Potawatomi Wildlife Park

Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Potawatomi Park, Inc. Strategic Plan 501(c)(3)

Letter from Wyatt Stephan on Behalf of the Board of Directors

Dear Friends of Potawatomi -

It is with great excitement that I share with you the newly created Strategic Plan for Potawatomi Park.

The 2023-2026 strategic plan will guide our organization towards greater success and impact over the next three years.

Our mission and vision are at the core of everything we do, and this strategic plan was developed with these guiding principles in mind. The key objective of this plan is to focus our limited resources to ensure that we are maximizing the impact of our organization within the community.

To ensure we created a robust plan, we utilized widely accepted strategic management tools and frameworks, including a structured four-step process. We first reviewed our mission, vision, and values to ensure they reflect our aspirations and articulate our shared values. We then conducted a thorough SWOT analysis to identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. We then translated our goals and aspirations into actionable steps, linked to measurable outcomes. Finally, we developed performance management criteria to measure our performance and identify when corrective action is necessary.
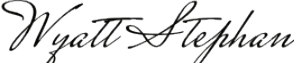

We are now fully committed to implementing the initiatives outlined in this plan. Our organization will shift its efforts immediately towards achieving our strategic goals.

As we move forward, we will ensure that this strategic plan remains a living document. We will review it annually in the month of release to ensure that we remain on track and continue to serve our community with excellence.

We are grateful to our current visitors, donors, business partners, and community partners for their continued support of Potawatomi Park. We hope that as we progress through this plan, we can continue to rely on your investment and engagement.

We truly believe that Potawatomi Park is a community gem, and we are excited to seize the abundant opportunities that lie ahead. If you would like to discuss our strategic vision further, I would be honored to connect with you.

Thank you for your support.

Wyatt Stephan
Sincerely,

Wyatt Stephan
Board Member
Potawatomi Park Inc.

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I. Organizational Profile

Potawatomi Park Inc. is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit located in Tippecanoe, IN. The organization was developed from the Estate of Vernon Romine, a local landowner who envisioned a free public park where visitors, particularly children and disadvantaged individuals, could enjoy recreational activities without financial burden. Mr. Romine left an estate of 151 of the current 314 acre park property and an endowment fund to be administered by a board of directors. The organization operates on income generated by donations from private individuals and businesses, rental income, grants and modest fees charged for some group activities. The organization receives no contractual city, county, or state funding and charges no general admission fee. The park system is open daily from dawn to dusk for the benefit of individuals, groups, school groups, and any other organizations desiring to use the park.

Incorporated in November 1982, the Board of Directors and the Advisory Council are responsible for developing the organization according to the guidelines set by Mr. Romine. The Potawatomi Park system features prairie, woodland, wetland, pond, and river landscapes, and consists of the flagship property, Potawatomi Wildlife Park (PWP), and "The Wall" Historic Park (WHP), both located on the banks of the Tippecanoe River. Potawatomi Wildlife Park, conveniently located on IN-331, includes the Bessinger Pavilion, the Michael and Sharon Stephan Visitor Center, and five miles of trails. It is home to the oldest building in Marshall County, the Boots' Cabin, and Benack's Village, a historical Potawatomi Indian settlement of leader Osheakkebe, also known as Stephen Benack. The Wall Historic Park is located along the banks of the Tippecanoe River on Birch Rd. Tippecanoe, IN. The park also has two residential properties, one located at the entrance of PWP and the other located near the main parking lot of PWP. The residential property at the entrance of PWP was purchased to control the visual elements of the park. The residential property located near the main parking lot of PWP was constructed to provide housing for the Park Manager.

Potawatomi Park provides a variety of programming throughout the year. The park hosts monthly events, such as guided hikes, fishing contests, and workshops. The park also accommodates school groups, youth organizations, and other community groups for camping and day visits, providing educational experiences and outdoor recreational activities. In addition, the park facilities, including the Bessinger Pavilion and gazebos are available for rental for events such as weddings, family gatherings, reunions, and corporate retreats. Potawatomi Park is a destination for those seeking to connect with nature, learn about local history, and build connections with other individuals and organizations.

The park employs one full-time and two part-time staff members: the Park Manager - who maintains the physical property, develops educational programming, and conducts the day-to-day organizational tasks of operating a not-for-profit organization; the Grounds Maintenance - who maintains the physical property; and the Bookkeeper - who records and maintains financial information.

II. Organizational Situation

Potawatomi Park is in a period of exciting change and opportunity. The park has many new Board Members and a new Park Manager as of 2022. With new faces and fresh energy, we are poised to build upon the foundation laid by our previous board members, staff, and volunteers.

