

Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Strategic Plan 2014-2018 with Action Plans

Developed in partnership with the Chicago Park District

November 2013



GARFIELD PARK
CONSERVATORY
ALLIANCE



Lord
Cultural Resources

ANCORA
ASSOCIATES

Lord Cultural Resources is a global professional practice dedicated to creating cultural capital worldwide.

We assist people, communities and organizations to realize and enhance cultural meaning and expression.

We distinguish ourselves through a comprehensive and integrated full-service offering built on a foundation of key competencies: visioning, planning and implementation.

We value and believe in cultural expression as essential for all people. We conduct ourselves with respect for collaboration, local adaptation and cultural diversity, embodying the highest standards of integrity, ethics and professional practice.

We help clients clarify their goals; we provide them with the tools to achieve those goals; and we leave a legacy as a result of training and collaboration.

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1. TWENTY YEARS OF SERVICE

As Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance (GPCA) approaches its 20th anniversary, it has a distinguished history to look back on: providing powerful aesthetic experiences and education on plants, science and the arts; advocating for the Conservatory and its community; and actively partnering with the Chicago Park District to deliver professional expertise, additional annual operating revenue and capital. Despite a complex mandate, rapidly changing context and unexpected challenges such as a hailstorm that destroyed the Conservatory's glass roof, the Alliance has been a driving force behind community development and cultural programming that connects people with plants and nature.

Now, with major accomplishments, such as the recent transition of the New Communities Program into the Garfield Park Community Council, and the addition of new exhibits, cultural programming and exciting events, the Alliance is poised for its next phase of development. Guided by an updated forward-looking vision and mission, and aligned with the new Chicago Park District Strategic Plan and the Chicago Cultural Plan, GPCA is poised to become a major new resource for engaging with science, conservation, art, architecture and contemporary issues. Programming will expand to engage new partners and serve a broader public. As Chicago's Conservatory, Garfield Park Conservatory will soon become a place where our everyday lives connect to the possibilities of the universe.

To help plan for this next stage, GPCA engaged Lord Cultural Resources and Ancora Associates in 2013 to facilitate the development of a five-year Strategic Plan. This plan, presented herein, clarifies the organization's programming priorities, improves strategic alignment, and sets out a clear direction for the future. The planning process included consultant-led research and analytic synthesis, consisting of: qualitative and quantitative research, interviews with external key opinion leaders, interviews with Board and Advisory Committee members, a staff survey and workshops, community workshops, and financial analysis; a planning workshop with Board and staff; and development of Action Plans by staff (with consultant support) outlining how each of the goals will be achieved. In total, over 125 people were involved with the planning process.



2. VISION & STRATEGY

Looking to the future, Garfield Park Conservatory will become a leading cultural destination in Chicago. By continuing to leverage and benefit from the strong partnership between the Alliance and the Park District, the Conservatory will focus on serving children and families, young professionals, active Baby Boomers, and Chicagoland residents and leaders. Becoming a premier destination for children is seen, above all else, as central to the Conservatory's new strategy.

The definition of success includes the following elements:

- National leadership in key programming areas;
- Welcoming, quality visitor experiences;
- Formal and informal educational experiences that appeal to all ages – from children to lifelong learners;
- Strong relationships with and positive impact on “communities of interest”;
- Linkages to organizations with similar goals;
- Highest quality Board and professional staff; and
- Robust and diversified funding to ensure long term sustainability.



2.1 MISSION, VISION & VALUES

The Board approved an updated Mission and Vision that articulates the impact the organization hopes to have on the communities it serves. It also developed Values to guide the tone of the organization, and support decision making and priority setting.

Mission

We inspire, educate and provoke exploration through innovative programs and experiences in one of the nation's largest and finest historic conservatories.

Vision

The Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance changes lives through the power of nature.

Values

Garfield Park Conservatory brings together people, plants and culture in an urban oasis like no other in the world. The following values reflect an appreciation for our unique opportunities and guide the visitor experiences we offer and the choices we make.

1. **Community** – As a public garden in a vibrant urban setting, we host a myriad of people, attracted to different dimensions of the Conservatory. We provide a welcoming and nurturing environment to all visitors, as we seek to build “communities of purpose” at the Conservatory.
2. **Education** – We infuse everything we do with enlightening elements to create transformational learning experiences.
3. **Wonder** – Every visit to the Conservatory is surprising and different. We strive to provoke curiosity in every visitor through authentic, fun, and engaging experiences.
4. **Vitality** – As an institution committed to plants and people, we are devoted to promoting human well-being and environmental responsibility. This means embracing sustainable practices and recognizing the regenerative benefits that plants, gardening, and greening have on society.
5. **Performance** – We are accountable to our public, supporters, and partners. We are consistent, and aim for excellence and the highest quality in everything we do.



2.2 PROGRAMMING STRATEGY

The following Palm Tree diagram illustrates the new integrated approach to programming and interpretation, which will deliver experiences through four vehicles—Experience, Education, Exhibits, and Events—and which will be achieved through partnership between the Alliance and Chicago Parks District. Moving forward, all programming will be born from the Conservatory’s distinctive roots to focus on Science and Conservation, Art and Performance, Architecture and Design, and Contemporary Life and Culture. Science and Conservation will be a priority area of focus to continue to build audience and reputation.



