

# **Spring Valley**

## **Nature Center & Heritage Farm**

### **2019-2023 Master Plan**

**(Balanced Scorecard Format aligned with  
Schaumburg Park District Goals & Objectives)  
Revised February, 2019**

**Approved by Board of Park Commissioners March, 2019**



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

DISTRICT GOAL 1: PROVIDE FIRST CLASS PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND FACILITIES

**District Initiative 1: Build Lifelong Programming to Enhance Wellness & Environmental/Historical Awareness**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Maintain a nature playground and other nature play features designed to promote active, creative play in natural settings by youth.</b></p> <p><b>Provide new opportunities for visitors to interface with and learn about site's natural and historical features via technology.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Complete Nature Play Discovery trail linked to Bison's Bluff and promote via signs and programming by 2020.</i></p> <p><i>B. Complete planning for an 'agricultural play' feature at the Heritage Farm by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>Develop a downloadable app (s) by 2020 that can be used by any site user to access maps, virtual tours, interpretive information, upcoming program information, and visitor surveys.</i></p>

**District Initiative 2: *Deliver Programs & Events Aligned with Diverse Customer Needs***

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Continue to develop, promote, and offer educational and interpretive programs that focus on the concepts outlined in the Spring Valley Interpretive Plan.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Utilize a variety of methods in development of programming to include:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. seasonal programs, classes, workshops, and special events</li> <li>b. on-site and off-site seasonal environmental and historical education programs for school/youth groups, which are grade-appropriate and correlated with Illinois state learning standards</li> <li>c. appropriate methods of interpreting natural and cultural history to people with disabilities.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Continue to develop and maintain the following additional methods of communicating content and themes outlined in the Spring Valley Interpretive Plan:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. indoor interpretive exhibits</li> <li>b. interpretive trails and outdoor interpretive displays (i.e. Illinois Heritage Grove, Bob Link Arboretum, Pollinator Garden, etc.)</li> <li>c. brochures, publications, and audiovisuals which interpret natural and agricultural history to general visitors</li> <li>d. informational signs within Bison’s Bluff and other nature play features</li> <li>e. electronic applications for use by visitors with ‘smart’ phones.</li> <li>f. site information accessible to non-English speakers</li> <li>g. a non-lending natural and cultural history library.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Continue to develop at least 4 new programs each season to be offered via the SPD brochure.</li> <li>B. Modify the special events schedule to include more variation in event scope/size and themes from year to year in order to better serve repeat visitors and make best use of site and staff resources, starting in 2019.</li> <li>C. Develop at least 2 ‘flash’ programs designed for walk-in visitors during peak seasons (spring, summer, fall), starting in 2019.</li> <li>D. Develop capabilities to provide site information to at least two non-English speaking visitor groups via new smart phone app by 2020.</li> <li>E. Develop a focus group of regular program attendees and other stakeholders to provide feedback to staff in developing new programs and events by the fall of 2019.</li> <li>F. Develop plan to expand group and special programming at the Heritage Farm into the winter months by 2021.</li> <li>G. Continue to support the monarch butterfly rearing program with the express purpose of engaging daily visitors during summer, thereby increasing understanding of butterfly and pollinator conservation.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Continue efforts to market programs, events, and facilities to diverse audiences throughout the northwest suburban region.</b></p> <p>Target the following prioritized user groups: a) families; b) schools/youth groups/educators; c) general visitors; and d) organized adult groups.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Complete analysis of Spring Valley’s brand and logo by Sept., 2019 and update brand and logo by 2020.</li> <li>B. Develop video virtual tours of Spring Valley’s facilities and features as well as district Conservation Areas to be posted on website by 2021.</li> <li>C. Explore the addition of webpages designed for two non-English speaking visitor groups by 2020.</li> <li>D. Work with the Village of Schaumburg Transportation Dept. in order to install site I.D./directional signs at nearby intersections by 2021.</li> <li>E. Continue to provide outreach programs to area organizations as a way to market Spring Valley.</li> </ol>

