



# Strategic Plan 2023-2026

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### Introduction

Urban parks and public spaces play a critical role in a community's social, economic, and physical well-being. They have the potential to encourage active lifestyles, strengthen local economies, and serve as a hub for community engagement (Ellis & Schwartz, 2016).

As the largest urban park in Michigan, Rouge Park is critical to the region's economy, health, and social connectedness. Established in 1925, Rouge Park spans 1,184 acres and highlights the natural environment with a 5-acre wetland, 70-acre prairie, forests, and 4.7 miles of the Rouge River. The park features a wide variety of amenities for residents and visitors, including nature trails and paved trails, mountain biking trails, athletic fields, campgrounds, playgrounds, and picnic shelters. The City of Detroit has recently invested in bike lanes, a dedicated maintenance crew, and programming. Together with the Detroit Pistons and the Tom Gores Family Foundation, the City of Detroit is planning a 25,000 square foot recreation center – the first in District VII (Friends of Rouge Park, 2022).

The Friends of Rouge Park (FORP) was established by people passionate about Detroit's largest park. A group initially gathered in January of 2002 after state representative Triette Reeves encouraged the formation of a group so that she could better advocate to the state for resources for the park. A board was established with representatives from interested and affected groups, including park user groups, neighborhood associations, environmental groups, other nonprofits, and individuals who cared about the park. The first activity was to organize an annual cleanup, Rouge Park Appreciation Day. In 2006, FORP campaigned to stop the sale of 115 acres of the park for development. In 2010, FORP came together with other park friends groups to rally against closing parks, leading to the formation of the Detroit Parks Coalition. In 2008, FORP achieved 501(c)(3) status. The group began organizing an annual fundraiser run that year, which led to the realization of the need for a Master Plan. In partnership with the city, in 2011 FORP garnered grants and donated services from Beckett and Raeder, Lawrence Technological University, and Rocket Mortgage staff to develop a community-based Master Plan. In 2015, the National Park Service supported a planning intern for Rouge Park and helped FORP secure an Urban Forestry grant to build a nature trail with interpretive signage. The Master Plan was completed in 2016, made available to the public in 2017, and updated in 2022.

Beginning in 2019, FORP was able to hire part-time staff and interns. This increased the capacity of the organization to plan and create new programs, build partnerships, and oversee cleanups and stewardship work. Being able to bring on full time, permanent staff would greatly improve the ability of the organization to meet its mission.

FORP was one of five regional park friends groups to re-engage the Detroit Parks Coalition (DPC) in 2019, leading to a robust organization that has been able to raise millions of dollars in funding for parks that is now being distributed to FORP and the other groups. In Rouge Park, the DPC has supported an annual Freedom Festival and a capital improvement project. For FORP specifically, the DPC is funding a fundraising and staffing plan and staff salary.

FORP is at a crossroads of transitioning from an all-volunteer organization with a \$8,000 budget in 2021 to a staffed organization with a \$100,000 budget. The *purpose of this strategic plan* is to (1) capture where we are as an organization now, (2) describe where we envision that we will be in three years, (3) identify priorities, and (4) to outline strategies.



### Strategic Planning Process

The purpose of strategic planning is to help leaders *think, learn, and act* strategically. Strategic planning is an intentional approach to producing decisions and actions that shape an organization, what it does, and why. The process can be framed as three parts: Where You Are, Where You Want to Be, and How to Get There (Figure 1).

Led by a volunteer Board of Directors, the Friends of Rouge Park initiated strategic planning in fall 2021. The Board asked Sam Shopinski to facilitate the strategic planning process. As a member and former Board Trustee (2018-2022), Mr. Shopinski has experience with nonprofit management and organizational development and has a focus on public health and equity from his work with the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan. The strategic planning process took place across 1½ years from fall 2021 through summer 2023 (Figure 2). The effort began with an assessment of the organization, its members, the communities it services, partners, and funders; identification of valued causes and problems/challenges we desire to address; and a summary of the services, programs, and resources we provide ([Appendix: Figure 3](#)).

Figure 1: ABCs of Strategic Planning (Bryson, 2018)

