



2023-2027

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Aaron Perri
Executive Director

MAYOR:

James Mueller

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS:

Mark Neal, President
Consuella Hopkins, Vice President
Sam Centellas
Georgianne Walker

CIVIC CENTER BOARD OF MANAGERS:

Aaron Perri, President
Michael Neises, Vice President
Randy Kelly, Secretary
Linda Doshi
Greg Downes
AJ Patel
Jill Scicchitano

PLANNING FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE.

Originally starting my professional career as a small business owner in a struggling downtown South Bend, I felt compelled to pour myself into being part of the city's revival. Little did I know that this would become my life's work. Over 20 years later, it seems this is true. It's an honor to work alongside hundreds of colleagues who are committed to this same inclusive, influential, and innovative work. As a team, we pride ourselves on listening to the community, using strong data, and pulling in benchmarks to help inform plans like the one you'll see in the following pages. All of this is in pursuit of improving upon our impact drivers and doing our part to make a more liveable and loveable South Bend.

SENIOR STAFF:

Deputy Director
Jordan Gathers

Chief Parks Officer
John Martinez

Chief Development Officer
Emily Sims

Chief Community Officer
Maurice Scott

General Manager of Venues
Andrew Schreiber

Director of Finance
Laura Althoff

Director of Finance - Venues
Michelle Smith

Director of Community Programming
Cynthia Taylor

Director of Golf
Tony Stearns

Director of Recreational Experiences
Macey Hanna

Director of Operations - Century Center
Scott Herczeg

Director of Booking & Event Services
Jane Moore



WHO WE ARE

OUR MISSION

Venues Parks & Arts inspires a more livable South Bend for all, connecting us to emotionally engaging experiences and to one another.

OUR VISION

Every resident of South Bend is positively engaged at least once **every year.**

OUR PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS

Arts & Culture
Recreation
Public Placemaking



WHAT GUIDES US

DEPARTMENTAL IMPACT DRIVERS

Social Equity

Erasing societal divides and ensuring the ability to thrive for all, regardless of income level, race, gender, ability, orientation or age.

Neighborhood & Economic Impact

Creating strong and safe neighborhoods and providing significant return on investment.

Health & Wellness

Enhancing the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals.

Ecological Stewardship

Responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conversation and sustainability practices.

CITY OF SOUTH BEND CORE VALUES

Excellence

For each major area of service delivery, establish South Bend as the best in the state and/or in the top 25% nationally, measuring and reporting progress.

Empowerment

Establish a work environment that enables employees to contribute richly to the administration and the community, taking pride and ownership in our work.

Inclusion

Ensure the City administration, as an employer and as a purchaser, reflects the community it serves and includes diverse voices in our decision making.

Innovation

Deliver better services more efficiently by introducing creative approaches to government operations, questioning habits and using evidence to continually improve.

Accountability

Put residents first always, offering services at the greatest value to the taxpayer with clear and transparent indications of how the government is using public resources.

WE ARE THE 2022 NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD WINNER

for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management
from the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration



STRATEGIC PLANNING MODEL

CONTEXT FOR INTERNAL & EXTERNAL PLANNING

✓ TRENDS & BENCHMARKS:

City / County
State / Regional
National

✓ STAKEHOLDERS:

Patrons & Users	Advocacy Groups
Visitors	Accrediting & Regulatory Agencies
Residents	Elected Officials
Businesses	Boards & Staff

✓ INFORMING DOCUMENTS:

Natural Resources Management Plan	City of South Bend 2022 Community Survey
Recreation Plan	2022 VPA Leadership Strategy & Planning
VPA Master Plan	NRPA Strategic Plan
Riverfront Parks & Trails Plan	Previous Strategic Plan
COSB 2025 Plan	



An aerial night photograph of a city, likely Boston, featuring a large Ferris wheel in the foreground, a river, and various city buildings. A massive, vibrant firework display is the central focus, with streaks of blue, red, green, and yellow light exploding against the dark sky. The city lights are visible in the background, including a prominent building with a 'DOUBLETREE BY HYATT' sign. The overall scene is festive and celebratory.

