

Introduction

In January 2015 the board and staff held a joint half-day retreat. The results of that retreat (in particular streams of work – see Appendix B) are the basis for this strategic plan’s goals and strategies. Terminology usage varies from industry to industry so for clarity planning terms are defined in Appendix A. This document should be reviewed at minimum every three years by the Board of Trustees. The strategic plan will be used by the executive director to compose the yearly operating plan prior to each fiscal year.

1. Organizational Description

1.1 Brief overview of history of organization

1.1.1 The Tenafly Nature Center exists today because of the actions of citizens concerned with the preservation of open space. As early as 1959, these advocates had the vision to recognize that the continuing growth of our borough could irrevocably harm some of the most important natural spaces in our community. Triggered by impending development of a parcel on the East Hill, they argued that the shared community values of open space conservation and preservation should be nurtured so that the normally competing forces of growth and conservation could co-exist. The Borough of Tenafly responded positively to these arguments by granting oversight of an important parcel to an association of residents committed to its protection. A steering committee was appointed in 1960 and the Tenafly Nature Center Association was created. By taking a leadership role in cooperation with the association, the Borough established a precedent for public-private partnerships dedicated to open space preservation. Since then, the members and supporters of the Tenafly Nature Center have demonstrated that a community that values its most precious open space resources is a vital and attractive place to live, with a strong sense of place and a sustainable relationship with its environment.

1.2 Description of major products and services

1.2.1 Tenafly Nature Center Association is responsible for the stewardship of nearly 400 acres of woodland owned and leased from the Borough of Tenafly. Tenafly Nature Center is open to the public seven days a week, year-round. The property boasts 7+ miles of trails that are available between dawn and dusk.

1.2.2 Our professional educators are available for questions from the community and offer a wide assortment of activities for families, adults, and children of all ages including:

- Seasonal Programs
- After-school programs
- Day Camps during School Vacation
- School Programs
- Scout Programs
- Birthday parties
- Teacher Professional Development

1.3 Overview of major accomplishments and other highlights during history of organization

- 1.3.1 Summer of 1961 first organized summer program conducted with the Tenafly Recreation Commission
- 1.3.2 Construction started in 1965 for the Redfield Building designed by Harsen and Johns architectural firm. It is dedicated May 1966.
- 1.3.3 Spring of 1969 Turtle Sanctuary pond and fence installed adjacent to the Redfield Building.
- 1.3.4 First full time Director-Naturalist hired early 1970
- 1.3.5 Education Pavilion completed in 1999, and serves as a protected outdoor enclave for various programs.

2. Guiding Statements

2.1 Vision

A community that feels a strong connection to the natural world and actively partners with us to promote the highest level of biodiversity possible for our natural areas.

2.2 Mission

The stewardship of nearly 400 wooded acres for the purposes of conservation, education and recreation.

2.3 Public Motto (Marketing Slogan)

Enriching lives through nature.

3. Goals and Strategies: Organization Wide

3.1 Goal: Financial and programmatic sustainability

- 3.1.1 **Background:** The past years working towards Education and Discovery Center have depleted TNC's reserves. There has also been concerns from members of the board that our business model (in particular concerns about the education program) may not be sustainable.
- 3.1.2 **Strategy:** Increase reserves to 50K by end of 3 years
- 3.1.3 **Strategy:** evaluate current business strategy (including education programs) using matrix map method (See Appendix C)

3.2 Goal: Upgrade Facilities (the built environment)

- 3.2.1 **Background:** The Education and Discovery Center is no longer an option and the board determined new construction on the Hudson Avenue location is not feasible or appropriate. This leaves renovation and possible limited expansion of the Redfield building. There are also issues with other structures like the white trail shelter, the pavilion path to name a few. There is also more a need to make a more welcoming impression for visitor & users when they arrive in the parking area.
- 3.2.2 **Strategy:** Review existing Building & Grounds notes on facility issues.