2.3 SUMMARY OF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Strategic Plan yielded five broad organizational goals that support the Mission and Vision. The Vision will become a reality through the implementation of an Action Plan; a series of objectives and specific tasks that create a roadmap for achieving the goals. The Action Plan was developed primarily by GPCA and CPD staff and identifies how multiple departments, and both partners, will address each of the strategic goals. Key to the Action Plans are assignments of personnel, due dates, outcomes and defined performance measures that will allow leadership to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan over time.

Action Plans, found in Chapter 3, have been developed for the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Emerge as a cultural leader through targeted distinctive GPC programs and visitor experiences.

- a) Develop and deliver distinctive experiences, exhibits, education, and events that reflect the programming guidelines.
- b) Build staff's capacity and commitment to create a welcoming experience for all guests.
- c) Address constraints of the physical facility that adversely impact current visitor experience.
- d) Deliver excellent and consistent experiences for school-age children, parents, and families with young children.
- e) Leverage technology to interpret the collection and extend learning (especially around science and conservation).
- f) Identify plant collection growth priorities and enhance stewardship of the collection.
- g) Amplify marketing and communications, especially through tech-based channels and networks.

Goal 2: Create and implement a comprehensive fundraising strategy.

- a) Increase contributed revenue from Board members.
- b) Increase contributed revenue from individuals.
- c) Cultivate and grow corporate sponsorships and foundation grants.
- d) Engage external stakeholders with GPC's unique attributes and contributions to its communities of interest.
- e) Enhance frequency and consistency of internal and Board communications.
- f) Boost government relations at City, State and Federal levels.
- g) Study, plan and begin a comprehensive campaign.

Goal 3: Enhance financial stability through intentional, mission-based income.

- a) Develop and implement a business plan to increase revenue through programs and events.
- b) Create a realistic short-term plan to upgrade revenue producing elements of the facility and grounds.
- c) Continue to evolve retail operation to enhance profitability.
- d) Explore membership to Museums in the Park.



Goal 4: Evolve Board and organizational capacity to set, manage and achieve targets.

- a) Evaluate Board size, structure and strategy for evolution.
- b) Advance and formalize metrics, reporting, tracking, and accountability.
- c) Cultivate staff talent through cross-training and professional development.
- d) Ensure ample staff and technology to implement mission and revenue targets.
- e) Enhance public profile and attract new Board members through clear messaging and increased publicity.
- f) Create succession plans for key Board and staff positions.



Goal 5: Develop mutually beneficial collaborations that further GPCA goals.

- a) Evaluate existing partnership portfolio (history, status, successes, and challenges) and create a strategy and criteria for segmenting and building future partnerships.
- b) Further develop and strengthen the relationship between GPCA and CPD.
- c) Identify new partners to help further GPCA's mission and priorities.

3. ACTION PLANS

The Action Plans that follows lays out specifically how each strategic goal will be accomplished through a series of objectives and tasks. It is a tool to make sure that concrete steps are being taken over time to improve mission fulfillment and realize the vision. It is a roadmap for implementation and will facilitate ongoing evaluation of Staff and Board progress on each objective.



4. EVALUATION

The GPCA Strategic Plan is a living document which may be adjusted annually. Progress of the GPCA Strategic Plan will be monitored in four ways:

1. Monthly Staff Meetings

GPCA staff will come together for a monthly status meeting to report on progress, identify points of collaboration on upcoming tasks, and tackle issues that may be causing any delays.

2. Quarterly Board Meetings

The Chair of the Executive Committee will provide quarterly updates to the Board. The information provided in the update will be based on reports from and discussion with the President of the GPCA and any other staff members who may be responsible for key tasks that quarter.

3. Annual Performance Reviews

The Action Plans provide a clear framework for evaluating each staff member against concrete goals, objectives and tasks. The Action Plans should be used as a reference document during the performance review process to ensure that each staff member is carrying out this segment of their responsibilities as planned.

4. Annual Reporting on Metrics

Measurable outcomes are critical to demonstrate progress, growth and comparative impact from year to year. Funders, partners and other supporters all seek metrics as a means for understanding the success of the organization. The performance measures outlined in the Action Plans will be tracked in a template, year on year, to ensure consistent evaluation.



APPENDIX A: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following people contributed valuable time, energy and critical ideas to support the development of this plan. GPCA would like to thank them for their commitment. The following lists reflect the Board and Staff as of March 2013, when the research phase of the planning process was completed.

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Sebastian Ritte
Gustav Roman
John Schneider
Rob Sproule
Koch Unni
Peter Vrotsos
Sally Ann Wheeler

Stakeholder Workshops

One workshop was held with **West Side Residents** and two others with **GPCA Patrons & Funders**. These three workshops were attended by over 35 people who represented:

- East and West Garfield Park
- Aldermanic representation
- Community Block Captains
- Law enforcement
- Garden and horticultural enthusiasts
- Educators
- Area businesses
- Realtors
- Foundations
- Area nonprofits