



CREATING STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH HEALTHY FORESTS

2017 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



funded by
SEATTLE
PARK DISTRICT
INVESTING IN PEOPLE & PARKS



Seattle
Parks & Recreation
seattle.gov/parks

OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Nearly twelve years ago, the Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) set out to complete what was, at the time, the largest urban forest restoration effort of its kind in the nation. Now more than halfway through our initial strategic plan, over 1,300 acres of Seattle's forests are well on their way to being restored to verdant, valuable and beneficial spaces for our communities to enjoy.

The focus of the next several years will be enrolling the remaining acres of Seattle's forested parklands in restoration efforts, protecting our investment by transitioning restored sites to long-term maintenance, and setting ourselves up to expand the benefits of the program's reach beyond park boundaries in the future. To ensure our success, GSP must engage with local communities to inspire new partnerships and funding sources. We must excite and empower residents to take ownership of forested parklands in their neighborhoods in order to strengthen their sense of community and connection to nature. Although we currently have an impressive volunteer base, we will continue to build upon that with a focus on engaging even more youth as our future forest restoration leaders, and on underrepresented communities to ensure the work being done is represented by those who live there.

OUR VISION

Seattle is a livable city with healthy urban forests supported by an aware and engaged community.

OUR GOALS

1

Restore and maintain the forested parklands and designated natural areas of Seattle.



OUR PROGRESS

51%

of the 2,500 acres of Seattle forested parklands and other designated natural areas have been enrolled in restoration.

We will continue to set an example for what urban forest restoration means as we enroll the remaining 1,273 acres into restoration, and start transitioning enrolled sites to the final phase of restoration: long-term stewardship and maintenance.

2

Expand and galvanize an informed, involved, and active community around forest restoration and stewardship.



879K

volunteer hours have been donated by the city's residents through volunteer events.

We will continue to improve our community outreach efforts to engage a broader, more diverse audience representative of Seattle's communities, thereby developing awareness and advocacy around the benefits of healthy urban forests.



A FUTURE BEYOND RESTORATION

Continued stewardship is required to protect our initial investment and address the impacts of environmental change and the pressures on our natural areas associated with a growing urban population. In GSP sites where there is measurable progress towards building a healthy forest, stewardship efforts will start to look a little different. GSP uses a four-phase approach to restoration, with the final phase being Phase 4: Long-term Stewardship and Maintenance. Whereas the first three phases require annual management activities, many Phase IV sites are expected to be on a 5-year management cycle, where sweeps for re-populating weeds, plant establishment issues, or other concerns will be documented and addressed. Other Phase 4 sites will require inspection and intervention far more frequently.

However, the forest doesn't stop at park boundaries. Although it is beyond our current funding, program scope and timeline, securing the resources to work across public property boundaries and with willing private landowners will help protect the deep investment we've made.

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Restoring and maintaining Seattle's forested parklands is no small feat; it requires a significant investment of time and resources to accomplish. With the support of an informed, organized, motivated and diverse community base, additional funding, dedicated partners, and the support of the City, GSP will have the resources require our goals and keep Seattle parklands resilient well into the future.



RESTORATION & MAINTENANCE WORK

GSP improves the health of our urban forests by restoring them to more sustainable natural areas that contribute to a cleaner environment, improved wildlife habitat, and reduced stormwater runoff and erosion.

OUR CHALLENGES

Stewardship of the urban forest is a process that never ends. Forested parklands require active stewardship and innovative ideas to respond to the re-invasion of weed species, impacts of human and pet use, climate impacts, and other environmental changes. Additionally, many of the restoration areas yet to be enrolled have difficult or complex conditions that require professional expertise and additional resources.

OUR FOCUS

We will need to adapt our forest restoration practices to better serve the urban environment in the face of social and environmental challenges, and secure the resources needed to tackle more complex sites.

As acres of forest proceed through the phases of restoration, GSP will develop a program for the long-term, ongoing maintenance and monitoring of restored sites to ensure these forests stay on a healthy trajectory and safeguard many years' worth of public investment.

Using the monitoring results to inform the innovative ideas mentioned above will help to drive adaptive and improved management moving forward.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

GSP strengthens communities in Seattle by creating places and opportunities for people to come together in healthy ways to enjoy nature in the heart of our dense urban environment.

OUR CHALLENGES

Many residents are not aware of GSP, why it is important, or why they should participate - yet without community support and action, the future of Seattle's forested parklands remains uncertain. Those who understand the importance of our mission need to be supported and empowered in their leadership roles, to build trust and maximize the effectiveness and satisfaction with each contribution.

OUR FOCUS

Developing public awareness and cultivating advocates around restoration through targeted outreach and volunteer recruitment is crucial to our success. Equally important is volunteer support and retention founded on open communication, respect, and ongoing educational opportunities.

Engagement efforts need to be tailored to keep the program relevant to each community's unique context and needs, and to grow a volunteer base representative of the wide range of ages, ethnicities, and interests of the communities in which restoration work is done.

We will continue to engage a younger demographic to transfer local and established knowledge to the next generation of leaders.



