

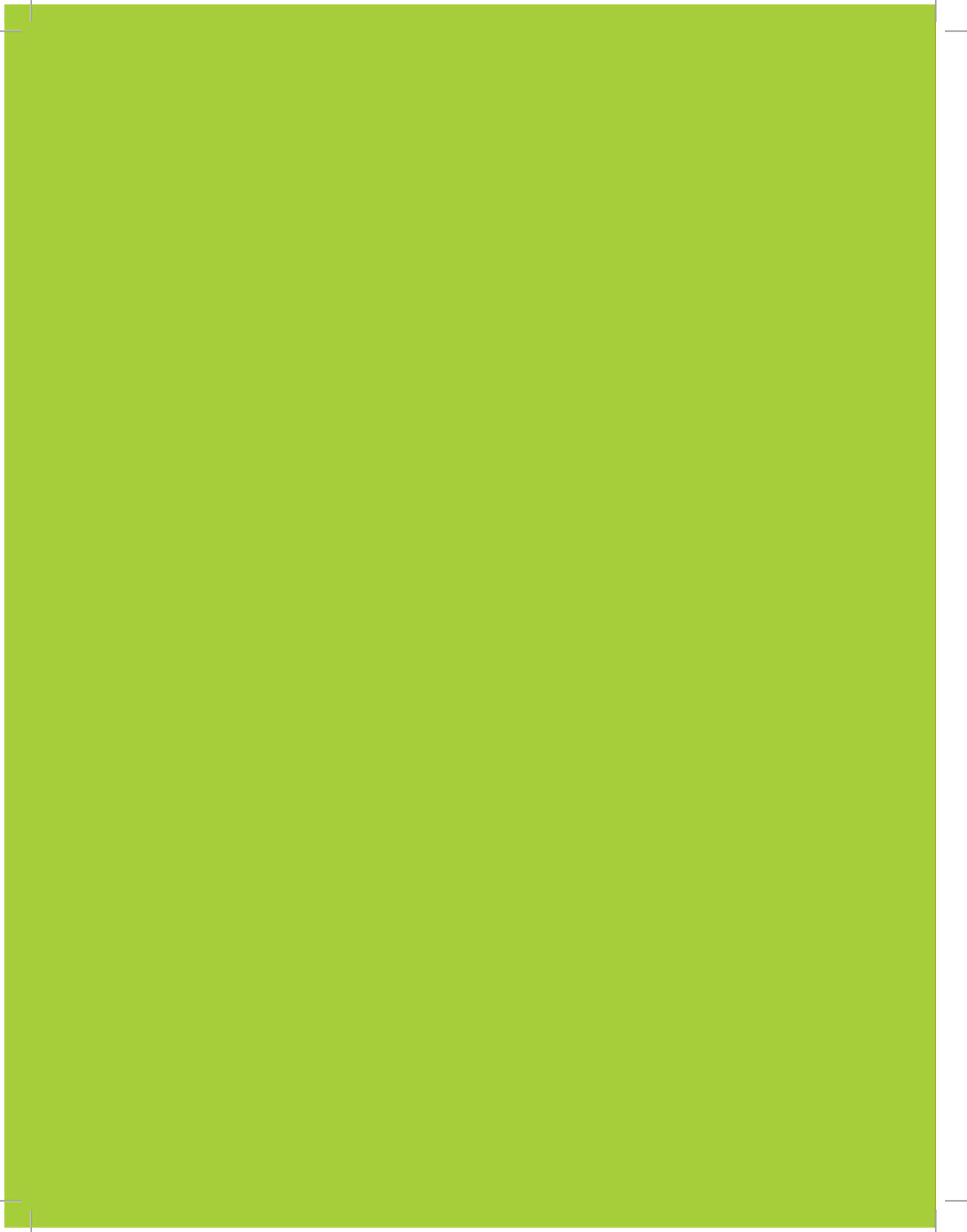


Pittsburgh  
Parks  
Conservancy  
PittsburghParks.org

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2017-  
2020









# 2017–2020 Strategic Plan

## Strategic initiatives of the Plan

- **ADVOCACY** - Create broad, enthusiastic public commitment to bring more resources to parks under unified parks administration and improve Pittsburgh park system's ranking among the top 100 cities.
- **GREEN FIRST** - Build green infrastructure into parks, leveraging recreational improvements.
- **EQUITY** - Adopt a long term goal of bringing all parks in all city neighborhoods up to a high level of quality.
- **SUSTAINABILITY** - Move toward a sustainable organizational revenue model; and maintain and build organizational capacities to support the strategic direction.



