

Richfield Heritage Preserve – 2026 Annual Plan

This annual plan is intended to articulate the Board’s focus in the 2026 calendar year and help guide the priorities, goals, and associated budget for Richfield Heritage Preserve. The primary categories are intended to articulate goals, tactical steps and timing, and should be accounted for in the annual budget. The categories should align to the main components on the vision articulated in the strategic plan. It will also be used to track progress in the monthly Board meetings.

Structures: One of the park’s unique features is the number of structures to manage, a result of the park’s history as private property and later a girl scout camp. The annual plan will confirm the status of each structure in the park. An ad hoc committee will be formed in January 2026 to confirm the status of each structure in the calendar year.

1. Current Use: Confirm structures that serve a current use. Articulate use with plan for each, including any improvements or budgetary needs.
 - a. Rentals
 - i. Lodge (Events)
 - ii. Amity House (Events/Overnight and paper storage in basement)
 - iii. Chagrin Valley Cabin (Events)
 - iv. High Lea Shelter (Camping)
 - v. Windy Hill Shelter (Camping)
 - vi. Waterfront Picnic Shelter
 - vii. Mable Smith Picnic Shelter
 - viii. Wonken Tonken Picnic Shelter
 - b. Visitor Use
 - i. Summer Barn (Bridle Use)
 - ii. Kirby’s Mill (Education – in process)
 - iii. Oviatt House (Museum – in process)
 - c. Operational Use
 - i. Office
 - ii. Maintenance Garage (Storage for tractor, truck and paints; has heat, water, electric)
 - iii. Pack Out Building (General storage, golf carts)
 - iv. Classroom (General storage; has water)
 - v. Winter Barn (Storage)
 - vi. Pool House Building (Storage)
 - vii. Gemini Cabin (Storage; decorations)
 - viii. Hilltop (Temporary Storage)
 - ix. Sawmill Pavilion (staging area for cutting wood)
2. To Be Classified During 2026 Year as: 1) potential use 2) mothball or 3) remove
 - a. Garfield Hall
 - b. Boat House

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- c. Kirby House
- d. North House
- e. Kirby Garage
- f. Hilltop
- g. Coach House (utilities for North House run through garage)
- h. Wayside Shelter
- i. Far Away Pines Shelter
- j. Robinson Shelter
- k. Cooks Cabin
- l. Nature Hut
- m. Latrines

Revenue: While budget and financial documents are regularly shared in board meetings, this section is intended to set revenue targets in key categories, outline top priorities, such as grants, and provide an easy-to-read dashboard that shows goal compared to year-to-date actuals. The dashboard will be reviewed on a regular basis in board meetings (Amounts are 2026 goal where indicated).

- 1. Park Generated
 - a. Rentals
 - i. Lodge – \$230,000
 - ii. Amity House -- \$40,000
 - iii. Chagrin Valley Cabin (see activities)
 - iv. Shelters - \$1,000
 - b. Events
 - i. Snowbird
 - ii. Goat Derby \$10,000
 - iii. Music Fest
 - iv. Treats on the Trail
 - c. Activities \$2,000
 - i. Classes
 - ii. Camps
 - iii. Jump start sports (summer camp)
 - d. Leases
 - i. Cell Tower - TBD
 - ii. Oviatt
- 2. Grants – Led through dedicated committee (Mike Selig, Chair)
 - a. Awarded/In-Process
 - i. Nature Works - \$60K – Upper Lake Bridge
 - ii. 2026 State Capital Grant - \$150,000
 - iii. Summit County Soil and Water - \$2,500

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- b. Targeted
 - i. Recreational Trails - \$130,000
 - ii. Summit County erosion - TBD
- 3. Capital Account: the park’s operating budget generated a surplus in 2025. The board will review the surplus in the December 2025 meeting and vote to allocate a certain amount to the Capital Account in 2026. Capital account expenditures for 2026 will then be defined (project, amount, timing).
 - a. Board discussion regarding when and how to contribute funds
- 4. Fundraising – the Park Director will provide regular updates on donations received (cash and in kind), prospective donations, which may be restrictive to a certain purpose or set of requirements and require board approval to accept, and progress reports on associated projects for those accepted. First report to be provided in the January 2026 board meeting. Additionally, the new 501(c)(3) non-profit will provide regular reporting on their strategy and results.
 - a. New 501(c)(3)
 - b. Partner organizations
 - c. Donations (cash)
 - d. Donations (In Kind Gifts)

Trails: Trails are one of the most important features of the park, as hiking is by far the most popular activity and the biggest driver of visitation from both community and the general public.

