



EXCELLENCE IS IN OUR NATURE



**LAKE COUNTY
FOREST PRESERVES**

PRESERVATION, RESTORATION,
EDUCATION AND RECREATION

LCFPD.org



100-year Vision

FOR LAKE COUNTY

Dear Readers,

More than 50 years ago, Lake County resident Ethel Untermyer was looking for an outdoor space for her son to play. She asked a friend about nearby preserves and was surprised to find that there were none. So the next day, she did what few other 33-year-old homemakers would do: she organized a countywide referendum to create the Lake County Forest Preserve District.

This bold, visionary success is the bedrock upon which the Lake County Forest Preserve District is built. Today, we have over 30,100 acres of open space, thanks to the continued spirit of leadership and support from Lake County residents—the true owners of this land. Healthy, diverse and woven throughout our community, our open space makes the County a beautiful and desirable place to live.

Inspired by Ethel's foresight, we realized that it was once again time to make big plans. So, early in 2013, we began a strategic planning process so that future generations will be as thankful for our actions as we are for Ethel's.

We began by assembling a diverse team of Advisors, including commissioners, staff and partners. To plan for the future, it is important to picture it; the Advisors literally drew what they thought the future landscape of Lake County should look like. Their visions were thoughtful, creative and transformative and the plan you hold in your hand today is derived from those ideas.

Designing a roadmap that will lead to a “healthy and resilient landscape with restored and preserved natural lands, waters and cultural assets” requires an understanding of potential roadblocks and opportunities. As Advisors worked on the plan they kept in mind three important factors:

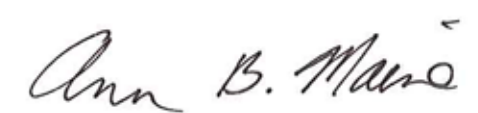
- Increasing population, decreased funding and other external forces will result in significant pressure to reconsider the use of underdeveloped land.
- New development and urbanization means that it is now more important than ever to connect people to nature and provide plenty of open space and opportunities to recreate outdoors.
- Benefits of healthy ecosystems continue to become more apparent and important; the wetlands that store flood waters and the trees that deliver clean air and absorb excess carbon from our atmosphere provide vital protection to our communities.

One of the most important strategies employed in developing this plan was the creation of a regular feedback loop. In each major phase of development, staff, volunteers, partners and other agencies were invited to review drafts and asked for their opinion and input. Each group involved in reviewing the work brought a different and important perspective to our planning process. Not only did this approach result in a well-rounded plan, but it also created a plan that belongs to everyone. As you read through it, we hope you will see your perspective represented here and see the role you can play in making our new 100-year Vision a reality.

Sincerely,

Ty Kovach, Executive Director

Ann Maine, Board President



OUR MISSION

To preserve a dynamic and unique system of natural and cultural resources and to develop innovative education, recreation and cultural opportunities of regional value, while exercising environmental and fiscal responsibility.



20-25 YEAR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Flowing from the Vision and complementing the Lake County Forest Preserve District's existing mission comes the Strategic Directions and Goals. The Strategic Directions identify the methods and systems needed to reach the Vision. The Goals associated with each strategic direction define the actual practices that our Board and staff will use to implement this plan.

100-year Vision FOR LAKE COUNTY

The Forest Preserve District envisions that 100 years from now Lake County will be a healthy and resilient landscape with restored and preserved natural lands, waters and cultural assets. Residents will take great pride in how their Forest Preserves make their communities more livable and the local economy more dynamic. Our vibrant communities will thrive, and future generations will protect and cherish these remarkable resources and the highly desirable quality of life that they provide.

LEADERSHIP

Acknowledged as a regional and national leader, the Forest Preserve District will initiate and coordinate innovative projects with diverse partners to further this 100-year Vision for Lake County. The community will recognize the District as a model of fiscal responsibility, social equity and governmental transparency. As the county's largest property owner, the District will demonstrate and promote best practices in resource management to encourage other public and private land owners to manage Lake County's working landscape in an environmentally sustainable manner.



PEOPLE

The Forest Preserve District and partners will promote an active, healthy lifestyle by providing convenient access for people to enjoy outdoor recreation and explore nature in clean and safe preserves and on an accessible regional network of land and water trails. The District will engage its diverse population through creative education and outreach programs to ensure that future generations are inspired to treasure and support Lake County's unique natural, historical and cultural resources.