**THE BRIGHT FUTURE OF
VENUES PARKS & ARTS
STARTS WITH A GOOD PLAN**

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

**1. CULTIVATE EXCEPTIONAL,
INCLUSIVE & SAFE
EXPERIENCES**

**2. ENHANCE & MAINTAIN
WORLD CLASS NATURAL &
BUILT ENVIRONMENTS**

**3. INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES
FOR COMMUNITY &
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**4. CREATE A CULTURE
OF ORGANIZATIONAL
EXCELLENCE**

CULTIVATE EXCEPTIONAL, INCLUSIVE & SAFE EXPERIENCES



OBJECTIVE 1. Curate Partnerships Across the Landscape, Particularly to Expand Reach

Initiatives:

- Formalize Meaningful & Sustainable Partnerships
- Utilize Partnerships Where Service Gaps Exist
- Lean on Partnerships to Leverage Expertise / Specialty Services

OBJECTIVE 2. Target Programmatic Reach Expansion Areas to Respond to Needs of Community

Initiatives:

- Teens and Pre-Teens
- Special Accommodations (Sensory, Limited Mobility, Etc.)
- Active Seniors
- Young Professionals
- Passive Community Use / “Discoverable” Engagement Opportunities

OBJECTIVE 3. Embrace Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion as a Core Competency

Initiatives:

- Implement Equity in Arts Program
- Intentional Cross Cultural Marketing Campaigns / Materials
- Ensure Staff Reflects Diversity of Community
- More Robust Scholarship Program
- Training & Education for Employees

CULTIVATE EXCEPTIONAL, INCLUSIVE & SAFE EXPERIENCES

OBJECTIVE 4. Help Create a Safer Community

Initiatives:

- Expand Night & Weekend Programming for Teens
- Employ Night & Weekend Staffing in Parks & Parking Garages
- Fully Integrate POET (Park Outreach & Engagement Team) & Ambassador Programs
- Install Child Tracking System at Community Centers
- On-Going Staff Training for Emergency / Hazard Response
- Bring All Major Parks & Venues Online with Real Time Crime Center

OBJECTIVE 5. Build a Spirit of Customer Service & Communication

Initiatives:

- From On-Boarding to Routine, Increase Process Instruction
- Add New Customer Service Trainings for All Staff
- Upgraded Social Media Responses & Integration, Keeping up with Trends
- Comprehensive Event Calendar & Project Tracking Reviews
- Require Plan Templates & Evaluations for All Venues & Programs by 1.1.24

ENHANCE & MAINTAIN WORLD CLASS NATURAL & BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

OBJECTIVE 1. Facilities & Venues

Initiatives:

- Introduce Comprehensive Facility Management Software
- Move to Partner with Specialized Equipment Maintenance
- Increase Resources to Maintain Growing Technological Assets
- Integrate Custodial Training and Management
- Maintain 24/7 Service at Parking Garages, Upgrade Experience

OBJECTIVE 2. Outdoor Spaces

Initiatives:

- Fully Integrate Natural Resources Management Plan into Operations
- Attain 30% tree-canopy coverage by 2030
- Adopt Wildlife Co-existence plan
- Focus attention on 1st Class Riverwalk Experience / “Own the River”
- Enhance Four Season Exterior Décor at Major Parks & Venues
- Fully Retool & Launch Parks Health Dashboard
- Formalize Night/Weekend Staffing for Maintenance & Cleanliness

OBJECTIVE 3. Comprehensive

Initiatives:

- Create Portal to Report & Track Needs / Opportunities
- Reinstate On-Site Experience Audits
- Introduce Indoor & Outdoor “Instagrammable” Spots
- Finish Introducing Free Wi-Fi to all Major Public Spaces
- Enhance Brand Identity Standards at Parks & Venues



ENHANCE & MAINTAIN WORLD CLASS NATURAL & BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

OBJECTIVE 4. Complete the Following Large Capital Projects and Scale Resources to Make them Sustainable

MAJOR REDEVELOPMENTS

Century Center
Four Winds Field
Kennedy Park
MLK Jr. Dream Center & Park
Morris 100 Phases II & III
Potawatomi Park
Seitz Park

TRAILS

Coal Line Trail (Phases II & III)
Downtown - ND Trail
East Bank - Leeper Pedestrian
Bridge
Seitz - Howard Trail
West Bank Trail

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Coquillard Park
LaSalle Park
South East Park
Sorin Park
Walker Field
35th Street Wetland
Southside Park (location TBD)

ATHLETIC COURTS

Boehm Park
Leeper Park



INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVE 1. Increase of Targeted Cultural & Recreational Opportunities

Initiatives:

Morris Presents... Self-Promoted Shows
E-Sports
Boomer
Public Art & River Lights
New/Expanded Offerings

OBJECTIVE 2. Expand Economic Drivers & Analysis

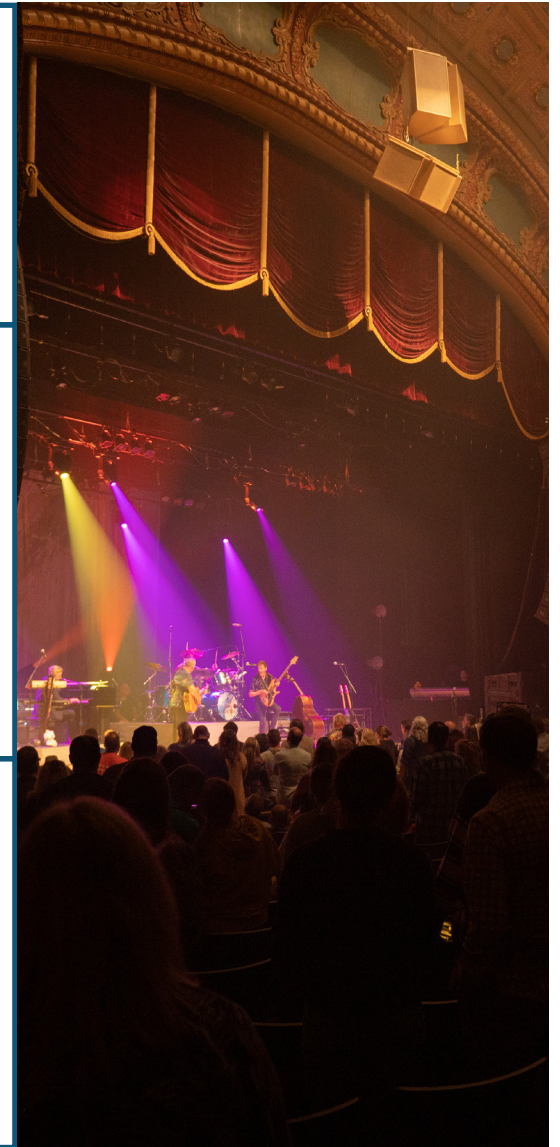
Initiatives:

Fully Deploy Youth Employment Program
Institute New Parking Rates
Set and Attain Cost Recovery Targets for All Programs
Introduce New Ticket Sales Strategies, Increase Annual Sales by 10%
Exceed Direct Hotel Room Night Contributions by 15% YOY
Expand Capacity for Grant Research & Writing
Build Customer Profiles to Enhance Analysis & Reach
Integrate Bloomerang into Daily Fundraising Operations

OBJECTIVE 3. Optimize Operations & Promotions

Initiatives:

Move to a Cashless System Across all Facilities & Programs
Expand VPA Marketing Efforts of Partner/Promoter Events & Activities
Improve Big Picture Storytelling & Engagement (Coffee Table Book)
Expand Geographic Reach of Messaging
Earned Media Strategy & Measurements
Introduce Varied/Creative Outlets of Communication
Track & Report Social Media Sentiments, Reach, & Engagement



CREATE A CULTURE OF ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE



OBJECTIVE 1. Leverage Outside Expertise and Resources

Initiatives:

- Form a Community Recreation Advisory Committee
- Organize a Public Arts Council
- Stronger Push for Volunteers/Interns - Integrated into Day-to-day Operations
- Utilize Off-site Visits for Benchmarking
- Formalize Program Evaluations

OBJECTIVE 2. Expand Use of Technology

Initiatives:

- Digital Storage of All Documentation, Archives, Plans, and Information
- Deploy CAPRA Software, Train & Integrate Additional Owners
- Introduce and Adapt to New Technologies in Daily Operations
- Use Advanced Tools in Surveying and Data Collection

OBJECTIVE 3. Build Capacity for Connectivity & Growth

Initiatives:

- Pursue Continuing Education Opportunities & Professional Certifications
- Create More Opportunities for Employee Connections & Engagement
- Mandate Management & Leadership Training for all Supervisors
- Maintain CAPRA Accreditation and Systematize Throughout Department



CITY OF SOUTH BEND
VENUES PARKS & ARTS

219 S. St. Louis Blvd. South Bend, IN 46617

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sbvpa.org



*Morris Performing Arts Center
South Bend City Cemetery*



MEMBER