

Strategic Plan Progress Report

Fiscal Year 2017



August 2017

Introduction

This report provides a review of actions taken to achieve Columbia Association's (CA) Strategic Plan goals and objectives. This is the third annual Strategic Plan Progress Report. It highlights CA's accomplishments in FY 2017 (May 2016 through April 2017) as CA works toward achieving its vision of "Making Columbia the community of choice — today and for generations to come."

The current Strategic Plan was developed in 2013 and 2014 and became effective May 1, 2014, after approval from CA's Board of Directors. The strategic planning process included a review of trends and driving forces, as well as self-examination. CA also engaged an extensive group of different stakeholders and organizations that interact with or are impacted by CA. This helped CA develop a framework of goals and objectives to achieve its desired future.

Moving the Needle — Recent Progress/Activities

CA's Strategic Plan identifies five high-level goals to guide the organization.

1. Deliver programs and services that meet stakeholders' expectations and enhance the quality of life in Columbia.
2. Maintain and enhance Columbia's facilities, open spaces, connectivity and environmental stewardship.
3. Develop and communicate a shared community vision for Columbia and advance the vision through advocacy, partnerships and alignment of CA programs and services.
4. Strengthen communication and community engagement in CA.
5. Demonstrate the practices of a high-performing and responsive organization.

This progress report is organized by Strategic Plan goal. Additional detail is provided in the appendix.

Goal 1: We're Serving

"Deliver programs and services that meet stakeholders' expectations and enhance the quality of life in Columbia."

Overview

CA's mission is "Working every day in hundreds of ways to make Columbia an even better place to live, work and play." CA offers a wide array of programs, events, activities and services, putting that mission into action. Some of the most notable programs and services include before and after school care, summer camps, a Lakefront Summer Festival featuring free concerts and movies, an archive collection that includes materials from the planning and development of Columbia to the present, a volunteer center, a sister city program, and hundreds of indoor and outdoor fitness classes and programs at our sport and fitness facilities. Highlights of recent programs that demonstrate how we are adapting to the changing needs of Columbia to better serve our community are provided below.

FY17 Highlights

Customer Service and Feedback: In FY17, CA made important strides toward improving customer service. One example was piloting a new, user-friendly method to communicate with potential and existing members to discuss membership related questions through an online chat feature. This improved customer service and helped CA better communicate with younger members and customers, who prefer chat-related communication. Another example is the launch of Clarabridge as CA's member experience management system to improve how we collect, respond to and analyze customer feedback. It also provides CA the ability to identify trends as they are happening and to understand where we are doing well and where we need to make improvements; and, if improvements are being made, whether they are having the desired impact.

Older Adult Program Manager: Columbia Association has made several notable programming changes to better meet the needs of Columbia residents. In FY17, CA hired an Older Adult Program Manager — a recommendation in CA's Community for a Lifetime Comprehensive Plan for Serving the Older Adult Community. This position coordinates programs and services for older adults in Columbia.

Exploring Open Space: CA expanded its "Exploring Columbia on Foot" program to include additional weekday walks, as well as some on weekends. The theme of the walks continued to focus primarily on environmental topics but also included historical sites and discussions to highlight Columbia's 50th Birthday.

Group Fitness Schedule Update: CA revised its group fitness schedules to provide class types and times that better meet the needs of members.

Goal 2: We're Greening

"Maintain and enhance Columbia's facilities, open spaces, connectivity and environmental stewardship."

Overview

Columbia Association owns and maintains nearly 3,600 acres of open space as a permanent community asset. This open space, which tightly weaves through residential and commercial areas, is a defining feature of Columbia. Amenities include lakes, ponds, parks, tot lots, basketball and tennis courts, fishing piers, landscaped features, and 95 miles of paved pathways. CA also operates and maintains three fitness clubs, a roller skating rink, an ice rink, a horse center, two golf clubs, four tennis clubs, 23 outdoor swimming pools, five indoor pools and a hot water therapy pool, Haven on the Lake mind body wellness retreat, Columbia DogPark, and Columbia SportsPark. Through funding allocated in capital and operating budgets, CA maintains and reinvests in these facilities.