- 3.2.3 **Strategy:** Inventory issues with visitors experience and information as they arrive at the parking area and move out to destinations (Redfield Building, Pavilion and trails). Include signage as well as overall look (attractiveness).
- 3.2.4 **Strategy:** Determine the scope of the upgrades necessary.
- 3.2.5 **Strategy:** Determine resources needed and develop a plan of action.

3.3 *Goal: Survey of Residents & Stakeholders*

- 3.3.1 **Background:** The board retreat allowed us to survey our internal stakeholders. It was determined at the retreat that we needed additional surveys of our external stakeholders.
- 3.3.2 **Strategy:** Identify external stakeholders: funders (existing and potential), community leaders, competitors, potential collaborators, other agencies in parallel or related fields, volunteers, etc.
- 3.3.3 **Strategy:** Develop and implement survey (or focus groups) to answer the questions:
 - How well are we meeting the needs of our customers/clients and members?
 - What are the perception of TNC in the community?
 - Where our services are being duplicated?

3.4 *Goal: Game plan for Development (Fundraising & membership management)*

- 3.4.1 **Background:** TNC currently has no dedicated Development staff member although the Executive Director is instrumental in current development activities. There has been no organized document that ties all the development activities together and coordinates them for maximum impact.
- 3.4.2 **Strategy:** (Re)Activate Development Committee (Board Committee)
- 3.4.3 **Strategy:** Author a Development & Marketing Plan and incorporate into strategic and operating plans.

4. Goals and Strategies: Education

4.1 *Goal: Evaluate Education Programming*

- 4.1.1 **Background:** The education program has grown organically over time and now is a significant part of the budget. Questions as to whether the education program pays for itself (based on direct and indirect costs) or is subsidized by other revenue streams has yet to be determined. This question is a subset of the “Financial and programmatic sustainability” Goal mentioned under “Organization Wide Goals”
- 4.1.2 **Strategy:** track employee hours based on program type (see evaluate business lines in Organization Wide Goals: Financial and programmatic sustainability).
- 4.1.3 **Strategy:** use data from tracking employee hours as they relate to programs and evaluate education programs based on income generated and how closely it ties to the mission (using a matrix map).

5. Goals and Strategies: Conservation

5.1 *Goal: Improve and preserve forest land*

- 5.1.1 **Background:** Improve and preserve forest land as wildlife habitat especially species of special concern and regional priority.
- 5.1.2 **Strategy:** Commission a Forest Stewardship/Management Plan.

5.1.3 **Strategy:** Make decisions based on the results of the plan and incorporate them into the strategic plan and implement them in the operating plan.

5.2 *Goal: Improve and preserve the quality of our freshwater biomes*

5.2.1 **Background:** Pfister's Pond has been mentioned with concern throughout the history of TNC and is considered by many the heart of TNC. The natural aging process of the pond called eutrophication (the physical, chemical, and biological changes associated with nutrient, organic matter, and silt enrichment and sedimentation) appears to have been accelerated by human activities (called cultural eutrophication which includes discharge of sewage and storm-water, and nonpoint source pollutants). If action is not taken in the near future the pond will eventually fill in and become a swamp forest.

5.2.2 **Strategy:** Investigate with the help of content experts the possible ways to protect the pond from further deterioration as well as restore the pond bringing it back to its attainable uses for both human and wildlife habitat and migratory use.

5.2.3 **Strategy:** Partner with the Borough of Tenafly and other associated organizations to determine what actions are possible, allowable and feasible.

6. Goals and Strategies: Recreation

6.1 *Goal Preserve and improve Hiking Trails*

6.1.1 **Background:** The seven plus miles of hiking trails that have been developed in stages over time. There has never been a comprehensive analysis of the entire existing trail network.

6.1.2 **Strategy:** Commission a Trail Master Plan from the NY NJ Trail Conference that will take stock of existing trail systems and infrastructure, identify opportunities for change and improvement, and suggests strategies for implementing actions that will improve the trail experience.

6.1.3 **Strategy:** Utilize the Trail Master Plan as a roadmap on how to move forward with tangible improvements and incorporate into both the strategic plan and operating plan.