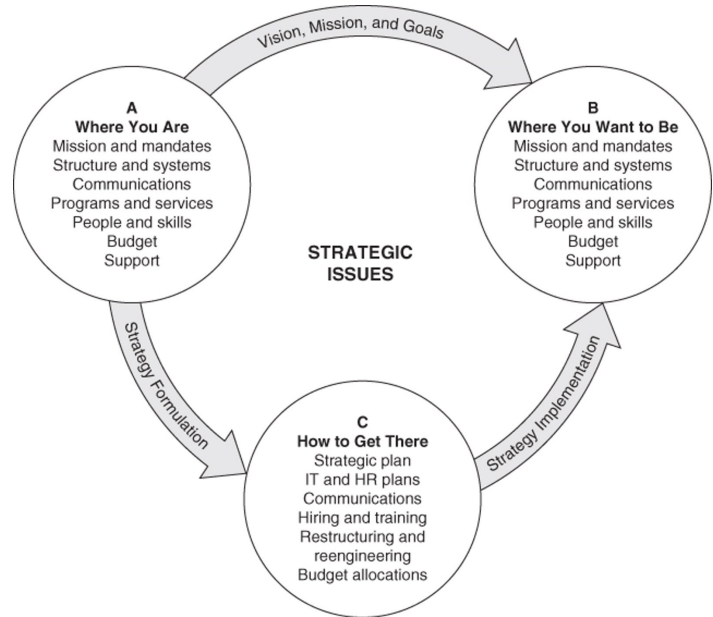
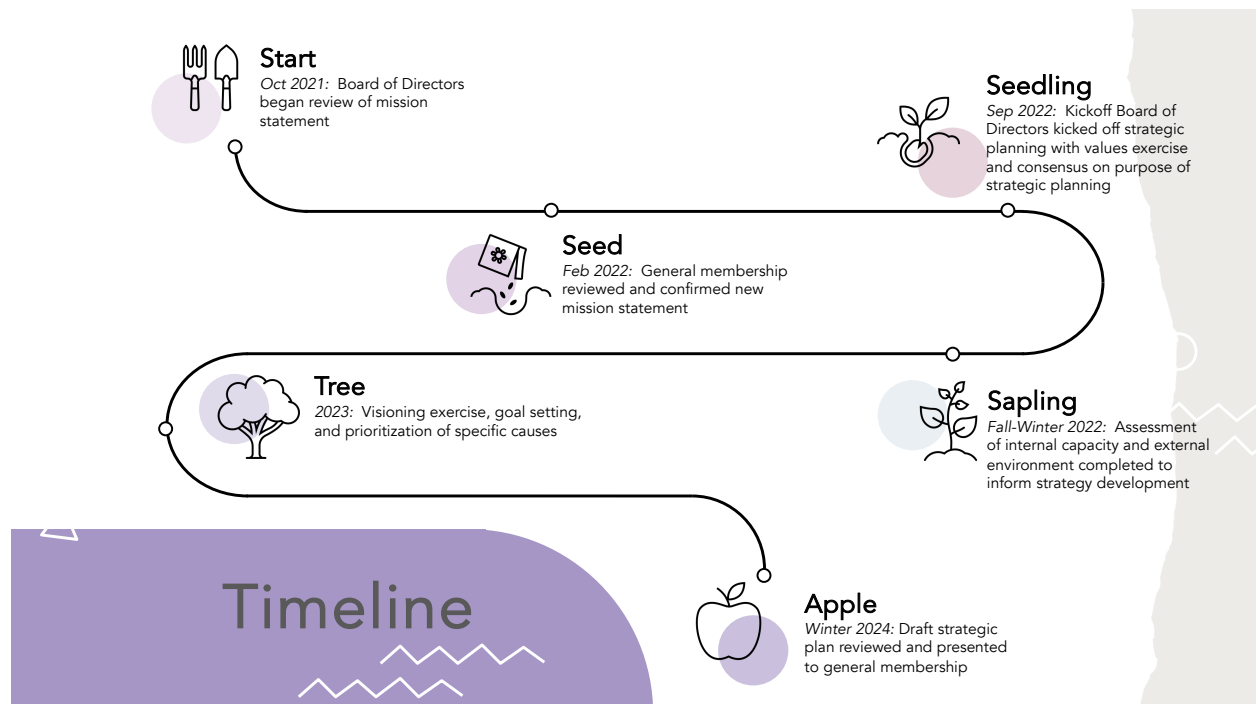


Figure 2: Overview of Strategic Planning Process





### Current State

#### Revision of Mission Statement

In fall 2021, the Board of Directors reflected on the values and impact of the organization in order to update the mission statement. This exercise provided the foundation for the strategic planning process. In multiple in-person and virtual meetings, the Board considered (1) *why* the nonprofit exists, (2) *who* it serves, and (3) *how* it impacts the surrounding communities. From 2002-2021, the mission statement read:

*To advocate for the protection and enhancement of the natural features and habitats found in Rouge Park and to promote existing activities and facilities and appropriate development of future recreational activities.*

The Board presented an overview of their process and proposed mission statement to the General Membership on February 16, 2022. General Membership voted and confirmed the following statement:

*To protect, restore, and promote a natural, environmentally healthy, and culturally vibrant Rouge Park that engages the community for the benefit and enjoyment of all.*

#### SOAR: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results

In fall 2022, the Board of Directors conducted a SWOT<sup>1</sup> assessment in order to understand the internal capacity of the organization ([Appendix: Table 1](#)) and a PEST<sup>2</sup> assessment in order to understand the external environment, both of which inform strategy development ([Appendix: Table 2](#)).

This strategic plan applies a *strength-based approach*, emphasizing the positives of the organization, its partners, the surrounding communities, and the environment. These strengths rather than the weaknesses are a stronger foundation for the strategy and recommendations.

#### Strengths

The Board of Directors provides leadership to the organization and its membership. They are committed to the mission and passionate about the organization's causes, dedicating their time, relationships, and talents. The greatest strength of the Board is their representation of Rouge Park communities and user groups. The Board is comprised of ten members, six of whom reside in Detroit communities neighboring Rouge Park, including Presidents of the Far West Detroit Civic Association and the West Outer Drive Civic Association. The composition of the Board, as well as their values, means that initiatives are community-driven and community-owned. The organization values and demonstrates equity in their practices.

In 2006, community members invested in the health and well-being of Rouge Park joined together to advocate for the preservation of Rouge Park when the City of Detroit considered the sale of park land. The Friends of Rouge Park now appreciates a positive and collaborative relationship with the City of Detroit. The organization has become a reliable resource for the City of Detroit when seeking community input for park maintenance and improvement, response for funding opportunities, and long-term planning. The General Services Department regularly has city staff present at member meetings to share updates and receive community input on the City's efforts and plans.

