



Park District of Oak Park Greening Advisory Committee (GAC)

Mission and Guiding Principles

It is the mission of the Greening Advisory Committee to monitor and contribute to the Park District of Oak Park’s environmental activities. This committee will oversee the implementation of the PDOP’s Environmental Policy and related activities and provide a valuable communication channel between the Park District and the citizens of Oak Park. The GAC will offer an independent perspective on parks and sustainability issues affecting the community with each member representing only themselves and not any organization(s) to which they may belong. Through this cooperative effort, the Park District will be better able to assess community needs and expectations necessary to carry out its mission, “In partnership with the community, we provide quality parks and recreation experiences for the residents of Oak Park.”

Specific Responsibilities

- Act as a direct liaison between the Park District and the community
- Help the Park District to better understand citizen concerns and to be responsive to community needs
- Assist Board and staff in identifying and considering sustainability issues and explore environmental initiatives for biodiversity, tree and park maintenance, and green operations in Oak Park
- Collect information and data as needed and provide fresh ideas and insights to the Park District’s decision-making process
- Review and analyze information and data provided by the Park District
- Drive and monitor the implementation of the Environmental Policy
- Determine annual projects, with approval of the Park Board and Executive Director
- Establish and maintain the parks’ stewardship program

History

The Greening Task Force (GTF), a group of citizen volunteers and staff, authored the Park District’s Environmental Policy, which the Park Board passed on August 21, 2008. The GTF was organized in October 2007 with three specific goals: 1) to author a comprehensive tree policy for use throughout the Park District of Oak Park encompassing tree replacement, preservation, and diversity; 2) to investigate and propose recycling, energy conservation, and environmentally-sound operations recommendations to the Park District of Oak Park; 3) to create a plan for the stewardship of biodiverse areas within the Park District. The task force members divided into three groups and submerged themselves in their specific areas for seven months. This group discussed environmental issues the Park District faces and the different measures that can be taken to meet citizens' greening interests and maintain the health of the parks.

The outcome of the Greening Task Force's efforts is the Environmental Policy – believed to be the first of its kind in Oak Park. The Policy is quilted from a variety of sources and is a document entirely unique in its design and content. The Policy recommends that the GAC be instituted as a permanent committee to support the Park District in the Policy's implementation and serve as a bridge between the PDOP and Oak Park citizens.

Composition

It is the intention that members of the GAC will represent an environmentally-focused cross-section of the community with a diverse range of interests, ideas, and opinions, and that the GAC will not include a member representing only a specific viewpoint or a specific user group. Members should be users of parks and recreation in our community. Additionally, it may be helpful that members of the GAC have skills or experience that can help with the implementation of the Policy including but not limited to:

- information gathering and market research;
- public policy and governance;
- fundraising and not-for-profit development;
- greening operations such as recycling and energy efficiency;
- planning and design of naturalized areas;
- leisure, recreation, health, and tourism;
- community outreach and cross-cultural communication;
- historic preservation;
- arborist, master gardener, or steward;
- child development;
- environmental conservation;
- accessibility awareness.

Selection Method

Members of the GAC will be appointed by the Park District of Oak Park Board of Commissioners. The Committee will be made up of no fewer than six and no more than eight Oak Park resident volunteers and at least five PDOP staff members. Members will serve three year terms from the date of appointment. A committee member may be re-appointed by the Board of Park Commissioners for up to two additional terms. One of the community members will be a PDCC member, appointed by the President of the Park Board to act as a liaison between the PDCC and the GAC. Membership officers will include an appointed secretary, stewardship chair, committee chair, and committee vice-chair, elected once a year by majority vote of the GAC. The committee chair, committee vice-chair, and stewardship chair will not be PDOP employees, and the committee chair nomination will be subject to approval by the Board of Park Commissioners.

The initial membership of the committee will have staggered terms. All continuing members of the original GTF, appointed in October 2007, will serve either a one year or a two year term, determined by lottery. Each newly appointed member will serve a three year term.

Members of the committee may be removed by the Board of Park Commissioners, with or without cause. A member may resign at any time by submitting such resignation in writing to the Board of Park Commissioners. Members of the GAC will be at least eighteen (18) years of age, and committee members will serve without compensation.

Meetings

The GAC will meet monthly or as deemed necessary by the chair and vice-chair. The meeting agendas will be established upon mutual agreement of the chairperson and the Executive Director.

The chairperson will be the presiding officer at all Greening Advisory Committee meetings. The vice-chairperson will be the presiding officer in the absence of the chairperson. A member of the GAC will act as the secretary and shall be responsible for the preparation and distribution of the committee minutes.

Decisions and/or recommendations of the GAC will be advisory only and will be non-binding on the part of the Park Board of Commissioners. Recommendations will be made using a consensus decision-making process. If consensus cannot be obtained, the chairperson may call for a vote. The minutes will clearly state that consensus on the subject was not reached, but that a vote was ultimately used to determine the recommendation. If a vote is used, the minutes will accurately reflect in detail why the members could not agree and the alternatives that were proposed.

A quorum, consisting of one more than half of the GAC total members must be present to conduct a meeting. A representative of the Park District will be present at all meetings. Members will treat each other with respect, will not monopolize meeting time, and will listen to and try to understand one another's view.

The minutes of the committee meetings will be the committee's official report and/or comment. Minutes of the GAC will be kept on file at the Park District Administration Center and should include:

- date, time, and place of the meeting;
- committee members in attendance;
- summary of discussion and presentation;
- outcome of any vote taken and the method of vote;
- any other information deemed appropriate for the discussions between the members.

Executive Director or Designee Responsibilities

The PDOP Executive Director or their designee will provide the necessary information to the GAC in order to carry out the Committee's stated responsibilities.

The Executive Director or designee will:

- act as liaison between the GAC, Citizens of Oak Park, and the Board of Park Commissioners; and
- respond to comments and inquiries from the GAC.

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