RESOURCE ACQUISITION

GSP will continue to advocate for the resources needed to accomplish the program's goals through City of Seattle funding, empowered resident advocates, and leveraged partnerships.

OUR CHALLENGES

To protect the investment made in GSP sites, substantial financial and volunteer resources are needed. Funding will be necessary to improve and secure the health of our forests, expand partnerships, and recruit large, diverse volunteer groups. The program currently receives funding from the Seattle Park District. Due to the complex nature and competing interests of this funding source, securing those necessary funds is an ongoing and significant challenge.

OUR FOCUS

We have secured 60% of the funding needed for restoration. GSP will need to secure additional funding for active restoration, long-term stewardship and maintenance efforts, monitoring, marketing, youth and diversity outreach, and building staffing capacity.

Forging new public/private partnerships is a vital component of our resource acquisition efforts. Every leveraged dollar allows our program to stretch further, helping to extend the program's reach and ensure the long-term sustainability of the City's urban forests.



RESTORATION & MAINTENANCE WORK

OUR PATH FORWARD

OBJECTIVES

1

Enroll 2,500 acres of Seattle's forested parklands in restoration by 2025.

2

Ensure all restored parklands in Seattle transition into long-term stewardship & maintenance by 2030.

SUB OBJECTIVES

Enroll an average of **141 new acres** in active restoration annually through 2025

Further Seattle's Race and Social Justice Initiative by ensuring **75% of parks** where work is completed each year are in priority communities, until all acres in priority communities are enrolled

Add a minimum of **171 acres** into long-term stewardship and maintenance (Phase IV) each year

STRATEGIES

- A.** Increase number of sites with volunteer projects
- B.** Increase contracted acres on sites not suitable for volunteer activity
- C.** Continue to improve and expand data collection and analysis efforts to drive restoration planning, capture/communicate successes, and contribute to local and national urban forestry research efforts

- D.** Increase number of restoration sites within priority communities
- E.** Increase community engagement in priority communities

- F.** Develop additional Best Management Practices (BMPs) to address environmental and social challenges
- G.** Develop long-term stewardship and maintenance workplan for restoration sites that meet Phase IV performance criteria, including defining the roles of GSP and Parks Resource District crews
- H.** Engage GSP partners to support a transition to long-term maintenance (Phase IV)



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OUR PATH FORWARD

OBJECTIVE

Increase the average number of volunteer hours to 86,000 annually through 2025.

SUB OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
Ensure 25% of total annual volunteer hours are completed by youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Increase number of events that target youth involvement B. Involve schools in restoration activities at adjacent GSP sites C. Support youth involvement through incentives and recognition for volunteering
Ensure volunteer hours completed by people of color are proportionate to Seattle's demographics (35% as of 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D. Hold community events to increase volunteerism and advocacy among people of color E. Utilize RSJI Toolkit to develop marketing campaigns targeted at attracting new volunteers F. Develop leadership roles for people of color
Ensure 20% of volunteer hours are Forest Stewards annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G. Identify and acknowledge the most active volunteers to cultivate future Forest Stewards and leaders H. Provide training and development opportunities for Forest Stewards I. Develop a succession plan to ensure existing knowledge is transferred from current Forest Stewards and GSP staff, and developed to fill each needed role J. Identify new roles for Forest Stewards to accommodate a variety of abilities and interests K. Increase recognition opportunities for Forest Stewards
Ensure every park in the City with forested parklands (where conditions allow) has some volunteer activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> L. Increase staff to improve volunteer recruitment, support, and customer service M. Increase public awareness of GSP, including its vision, benefits, and opportunities to participate N. Broaden the reach of current and future marketing and engagement efforts through multiple media sources and methods
Maintain and strengthen the current number of partnerships with community organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> O. Increase coordination and communication among GSP partners, volunteers, Forest Stewards and staff to maximize results P. Increase partnership opportunities across Parks programs Q. Increase partner organization recognition



RESOURCE ACQUISITION

OUR PATH FORWARD

OBJECTIVE

Secure a total of \$43,073,700 for GSP activities between 2017 and 2025.

SUB OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES
Secure \$19 million in funding to enroll remaining acres in active restoration by 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Acquire funding through Metropolitan Park District, General Fund, and Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) revenue B. Actively pursue alternative sources of funding to support restoration work (grants, donations, partnerships, leveraged funding, etc.) C. Document GSP performance metrics and report annually D. Identify funding and approval for additional staffing E. Identify funding for outreach and engagement needs
Secure \$1,000 per acre each year in funding for operations and maintenance for all acres that have been moved into long-term stewardship and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. Initiate and facilitate a strategy to engage other City departments in funding forest restoration within their jurisdictions G. Identify funding and approval for necessary staffing (this will be needed for long-term maintenance as well as through 2025 as shown above) H. Institutionalize GSP into the City's business, to build a sustainable budget I. Create an aggressive Urban Forest Fund campaign
Secure \$4,350,000 in funding for the expansion of GSP activities beyond park boundaries by 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> J. Define and strengthen relationships with GSP partner organizations for education, outreach, and other activities, including new programs to support urban forests beyond 2025 K. Identify priority partners in the next five years and set meetings to identify barriers to participation, explore funding opportunities including grants, etc. L. Work with other City programs, partners and departments to develop policies and interdepartmental agreements to include active restoration of areas directly adjacent to existing GSP sites M. Actively pursue alternative sources of funding (grants, donations, partnerships, leveraged funding, etc.)