Our team is actively working on the expansion of the Michael and Sharon Stephan Visitor Center honoring former employees, Michael and Sharon Stephan, who devoted over 30 years to our organization. This enhancement of our visitor center holds great significance as it serves as the gateway to our park, providing a hub for education and community gatherings. We continue to provide a park system and a range of engaging programming and events for all ages, including monthly activities, educational programs for school groups, and camping opportunities for youth organizations.

We recognize that improvement and modernization of our operations is necessary to continue providing high-quality experiences for our visitors and ensure sustainability of our organization. This includes leveraging technology, improving donor engagement, enhancing our marketing efforts, and improving the experience of our users. This is where our attention lies as we look into the future.

Our commitment to providing free access to nature, history, and programming will remain central to our mission.

III. Mission, Vision & Values

The first step to our strategic planning process was to evaluate our mission, vision, and values. We found that while our existing mission and vision were aligned with our aspirations, they were too lengthy and convoluted. As a result, our Board and Staff collaborated to create bold, concise, and inspiring statements that clearly communicate our organization's purpose and direction. You can find the updated mission and vision statements outlined in the document below.

Additionally, during this process, we realized that our organization had not previously established any core values. To guide our decision-making and daily actions, we established a set of organizational values that reflect who we are and how we want to operate. You can find these values outlined in the document below. We are committed to upholding these values as we work towards achieving our mission and vision for the community.

Mission - What We Do
The mission of Potawatomi Park is to connect people with nature, local history, and their community through low-impact recreation and educational programming.

Vision - Our Aspiration
The vision of Potawatomi Park is to be a thriving community hub that fosters connections through nature, history, and recreational opportunities for all.

Values - Our Guiding Principles
Sustainability: We value sustainability in all aspects of our operations, from the conservation of our natural resources to the financial sustainability of our organization. We strive to make decisions that have a positive impact on the environment and local history, and ensure the long-term success of the park.

Community: We prioritize community engagement and building relationships with all who visit our park. We aim to create a welcoming environment where everyone feels included, and to work collaboratively with community partners to achieve our shared goals.

Adventure: We value the spirit of adventure and exploration that is integral to our park's mission. We offer a range of activities and experiences that encourage visitors to step out of their comfort zones, try new things, and discover the natural beauty of our park.

Education: We believe in the power of education to transform lives and enrich communities. We are committed to providing hands-on educational experiences that inspire curiosity, foster a deeper understanding of nature and local history, and encourage lifelong learning.

IV. SWOT Analysis

During our strategic planning sessions, our team conducted a SWOT analysis, a widely recognized tool used across businesses, to identify an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. As a result, we were able to identify how we will leverage our strengths, improve upon our weaknesses, seek out opportunities, and mitigate potential threats.

Strengths

Characteristics of a business that give it advantages over its competitors

Unique mission & vision established by Vernon R.
New Board Members and Staff with fresh energy
Unique historical features
Open free-of-charge
Diverse landscapes
Excellent community gathering spaces
Trail design
Geographic location

Weaknesses

Characteristics of a business that put it at a disadvantage relative to its competitors

Aging donor database
Not government funded
Limited resources (staff & funds)
Poor internet access
Proximity to local housing edition
Online presence
Sub committee effectiveness
Documentation of governance practices & procedures
Donor & visitor database management
Relationship with donors
Grantmaking volume

Opportunities

Elements in a company's external environment that allows it to formulate and implements strategies to achieve its mission

Community engagement
Increasing perceived value of parks
Health & wellness trends
Program expansion

Threats

Elements in the external environment that could endanger the business, its profitability or its competitive advantages

Competition with local cities/recreational alternatives
Inclimate weather
Financial sustainability
Increasing maintenence & development costs

V. Strategic Plan Framework

Based on our comprehensive SWOT analysis, we have identified four strategic priorities that will guide our efforts for the next three years.

#1. Increase financial strength:
Develop and execute targeted fundraising initiatives to generate financial support.

### #2. Deploy best business practices, processes, and systems:
Implement industry best practices, establish business processes, and upgrade systems and tools to optimize operations and maximize productivity.

#3. Extend our reach:
Gather market research and establish relative marketing processes and schedules to increase brand recognition and drive traffic to our parks.

#4. Improve user experience:
Elevate visitor experiences by improving interaction between our visitors and the park systems.

