October 2013

Steering Committee

Michele Kurucz Peel, Friends of Gumbo Limbo, Facilitator
Judith M. Gire, Friends of Gumbo Limbo
Stefanie Ouellette, City of Boca Raton
John (Buddy) Parks, City of Boca Raton
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Steering Committee would like to thank:

- Dr. Dennis Frisch, for requesting a Strategic Plan for Gumbo Limbo Nature Center.
- Volunteers; Visitors; City of Boca Raton Staff; Friends of Gumbo Limbo Members, Staff and Board Members; Palm Beach County Teachers; and many, many others who provided their honest input into the creation of this plan and continue to bring their passion and energy every day.
- Our new and returning visitors who have expressed their desire to make sure that Gumbo Limbo is there for THEIR children.
- The Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District and the City of Boca Raton City Council who have supported Gumbo Limbo Nature Center over the years and in the coming years.
Dear Valued Member of our Gumbo Limbo Community,

Gumbo Limbo Nature Center was created thirty years ago as a direct result of members of our community coming together around a great idea, and working to make it happen.

In 2012, Friends of Gumbo Limbo initiated and spearheaded the creation of a strategic plan for the Center. The plan summary document you are now holding in your hands reflects the desires that today’s community has for the Center, particularly over the next five to ten years.

This 18-month-long process involved:

- 800 surveys
- 120 responses
- 10 group and individual interviews
- two workshops
- plus countless hours of interpretation, research, shaping, guidance, organization, and refinement of all the information by the Steering Committee.

You will find that this plan’s goals are organized around six Cores – four focused on delivering services, and two on the support. Unseen by you, the Steering Committee expanded each of them into the steps needed to achieve the goal, and examined the associated timelines, interdependencies, and resources required to further validate these goals. The result is what we feel is a solid guidebook for the future of the Center.

We envision this plan to be a work in progress. Every detail is not yet hammered out. But if we can agree as a community on where we’re going, then we can work together to make it happen.

Just like we did 30 years ago.

Looking forward –

Michele   Judy   Stefanie   Buddy
Public Programs | Increase to 20 programs per month with an average of 15 participants each
---|---
Camps | Double the number of participants in camp programs
Internships | Establish an internship program that furthers our Mission
Outreach (Informational & events) | Participate in an average of 2 outreach events per month
K-12 | Increase the number of grade levels and number of students taught daily to at least 90
The Rehab Medical Team uses a surgical laser to remove tumors from a sea turtle caused by pollution.

Boca Raton was a pioneer in monitoring sea turtle nesting starting in 1977.

Hundreds of people attend the release of a loggerhead sea turtle rehabilitated at Gumbo Limbo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turtle Walks/Hatchling Releases</th>
<th>Increase the number of public offerings of Turtle Walk and Hatchling Release programs to reach the FWC maximum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Support research which results in the publication of 2 papers per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nest Monitoring</td>
<td>Establish an annual, documented, forward-thinking process to match beach monitoring needs with resources</td>
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The Sea Turtle Exhibit, funded by Friends of Gumbo Limbo and The Sea Turtle Conservancy, was installed inside the main Nature Center building in August 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit Master Plan</th>
<th>Exhibit Master Plan for integrated, ocean-to-intracoastal nature experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping it Fresh</td>
<td>Change select exhibits/interpretative signage at least twice a year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>Incorporate interactive capabilities into the interpretive exhibits</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Food/Beverage</strong></td>
<td>Evaluate the needs for public consumption of food/beverage onsite</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Guided Tours</strong></td>
<td>Offer three methods of self-guided tours of the Center</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hours to Public - Phase 1</strong></td>
<td>Grounds: open dawn to dusk by 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hours to Public – Phase 2</strong></td>
<td>Facilities: open 10am to 6pm (12 to 6pm Sunday) by 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Backup Classroom – (multiple uses)</strong></td>
<td>Establish a back-up classroom for 90 to 120 that can serve multiple purposes</td>
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The Gift Store inside the Nature Center is operated by the Friends of Gumbo Limbo, and offers unique, nature-inspired items for all occasions. Proceeds benefit the Nature Center in many ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Staffing</th>
<th>Match staffing levels to meet goals as identified in the Strategic Plan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>Improve longevity of buildings by continuing to invest regular CIP resources into maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Fully staffed volunteer program by 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Desk/Reception</td>
<td>Welcome Desk to interact with all visitors, responsible for door donations, and central “information hub”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Line Registration</td>
<td>Enable/facilitate on-line registration for classes for members/non-members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gift Shop</td>
<td>Friends will create a plan to increase sales in conjunction with Facility goals and Mission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The new pavilions and sea tanks, funded by the Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District, were completed in 2012. Friends of Gumbo Limbo raised $250,000 to provide the habitats for inside the tanks.

The container garden features many unique as well as common species of plants that thrive in a coastal marine environment.