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<sup>1</sup> Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

<sup>2</sup> Political climate, economic drivers, social needs, and technology and resources.



## Strategic Plan 2023-2026

### Opportunities

In 2019, Belle Isle Conservancy, Clark Park, Chandler Park Conservancy, the Friends of Rouge Park, and the People for Palmer Park convened to form a shared vision and purpose for the Detroit Parks Coalition (DPC). Collectively, these five regional parks formed a strategic plan for the DPC in 2020. The organization has grown to include representatives from 10 park steward organizations, representing 20 parks across the City of Detroit. With three staff members and a fellow and funding from regional foundations, the DPC can provide significant technical assistance to the Friends of Rouge Park to expand operations, promote programming and the park itself, and provide financial support.

Alongside the momentum with DPC, the City of Detroit has made significant investments and leveraged significant resources to add to and maintain Rouge Park's built environment. Recent improvements include: capital improvements by the State of Michigan, restoration of a 3,000 foot aggregate trail connecting Joe Prance area play structure to nature trails, directional signage, restoration of nature study areas, and new interpretive signage. The City of Detroit adopted their 2022 Parks & Recreation Strategic Plan following 18 months of community engagement. The plan prioritizes equitable access to parks and gives attention to both natural space and built environment in Rouge Park (Detroit Parks & Recreation, 2022). With the commitment by the Detroit Pistons and the Tom Gores Family Foundation, the City of Detroit is planning its first recreation center in Rouge Park, a 25,000 square foot center adjacent to Brennan Poolhouse. The Friends of Rouge Park is among the key audiences for gathering input on needs, potential use, and design.

### Aspirations

Beginning in 2009, the Friends of Rouge Park began gathering input from residents, neighborhood organizations, park user groups, and other invested groups to develop the Rouge Park Master Plan. The plan was intended to be a living document that would be updated in real time. Priority was given to presentation of natural areas followed by the need for more recreational amenities and additional events/activities. While the plan has not been formally adopted by the City of Detroit, it is treated as a guiding document and the City regularly seeks additional guidance and input from the Friends of Rouge Park. The plan was completed in 2016 and updated in 2022. It serves as a blueprint for the organization when advocating or planning park improvements.

Member organizations and partners are key to the direction of the organization as well as its planning and implementation. The Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association were early partners with FORP and the City to open the Rouge Park barn and provide horse programming after the mounted division left. Collaboration with the Pistons Neighborhood Program led to the installation of new basketball courts. New courts led to creation of new programming for kids and youth, with interest in more programming still increasing. Volunteer efforts from the Motor City Mountain Biking Association have maintained the current three-mile mountain bike trail. The group is interested in trail development and mountain biking programming. Detroit Outdoors has re-developed Scout Hollow into a functional and regularly used campground. They host regular programming for youth and student groups to experience urban camping and aspire to reach people across the City of Detroit.

Finally, the Friends of Rouge Park aspires for the park to be accessible and used by diverse communities, especially individuals who identify as black, indigenous, or people of color. Partnerships with Black to the Land, the Forestry School, and the Sugarbushers should be the start of more equitable access and park use. As the organization moves forward, the Board, staff, and members should consider what diversity, equity, and inclusion means for every level of the organization, from operations to community engagement and programming.



### Results

The member base has grown significantly in the past five years, increasing both by number (39 to 235 individuals/families, 10 to 20 organizations) and by influence. Members are the experts in the park's history and current activities. Members participate in and help organize the annual Rouge Park Appreciation Day (RPAD) cleanup that has been held every year since 2002 and has grown to attract up to 300 people to remove thousands of pounds of trash and hundreds of yards of invasive species. Organizational members support the park events including the Detroit AeroModelers who cook the lunch for RPAD, the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association who provide storage space for FORP tools and supplies and host the Earth Day cleanup, Detroit Outdoors that supports winter events with sleds and snowshoes and fire rings, and the neighborhood associations and partners who promote and support park events and more.

The organization has recently been awarded funding to conduct programming and community outreach. Kresge Innovative Projects in Detroit + (KIP:D+) awarded the Friends of Rouge Park a planning grant in 2022 for \$35,000 for 24 months of intentional and collaborative park programming in the central core area of Rouge Park. The project involves consistent feedback and evaluation with park stakeholders to guide revitalization of this important area of Rouge Park. Cody Rouge Community Action Alliance has subcontracted FORP to provide park-based programming to seniors as part of their Senior University initiative funded by the State of Michigan in 2022 and 2023, providing \$10,000-\$12,000 annually plus reimbursement for tent rentals, food, bus rental etc. The Detroit Parks Coalition provided \$2000-\$3500 in support for planning a Freedom Festival event in 2022 and 2023. The DPC was awarded \$2.6 million by the Ralph Wilson Foundation and has re-granted \$27,500 to FORP to support staff salary and hire a contractor to develop a staffing and fundraising plan. Finally, the US Forest Service has committed to a Cost Sharing Agreement for \$15,000 that will allow us to engage in conservation education and natural resource service learning.

FORP has engaged five interns in Rouge Park to develop programs and organize stewardship work. In 2020, we hired our first intern who worked to get Rouge Park nature trails on the Hiking Project app and began organizing workdays before work was cut short due to the pandemic. A second intern was hired in May 2021. Many cleanups and stewardship days were conducted, engaging corporate and community groups. She developed new nature walks and planned three new winter events including the first Winter Fest that brought together multiple stakeholders including Black to the Land, We Fixin to Fish, the Department of Natural Resources, Detroit Outdoors, Metro Detroit Walleye Stalkers and more. Our third intern was hired in 2022 and continued programming and stewardship activities including supporting the first Rouge Park Freedom Festival, a Senior Picnic, a bicycle and bus tour of DIA's Inside Out Art Exhibition in the park, and re-dedication of a trail to ornithologist Etta S. Wilson. In 2023, FORP hired two Wayne State University history interns that are working to conduct research on the park's history and collect stories from local residents.