CONSERVATION

The Forest Preserve District and partners will steward an interconnected native landscape of woodlands, prairies, lakes, streams and wetlands that are restored to ecological health, adaptable to a changing environment and preserved in perpetuity. The District will work with partners to create large open spaces and greenways within our communities to naturally clean our air and water, provide habitat for wildlife, lessen flood damage and improve property values.



LEADERSHIP

Strategic Direction: The District will build the leadership and innovation capabilities of its staff, strengthen the decision-making and governing abilities of its board, expand private philanthropic support of its mission, and facilitate the cooperative work of its diverse partners.

Purpose: To continually scan the horizon for needed changes and direction to improve the natural and developed landscape, to adapt to a shifting economic, ecological and technological environment, and to promote its role as a local, regional and national model for best practices in natural resource management and all other aspects of its mission.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Strategic Direction: The District will maintain and improve its sustainable business model with measurable performance standards, focusing resources on core activities and allowing for transparent decision-making about program costs and benefits, allocation of public funds and diversification of revenue sources. Core activities will prioritize protecting, restoring and managing the District's natural and cultural resources and providing and maintaining safe public access for nature-based outdoor recreation and environmental and cultural education.

Purpose: To ensure the District's continued financial and organizational capacity to pursue its vision and mission.

CONSERVATION

Strategic Direction: The District will acquire and protect, ecologically restore and adaptively manage a system of large natural areas and other open spaces connected by waterways and greenways, and will seek and facilitate projects with partners to enhance the surrounding working landscape, in order to improve the ecosystem functions and diversity of native plant and animal life found throughout Lake County and the region.

Purpose: To conserve and improve the biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and the water quality and other public benefits that forest preserves and other natural lands and waters in Lake County and the region provide.

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Strategic Direction: The District will undertake proactive communication, education and outreach initiatives targeted to a diversity of audiences across all ages, physical abilities, geographic locations, economic strata and ethnicities.

Purpose: To build broad public awareness and support for its vision, mission and brand within and outside of Lake County and to encourage an active outdoor lifestyle and support for Lake County's natural and cultural heritage, while improving the quality of life and economic vitality of the county.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS

Strategic Direction: The District will promote the public health benefits of trails, open space, natural lands and cultural experiences; encourage outdoor recreation and nature appreciation activities that are compatible with protecting the District's natural and historical resources; and continuously identify and eliminate barriers to participation.

Purpose: To improve the quality of life in Lake County by increasing equitable access from communities throughout Lake County to District lands, facilities, programs and services while balancing the need to preserve and protect the District's resources.

5-10 YEAR GOALS

LEADERSHIP

{STRATEGIC DIRECTION} The District will build the leadership and innovation capabilities of its staff, strengthen the decision-making and governing abilities of its Board, expand private philanthropic support of its mission, and facilitate the cooperative work of its diverse partners.

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LEADERSHIP GOALS

- **Invest in Staff** Cultivate staff to become future leaders and ambassadors for the District through education, training and professional development.
- **Build Governance Capacity** Provide the Board with ongoing, in-depth learning about opportunities and challenges they face to ensure the best decision-making for the District.
- **Engage Donors and Volunteers** Grow our base of donors and volunteers in a way that creates a sense of ownership in our projects and initiatives.
- **Build Strategic Partnerships** Strengthen staff capacity and collaborative skills to create and manage strategic partnerships.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

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{PURPOSE} To ensure the District's continued financial and organizational capacity to pursue its vision and mission.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- **Maximize Staff Potential** Create a culture of excellence by recruiting, developing and retaining a highly skilled, diverse workforce.
- **Ensure Public Trust** Function in a transparent and sustainable manner, both fiscally and operationally.
- **Enable Value-based Decisions** Assess the value of our resources to ensure informed decision-making about current and future priorities.
- **Balance Resources and Needs** Balance new and existing resources with core activities to ensure long-term organizational stability.



PRESERVING LAKE COUNTY'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY Above, from left: Native Americans navigated a regional network of trails using trail marker trees such as this one, photographed west of Fort Sheridan circa 1930; this 1913 photo of a northern flatwoods community located near Highland Park provides a glimpse at the character of Lake County natural areas before they were impacted by European settlement, altered hydrology and introduction of invasive species; rich soil and abundant fresh water made agriculture a key industry in the county from the 1830s-1950s (Prairie View, 1909); county roads began to be paved in the 1910s to accommodate automobile traffic, such as along Sheridan Road near Lyons Woods, circa 1935. Historic photos courtesy of the Lake County Discovery Museum. Below, from left: Spring woodland wildflowers at Edward L. Ryerson Conservation Area, Riverwoods; sunset on Lake Michigan at Fort Sheridan Forest Preserve, Lake Forest; mature oak tree near a trail at Nippersink Forest Preserve, Round Lake.