Improve User Experience

Extend Our Reach

Deploy Best Practices

Increase Financial Strength
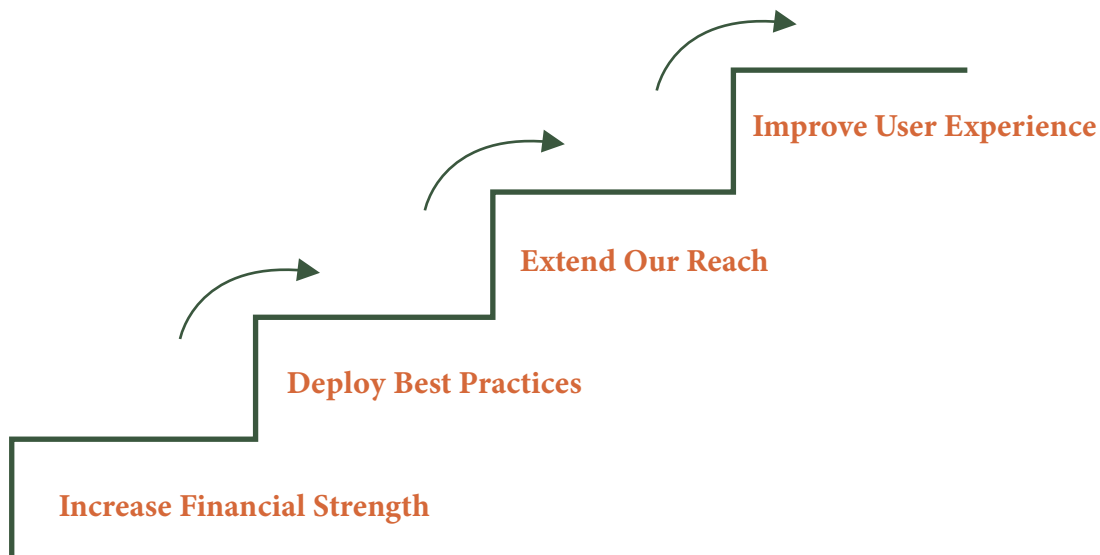
Key Strategic Priority #1

Increase financial strength

Seek opportunities to diversify revenue sources and establish structure around how we encourage investment from our community.

Strategic Priority	Initiative	Outcomes	Lead	Team Members
Increase Financial Strength	1.1 Develop and implement a Donor Engagement Plan	- Increase donor retention - Increase average donation amount - Increase volume of donations - Increase number of annual donors	Wyatt S.	Lacey P.
	1.2 Invest in the Park Manager House (short term or long term rental)	- Generate a steady stream of revenue	Mandy N.	Wyatt S. Lacey P. Mark E.
	1.3 Develop a grant schedule	- Increase number of grants applied for - Diversify grantmaker sources	Lacey P.	Wyatt S. River W.
	1.4 Develop a grant portfolio	- Increase overall grant funding - Increase success rate of grant applications	Lacey P.	River W. Susan L.
	1.5 Develop an annual fundraising plan	- Increase overall fundraising revenue - Increase donor participation	Wyatt S.	Mandy N.
	1.6 Plan and host specialty events bi-annually	- Host two specialty events each year - Increase community engagement	J.H.N	Lacey P. River W.

**CRM (Customer Relationship Management)

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Key Strategic Priority #2

Deploy best business practices, processes, and systems

Enhance how we operate as a business by refreshing and introducing new strategies, policies and technologies to ensure we are modernized and working in an efficient manner.

Strategic Priority	Initiative	Outcomes	Lead	Team Members
Deploy best business practices, processes, and systems	2.1 Fund, integrate, and, launch a donor & volunteer database	- Collect, organize, store, and utilize donor and volunteer data	Wyatt S.	Lacey P. Amber B.
	2.2 Integrate and launch a cloud based bookkeeping system	-Reduce risk of data loss -Increase accessibility for Board Members	Tana B.	Lacey P.
	2.3 Set up and implement a cloud based collaboration and document storage platform	- Increase collaboration among team members -Reduce time spent searching for documents	Wyatt S.	Lacey P.
	2.4 Update, store, and publish governance documents	- Ensure all governance document are up-to-date and accessible to team members - Increase stakeholder confidence by ensuring documents are easily accessible and published on our website	Amber B.	Tana B.
	2.5 Develop property maintenance schedule	- Improve efficiency of our limited staff	Lacey P.	J.H.N Tim G. Jeff K. Keith M. River W.
	2.6 Achieve Seals of Transparency with Guidestar	- Achieve the Platinum Seal of Transparency	Wyatt S.	Tana B.
	2.7 Develop a board, staff, and volunteer onboarding program	- Increase volunteer retention - Improve Staff and Board effectiveness and satisfaction	Amber B.	Lacey P. Mandy N.
	2.8 Conduct an annual stakeholder survey	- Increase stakeholder satisfaction - Identify areas for improvement and increase the effectiveness of the organization's programs	Wyatt S.	J.H.N
	2.9 Conduct an annual strategic planning meeting	- Reflect on our performance and adjust direction accordingly	Wyatt S.	Board & Staff

**CRM (Customer Relationship Management)

Key Strategic Priority #3

Extend our reach

Establish standard marketing practices and processes to optimize our marketing across all channels.