Columbia Association is committed to environmental sustainability. Major sustainability initiatives include watershed management and energy management. CA is actively working to restore Columbia's watersheds through public education and projects to reduce water runoff

and restore our streams. In addition, CA is working to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

FY17 Highlights

Energy and Environmental Management: Once again, CA has made great strides toward reducing its environmental impact. From FY16 to FY17, CA reduced its energy use intensity by 6 percent. This was accomplished through a variety of energy efficiency improvements, including the installation of more than a dozen high efficiency ENERGY STAR® HVAC units and 25 LED lighting retrofit projects throughout CA's building portfolio. Through the end of FY17, CA has reduced its carbon footprint by more than 50 percent relative to 2012 levels.

Stormwater Improvements: CA made significant stormwater improvements, including the addition of new rain gardens built on residential property through CA's Rain Garden Cost Share program. CA also completed the Harper's Glen stream restoration project (970 linear feet), built a new bioretention facility at the end of Long Look Lane, and stabilized the weir above the forebay at Jackson Pond.

Beautification: Last fall, CA led the effort to plant 50,000 daffodil bulbs throughout the community to create a perpetual, beautiful, colorful, springtime display in honor of Columbia's 50th Birthday celebration. Scores of organizations participated in this effort.

Improvements for Those Who Walk and Cycle: In FY17, Columbia was awarded a bronze designation as a *Bicycle Friendly Community* by the American League of Bicyclists. CA managed the application process with assistance from a number of organizations and Howard County Government. The award recognizes the work CA and other organizations have done to create a bicycle friendly environment. Specific improvements CA made to improve connectivity for walking and bicycling in FY17 include three new footbridges and the improvement and widening of 5,500 linear feet of pathway around Lake Elkhorn. CA also installed additional way-finding signage along pathway sections in River Hill, Kings Contrivance and Owen Brown. To encourage civility and comfort along pathways for all users, CA also installed new "share the pathway" signage along pathway segments with high usage.

Open Space Assessment: CA convened an interdepartmental work group to complete an assessment of its open space. The work group compiled and analyzed plans, policies and procedures related to open space. The project also included interviews with other leading park and conservancy organizations to identify best practices. These efforts helped identify opportunities for CA to enhance its open space management practices, which are documented in a series of recommendations in the Open Space Assessment report. In April 2017, the work group presented its finding to CA's Board of Directors.

Goal 3: We're Columbia

“Develop and communicate a shared community vision for Columbia, and advance the vision through advocacy, partnerships and alignment of CA programs and services.”

Overview

Columbia Association plays an important role in ensuring that the shared community vision for Columbia remains in the forefront as the community advances toward its next 50 years. To do this, CA goes beyond its programs, services, activities and events to collaborate with community organizations to discuss topics and resolve issues that affect the quality of life of individuals who live or work in Columbia. Also, CA is the steward of Columbia's history through Columbia Archives, where the history of Columbia and its founding values are collected, preserved and shared with the community.

FY17 Highlights

Columbia Vision and Celebration: In FY17, Columbia Association was instrumental in the success of Columbia's 50th Birthday through planning, funding and overseeing the events and programs to celebrate Columbia. CA communicated the significance of Columbia's 50th birthday celebration and Columbia's vision widely by working closely with media outlets, including but not limited to The Baltimore Sun, The Washington Post, Baltimore Magazine, Howard Magazine, Common Ground Magazine and select international outlets.

In addition to being recognized for its 50th Birthday, Money Magazine ranked Columbia, Maryland as America's #1 small city. CA was instrumental in highlighting this honor through collaborative press/media talking points, artwork and promotional items with Howard County Economic Development Authority and Howard County Tourism.

Collaboration: Columbia Association collaborates with many organizations and entities that support CA's strategic mission: “Working every day in hundreds of ways to make Columbia an even better place to live, work and play.” In addition to CA-sponsored events and programs, CA participated in, cosponsored and/or promoted other community programs and events, such as the grand opening and community programming for The Chrysalis, the Discover Downtown Columbia 5k and Fun Run, various Chamber of Commerce events, Leadership Howard County initiatives, and events held at community centers and schools.