## Overview of Strategic Plan

### Strategic Initiative - Advocacy

Create a broad, enthusiastic public commitment to bring more resources to parks. Establish a unified parks management plan and improve the ranking of the City of Pittsburgh's park system among the top 100 cities.

#### GOAL ONE

Seek dedicated public funding to support costs for operating and maintaining the City Park System.

**Objective 1** Develop a case statement for increasing investment in parks.

**Objective 2** Work with the City and park stakeholders to secure additional ARAD funding.

**Objective 3** Advocate broadly throughout the community to create enthusiastic and broad public support for contribution of more resources to the City's park system. Work with foundations, the City and park stakeholders to achieve an adequate and sustainable level of funding for the Pittsburgh parks system in parity with other benchmark urban cities. Include City capital budget commitments, carve-outs within state funding such as the Growing Greener III Initiative, and negotiations with large non-profits supporting City infrastructure.

#### GOAL TWO

Transition from 20 separate contracts with the City to a single Parks Administration Agreement with operating funding for the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

**Objective 1** Shift to one streamlined master agreement and clarify specific roles, responsibilities and resources.

**Objective 2** Advocate for the Parks Conservancy to be hired as the City's manager for the ARAD parks and Mellon Square with staggered implementation of the master agreement (and attendant resources) with the City over a multi-year basis, on a specific onboarding schedule.

**Objective 3** Implement a Parks Inspection Program for parks under the master agreement that builds in accountability metrics.



## Strategic Initiative - Build green infrastructure into parks strategically and sensitively

### GOAL ONE

Help achieve regional compliance with the EPA Consent Decree. Create a park-specific green infrastructure unit to develop, construct and maintain green infrastructure installations within and adjacent to the park system where parks can contribute to the reduction of stormwater overflows and collateral benefits.



#### Objective 1

Reorganize existing staff and add a capital projects manager with relevant experience.

#### Objective 2

Seek contracts with PWSA and the City, utilizing these organizational capacities:

- Community engagement, public process facilitation
- Design and capital project definition and scoping
- Project management and oversight
- Project impact and performance monitoring (e.g. runoff mitigation metrics)
- Ongoing maintenance (e.g. rain garden maintenance)

### GOAL TWO

Position the Frick Environmental Center as an educational resource for park visitors and K-12 students.

**Objective 1** Emphasize the importance of the City's park system and the role parks play in contributing to green infrastructure,

**Objective 2** Emphasize the contribution parks offer to mitigating the effects of weather related impacts.

### GOAL THREE

Identify and target parks improvement and green infrastructure projects.

**Objective** Identify CSOs (combined sewer overflows), water quality management areas, and locations with severe flooding where parks offer significant opportunities to improve conditions; and work with the City, PWSA, ALCOSAN and neighborhoods to develop solutions that also enhance parks.



## Strategic Initiative - Improve park equity

### GOAL ONE

Initiate a Capital Campaign. Work with the City, foundations and park stakeholders to invest \$200M+ in high-need, high-impact parks citywide.

**Objective 1** Implement a parks excellence initiative that identifies high-impact capital projects that align with City goals (ex. Open Space Pittsburgh plan, community development plans, economic development areas), engages the community and other stakeholders in the process, and can be implemented over a 10-year time horizon.

**Objective 2** Prepare a case statement for investing in and enhancing high-need, high impact parks across Pittsburgh and launch a capital campaign to raise \$200M.

### GOAL TWO

Establish metrics for parks equity including access, programs and maintenance, and compare progress to baseline conditions.

**Objective** Establish a methodology that goes beyond overall investment or proximity to parks, and which develops targets for the level of investment across parks and whether the investments will meet the needs of the community. Building capital projects is not enough; we need to assess what else is needed and how we can help achieve it. This includes new programming throughout the city.

### GOAL THREE

Support the mission of the Frick Environmental Center to develop innovative, impactful and experiential outreach and after school pilot programs for K-12 children, striving especially to reach children in under-represented neighborhoods.





## **Strategic Initiative - Move toward a sustainable organizational revenue model; and maintain and build organizational capacities to support the strategic direction.**

### **GOAL ONE**

Design and phase-in a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) system to manage programs and operations.