In 2022, FORP began developing a Park Stewards program to engage local residents in regularly conducting park stewardship activities and reporting of park issues. Stewards were provided with training, safety vests, badges and car signs and taught to use the Improve Detroit app.



## Future State: Goals and Priorities

As an overarching activity for the strategic plan, the Board of Directors and staff will facilitate a visioning exercise to design an inclusive and aspiration vision statement representative of the organization.

The organization is committed to transitioning from an all-volunteer approach to a staffed organization. The organization’s strength comes from its relationships and it will maintain its member-driven approach. Form follows function: the structure must change in order to achieve its vision. Projects are grouped into six overarching goals:

- [Board Development and Governance](#)
- [Improved Operations](#)
- [Increased Staffing Capacity](#)
- [Increased Member Involvement and Volunteering](#)
- [Expanded Programming](#)
- [Master Plan Implementation and Park Advocacy](#)

### Board Development and Governance

In order to support future staff members, the Board must transition from coordinating and managing projects to providing oversight and direction. This requires realignment of responsibilities for the current Board members as well as the addition of new Board members. A strong Board reflects a balance of strengths and interests, while also connecting the organization to a range of additional people, resources, and funds. Across the next two years, the Board should assess their strength, undergo training on Board responsibilities and governance, and seek new members to fill gaps. Future Board composition should balance representation from community, technical competencies (e.g., nonprofit management or environmental stewardship), and fundraising. The DPC can connect the Board to necessary tools and training, potential Board members, and appropriate consultants.

Following 20 years of leadership, the organization should identify, select, and develop a new President. Sally Petrella should remain a Board member as an *Immediate Past Board President* in order to maintain relationships with member organizations, partners, and donors. As the organization develops recruitment strategies for new Board members, the organization should consider how to incorporate succession planning and staggered term limits. This will help preserve and develop institutional knowledge. The by-laws should be reviewed and updated to reflect the adapting role of the Board as the organization builds staffing capacity.

Activity	Timeline
Review, update, and distribute By-Laws of the Friends of Rouge Park. Key partner: DPC	Q1-Q2 2024: Review Q3-Q4 2024: Propose Updates to general membership, solicit input, integrate Q1 2025: Ratify updates
Define board roles in order to set clear expectations for current/potential members.	Q2-Q3 2024
Assess board member skills, experience, and interest in order to understand strengths and gaps. Potential partners: Michigan Nonprofit Association, Co.act Detroit, Michigan Community Resources	Q3-Q4 2024



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Create nominating committee, including current Board members and interested at-large members. Key partner: Goaltrac	Q1 2024
Identify and recruit Board President who possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) necessary to build staffing capacity.	Q2 2024: Identify desired KSA Q3-Q4 2024: Recruitment Q1 2025: Nomination and Election Q2-Q4 2025: Mentoring by Immediate Past Board President
Develop succession plan for Board Members, including benefits, strategies, and procedures. Include procedures for staggered term limits. Integrate into By-Laws. Potential partners: Michigan Nonprofit Association, Co.act Detroit, Michigan Community Resources, Nonprofit Enterprise at Work	2024
Recruit three to five board members with skills and experience that addresses gaps, including fundraising. Key partner: DPC, Goaltrac	Q1 (annually): Elections Q3-Q4 (annually): Recruitment
Improve the capacity and effectiveness of the board by providing education and training on board governance. Potential partners: Michigan Nonprofit Association, Co.act Detroit, Michigan Community Resources, Nonprofit Enterprise at Work	Q3 2024 - Q2 2025

### Improved Operations

The organization has had recent success acquiring funds for programming, outreach, and park improvements. In order to support a Program Manager and eventually an Executive Director, the organization must shift its fundraising approach to prioritize new salaries and benefits. This involves long-term budget planning as well as developing a records system for payroll, expenses, and 501(c)(3) maintenance. Collaborating with the DPC and other park steward organizations may offset some human resource responsibilities. The fundraising plan ought to appeal to area businesses, universities, and regional corporations.

Activity	Timeline
Draft 3-year budget in order to project payroll and benefit capacity and needs. Key partner: Priscilla (accountant)	Q3-Q4 2023: Draft (v1) Q3-Q4 2024: Revise (v2) Q3-Q4 2025: Revise (v3)
Draft and implement fundraising plan that includes fundraising goals, potential consultants, and strategies. Key partners: Goaltrac, Mondo, DPC, Chandler Park Conservancy, People for Palmer Park, Sidewalk Detroit	Q3 2023-Q1 2024: Identify consultant, draft plan Q2-Q4 2024: Y1 implementation 2025: Y2 implementation 2026: Y3 implementation
Identify and implement HR/accounting administration and procedures for documentation that can be outsourced to Detroit Parks Coalition (including payroll). Key partner: DPC	Q3-Q4 2024: Identify tools and draft procedures 2025: Initial implementation 2026: Reevaluate and continue implementation





## Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Develop and implement a records system with greater capacity for payroll/benefits, fundraising, membership, licensing, and 501(c)(3) maintenance.	Q3-Q4 2024: Identify tools 2025: Implement system
Adopt fundraising software to increase donations, improve organization, and analyze giving history.	Q3-Q4 2024: Identify software 2025: Onboard staff/board and utilize

### Increased Staffing Capacity

Over the past five years, the Friends of Rouge Park has employed three part-time employees, each of whom served as Project Manager for a wide variety of projects across the organization’s entire work plan, with areas of focus on natural areas management, marketing, and community programming. We have also supported three interns with a focus on community programming (<1 year each) and two with a focus on capturing the history of Rouge Park (<1 year each).

