead to the development of a series of findings, conclusions and recommendations which the ESC Team believes should be considered during *Step Two - The Retreat* to be held on Saturday, June 3, 2006.

This Interim Report was submitted first to the Steering Committee for their consideration. The Steering Committee, at their meeting on May 17, 2006, made the final selection of issues to be considered in *Step Two*. The Steering Committee, in consultation with the ESC Team, and Lou Pedicini, Retreat Facilitator, determined who was invited to participate in the scheduled *Retreat*.

Step Two - Initiating the Planning Process

The Retreat, held June 3, was the beginning of the planning process. During the retreat five North Berwyn Park District commissioners, and six staff, with the ESC Team, under the guidance of ESC Retreat Facilitator Lou Pedicini, reviewed the issues previously identified.

Step Three - Taking Stock

In a typical ESC retreat, several activities are used to get at the authenticity of the issues identified. A major activity is a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), conducted to insure that the issues recommended for review are indeed the critical one, in the eyes of the participants. It also is intended to identify key factors to be considered in the development of plans. The SWOT analysis was attempted but yielded little response. The Steering Committee considered this was a failure of the retreat leadership.

Related issues were grouped into categories and assigned to a Work Group for detailed study and resolution. Due to the small number of participants, only three of the 5 Key Issues could be considered.

Step Four - Developing Goals and Objectives

Three Work Groups were formed: Program, Communications-Internal, and Communications-External, Community Involvement and Marketing. Work Groups' study and planning continued after the retreat until a well documented *Action Plan* was developed which will include goals and objectives. It was necessary to combine the latter two work groups into a single work group. The Steering Committee identified person(s) responsible for carrying out the action for each of the goals. Staff will be working on resources needed and time lines for accomplishment.

Many of the issues identified by the ESC Team in *Step One* are complex. Often they are

The Steering Committee concurred with the ESC Team recommendation that additional "Resources Needed" and the assignment of time lines should be done by staff, who have an intimate knowledge of the resources, fiscal and personnel, available.

Concern was expressed that there was no mention of Fiscal issues. By consensus, the Steering Committee agreed that Joe Vallez and Don Nylin meet to develop Goals and Objectives for this area. This document contains a tentative goal and tentative objectives developed by Don Nylin. These may be replaced with some from a meeting Joe Vallez and Don Nylin will have on September 8.

The Steering Committee revised the Mission Statement.

Step Six - Gaining Plan Approval

The draft of the Strategic Plan will be on the agenda for the Board of Commissioners meeting on September 14. It is the recommendation of the ESC Team, with concurrence of the Park District Steering Committee members that the Board accept the draft for review with final action to be taken at the October 12 meeting.

The test of the validity and utility of the strategic plan for North Berwyn Park District is what happens after the Board takes action to adopt it. To encourage use of the plan, Alice Konopasek and Joe Vallez will be developing a plan for implementation following guidelines suggested by the ESC Team. (See next page.)

Work Group Members

Program

Jessica Camacho, Program Supervisor, Arts
Jim Gatlin, Recreation Supervisor
Michael Phelan, Commissioner
Mark Sladek, Commissioner
Carole Aston, ESC Consultant

Communication, Community Involvement, Marketing

Raul Carmona, Recreation Supervisor, Soccer
Mary De Santo, former Commissioner
Alice Konopasek, Commissioner
Jeanmarie Hajer, Commissioner
Ann Mackin, Commissioner
Nancy Woods, Administrative Assistant
Leslie Zizumbo, Program Supervisor, Senior Programs & Marketing

This led us to:

Who does what, for what purpose in the Park District?

They need to be heard to

program employees	inform to know what's going on
commissioners	present issues
administrators	to know each other
volunteers	know what's available
	build trust

We began to find some "principles" about the what and the how:

Board and leader visibility

- is encouraging and nurturing
- shows leadership to build a team
- can set the rules and apply them with consistency

We believe that

There should be a plan for staff to be heard regularly and consistently to:

- have face to face communication
- cooperatively plan

So we began to write our plan:

Goal: To have an effective two-way communication system for board, administration and staff.

Objective 1: Build a team through encouraging and nurturing leadership at all levels.

Measurable Outcomes/Deliverables:

1. Board's leaders are visible at program activities.

Goal 1 - Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Determine the most appropriate recreational programs for a changing population.

KEY FINDINGS

Positive Findings

The current program is comprehensive and varied for persons preschool through seniors.
 There is family oriented programming.
 Programs are open to any Berwyn resident at the same fee and same enrollment options as residents of NBPD.
 Participants report feeling welcome.
 Citizen have confidence in the staff who are looked upon as competent and caring.
 The present programs are a dramatic improvement over several years ago.
 Staff is visible in the community.
 All city programming, such as Best of Berwyn, are unifying events for the city.
 Staff is dedicated and giving of themselves beyond the required or expected.
 There are some bilingual staff.
 Best of Berwyn winners could be a service corps as well as being a pool for Park District security is visible.
 A mission statement exists.

Concerns

Spanish speaking adults need ESL programs.
 Program descriptions are not available in Spanish.
 Teen programs are minimal.
 The senior population is growing.
 Many 15-30 year olds would enroll in soccer if the option existed.
 Program delivery is limited by lack of space.
 Commissioner visibility at programs and events is seen as limited.
 Last minute changes and assignments create program delivery problems.
 There is no evidence of a system for program planning, including systematic community input.
 There is little evidence of an internal communication system, e.g. oral, written, and through staff meetings.
 There is little evidence of use of program evaluation.
 Local staff inservice is limited.
 The role of volunteers is unclear.
 There are concerns about gangs and their impact upon programs.
 The mission statement appears to have little impact upon program decisions.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Existing programs are exemplary.
2. The public perception of the North Berwyn Park District is that it is welcoming, caring, competent, organized with an aura of exciting programs and activities.
3. Though the programs appear to be comprehensive, there is little evidence of systematic program planning and evaluation.
4. A mission statement exists, but seems to provide little direction for program decisions.
5. There are concerns about internal communications.
6. There are concerns about on-going orientation and training of staff and commissioners.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Review the existing mission statement, revising as needed, and implement a plan for adherence to the stated mission.
2. Design and implement a model comprehensive plan for systematic program development, implementation and evaluation.
3. Assess internal communication systems and address any issues found.
4. Assess the orientation and training practices for staff and commissioners and address any issues found.

Goal 3 - Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Find alternative sources of support for current and future programs.

KEY FINDINGS

Positive Findings

Income from some programs helps to support other programs. Program fees appear to be reasonable for most of the community. A reasonable reserve is maintained. There is strong support from veterans organizations. Strong and positive collaboration with School District 98 exists. The business community has expressed a strong interest in working with and providing support for park district programs.

Concerns

Some believe low income families are unable to participate because the level of the fees. Major fund raisers (golf outing) generate no income for the park district. Volunteers, service clubs and community organizations appear to be untapped resources. A partnership with the business community is lacking.

CONCLUSIONS:

1. Available park district resources appear to be well manage and used.
2. Some efforts have been made to find alternative sources of support but they do not appear to be extensive.
3. There appear to be untapped local opportunities for support, financial and other.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Explore national, state and local park district organizations for ideas for alternative sources of support.
2. Build on established relationships within Berwyn and existing but unexplored relationships systematically and aggressively pursue opportunities for support.
3. Have a salsa smack down.