



PARK DISTRICT  
of OAK PARK

# **Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC)**

## **Mission and Guiding Principles**

It is the mission of the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC), formerly known as the Greening Advisory Committee (GAC), to monitor and contribute to the Park District of Oak Park's (herein referred to as Park District) environmental activities. This committee will oversee the implementation of the Park District Environmental Policy, Sustainability Plan, and related activities, and provide a valuable communication channel between the Park District and the citizens of Oak Park. The ESAC 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 enrich lives by providing meaningful experiences through programs, parks and facilities."

## **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

## **History**

The Greening Task Force (GTF), a group of citizen volunteers and staff, authored the Park District 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, encompassing tree replacement, preservation, and diversity; 2) to investigate and propose recycling, energy conservation, and environmentally-sound operations recommendations to the Park District; 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 GTF'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 ESAC be instituted as a permanent committee to support the Park District in the policy's implementation and serve as a bridge between the Park District and Oak Park citizens.

## **Composition**

It is the intention that members of the ESAC will represent an environmentally-focused cross-section of the community with a diverse range of interests, ideas, and opinions, and that the ESAC 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 ESAC 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 ESAC will be appointed by the Board of Park District Commissioners. The ESAC will be made up of no fewer than six and no more than eight Oak Park resident volunteers and at least five Park District 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 District Commissioners for up to two additional terms. One of the community members will be a PDCC member, appointed by the President of the Board of Park District Commissioners to act as a liaison between the PDCC and the ESAC. A committee chairperson and a vice-chairperson will be elected by a majority vote of the ESAC. The chairperson is subject to approval by the Board of Park District Commissioners. The chairperson and vice-chairperson will not be Park District employees.

Members of the committee may be removed by the Board of Park District 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 ESAC will be residents of Oak Park who are at least eighteen (18) years of age. ESAC members will serve without compensation.

## **Meetings**

The ESAC will meet monthly or as deemed necessary by the chairperson or vice-chairperson. The meeting agendas will be established upon mutual agreement of the chairperson and the Executive Director or Park District liaison to the ESAC.

The chairperson will be the presiding officer at all ESAC meetings. The vice-chairperson will be the presiding officer in the absence of the chairperson. ESAC members will take meeting minutes on a rotating basis and submit them to the chair for distribution.

Decisions and/or recommendations of the ESAC will be advisory only and will be non-binding on the part of the Board of Park District 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 ESAC resident volunteer 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 ESAC 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 Park District Executive Director or their designee will provide the necessary information to the ESAC in order to carry out the Committee's stated responsibilities.

The Executive Director or designee will:

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