Objective Develop KPI metrics to measure priority operational performance and project outcomes of the Conservancy, including outcomes and benefits to parks users.

### **GOAL TWO**

Transition the Conservancy toward a sustainable revenue model through the implementation of this strategic plan and five key elements below.

1. Develop a single streamlined master agreement with the City.

2. Work to increase ARAD funding to support the scope of work outlined in the single master agreement with the City as baseline operational support. Develop additional strategies around other potential sources.
3. Ensure that key green infrastructure projects are supported through specific agreements or contracts with the City, PWSA and Alcosan.
4. Focus not only on capital projects but also on maintenance, operating endowments, education programming and funding.
5. Develop a multi-faceted development, outreach, and fundraising strategy and build leadership capacity within the team to develop management of:
  - The next phase capital campaign
  - Foundation support and new sources of revenue to support maintenance and capital projects
  - Parks equity
  - Green infrastructure, and urban sustainability
  - Major gifts, planned giving, corporate and general public support

# The Strategic Situation

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The evolving role and performance of Pittsburgh's parks in this era of urban sustainability is crucial to the health, vitality and economy of the city, its residents, its institutions, and businesses. The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy envisions a future in which parks, trails and waterways are part of an integrated urban

ecology, playing a vital role in the green infrastructure, economy, and sustainability of the region. Each park and trail will be attractive, well maintained and widely used, and will offer an appealing experience, contributing to the economy and quality of life of Pittsburgh's residents and visitors.

The City of Pittsburgh and the Parks Conservancy established their partnership in 1996 when a group of concerned citizens volunteered to work with the City to address the declining condition of the park system. With an initial focus on the four historic regional parks, the organization was formalized with a cooperation agreement under



which the Parks Conservancy has focused on signature projects to restore, maintain and enhance the entire city park system, together with education programming. Twenty years later, the organization's purview has grown to include partnering with the City on parks throughout the Pittsburgh system (of 160 total parks). More than \$100 million has been raised and invested in the park system. Today, the Parks Conservancy is known around the world as a leader in urban park management, bringing positive attention to the City of Pittsburgh and its parks.

We believe that an excellent park system is a key element in the value proposition for the Pittsburgh region. We are uniquely focused on the entire parks system, and we enter our third decade of partnering with local government with these strengths:

- The organization has a long list of high profile capital projects, recognized for quality, originality, and excellence.
- Broad staff expertise includes landscape and tree care, professional horticulture, ecological restoration, historic preservation, security, planning, community engagement, design and management of capital projects, and provision of a range of educational and recreational programs as well as fundraising and special events management.
- The organization has raised awareness of the role parks play in achieving social equity, buffering climate change impacts and improving quality of life.

## A Sense of Urgency

The Strategic Planning Committee developed this strategic plan to address eight critical factors that combine to create a sense of urgency for action.

1. Right now Pittsburgh benefits from forward thinking political and philanthropic leadership with the potential to make decisions that significantly improve parks.
2. Over the next decade, the unprecedented level of capital investment required to transform the city's stormwater system should be leveraged to also improve parks and their contribution to green infrastructure.
3. The Parks Conservancy manages parks and programs under 20 separate City agreements, making it a challenge to navigate complex governmental relationships, siphoning significant time and resources which could be invested in the parks in a more productive way.
4. The current Parks Conservancy business/revenue model is dependent on a continuous stream of funded capital projects.
5. Without a sense of direction or a plan to make parks great for all Pittsburgh residents, funders and foundations may begin to cycle out of supporting the Parks Conservancy.
6. The \$100 million invested by the Parks Conservancy and stakeholders in parks could be compromised unless more funding is secured to support maintenance and operations.
7. Pittsburgh ranks 39 out of 100 of the largest U.S. cities by the Trust for Public Land's 2016 ParksScore. Two measures significantly influence Pittsburgh's lower ranking: Investment and Park Size.
8. Municipal fiscal pressures will continue to relegate parks to a lower priority than the more traditional "essential services."