CONSERVATION

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{PURPOSE} To conserve and improve the biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and the water quality and other public benefits that forest preserves and other natural lands and waters in Lake County and the region provide.

CONSERVATION GOALS

- **Conserve Nature at a Landscape-scale** Acquire, protect and restore open spaces to create three 10,000-acre complexes of diverse natural communities connected by dedicated habitat corridors for the migration of plants and animals.
- **Prevent Species Loss** Allow for no additional native species to disappear from Lake County.
- **Data-driven Conservation** Develop a centralized geographic information system to streamline data sharing, increase cross-departmental communication and better inform decision making for land conservation, maintenance, and development.
- **Eradicate Buckthorn** Eradicate buckthorn on District lands through restoration and management, and reduce buckthorn by 50% in Lake County through partnerships and outreach.
- **Improve Water Quality** Amend management and development practices on our lands to improve water quality and aquatic habitat.

PUBLIC ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS

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PUBLIC ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS GOALS

- **Reach Every Resident** Expand our reach so that a District core activity or function touches the home, heart, body or mind of every resident in a meaningful way.
- **Trail Travel** Facilitate a regional network of multi-use recreational trail connections to optimize access in an ecologically and fiscally responsible manner.
- **Tell Our Story** Tell the intertwined human and natural story of our county and preserves, encompassing the past, present and future, through all staff and facilities and a strategically-located, re-envisioned Museum.
- **Establish Guidelines for Public Use** Determine compatible levels and types of public access and activities to guide sustainable development and management of new and existing preserves.

COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

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COMMUNICATION GOALS

- **Promote Awareness** Promote a deeper understanding of our system of preserves and the opportunities we provide and how they improve quality of life.
- **Cultivate Knowledge** Educate broadly about the biology of our landscape, the history of our county, and the connections they share in order to inspire current and future generations to support our mission.
- **Inspire Advocates** Appeal to groups and individuals to develop values and feelings of concern for Lake County's natural and working landscapes and inspire them to actively protect and improve those resources in support of our work.
- **Learn from the Public** Regularly gather feedback from the public to understand how they use and wish to use preserves and facilities, and any barriers they face.

For more information, visit LCFPD.org/vision



ABOUT *the* LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

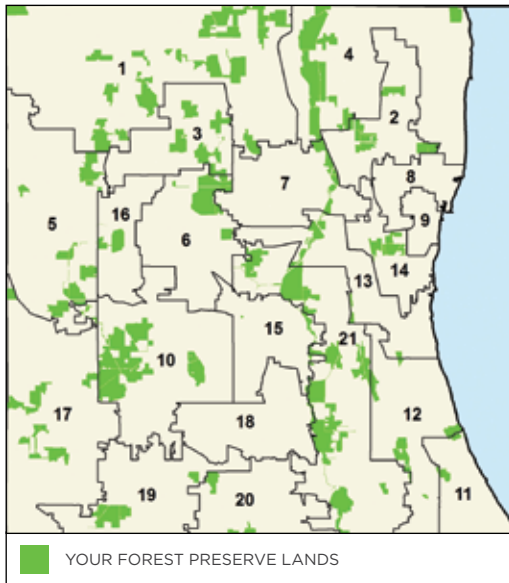
As principal guardian of Lake County's open space and natural areas since 1958, we manage more than 30,100 acres of land and offer innovative educational, recreational and cultural opportunities for all people.

Visitors of all ages can enjoy over 182 miles of trail for a variety of outdoor recreation uses, ponds and lakes for fishing, public golf courses, historical and cultural venues, public access to the Fox River and Lake Michigan and award-winning nature and history education programs and events.

OUR ORGANIZING STATUTE

"...to acquire and hold lands...for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna, and scenic beauties within such district, and to restore, restock, protect and preserve the natural forests and such lands...in their natural state and condition, for the purpose of the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public."

Excerpted from (70 ILCS 805/
Downstate Forest Preserve District Act



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VICE PRESIDENT

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LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

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