Inclusion: CA helped organize *ColumbiaDialogues* in collaboration with the Howard County Public School System's Cultural Proficiency Coordinator and the other interested community members of various organizations. *ColumbiaDialogues* were facilitated, small group discussions on race, class and culture, with a focus on fostering a personal commitment by each participant to better understand their perspective and that of other participants who are different from them. The desired outcome was for each participant to make personal changes in their behavior and perspective to help our community be more inclusive. The program was well-received and participants found it valuable and recommended that it be continued. And, in fact, the Howard County Public Library System plans to offer additional sessions using the same format this fall.

Goal 4: We're Engaging

"Strengthen communication and community engagement in CA."

Overview

Columbia Association informs residents, members and the general public about its programs, events, activities and opportunities through many channels, including ColumbiaAssociation.org, print, digital and broadcast media and a presence at community events. The Customer and Member Service Center team, in conjunction with the Maggie J. Brown Welcome Center, are available six days a week to assist residents, members, guests and others in obtaining the information and services they seek. In addition, CA seeks input and ideas from the community to help us understand what changes or enhancements are desired. The avenues for civic engagement include resident speakout at the public Board of Directors meetings, surveys and social media.

FY17 Highlights

Board Meetings: Once a month, CA holds a Board of Directors meeting. The meeting is open to the public and provides an opportunity for residents to give testimony on topics, generally, to be discussed by the Board. In the past, these meetings were audio-recorded and posted on CA's website as a podcast. In FY17, to provide another channel to share information with and further engage the community, CA purchased and installed camera technology, trained staff and tested live-streaming of CA Board meetings so that, in FY18, CA could begin to live-stream the monthly Board meeting. This new feature enables individuals who cannot attend the meeting to watch the meeting live or view it at a later time.

New Website: In FY16, CA improved its website with new features and other enhancements, with a goal of making it more intuitive and user-friendly. In FY17, CA turned its attention to the website for Haven on the Lake. That website was completely overhauled to provide more information and integration with registration and scheduling software.

Open Space Engagement: CA assigned more Open Space staff at CA's high-use parks to enhance the user experience by answering questions, providing guidance and ensuring the enforcement of rules for the use of CA's open space.

Mosquito Control Education: CA developed and implemented an education and outreach program in response to resident concerns about the mosquito-borne Zika virus.

Support for Village Community Associations: In FY17, CA created the new position of Covenants Administrator to provide additional support to the villages related to residential covenant enforcement. CA worked with covenant advisors in the villages to successfully resolve and close 72 covenant enforcement cases.

Goal 5: We're High Performing

"Demonstrate the practices of a high-performing and responsive organization."

Overview

When CA talks about our employees, we often refer to them as "team members." Team members work together to achieve CA's mission "every day in hundreds of ways to make Columbia an even better place to live, work and play." As team members focus on service to the community, they play an important part in enhancing the quality of life in Columbia. CA needs to continue to manage its financial assets, provide team member training and make investments in technology that result in a high-performing and responsive organization.

FY17 Highlights

New Membership Structure: In May 2016, CA's Board of Directors approved the new membership structure. In FY17, CA staff convened a cross-departmental work team that spent the year working to ensure a smooth transition to the new membership structure and to implement and communicate the new structure to existing and potential members. The new membership structure was launched May 1, 2017.

Human Resource Policies and Procedures: In FY17, CA completed a comprehensive human resources policy, procedures and practices review and, as a result, made changes as necessary for either compliance or to implement best practices to enable a stronger organization.

Team Member Training: CA provided orientation training to more than 200 new team members to ensure alignment with CA mission and values. CA also redesigned, developed and introduced more than 300 new online and instructor-led courses geared to the needs of CA's headquarters, program and facility staff. CA also trained more than 1,000 CA team members on our Service Excellence quality initiative.

Financial Performance and Resource Conservation: CA completed FY17 with an increase in net assets of \$5,102,000, exceeding the budgeted amount by \$1,288,000, as a result of very strong expense controls. CA also gained Howard County Government's agreement for the county to share in the payment of repairs to one of CA's ponds and to accept future structural maintenance responsibility for four CA ponds.