Appendix A – Definitions

Strategic plan: A tool that provides guidance in fulfilling a mission with maximum efficiency and impact. If it is to be effective and useful, it should articulate specific goals and describe the strategies needed to accomplish them. As a rule, most strategic plans should be reviewed and revamped every three to five years.

Operating plan: A coordinated set of tasks (or tactics) for carrying out the goals and strategies delineated in a strategic plan. It thus goes into greater detail than the strategic plan from which it is derived, spelling out time frames and the roles of individual staff and board members, for example. It also has a shorter horizon than a strategic plan — usually one fiscal year.

Goal: A broad primary outcome.

Strategy: The approach you take to achieve a goal.

Objective: A measurable step you take to achieve a strategy.

Tactic: A tool you use in pursuing an objective associated with a strategy.

Appendix B – Board Staff Retreat Streams of work results

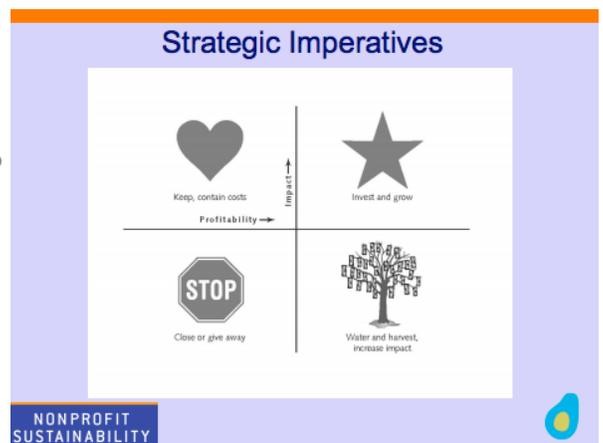
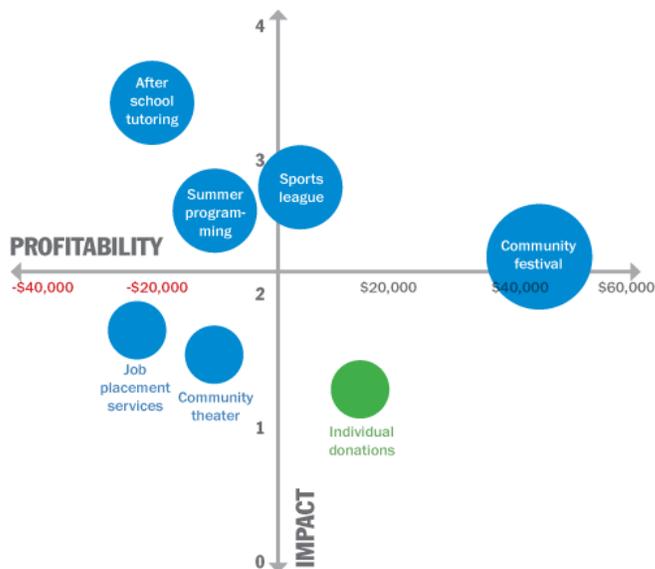
What Streams of work does the TNC need to Achieve	Red votes	Green Votes	Total Votes
Forest Management Plan	3	14	17
Fundraising & Membership Game plan (Development)	7	8	15
Pfister's Pond	1	13	14
Questionnaire - Research Survey Residents & Stakeholders	2	11	13
Upgrading Facility	2	10	12
Improve Trails / Trail Management Plan	1	8	9

Appendix C – Matrix Map Modeling

The Matrix Map and Strategic planning

- Identify and group programs and revenue lines. (ours are based on our P&L breakdowns)
- Collect revenue data (one year minimum) on each (income & expenses – including overhead)
- Key issue is tracking employee time – new electronic system in place (April) to track time based on program and revenue lines (see reverse side)
- Rank programs mission impact
- Create Matrix Map – the result is the expression of our organization’s current business model as a single, compelling visual image.

Matrix Map for a Community Center



Make strategic choices to adjust the business model (for program and fundraising activities).