Strategic Priority	Initiative	Outcomes	Lead	Team Members
Extend Our Reach	3.1 Complete research to identify our target audience and develop personas	- Increase the effectiveness of outreach efforts - Increase engagament with target audience	Lacey P.	Wyatt S.
	3.2 Create a brand plan	- Increase brand awareness and attractiveness	Bailey S.	Mandy N.
	3.3 Create a Marketing Content Schedule	- Increase social media engagament - Increase website traffic	Lacey P.	Bailey S.
	3.4 Establish and document our marketing processes	- Increase the efficiency of our Marketing efforts -Improve the quality of our marketing efforts	Lacey P.	Bailey S.
	3.5 Improve our website	- Increase website traffic - Increase online donations	Lacey P.	Wyatt S. Mark E.
	3.6 Invest in targetted digital and print media	- Increase reach of our campaigns	Bailey S.	Lacey P.
	3.7 Develop an annual community event plan	- Increase comunity engagement - Increase volunteer participation	Holly S.	J.H.N Mandy N. Mark E. Event Commitee

Key Strategic Priority #4

Improve user experience

Investing in our user experience and programming.

Strategic Priority	Initiative	Outcomes	Lead	Team Members
Improve User Experience	4.1 Improve our sign in experience	- Increase the speed of the sign-in process - Increase user satisfaction with the sign-in experience	Lacey P.	Alex G. Mandy N.
	4.2 Improve signage	- Increase visitor ability to navigate our property	Alex G.	Chad M. Keith M.
	4.3 Improve PWP entrance	- Improve visitor experience when vising PWP	Lacey P.	Mandy N. Tim G.
	4.4 Seek oppurtunities to improve accessibility	-Identify and address accessibility barriers for those with disabilities	Lacey P.	River W. Keith M.
	4.5 Develop and promote a school group curricculum	- Increase the number of school groups	Lacey P.	River W.

**CRM (Customer Relationship Management)

VI. Partnerships & Enablement Tools

Partnerships
Lake City Bank
First Merchants Bank
Morrow Insurance Agency
The Accounting Firm, Inc

Tools
Google Suite
Canva
Guidestar
Stripe
Squarespace
PayPal
Facebook
Instagram
MailChimp

VII. Key Community Partners & Stakeholders

Marshall County Visitor Center
Marshall County Community Foundation
Marshall County Community Foundation
Boy Scouts of America - Lasalle Council and Troop 251
Warsaw Astronomical Society

VIII. Performace Measures

Financial
- What is our current level of donations and grant funding, and how does it compare to previous years?
- Are we able to maintain our current level of operations and programming with our current funding sources?
- What is our return on investment for the various revenue-generating activities, such as rentals and major events?
- Short term Health: Does the organization demonstrate appropriate liquidity to pay its obligations in the next 12 months?
- Long-term Health: Does the organization demonstrate savings/investments to ensure longer-term (3-years) financial viability?
- Have we established robust relationships with a major donors?
- Have we administered effective stewardship of our donor network?

Customer
- How satisfied are our visitors with their experiences at the park?
- Are we meeting the needs of our target audiences, such as children, disadvantaged individuals, and nature enthusiasts?
- How does our park compare to other similar parks in the region in terms of visitor experience?
- Does the organization survey visitors for satisfaction annually?