The organization aims to employ full-time staff roles and responsibilities that align with the long-term growth of the organization. Hence, the organization should develop a staffing plan that incorporates (1) administration and operations, (2) programming, and (3) fund development. This should include realignment for interns’ roles so that supervision and mentoring shifts from Board members to full time staff. Combined with the three-year budget, this staffing plan should serve as a roadmap to sustain investment in a Program Manager and expand capacity to later hire an Executive Director.

Activity	Timeline
Draft a staffing plan that incorporates (1) administration and operations, (2) programming, and (3) fund development. Key partner: Goaltrac	Q3 2023: Identify consultant Q4 2023 - Q2 2024: Draft plan
Define roles and responsibilities in job description for Program Manager that aligns with capacity of Board of Directors and funding.	Q3 2023
Recruit, hire, and onboard Program Manager.	Q3 2023
Develop a mentorship and reporting model between the Board of Directors and Program Manager. Potential partners: Michigan Nonprofit Association, Co.act Detroit, Michigan Community Resources, Nonprofit Enterprise at Work	2024
Define roles and responsibilities in job description for Executive Director that aligns with capacity of Board of Directors, function of the Program Manager, and funding. Key partner: Goaltrac	Q1 2024
Recruit, hire, and onboard Executive Director (subject to funding availability). Key partner: Goaltrac	Q2-Q3 2024
Draft policies and procedures for internship support and management.	2025



### Increased Member Involvement & Volunteering

Members are the experts in the park’s history and current activity. As membership has expanded, the organization should create opportunities for members to contribute meaningfully to the mission and goals of the organization. The organization must first understand the current capacity, needs, and interests of individual/family and organizational members through qualitative assessment.

Activity	Timeline
Review and update roles and responsibilities for committees (programming, membership, fundraising).	Q1-Q2 2024
Develop recruitment strategies for individuals to join committees.	Q3-Q4 2024
Recruit members to join the membership committee.	Q1-Q2 2025 (continues annually)
Conduct a survey of members on why they are members, what they see as priorities for the organization, and what they consider the organization’s greatest strengths and weaknesses.	Q3-Q4 2024
Conduct group interview with member organizations in order to understand (1) how they benefit as member organizations, (2) what they are interested in receiving more of as member organizations, and (3) their capacity to contribute to organizational causes.	Q3-Q4 2024
Create and implement benefits for member organizations.	2025
Develop volunteer opportunities and expand volunteer base. Review and update roles and responsibilities for volunteers.	Q1-Q2 2024: Review and update volunteer roles and responsibilities Q3-Q4 2024: Develop recruitment strategies Q1-Q2 2025: Recruitment (continues annually)
Redevelop Rouge Park Stewardship program and implement.	Q4 2024: Review and update roles, responsibilities, policies, and procedures 2025: Revise implementation

### Expanded Programming

The COVID-19 pandemic brought positive attention to parks as public spaces and highlighted the critical value of Rouge Park in maintaining the health and wellness of the community. FORP began expanding programming and stewardship work prior to the pandemic and greatly expanded once COVID safety measures allowed it. From one annual Butterfly Walk, nature programming was expanded to include year-round nature walks in partnership with local non-profits and experts that include plant identification, pollinators, birds, and fish. Winter events began in 2022 and now include an annual Winter Fest. An annual early spring cleanup was added in 2019. The annual Rouge Park Appreciation Day was expanded to attract 300+ people and additional cleanups and stewardship days engage hundreds of volunteers in work to clean up the park and maintain the natural areas. A new Freedom Festival event was held in 2022 in conjunction with the DPC that dedicated a nature trail and highlighted Anishinaabee and African music and a second Freedom Festival highlighted the role of the Buffalo Soldiers and their history in conjunction with “the blues”. Sunday “Yoga in the Park” was started in 2022 and regularly attracts 20-25 people. Senior specific events started in 2022 and have included senior bus tours, indoor yoga, and senior picnics.



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As these programs have grown, FORP continues to facilitate partnerships in programming. The current Kresge Innovative Projects in Detroit Plus (KIP:D+) grant is funding FORP to collect feedback through surveys and focus groups, leading to the development of additional partnerships and collaborative programming and a shared calendar. The Pistons Foundation regularly offers summer programming through the Neighbors Program that is now facilitated by DPC with assistance from FORP for Rouge Park. The City of Detroit added indoor programming and swim classes at the Brennan Poolhouse in 2022. Huron Clinton Metroparks offered art classes for kids in 2023. Finally, the Detroit Black Health Initiative organized monthly summer fitness fairs in 2023.