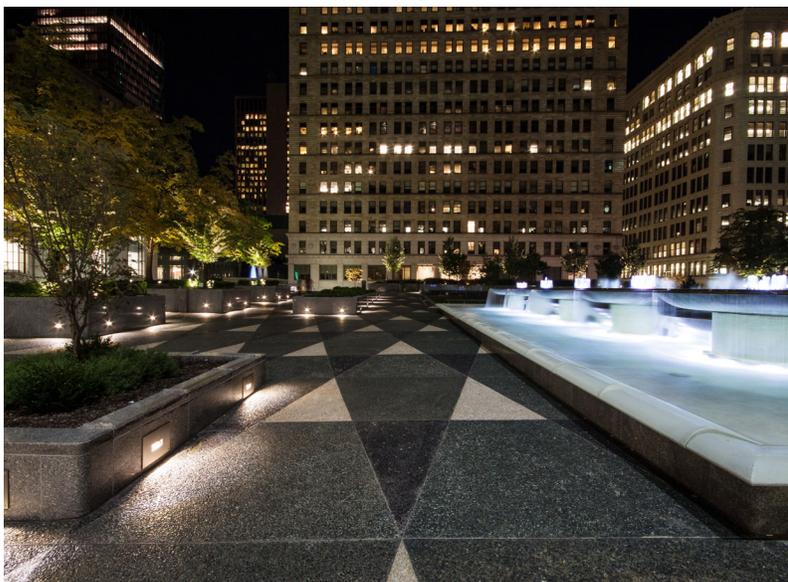


## Aims for this Strategic Plan

This plan speaks to the long-term future of the park system and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy by addressing:

1. The underlying revenue model of the Parks Conservancy, balancing commitments with resources, and investing in new organizational capacities to achieve priorities
2. The management structure that maintains the park system
3. The Parks Conservancy's role in adapting parks to support the City's priorities on green infrastructure, environmental quality, and parks equity

Taken in combination, these aims hold the potential to reshape the business and revenue model of the Parks Conservancy by achieving a sustainable balance between mission and resources over the next four years.



## Strategic Plan Steering Committee

The Strategic Plan was the outcome of discussions between the management team and a board committee. The Strategic Plan Committee members are: Mike Lyons (Chairperson), Dan Booker, Meg Cheever, Mike Gable, and Paul Supowitz. The staff management team members are: Richard Reed, Catherine Qureshi, and Heather Sage. The discussions were facilitated by Richard Anderson, co-founder of the Innovation Network for Communities, and were informed by his interviews and findings from discussions with stakeholders and key partners.

## Current context

Prominent features of the current context include:

- The current Parks Conservancy revenue model is heavily dependent on a continuous flow of funded capital projects
- Philanthropic priorities and government investments are shifting to parks equity, green infrastructure, and the role of parks in improving urban resilience and sustainability

- The fiscal demands of the City leaves insufficient resources for the park system
- Development and fundraising have room for growth, but the organization needs to mount a capital campaign and add staff to capture the opportunity
- The organization should proactively address succession planning for the current generation of founder and board leadership

## New and emerging themes since last strategic plan

Since the adoption of the 2013 – 2016 Parks Conservancy Strategic Plan, several new themes have emerged.

### **Forward thinking political and philanthropic leadership, and whole systems thinking**

Pittsburgh political and civic leaders increasingly understand that smart, sustainable, resilient cities consider a great park system to be a competitive necessity.



### **“Green First”**

PWSA’s, ALCOSAN’s, and the City’s “Clean and Green” approach to improve water quality affected by stormwater runoff and to meet conditions of an EPA consent decree requires a broad, new citywide stormwater management strategy to reduce runoff and combined sewer overflows. Park locations within the region’s watersheds play a key role in accomplishing the plan. With funding from PWSA, ALCOSAN, and the City, the Parks Conservancy could play a significant role in the development, design, construction, and maintenance of park-related green infrastructure. The Parks Conservancy’s well-respected community process skills can enhance citizen engagement and move projects more quickly through the formative stages.

## Hays Woods addition to the park system

Of the 160 City parks, only five (Emerald View, Frick, Highland, Riverview, and Schenley) are Allegheny County Regional Asset District (ARAD) eligible and supported. The addition of Hays Woods to the park system is a unique opportunity to add a large woodland park to the city's southeastern edge. While Hays Woods designation as a City park makes it the largest regional greenspace, the land has not yet been transformed into a park. Funding for planning and capital improvements must be sought to assess the property's soils, plant population and ecology, engage the community, define and develop recreational access and facilities, and develop an ongoing maintenance and security plan. Hays is eligible for ARAD support because of its size; but ARAD funding must be sought and awarded, and the City's overall ARAD funding must be increased if it is not to jeopardize funding for the City's other regional parks.

## Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land rates municipalities by the per capita dollar value that is contributed to parks by taxpayers. The City of Pittsburgh ranks relatively low on this list. There is an opportunity for the City to work strategically with the Parks Conservancy to improve this ranking.

## Five guiding principles for the strategic plan

Discussions with stakeholders and the Steering Committee led to these guiding principles to help shape goals and objectives.

1. Park systems are critical components of other systems beyond recreation: specifically the environment, the economy, and the health and well-being of residents.
2. Green infrastructure in or adjacent to parks will play a key role in the design of Pittsburgh's 21st century stormwater system.
3. Parks should be an equal opportunity asset for residents regardless of their location, ethnicity, race, or income. Parks are more responsive to diverse user needs when multiple stakeholders are engaged in improving their parks.
4. For improved parks quality and operational efficiency, parks are more effectively managed as a system with an overall system-wide plan and assignment of responsibilities.
5. City parks systems require adequate dedicated and sustainable funding for operations and maintenance if they are to meet goals.





## **Vision of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy**

The vision of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy remains unchanged: Wide appreciation and enjoyment of a sustainable park system whose landscapes, facilities and programming set world standards of excellence.

## **Mission of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy**

The mission of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy remains unchanged: To improve quality of life for the people of Pittsburgh by restoring the park system to excellence in partnership with government and community partners.

## Strategic Initiative - Advocacy

Create a broad, enthusiastic public commitment to bring more resources to parks under unified parks management plan and improve Pittsburgh park system's ranking among the top 100 cities.

### GOAL ONE

Seek dedicated public funding to support costs for operating and maintaining the City Park System.

**Objective 1** Develop a case statement for increasing investment in parks.

**Objective 2** Work with the City and parks stakeholders to secure additional ARAD funding.

	1994	Today, Pre-Hays	With Hays
Acreage	1,550	1,900 ( EVP added)	2,500
ARAD Allocation	\$6.4 M*	\$6.4 M	\$6.4 M
ARAD Allocation per acre	\$4,129	\$3,368	\$2,560
<b>Responsible Scope Adjustment</b>			
		\$7.8 M	\$10.3 M*

\* There have been slight annual increases, less than the inflation index.

**Objective 3** Advocate broadly throughout the community to create enthusiastic and broad public support for contribution of more resources to the city's park system. Work with foundations, the City and parks stakeholders to achieve an adequate and sustainable level of funding for the Pittsburgh park system in parity with other benchmark urban cities. Include City capital budget commitments, carve-outs within state funding such as the Growing Greener III Initiative, and negotiations with large non-profits supporting City infrastructure.

## GOAL TWO

Transition from 20 separate contracts with the City to a single Parks Administration Agreement with operating funding for Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

**Objective 1** Shift to one streamlined master agreement and clarify specific roles, responsibilities and resources.

**Objective 2** Consider requesting that the Parks Conservancy be hired as the City's manager for the ARAD parks and Mellon Square with staggered implementation of the master agreement (and attendant resources) with City over a multi-year basis, under a specific onboarding schedule.

### **Illustrative Schedule**

- 2017- Mellon Square
- 2018 - Schenley
- 2019 - Riverview
- 2020 - Frick
- 2021 - Emerald View
- 2022 - Highland
- 2023 - Hays Woods

**Objective 3** Implement a Parks Inspection Program for parks under the master agreement that builds in accountability metrics.



## Strategic Initiative - Build green infrastructure into parks strategically and sensitively

### GOAL ONE

Create a park-specific green infrastructure unit to develop, construct and maintain green infrastructure installations within and adjacent to the park system where parks can contribute to the reduction of stormwater overflows and collateral benefits. Help achieve regional compliance with the EPA Consent Decree.

**Objective 1** Reorganize existing staff and add a capital projects manager with relevant experience.

**Objective 2** Seek contracts with PWSA and the City, utilizing these organizational capacities:

- Community engagement, public process facilitation;
- Design and capital project definition and scoping;
- Project management and oversight;
- Project impact and performance monitoring (e.g. runoff mitigation metrics); and
- Ongoing maintenance (e.g. rain garden maintenance).

### GOAL TWO

Position the Frick Environmental Center as an educational resource for park visitors and K-12 students.