### District Initiative 3: Improve Loyalty Through Customer Satisfaction

Division Objectives:	Measures:
<p data-bbox="94 172 831 201"><b>Encourage patron feedback via program and visitor surveys.</b></p> <p data-bbox="94 607 867 669"><b>Focus on improvements that add convenience and quality to the visitor experience whenever possible.</b></p>	<p data-bbox="968 172 1816 224"><i>A. Ensure that program survey is provided to all program attendees starting in 2019.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 232 1816 284"><i>B. Collect and evaluate at least 50 survey responses annually from attendees at each major event.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 292 1816 344"><i>C. Collect and evaluate at least 50 survey responses annually from summer camp participants.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 352 1816 436"><i>D. Collect and evaluate at least 100 survey responses annually from casual visitors at both the Nature Center and Heritage Farm between May and October.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 444 1816 496"><i>E. Place suggestion boxes in Nature Center and Farm Visitor Center as well as at entrance kiosks by summer, 2019.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 505 1816 557"><i>F. Provide visitor access to on-line site surveys via the new smart phone app by 2020.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 600 1816 652"><i>A. Work with IT staff to expand ease of providing credit card services to special event sales areas by 2020.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 660 1816 712"><i>B. Make improvements to parking and access to better accommodate traditional site users, as well as program and rental attendees by June, 2019.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 721 1816 773"><i>C. Complete improvements needed in order to use St. Matthew's Church parking lot as alternate parking by Sept., 2019.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 781 1816 865"><i>C. Complete planned improvements designed to serve the needs of nature playground visitors (restrooms, drinking fountain, picnic area) by early 2020, subject to funding availability.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 873 1816 958"><i>D. Create a program activity area adjacent to the Nature Center in order to provide dedicated outdoor space for group program activities by 2021, subject to funding availability.</i></p> <p data-bbox="968 966 1816 1018"><i>E. Develop a permanent outdoor restroom facility adjacent to the Merkle Cabin picnic shelter by 2022, subject to funding availability.</i></p>

**District Initiative 4: Create and Sustain Quality Programs and Facilities Focused on Education and Interpretation**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Seek to align all programs, events, and visitor amenities with Spring Valley’s mission statement and interpretive plan.</b></p>	<p><i>Incorporate language from the mission statement and/or site interpretive plan into the written program plans for all events and program starting in 2019.</i></p>
<p><b>Maintain a system of trails and interpretive signs designed to place visitors in contact with particular natural features or ecosystems.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Develop a phased plan to modify trails in order to create thematic loops by Sept., 2020, to be implemented over the next 5 years, subject to funding availability.</i></p> <p><i>B. Begin the development of seasonal, updatable and temporary interpretive displays that will highlight particular features along the trails in 2019.</i></p> <p><i>C. Create a series of eco-cultural ‘interpretation stations’ along trails that can be used in programming or temporary displays and replace the Footprints on the Land trail by 2021.</i></p>
<p><b>Continue to improve the visitor experience at Nature Center and Farm visitor center.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Update visitor orientation AV program at Nature Center by 2020.</i></p> <p><i>B. Redesign the entrance areas at both visitor centers in order to invite additional engagement with site resources and staff by 2023, subject to funding availability.</i></p> <p><i>C. Include an interpretive element as part of all planned visitor amenities adjacent to Bison’s Bluff and Nature Center.</i></p>
<p><b>Maintain display plantings around Nature Center, Merkle Cabin and Heritage Farm for the purpose of education/interpretation and landscape aesthetics.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Create a pollinator display and interpretation garden display adjacent to the Nature Center by 2020.</i></p> <p><i>B. Develop a maintenance program for display plantings with assistance from Master Gardeners and other volunteer groups in 2019 and implement in 2020.</i></p>
<p><b>Establish and maintain other features that add value to the visitor experience and ecological integrity to the landscape.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Continue to maintain nest boxes and bird feeding program, in order to promote and encourage wildlife viewing by visitors.</i></p> <p><i>B. Maintain plantings of conifers and other trees and shrubs for the purposes of visual and noise screening along established site boundaries.</i></p>
<p><b>Maintain staffing levels that are adequate to handle both site maintenance and best-practice stewardship of natural resources.</b></p>	<p><i>Increase staffing levels and/or funds dedicated to contractual work starting in 2019 in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness of site maintenance, subject to budget approval.</i></p>

**FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**DISTRICT GOAL 2: OPTIMIZE AND LEVERAGE FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