The Wayfaring project, currently underway, will be a top priority in the first part of 2026 and will be completed by May 2026. An ad hoc committee will be set up shortly thereafter to define priorities for the second half of the year.

- 1. Improvements
 - a. Signage
 - i. Wayfaring
 - 1. Markers on trails with new names
 - a. Update map
 - ii. Interpretative
 - 1. Buildings – consider standardization of sign design.
 - 2. Trailheads posts for meaning behind trail names
 - iii. Historical
 - 1. Consider recognition/placement of Kirby House Pillars
 - 2. Identify other features worth recognizing.
 - 3. Consider formal recognition of certain designations already provided to the park, e.g. its list on the National Register of Historic Places.
 - iv. Specially designated areas (e.g. Clean Ohio)
 - v. Commemorative
 - b. Areas where remediation is required (due to erosion or other factors). The Park Director

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will poll board members plus other key stakeholders for inputs on areas needing attention by January 2026.

- i. Hill from Mabel Smith to Garfield
 1. Culverts and regrading
 - ii. Kirby garage water
 1. Culverts and regrading
 - iii. Hilltop to Oviatt culvert pipe
 1. Culverts and regrading
 - iv. Storybook at the gascut for mud
 1. Evaluate and create plan as needed
2. Infrastructure/Routing/Connectors: There are several pieces of infrastructure in the park that need to be addressed because of safety or structural integrity concerns. The upper lake bridge replacement has arrived and will be installed by volunteer groups from local trade unions by March 2026.
- a. Infrastructure
 - i. Upper lake bridge (in process)
 1. Estimated completion of March 2026
 - ii. Lower driveway bridge – a plan on addressing the structural issues will be confirmed in the first half of 2026.
 1. Removal by Ohio Operating Engineers
 2. Create natural crossing
 - a. Army Corp of Engineers approval of regrade (in-house sketch)
 - b. Ohio Operating Engineers assistance in the regrading
 - c. Monitor effectiveness and re-address in 2027
 - iii. Lower lake inlet bridge
 1. Document current condition
 2. Hire engineer (last done in 2016) for professional evaluation.
 - b. Routing
 - i. Discussion with OHC re: extending bridle trail
 - c. Connectors

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- i. Complete connection to Rising Valley
- 3. Amenities
 - a. Restrooms
 - i. Recommend for board discussion with eye on including in 2027 plan

Nature and Wildlife: Wildlife, ecology, and vegetation are all important factors in ensuring that the natural beauty of the park is preserved with a view toward the future. A formal plan will be developed in 2026 and an annual report will be provided towards the end of 2026. The Park Director will provide regular status reports over the course of the year.

- 1. Soil and Water Conservation
 - a. High Lea area
 - i. Study in conjunction with XXX and exploration of future grants
- 2. Wildlife
 - a. Blue Bird Monitoring - 17 boxes in park with regular monitoring during breeding season
 - b. Wood duck monitoring (5)
 - c. Bird reporting (via Merlin)
 - d. Beaver Habitat - hands off monitoring of activity. Protection of key trees.
- 3. Vegetation
 - a. Habitat restoration (fka Invasives)
 - i. Ongoing need for licensed herbicide applicator
 - ii. Schedule and specific plan
 - b. Tree planting project
 - c. Pollinator initiative (milkweed)
 - d. Heritage tree initiative
 - i. Seek out and nurture keystone trees (Chestnut)

Operations / Maintenance: A formal operations manual will be developed over the course of 2026. The Park Director will provide regular status reports on its completion over the course of the year.

- 1. Operations Manual
 - a. Formalize existing policies and procedures to keep the park in good working order
- 2. Facilities and Infrastructure Maintenance
 - a. Formalize general maintenance plan
 - b. Waste water treatment plant
 - c. Latrines
 - d. Lodge sewer line
- 3. Equipment
 - a. Inventory and maintenance schedule
 - b. List of needed equipment
- 4. Policy and Agreement Review
 - a. Ensure documents are up to date.
 - i. i.e., documented policy on demolition, prohibitions, etc.
 - ii. damages to property generally vs. Lodge-specific
- 5. Volunteer Services
 - a. List and schedule projects – prioritize them according to park need

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- b. Volunteer experience survey
- 6. Personnel and Employee Engagement
- 7. Resource Planning
 - a. Outsource IT function and consulting vs. relying on volunteer support
 - b. What are the next best hires that would benefit the park

Marketing and Communications

The focus in 2026 will be improving the product of current digital assets and production processes for communications, such as the monthly e-letter. Development of new feedback channels will also be considered.

