

Executive Summary

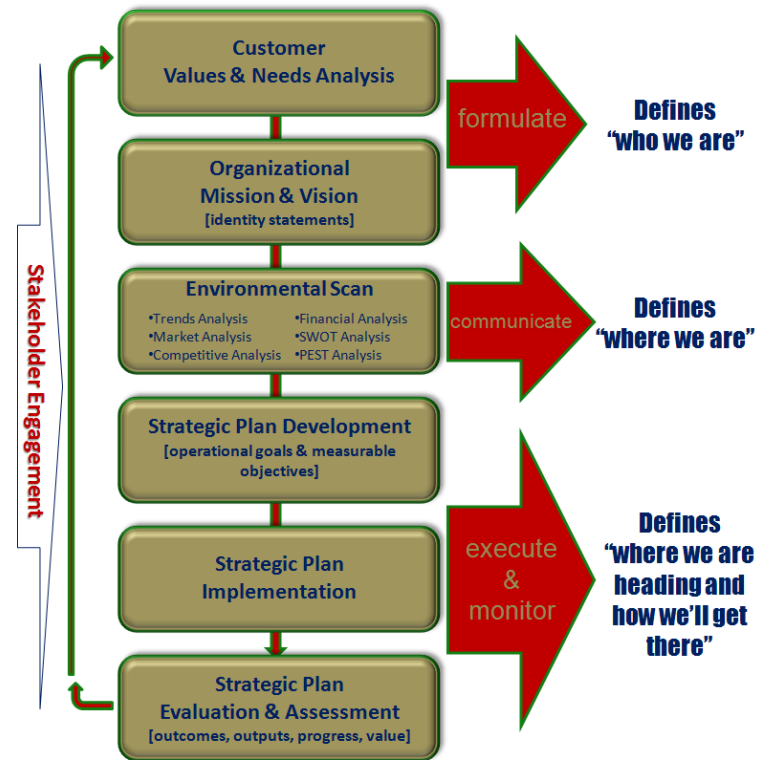
Experts stress that the most important outcome of strategic planning is to instill strategic thinking in an organization. They generally agree that strategic planning is only useful if it built upon a strong foundation of values, mission and vision, driven by customer interests and need, supported and championed by critical staff and leadership, and grounded in strategic thinking leading to action.

To be sustainable, public and non-profit sector organizations including public parks and recreation agencies must regularly examine and adjust their strategies as situations change and opportunities arise. Today, scarce resources and a constantly shifting environment are forcing many organizations to reconsider their current strategies or to explicitly undertake strategy development for the first time. All indications are that future success will require much more rapid strategic rethinking and repositioning than are now the norm.

Development of the South Suburban Park and Recreation District’s 2013-2015 Strategic Plan began in January 2012. The process (illustration at right) was thoughtful, comprehensive and focused on those critical factors that lead to effectiveness including:

- Developed in cooperation with those responsible for carrying it to fruition (both staff and the Board), and with community representatives.
- Developed with the intent to be dynamic and capable of evolving with constantly changing market conditions.
- Developed with the intention of being monitored and measured, both in terms of progress and value.

The process focused on allowing for strong and active participation from all three key stakeholder groups: staff, board and community. Ultimately, it unveiled four organizational priorities the District should dedicate its resources to addressing and resolving over the course of the next three years.



Operational Assessment & Strategic Plan Development
[assessing performance and setting a standard for continuous improvement]



2013-2015 Strategic Plan

These four focus areas are able to act as overarching priorities in efforts to address parks and recreation trends, the financial condition of the communities the District serves and the District itself, target market conditions, the competitive landscape, and the repeated issues, concerns, and considerations shared via community and staff interviews, and focus groups. Among those issues that were repeated and identified with regularity were:

- Revenue declines
- Economic challenges (e.g., decreasing property values, unemployment rates)
- Affordability of District services
- Accessibility of District services
- Community connectivity
- Maintaining the District's infrastructure
- Rapidly changing demographics (e.g., older adult and minority population increases)
- Health and wellness of communities
- Community outreach
- Marketing and communications (internal and external)
- Customer Service (internal and external)
- Impending staff retirements
- Rapid technological advances
- Increased competition
- Staff training and development opportunities
- Partnerships/collaborations
- Staff workloads

Organizational Priority 1. Financial Resilience

Organizational Priority 2. Community Engagement

Organizational Priority 3. The SSPRD Team

Organizational Priority 4. Cutting Edge Operations



The following pages provide an illustrative overview of the District's 2013-2015 Strategic Plan including the organization's key priorities, goals, and those subsequent actions that have been identified as having the greatest impact on District operations in the next three years, recommendations concerning implementation of the plan, trends and issues affecting District operations today and into the future, a summary of the process review (Appendix A), and a summary of all stakeholder feedback (Appendix B).



South Suburban Park and Recreation District's 2013-2015 Strategic Plan Illustration

Organizational Priority 1:
Financial Resilience



- Goal 1a. Strive to maintain our infrastructure
 - Goal 1b. Increase net revenue
 - Goal 1c. Improve operational efficiencies
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Organizational Priority 2:
Community Engagement



- Goal 2a. Create effective and efficient partnerships and collaborations
 - Goal 2b. Enhance community awareness of the SSPRD
 - Goal 2c. Increase utilization of SSPRD services
 - Goal 2d. Assess community needs and interests as they relate to parks and recreation service delivery
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Organizational Priority 3:
The SSPRD Team



- Goal 3a. Improve internal communication
 - Goal 3b. Maintain a culture which values staff
 - Goal 3c. Invest in the growth and development of staff
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Organizational Priority 4:
Cutting Edge Operations



- Goal 4a. Identify "non-traditional" partnerships and collaboration opportunities
 - Goal 4b. Foster a culture of creativity and innovation
 - Goal 4c. Responsibly use current technology to improve District operations
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