**District Initiative 1: Develop Dynamic Business Plans and Strategies**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Improve and maintain accessibility and functionality of the Merkle Cabin to maximize use of site for premium rentals and programs.</b></p> <p><b>Offer an annual pass/membership program that conveys special site use benefits to purchasers as a marketing and revenue production tool.</b></p> <p><b>Continue to offer facility rentals as a supplementary revenue source.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Resurface access road and enlarge parking lot to better accommodate groups renting or using site by 2021.</i></p> <p><i>B. Develop an outdoor restroom adjacent to picnic shelter by 2022.</i></p> <p><i>Further refine and 'rebrand' the annual pass program as a multi-level giving program that invites financial support and conveys benefactor status rather than merely tangible benefits in 2019.</i></p> <p><i>A. Establish new shelter rental program and pricing, to include Heritage Farm shelter as well as new program shelter adjacent to Nature Center by 2020.</i></p> <p><i>B. Establish new group admission fees and booking guidelines for youth groups visiting Bison's Bluff during peak season (April-October) in 2019.</i></p>

**District Initiative 2: Maximize Funding Opportunities**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Maintain gift sale areas that are attractive, profitable, meet visitor needs, and promote the site's mission.</b></p> <p><b>Continue to pursue supplemental revenue sources such as federal, state and local grants, corporate and foundation support, and support from local clubs and organizations (Spring Valley Nature Club and Schaumburg Community Garden Club).</b></p>	<p><i>A. Develop new layout of Nature Center gift sale and library area and implement by spring, 2020.</i></p> <p><i>B. Develop seasonal gift sale promotions for the website, starting in Nov., 2019.</i></p> <p><i>C. Incorporate gift sale redesign into Nature Center façade improvements by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>A. Develop strategies to connect potential individual and corporate donors to site, resources, programs, etc. and establish criteria for sponsor recognition and benefits by 2020.</i></p> <p><i>B. Continue to utilize Spring Valley Nature Club as an event and program sponsor as well as provider of group program scholarships.</i></p>

**District Initiative 3: Achieve Accountability to Taxpayers through Meeting Budget Expectations**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Manage the Spring Valley portion of the Recreation Fund as a balanced budget, per Schaumburg Park District business practices.</b></p> <p><b>Communicate accomplishments, impacts, business plans, etc. to the wider community on a regular basis.</b></p>	<p><i>Review budget balance sheets monthly to identify trending shortfalls and over-expenditures.</i></p> <p><i>A. Prepare a year-end annual report that summarizes annual attendance, accomplishments, highlights, and budget performance starting in 2019.</i></p> <p><i>B. Complete an economic impact study that highlights Spring Valley's impact on the local economy and tourism during 2020.</i></p>

**District Initiative 4: Develop Best Practice *Fee Structures***

<p><b>Division Objectives:</b></p>	<p><b>Measures:</b></p>
<p><b>Manage programs and events to produce revenue in order to insure balanced program budgets.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Begin managing program and event budgets to reflect actual cost of all part-time staff and resources needed for program implementation.</i></p> <p><i>B. Continue utilization of a 3-tiered pricing strategy for programs that insures both profitability and diversity of pricing for various user groups. Target percentage of programming will be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• 20% - Free (zero or little revenue with sponsorships to meet expenses)</i></li> <li><i>• 50% - Budget/family pricing (20-30% net revenues)</i></li> <li><i>• 30% - Premium pricing (&gt;30% net revenues)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Continue to adjust fees for programs, events, and rentals based on bi-annual market research and cost accounting.</b></p>	<p><i>Conduct market research of program and rental fees from other similar facilities in the area on a bi-annual basis and increase fees as deemed appropriate.</i></p>



**OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

**DISTRICT GOAL 3: ACHIEVE OPERATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE**

**District Initiative 1: Develop Environmental and Sustainable Best Practices**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Continue to manage site natural resources in a manner that will improve ecological integrity and biodiversity.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Re-create, restore, monitor, and manage diverse native prairie, woodland, and wetland plant communities, consistent with Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan protocols and/or methods currently accepted and used by natural area management and restoration professionals.</li><li>2. Actively remove invasive aggressive exotic plants, consistent with Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan protocols and/or methods currently accepted and used by natural area management and restoration professionals.</li><li>3. Re-create, restore, monitor, and manage diverse native Illinois habitat types which will support diverse and sustainable populations of native wildlife species, in a manner consistent with the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan protocols and/or generally accepted natural resource management standards.</li><li>4. Conduct regular censuses of birds and other wildlife species, in a manner consistent with the protocols of Chicago Wilderness, the Bird Conservation Network, and/or other accepted biological data sampling protocols.</li><li>5. Explore the possible reintroduction of native wildlife species in cooperation with state and local wildlife professionals.</li><li>6. Address wildlife management issues as needed and with consultation with state and local wildlife professionals.</li><li>7. Research site hydrology and develop project proposals which will improve natural drainage into and out of wetland areas.</li><li>8. Research appropriate solutions to address erosion issues.</li></ol> <p><b>Serve as a model of sustainability for the agency and community.</b></p> <p><b>Incorporate alternative energy features as well as other green technologies to Nature Center and other Spring Valley facilities as funding allows.</b></p> <p><b>Strive to maintain museum management standards as defined by the American Alliance of Museums.</b></p> <p><b>Continue implementation of collection policy to reflect primary focus on natural and agricultural history interpretation.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Maintain an annual schedule of natural resource management projects to insure regular attention to needed practices and treatments.</i></p> <p><i>B. Maintain an annual schedule of Community Conservation Workdays designed to attract volunteers and engage the community in conservation stewardship.</i></p> <p><i>C. Budget funds to utilize outside contractors to complete natural resource management work when necessary and as funding permits.</i></p> <p><i>D. When available, pursue grant opportunities to fund stewardship activities.</i></p> <p><i>Develop a list of sustainability guidelines for special events by 2020.</i></p> <p><i>A. Advocate for the inclusion of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels to power any new outbuildings.</i></p> <p><i>B. Advocate for the establishment of PV panels on Nature Center roof by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>C. Advocate for addition of vehicle charging stations at Nature Center by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>Re-assess and revise if needed Spring Valley Interpretive Plan, Livestock Policy, and Collection Policy by 2023.</i></p> <p><i>Re-activate Collections Committee in 2020 to address surplus items located at VHF and other SPD storage locations.</i></p>

## District Initiative 2: Build Positive Communications, Partnerships, Identity and Image

Division Objectives:	Measures:
<p data-bbox="92 172 932 232"><b>Conduct off-site programs for area clubs and organizations as well as sister-sites in other communities.</b></p> <p data-bbox="92 440 898 500"><b>Maintain a high quality volunteer program in order to engage the community in Spring Valley's continued maintenance and growth.</b></p>	<p data-bbox="961 172 1745 232"><i>A. Conduct at least 10 off-site programs for area garden clubs and other groups each year.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 233 1787 290"><i>B. Maintain communications with other living history sites in order to enable staff/skill sharing among sites for special events and promote VHF.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 292 1780 349"><i>C. Conduct at least one teacher training workshop each year in cooperation with sister sites and/or local universities each year.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 350 1793 407"><i>D. Encourage staff to share expertise via educational sessions at professional conferences and workshops.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 444 1808 501"><i>A. Continue to offer regular seasonal Community Conservation Workdays as a way to engage the public in conservation stewardship.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 503 1776 560"><i>B. Develop ways to staff additional workdays with PT staff and/or volunteer mentors starting in 2019.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 561 1808 618"><i>C. Host at least two local business/corporate groups each year in conservation and maintenance projects as a way to engage with the business community.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 620 1734 677"><i>D. Host an annual volunteer open house each year as a way to increase awareness of volunteer opportunities starting in 2020.</i></p> <p data-bbox="961 678 1797 735"><i>E. Develop a Volunteer Mentor program to encourage experienced volunteers to share skills and knowledge with new volunteers by 2020.</i></p>

**District Initiative 3: Efficient and Effective Use of Resources**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Continue to update site inventory (paths, fencing, benches, signage, etc.).</b></p> <p><b>Acquire and care for period appropriate livestock (where available) to support interpretive program, per Livestock Policy.</b></p>	<p><i>Update the equipment inventory at the maintenance building and Heritage Farm, to be completed by 2021.</i></p> <p><i>A. Continue to sell/trade all swine by December of each year in order to reduce winter livestock maintenance needs and costs, and acquire new young stock each March or April.</i></p> <p><i>B. Continue to replenish poultry stock each fall to insure adequate number of laying hens during spring and summer to support egg sales.</i></p>