**Objective 1** Emphasize the importance of the City's park system and the role parks play in contributing to green infrastructure,

**Objective 2** Emphasize the contribution parks offer to mitigating the effects of weather related impacts.



## GOAL THREE

### Identify and target parks improvement and green infrastructure projects.

**Objective** Identify CSOs (combined sewer overflows), water quality management areas, and locations with severe flooding where parks offer significant opportunities to improve conditions and the Parks Conservancy is best positioned to work with the City, PWSA, ALCOSAN and neighborhoods to develop solutions that also enhance parks.



The High Impact Combined Sewer Overflows Are In or Adjacent to City Parks

**Figure 1:** Map of Pittsburgh depicting current parks (green areas) within PWSA- identified highest priority sewersheds (blue) and secondary priority sewersheds (purple).

## Strategic Initiative - Improve park equity

### GOAL ONE

**Initiate a Capital Campaign. Work with the City, foundations and parks stakeholders to invest \$200M+ in high-need, high-impact parks citywide.**

**Objective 1** Implement a parks excellence initiative that identifies high-impact capital projects that aligns with City goals (ex. Open Space Pittsburgh plan, community development plans, economic development areas); that engages community and other stakeholders in the process; and can be implemented over a 10-year time horizon.

**Objective 2** Prepare a case statement for investing in and enhancing high-need, high impact parks across Pittsburgh and launch a capital campaign to raise \$200M.

### Possible Investment Target

Project	Proposed Investent	Area
Allegheny Commons	\$20 M	North
Riverview	\$2 M	North
Spring Hill/ Spring Garden	\$3 M	North
Frick	\$5 M	East
Mellon Park—Shadyside	\$5 M	East
Arsenal and Leslie	\$10 M	East
Highland	\$15 M	East
Westinghouse Park	\$7 M	East
Larimer	\$12 M	East
Heth's Run	\$5 M	East
McKinley	\$10 M	South
Southside Park	\$4 M	South
Olympia/ Mt. Washington	\$2 M	South
Hays	\$9 M	Southeast
Sheraden	\$10 M	West
Phillips	\$7 M	South
West End	\$5 M	West
Schenley	\$3 M	Central
Mellon Square	\$2 M	Central
Citywide	\$70 M	Citywide

## GOAL TWO

**Establish metrics for parks equity including access, programs and maintenance, and compare progress to baseline conditions.**

**Objective** Establish a methodology that goes beyond overall investment or proximity to parks, and which develops targets for the level of investment across parks and whether the investments will meet the needs of the community. Building capital projects is not enough; we need to assess what else is needed and how we can help achieve it. This includes new programming throughout the city.

## GOAL THREE

**Support the mission of the Frick Environmental Center to develop innovative, impactful and experiential outreach and after school pilot programs for K-12 children, striving especially to reach children in under-represented neighborhoods.**



**Strategic Initiative - Move toward a sustainable organizational revenue model; and maintain and build organizational capacities to support the strategic direction.**

## GOAL ONE

**Design and phase-in a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) system to manage programs and operations.**

**Objective** Develop KPI metrics to measure priority operational performance and project outcomes of the Conservancy, including outcomes and benefits to park users.



## GOAL TWO

Transition the Conservancy toward a sustainable revenue model through the implementation of this strategic plan and five key elements below.

1. Develop a single streamlined master agreement and funding.
2. Work to increase ARAD funding to support the scope of work outlined in the single master agreement with the City as baseline operational support.
3. Ensure that key green infrastructure projects are supported through specific agreements or contracts with the City, PWSA and Alcosan.
4. Focus not only on capital projects but also on maintenance, operating endowments, education programming and funding.
5. Develop a multi-faceted development, outreach, and fundraising strategy and build leadership capacity within the team to develop management and implementation of:
  - The next phase capital campaign
  - Foundation support and new sources of revenue to support maintenance and capital projects
  - Parks equity
  - Green infrastructure, and urban sustainability
  - Major gifts, planned giving, corporate and general public support



Frick  
Environmental  
Center Project



Project Credits

Architectural Design: **Woods Bagot**  
Landscape Architecture: **Woods Bagot**  
Civil Engineering: **EA Anderson**  
Structural Engineering: **Woods Bagot**  
Mechanical, Electrical, & Plumbing Engineering: **Woods Bagot**  
Interior Design: **Woods Bagot**  
Construction Management: **Woods Bagot**

THANK YOU!