DATA MANAGEMENT, EVALUATION & REPORTING

The formation of the Seattle Parks District (SPD) in 2014 included a key measure to provide another dedicated source of long-term funding for GSP that needs to be renewed every six years. Seattle Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Unit is the steward of this funding, and is responsible for how the portion of the budget committed to GSP is used and accountable for the progress we make toward achieving our goals. GSP will implement an evaluation and reporting approach linked to this six-year funding cycle to help us comply with our funding requirements and ensure our program is as effective as possible.

REPORTING SCHEDULE

GSP measures progress on its goals annually using metrics reported on a quarterly basis. The quarterly reporting schedule helps us refine and evaluate the effectiveness, costs, and efficiencies of our large-scale restoration and volunteer efforts.

DATA MANAGEMENT & ACCESS

GSP prioritizes systematic data collection on ecological conditions, restoration activities, and volunteer contributions. Existing data collection include an annual inventory of active restoration sites, restoration work logging through CEDAR, permanent monitoring plots to measure long-term impacts, and data presented in an interactive online map. GSP will continue to improve and add to these systems in order to increase the program's transparency and integrity, preserve institutional knowledge, and advocate for additional resources to support GSP efforts.

METRICS WE CAPTURE



RESTORATION & MAINTENANCE WORK

- Acres enrolled in active restoration (Phase 1)
- Number of parks with active restoration
- Acres with active establishment activities (Phase 3)
- Acres enrolled in long-term stewardship and maintenance (Phase 4)
- Number of tree survival rings cut
- Number of trees installed
- Total plants installed
- Total quantity of mulch installed



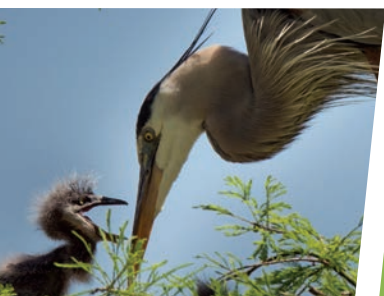
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Number of active Forest Stewards and hours contributed
- Overall volunteer hours
- Demographics for Forest Stewards and volunteers
- Number of educational opportunities / Forest Steward trainings
- Number of volunteer events
- Number of youth volunteers and hours contributed
- Number of schools engaged in GSP activities
- Number of partner organization



RESOURCE ACQUISITION

- Total budget and expenses per funding source
- Leveraged dollars from volunteer activities, GSP partner organizations, and Forest Steward fundraising efforts



In 2015, the Seattle Park District provided GSP with **\$453,000** to ramp up, and additionally dedicated **an average of \$2,868,500** in funding annually through 2020. With continued funding and approval from the Oversight Committee and City Council in 2020, and sustained contributions from REET, GSP requires an additional **\$4,786,000** annually to meet our funding needs and achieve our restoration goal.

WHO WE ARE

The Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) was founded in 2004 by a coalition of City departments and nonprofit organizations to re-establish and maintain healthy urban forested parklands to keep our city a great place to live, work and play. We lead restoration activities to restore our forested parklands and to build community through hands-on volunteerism, hardworking professional crews, and dedicated staff members. Seattle Parks and Recreation leverages expertise, guidance and manpower from hundreds of volunteers, other municipal departments, partner organizations and ecology experts. To date, 51% of Seattle's forested parklands have been enrolled in active restoration, which has had significant impacts on the City and has elevated GSP to the forefront of urban forest restoration nationally.

BENEFITS WE BRING OUR COMMUNITY

Seattle Parks and Recreation's Performance Measures work towards several ultimate outcomes, including healthy environment, healthy people and strong communities. The work we do aligns with and complements the City's work towards achieving these outcomes, benefiting the communities in which we work and the people who live there for generations to come.



HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Restoring the natural functions of our forested parklands improves the quality of our environment, providing cleaner air, cooler temperatures, better stormwater retention and filtration, carbon storage, and improved wildlife habitat.

1,309 ACRES ENROLLED IN ACTIVE RESTORATION



HEALTHY PEOPLE

GSP offers residents an opportunity to experience urban forests through active restoration and creates a deep connection with the natural environment, which is proven to improve both the mental and physical health of our volunteers and, by association, the communities around GSP sites.

879,752 VOLUNTEER HOURS COMPLETED (as of 2016)



STRONG COMMUNITIES

Our volunteer program brings diverse communities together around common goals and values to restore our forested parklands.

13 NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICTS SERVED BY 2025



BEAUTIFUL CITY

Urban forests are a defining element of Seattle, the "Emerald City," where we celebrate the majestic trees that cover our region, an iconic element of our collective culture and experience.

256 PARKS RESTORED BY 2025

AS OF 2016, OUR PARTNERSHIP INCLUDES:

4

CITY
DEPARTMENTS

53

COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATIONS

161

ACTIVE FOREST
STEWARDS

879,752

VOLUNTEER
HOURS