Activity	Timeline
Develop an annual calendar that emphasizes organizational programming (stewardship, community and member engagement, recreation, and education) and serves as a central source for publicly available programming and events.	Q4 (annually)
Work with the City and other partners to highlight the park's 100th anniversary in 2025.	2024: Planning 2025: Implementation
Park promotion: develop an annual communications plan that includes traditional, social, and paid media. Components include: park recognition and event promotion. This first plan can be used as a template for future years and aligns with the annual calendar.	Q4 2023 - Q1 2024: Initial Plan Q4 2024: Update (continues annually)
Environmental education and awareness: plan nature walks year round. Key partners: local nonprofits	Q3-Q4 2023: Plan 2024 calendar 2024: implementation (continues annually)
Environmental education and awareness: develop regular programming for youth. Potential partners: Dixon School, Cody High School, Westside Christian Academy, Buffalo Soldiers, International Wildlife Refuge	Q3-Q4 2023: Plan 2024 calendar 2024: implementation (continues annually)
In addition to developing our own programming, actively promote Rouge Park as a location for other organizations to host activities and events. Provide support as appropriate.	Q1-Q2 2024: Identify user groups and organizational partners Q3-Q4: Develop strategies for partnership, promotion, community engagement 2025: Implementation
Plan and coordinate programs for seniors through Senior University. Key partner: Cody Rouge Community Action Alliance	Q2 2024: Planning Q3-Q4 2024: Implementation and Reporting
Work with the Detroit Parks & Recreation Department to develop programming at the new Detroit Pistons Recreation center that includes activities not currently offered locally and opportunities to interact with local musicians and artists. Key partners: Detroit Parks & Recreation Department and Detroit Pistons	2025: Planning 2026: Implementation



### Master Plan Implementation and Park Advocacy

Rouge Park is unique in being the largest urban park in the state. Although it is a City of Detroit park, it spans regional jurisdictions. Outer Drive, owned by Wayne County, cuts through it. Both the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department and the Great Lakes Water Authority own water mains and sewage pipes that run through it. Being such a large park, a multitude of stakeholders have agreements to run park amenities: the Detroit Aero Modelers and the Strathmoor Control Line Club run two separate flying fields; the Buffalo Soldiers Heritage Association runs the barn; the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network runs an organic vegetable farm; Greening of Detroit runs the nursery; the Motor City Mountain Biking Association maintains a trail; and Elite Archery runs the archery range. The park has a history of other uses including a National Guard Airfield, a Nike missile base, and home of the cavalry. A portion of the original park was given to DWSD to operate a DWSD facility and a Detroit Public School is located within the park boundaries. A pistol range is located within the park and still operated by the Detroit Police Department who have also used the park for riot training and bomb detonations.

Given the size of the park and its resources and the vast range of park stakeholder groups and public agencies that have concerns in Rouge Park, the Friends of Rouge Park play a unique role in facilitating cooperation. FORP advocates for the greater good of the park and community. FORP also works with partners to implement the Rouge Park Master Plan. FORP has a unique role in guiding natural areas management and the development of projects that increase engagement in the park, including:

- Advocating for the park to ensure projects do not negatively affect it (examples: DWSD, Pistol Range, Brennan Rec Center).
- Advocating to the City for proper maintenance of the park.
- Working to implement the Rouge Park Master Plan (e.g., recreation areas, splash pad, designated parking and bike lanes).
- Advising and implementing natural areas management, working with City and Huron Clinton Metroparks on a plan and organizing park stewards to implement.
- Facilitating relationships with organizations interested in stewarding areas in the park (e.g., Buffalo Soldiers, Greening of Detroit, Elite Archery, Sugarbushers).

Activity	Timeline
Conserve natural spaces: Develop and implement natural areas management plan for the park. Key partners: Kate Gmyrek and Jeff Klein (City of Detroit, Landscape Architecture), Katie Carlisle and Tyler Mitchell (Huron Clinton Metroparks)	2024: Develop management plan for park with invasive species removal and prescribed burns Q1 2025: Plan seasonal activities (continues annually) Q2-Q4 2025: Implement (continues annually)
Plan and conduct conservation education and stewardship workdays, especially for youth and young adults. Key partners: USDA Forest Service, area schools, youth organizations, corporate groups, and other nonprofits.	Q3-Q4 2023: Initial planning Q1-Q4 2024: Conservation education and stewardship work days
Plan and conduct stewardship workdays for youth crews (summers). Key partners: USDA Forest Service, YouthWork	Q2-3: Engage youth work crew (summers)