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<tr>
<th>Saltwater Life Support System</th>
<th>Address current and future salt water supply needs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Master Plan</strong></td>
<td>Creating a Site Master Plan which maximize the visitor experience and supports the Strategic Plan goals</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Characteristics to be included in the Master Plan (not intended to be all-inclusive):

- **Main Nature Center**: Dedicate the space for visitors
- **Classroom/Lab**: Utilize space only for educational purposes
- **Amphitheater**: Enhance for outdoor teaching and meeting usage
- **Rehab**: Increase available beds in current facility and add advanced capabilities for patient assessment and treatment
- **Chiki Hut**: Enhance for use as an outdoor teaching/meeting space
- **Butterfly Garden**: Expand prominence and visitor experience in garden
- **Gift Store**: Expand plus appropriate support areas (stock, shipping/receiving, etc)
- **Backup Classroom**: with enhanced capabilities to serve multiple functions for 200
- **Parking**: to match operational goals
- **Offices and Workspace**: Create dedicated office space for staff, including part-time, and seasonal staff
- **Conference Room(s) and Library**.
- **Storage**: Have designated storage space for current and growth needs
- **Volunteer Support Space**: Lockers, lunchroom, check in/out.
- **Friends Business Needs**: Office space, storage, meeting space

**OVERALL**

- **Interior Flow**: Improve the existing space utilization for all purposes above
- **Site Flow**: For all elements
- **Potential for Future Growth and Operational Needs**: Such as: animal quarantine, outdoor teaching, animal care, shop/prop prep
- **Mix of “Group” and “Private” Areas**
- **Rustic**
- **Minimal Footprint**
MISSION

To increase public awareness of coastal and marine ecosystems through Research, Education, Preservation, and Conservation.

VISION

To be a center of innovative instruction in good stewardship of our priceless coastal and marine environments and their inhabitants

A Center:
• Be recognized locally, and regionally by the public, academic & research institutions, the press, and local government
• Have a reputation as a source of up-to-date, scientific knowledge in our field
• Seen as a host/facilitator/integrator of the multiple disciplines that are needed
• Further the education/research/conservation/preservation by obtaining grants in related areas, demonstrating/applying concepts onsite

Innovative Instruction:
• Provide educational programs for the public, local schools, academic & research targeted for differing demographics/audiences [pre-K, elementary, middle school, high school, college, families, adults, etc]
• Create communications tools in a variety of media/formats including signage, interactive displays, static displays, website, newsletters, literature
• Demonstrate/apply concepts as part of the center’s day-to-day functioning
• Utilize Sea Turtle Conservation Program educational aspects

Good Stewardship:
• Evoke a sense of personal responsibility for ensuring our natural resources are sustainably managed for future generations
• Encourage individual participation in the careful and responsible management of air, land, water and biodiversity to ensure healthy ecosystems for present and future generations
• Cooperatively plan and manage environmental resources with organizations, communities and others to prevent loss and facilitate recovery in the interest of long-term sustainability
• Host, develop, and utilize the Sea Turtle Conservation Program as a benchmark of progress in ecosystem recovery both locally and worldwide

Priceless coastal and marine environments and their inhabitants:
• The flora, fauna, and related geology of land and water environments tied together by a saltwater body, including estuarine areas
• Prominent role for sea turtle conservation as a ‘draw’ for the public, and a benchmark of progress in ecosystem recovery both locally and worldwide
• Sea Turtle Conservation Program for City of Boca Raton beaches
Organization
Gumbo Limbo Nature Center is operated by the City of Boca Raton. The scope of the operation and maintenance is at the discretion of the Greater Boca Raton Beach and Park District, which has financial responsibility for capital improvements, as well as the cost of operation and maintenance. To enhance the ability of the Center in achieving its Mission, Gumbo Limbo Nature Center, Inc. (d/b/a Friends of Gumbo Limbo) provides ongoing advisory services to both the City and District on the operation of the Center, as well as fundraising and related project support.

Staff
As of October 1, 2013, the City assigns 12 fulltime, 4 parttime and 9 seasonal staff to work at the facility. Park Rangers, supervisory oversight, project management, groundskeeping and other staff are assigned on an as needed basis. Friends employees two fulltime and 6 parttime employees which are co-located at the Center, primarily associated with the Gift Store.

Volunteers
Over 200 active volunteers are on the roster to assist visitors as well as provide behind the scenes support to City Staff. In addition, Friends has a small number of volunteers working on special events and activities.

Operating Budget
The operating budget directly assigned to the Center is approximately $800K per year. In addition, Friends provides $150K to $250K annually in enhancements, day-to-day support, and underwriting. Friends’ Annual Report is available on the website. www.gumbolimbo.org

Membership
Friends is a dues-paying membership organization, open to all.

Visitation
The annual average number of visitors served from 2005 to 2012 was 104,000. In 2013, visitation is projected to reach nearly 150,000.

Students Served
From September to May, the Center hosts school children primarily from the City of Boca Raton, and south Palm Beach County. In addition, during the summer months, there are 9 weeks of camps held onsite, and day trips from other camp programs. Together these programs serve nearly 10,000 school-age children annually.

Facilities/Buildings
- **Square Footage:** 8,778 sf
- **Buildings:** main building, laboratory, classroom, 2 pavilions with outdoor tanks, 1 chiki hut
- **Property:** 20 acres west of AIA, as a part of the larger Red Reef Park

Founding
The property was purchased in the 1970’s, the Friends founded in 1983, and the City and District entered into an agreement in 1984. Construction of the Center took place through the early 1990’s. A major District-funded and City-managed capital project constructing new saltwater tanks was completed in 2011, with an accompanying Friends funded and managed project to place habitats in the tanks finishing in 2012.
Friends of Gumbo Limbo

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