Internal Processes
- How efficient are our operational processes, such as maintenance, programming, and administration?
- Are we able to meet our goals and objectives, such as maintaining the park's natural resources and historical buildings?
- How well do we communicate with stakeholders, including visitors, donors, and the community?
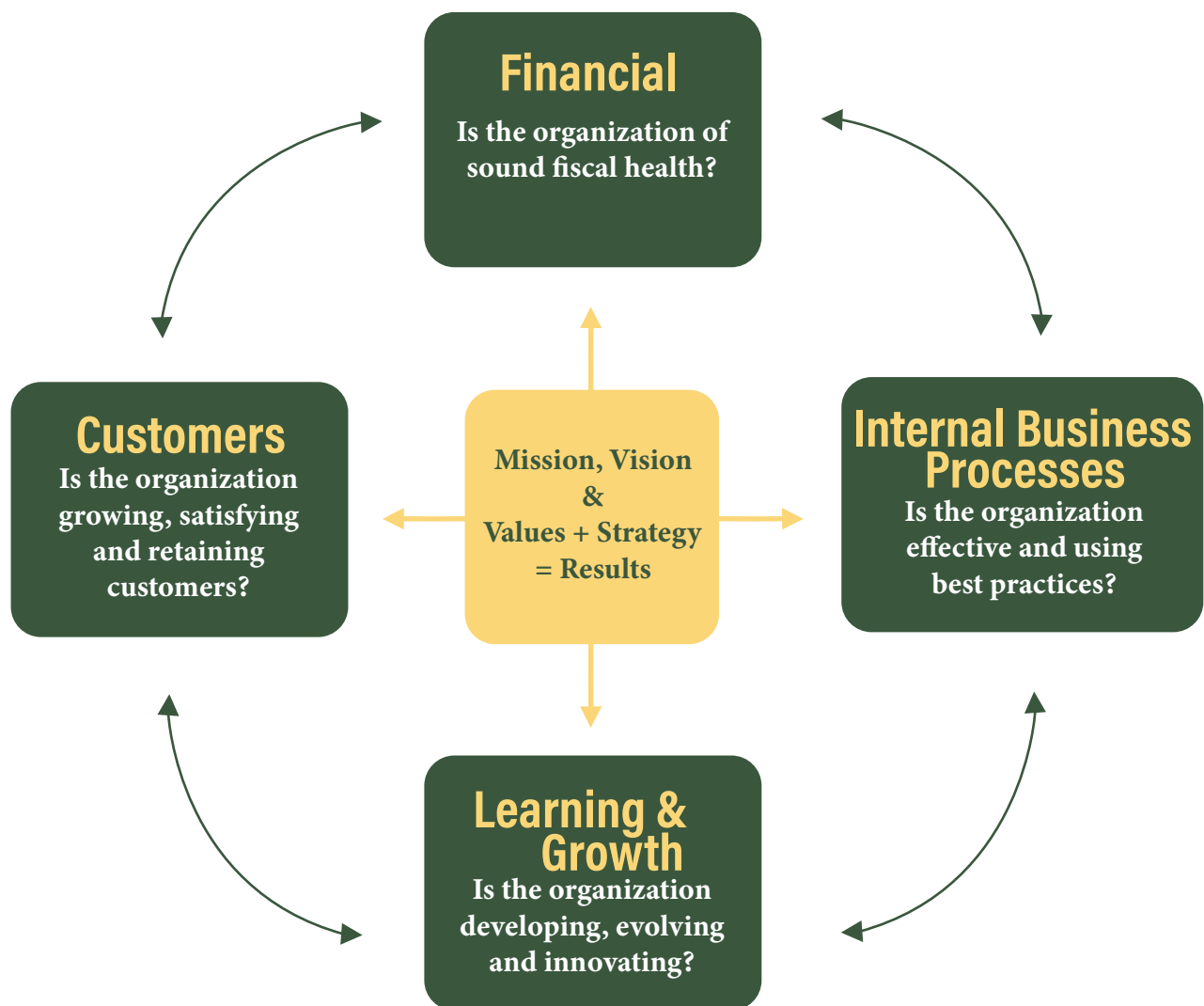- How well do we manage our staff and volunteers, and how can we improve in this area?

Learning and Growth
- Are we developing new programming and activities that align with our mission and goals?
- Are we investing in staff training and development to improve our operational efficiency and effectiveness?
- How are we incorporating feedback from visitors and stakeholders into our decision-making processes?
- How are we leveraging technology and other tools to improve our operations and reach new audiences?

VIII. Balanced Scorecard

The balanced scorecard suggests that leadership view the organization from four perspectives, and to develop metrics, collect data and analyze it relative to each of these perspectives: Financial, Customers, Internal Business Processes, Learning and Growth.

The balanced scorecard is a strategic planning and management system used extensively in business and industry, government, and nonprofit organizations worldwide to align key activities to the vision and strategy of the organization, improve internal and external communications, and monitor organization performance against strategic goals.

Financial
Is the organization of sound fiscal health?

Customers
Is the organization growing, satisfying and retaining customers?

Mission, Vision & Values + Strategy = Results

Internal Business Processes
Is the organization effective and using best practices?

Learning & Growth
Is the organization developing, evolving and innovating?

Potawatomi
Wildlife Park

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