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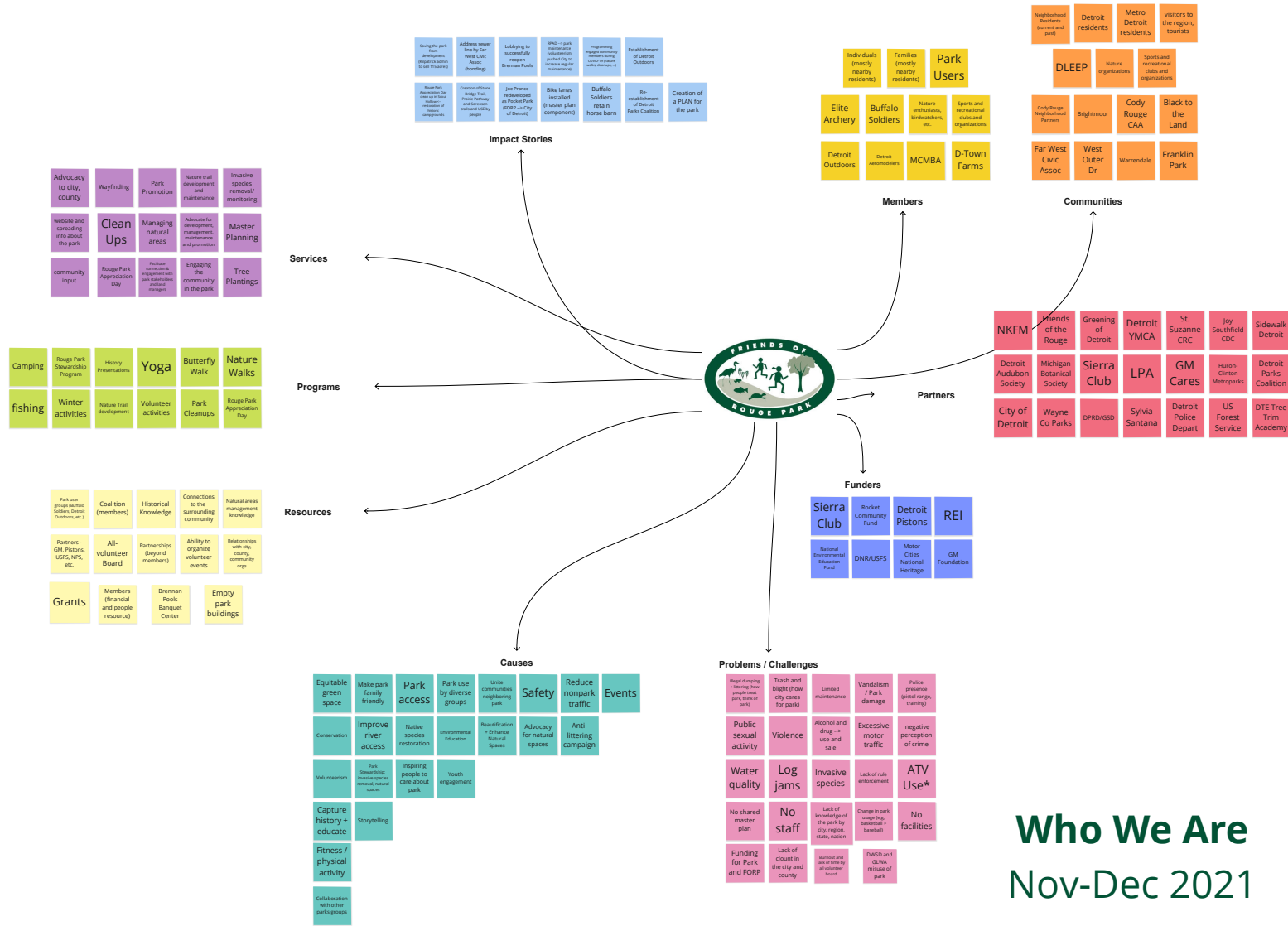
<p>Advocate to the City of Detroit for regular park maintenance. Develop standards with dedicated park crew.</p>	<p>Q3-Q4 2023: Develop relationships with dedicated crew 2024: Set expectations, collaborate for maintenance standards</p>
<p>Advocate for addition of bike lanes on Wayne County roads.</p>	<p>Q3 2023 - Q4 2024: Advocate to Wayne County 2025-2026: implement environmental change</p>
<p>Develop built environmental: improve and expand nature trails and signage</p>	<p>Q3-Q4 2023: Renovate kiosks; build Ma'iingan Wildwood Trail 2024: Build Ma'iingan Wildwood Trail; plant cherry grove; develop indigenous fruit and nut tree trails; construct nature play structure 2025: Reroute trail and trailhead entrance in prairie 2026: Develop equestrian trail</p>
<p>Advocate for protection of natural resources in Rouge Park including DWSD green infrastructure projects, Brennan Recreation Center, etc.</p>	<p>Ongoing advocacy</p>
<p>Advocate for the implementation of all of the recommendations for park improvements listed in the Master Plan</p>	<p>Ongoing advocacy</p>
<p>Develop a permanent channel of regular communication between FORP and the City of Detroit and Wayne County.</p>	<p>Ongoing advocacy</p>