**District Initiative 4: Implement Sound Risk and Safety Management Practices**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Ensure that trails, facilities and programs meet ADA accessibility requirements to the maximum extent possible.</b></p>	<p><i>Consult with District architect and NWSRA staff as needed prior to implementing any new exhibit and trail construction or improvements.</i></p>
<p><b>Continue regular surveys of grounds and trails to ensure that problems and repairs are addressed promptly.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Conduct bi-weekly safety/maintenance checks of grounds and trails. B. Conduct seasonal inspections of all conservation areas and schedule at least one staff/volunteer workday at each site annually.</i></p>
<p><b>Continue regular facilities maintenance inspections and replacement program per Facilities Dept. 5-year plan.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Review emergency response plan at the Heritage Farm and identify solutions for large group evacuation during severe weather by 2020. B. Implement new solution by 2023.</i></p>
<p><b>Continue to maintain clean and safe parking areas and accessible pathways per Parks Dept. 5-year plan.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Repave Cabin service road and expand parking area by 2020. B. Replace Heritage Farm access boardwalk by 2021. C. Look at resurfacing options for pathways between Farm and Cabin and between Cabin and service road by 2023.</i></p>
<p><b>Continue regular training for staff in risk management, emergency response, and first aid/CPR.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Ensure that at least one staff person attends all Safety Committee meetings and provides updates on meetings and trainings to all staff. B. Ensure that all staff receives annual safety and emergency response training. C. Ensure that all staff receive training and/or review of CPR and AED use prior to March 1 of each year.</i></p>

**EMPLOYEE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**DISTRICT GOAL 4: FOSTER A MOTIVATED AND ACCOUNTABLE TEAM CULTURE**

**District Initiative 1: Cultivate Personal and Professional Growth**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Continue to budget for and encourage staff involvement in professional organizations (IPRA, NAI, MOMCC, AVA) and attendance at professional workshops and conferences aligned with staff professional goals.</b></p> <p><b>Insure that all staff receives an annual performance review and opportunity to provide feedback to their supervisor.</b></p>	<p><i>Ensure that all supervisory and permanent program staff attends one professional development workshop or conference/year and that a summary of educational sessions is shared with other staff subsequent to attending.</i></p> <p><i>A. Schedule all full-time and permanent part-time staff performance reviews for March/April of each year.</i></p> <p><i>B. Program coordinators should schedule a performance review for all interpretive and program staff once/year at a pre-determined period of their employment .</i></p> <p><i>C. Work with Human Resources Dept. to establish salary/wage ranges for all staff and communicate these ranges to staff upon hire.</i></p>

**District Initiative 2: Promote Teamwork**

<b>Division Objectives:</b>	<b>Measures:</b>
<p><b>Develop and promote a team-oriented work atmosphere among all staff and volunteers at Spring Valley.</b></p>	<p><i>A. Conduct quarterly division staff meetings to review annual goals, budgets, program schedules, and discuss solutions to challenges.</i></p> <p><i>B. Schedule two annual staff workdays (winter and summer), at which all staff can work together on a defined grounds or facility improvement project.</i></p> <p><i>C. Conduct an annual all-staff meeting in early spring of each year to review emergency response and incident reporting procedures, update staff on new policies and procedures, budgets, etc.</i></p> <p><i>D. Integrate volunteers into mentoring program with new volunteers and staff.</i></p> <p><i>E. Continue to hold quarterly volunteer meetings.</i></p> <p><i>F. Continue to host an annual spring meeting of Farm volunteers to update them on changes.</i></p>

### District Initiative 3: Develop Customer Focus

Division Objectives:	Measures:
<b>Ensure that all staff is focused on high quality customer service.</b>	<i>A. Conduct a Certified Interpretive Host (CIH) training for any new staff each year in spring, starting in 2019. B. Conduct a CIH review for all existing program and interpretive staff as well as visitor services staff each year, starting in spring, 2019. B. Ensure that all staff receives exposure to and training in district-wide customer service initiatives, such as the H.A.P.P.Y. program.</i>

### District Initiative 4: Encourage Innovation and Creativity

Division Objectives:	Measures:
<b>Constantly encourage all staff to develop and share new ideas designed to improve quality of programs, facilities, and services.</b>	<i>Conduct quarterly program and project brainstorming meetings.</i>