1. Newsletter: Identify process and tools to engage and maintain subscribers (2026).
 - a. Formalize goal and production process
 - b. Research and select tool for creation, distribution and list management
 - i. Provide regular updates regarding subscribers and open rates
2. Website Improvements: Identify strategies to improve website experience, including SEO.
 - a. Seek volunteer(s) or other resource with subject matter expertise (2026)
 - i. Request updates/enhancements related to Google Maps, overall SEO
 - ii. Feedback on other website improvements
 - b. Consider overhaul of www.rjrd.org (2026, focus on *consider*)
3. Content: Identify categories to source or develop more content on, either for park visits or via website.
 - a. Recommend for Board discussion
4. Celebrations
 - a. Event to celebrate completion of upper bridge
 - b. Combined with completion of state capital grant project.
5. Visitor Survey: Gain updated insights into visitor experiences and priorities.
 - a. Explore online survey tools and costs for use in:
 - i. Open experience survey with QR code to link in Park kiosks
 - ii. Annual feedback on larger issues/themes

Partnerships: Partner organizations are especially important to the success of Richfield Heritage Preserve given the park's modest budget, size (330 acres) and complicated infrastructure. Engagement with each major partner in 2026 will include ideas on how to further foster and develop the relationship in a mutually beneficial manner.

1. Existing Park Partners
 - a. Friends of Richfield Heritage Preserve
 - i. Agreement status & review
 1. New agreement has been drafted and is ready to be executed.
 - ii. Partnership areas:
 1. Hands-on work on specific, defined projects
 - a. Structures (Kirby mill, Amity, Garfield)
 - b. Maintenance (Fence repair, trails)

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- c. Volunteer (Invasives, Mill docents, TLC)
 - 2. Programing
- b. Ohio Operating Engineers
 - i. Agreement status and review:
 - 1. Have confirmed existing of an agreement. Agreement needs to be reviewed.
 - ii. Partnership areas:
 - 1. Infrastructure improvements
 - 2. Currently providing crane to place new bridge and will remove old bridge at upper lake.
- c. CVCC
 - i. Agreement status & review:
 - 1. Simple, one page agreement in place.
 - ii. Partnership areas:
 - 1. Power equipment division, i.e., mower repair
- d. Ohio Horseman’s Council
 - i. Agreement status & review:
 - 1. Have confirmed existing of an agreement. Agreement needs to be reviewed.
 - ii. Partnership areas:
 - 1. Summer barn
 - 2. Improvement & maintenance of bridle trails
- e. Oviatt House, Inc.
 - i. Agreement status & review:
 - 1. Lease of Oviatt House,
 - ii. Partnership areas:
 - 1. Generally limited to the boundaries of the Oviatt House
 - 2. Recent project to connect Oviatt House to waste water treatment facility and water supply
 - 3. RJRD maintains grounds around the House.
- f. Richfield Heritage Preserve Conservancy (Newly created non-profit corporation, in the process of applying for 501(c)(3) status).
 - i. Partnership areas:
 - 1. Fundraising and facilitation of charitable contributions to RJRD to match RJRD’s priorities.

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- g. Buckeye Trail Association.
 - i. Agreement status & review:
 - 1. Existing, simple agreement calls for coordination of efforts.
 - ii. Partnership areas:
 - 1. Primarily focuses on Buckeye Trail
 - h. Western Reserve Land Conservancy.
 - i. Agreement status & review:
 - 1. Primary contractual relationship relates to monitoring our compliance with terms of Clean Ohio Grant.
 - ii. Partnership areas:
 - 1. Walk the property once a year for Western Reserve to monitor use of property (e.g., stipulation in the original agreement for Clean Ohio Grant to remove tent platforms.)
2. Partner Organization we'd like to target for the future (to be developed in 2023).
- a. Educational Institutions
 - b. Foundations
 - c. Corporations
 - d. Individual Trusts