# Strategic Plan 2023-2026

## Appendix

Figure 3: Who We Are



**Who We Are**  
Nov-Dec 2021



# Strategic Plan 2023-2026

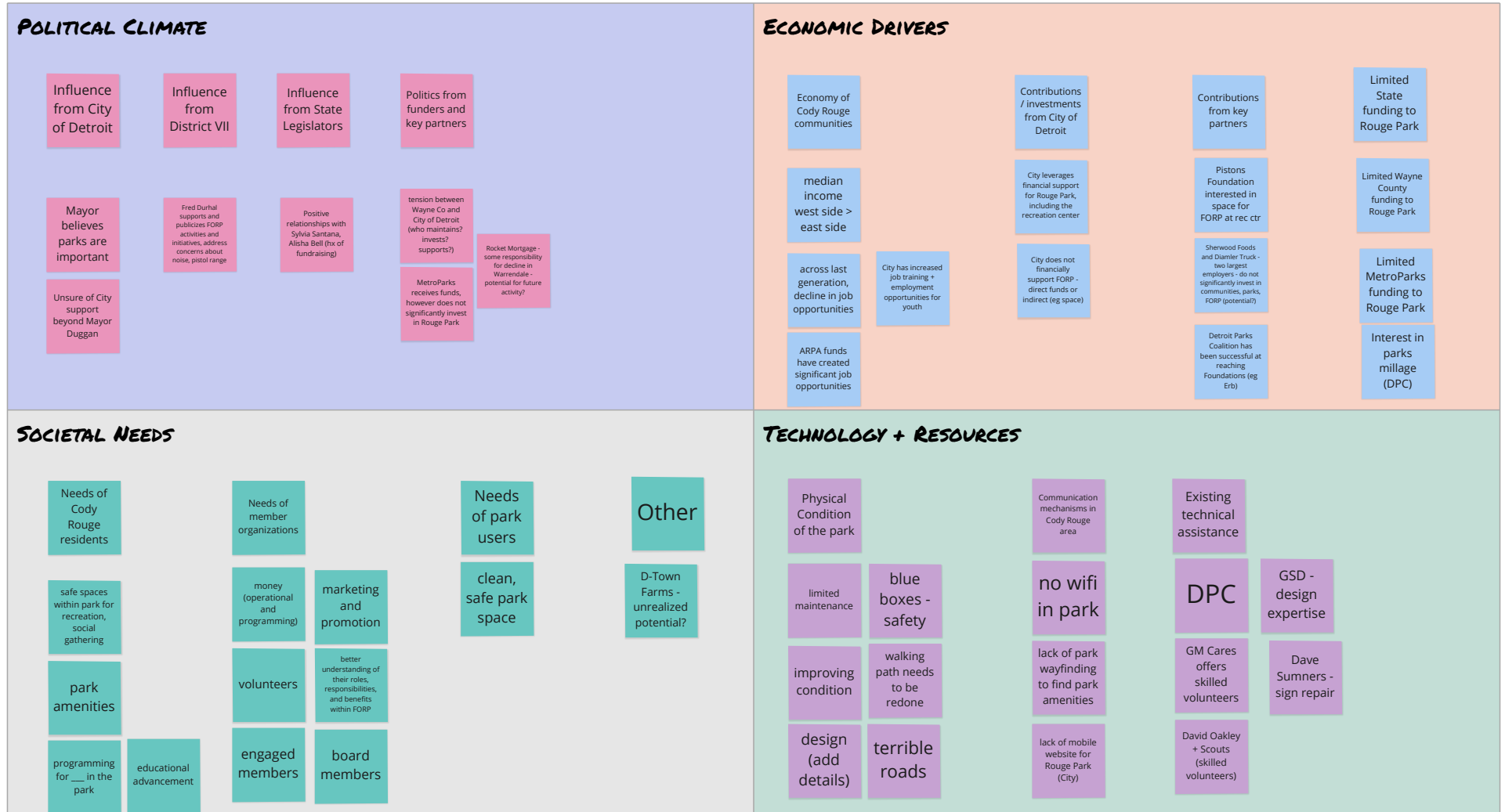
Table 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths					Weaknesses?					
What do you do well? What unique resources do you have? What do others compliment or praise?					Where is there room for improvement? What resources do you lack? What critiques do you receive?					
Board of Directors		Operational		People	Partnerships	Board of Directors		Financial	General	
board members have effectively built relationships to support mission	leadership from Board of Directors	FORP effectively communicates activities, priorities (FORP newsletter and social media presence)	volunteer organization (cleanups + stewardship)	park historians	support and involvement of almost all park user groups (ie, dues-paying org members)	Board performs responsibilities of staff	leadership concentrated on too few board members	lack of funds	complex problems exist in park - often directly to FORP to help	limited engagement with youth in order to develop programming
board members are committed to the mission, passionate about the work	established President who is dedicated, well-connected, well-known	track record promoting diversity in park	track record and interest in making park open to greater community	knowledge base for natural areas management	good working relationship with City of Detroit employees + politicians	succession planning for President	few interested in joining Board	limited fundraising capacity or experience	try to do everything: too many priorities, difficulty prioritizing	limited engagement with young adults
					good relationship with 6th precinct command staff (took long time to gain)	Board does not have capacity to support staff (technical)	limited Board representation from different sectors		limited interest in standing committee	lack of awareness of park, especially among youth
Opportunities					Threats					
What opportunities do you have? What trends can you take advantage of? How can your strengths be used?					What potential threats do you face? What changes in your urban parks are challenging? What threats do your weaknesses expose?					
From Partners		From City of Detroit		From the Park Itself	From Within the Organization	From within the Organization	From the Park Itself	From External Environment		
Buffalo Soldiers + Camp Casey -> Redevelopment of infrastructure adjacent to stables	Black to the Land, Forestry School, and Sugarbushers can connect to BIPOC communities	Self-Contained Park	100th anniversary (2025)	KIP:D: opportunity to expand partnerships with park user groups	Invasive species	Lack of funding	Economic recession would reduce park spending	Lack of public awareness of park	Brennan Pools parking lot regularly used as party area	
Pistons Neighborhoods Program: programming for kids / youth	MCMBAs: enthusiasm, interested in trail development and min biking programming	Pistons Brennan Recreation Center	nature programming (incredible natural resources)	host activities with schools (school responsible for youth)			police use of park (bomb squad, tear gas, shooting range) -> discourages family use of park	Safety (false perception)	Vandalism	
Joe Prance day camp (build off recent trail development)		Alex Jefferson Plaza		Park Ambassadors can monitor park and assist with events			Lack of park maintenance turns away regular and new park users	illicit hook ups (expanding)		



# Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Table 2: PEST Assessment







### References

- Bryson, J. M. (2018). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations : a guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement*. Fifth edition. Hoboken, New Jersey : Wiley, 2018. ©2018. <https://search.library.wisc.edu/catalog/9913020927302121>
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