

Growing Friends of Helena Strategic Plan 2024-2026

***Growing Friends** is an urban tree-planting organization. Its purpose is to enrich the quality of life in the Helena, Montana area with extensive planting of suitable, attractive, diverse, and well-cared-for trees and shrubs. Growing Friends works by funding and conducting planting projects, by educating the public and decision-makers, and by encouraging and assisting local governments.*

Goal One: Increase the amount, diversity and equitable distribution of tree cover in the Greater Helena area.

Objectives and Action	Timeline	Tracking Metrics
Objective 1.1: Plant more trees in the Greater Helena area that thrive.		Targets: Plant 100 trees annually 2023-2026
Action 1.1.1: Define and refine system for identifying tree projects with high benefits for the community, environment and organization	Year 1	Completion, periodic revision
Action 1.1.2: Develop and maintain logistics planning and training to ensure board and volunteer leaders have the know how to identify, plant and complete tree planting projects. Identify and utilize best practices to ensure a high rate of successful plantings.	Year 2	Completion, annual training.
Action 1.1.3: Identify and plan next year tree planting projects.	Year 1-3	Projects planned by July for the next calendar year
Action 1.1.4: Identify and complete large tree projects	Years 1-3	Target: 1-2 annually
Action 1.1.5: Complete small tree planting projects or fill as capacity	Years 1-3	# projects, #

funds/planting assistance allows			requests
Objective 1.2: Support the maintenance and sustainability of Growing Friends' urban tree plantings.			Targets: Increase survival level numbers in first three years
Action 1.2.1: Develop and maintain a tree maintenance crew	Year 1: Evaluate options and initial training and begin implementing plan and annual training Years 2-3: Active maintenance in place for all identified plantings, including replacing trees when needed and appropriate		Plan in place, trainings, # trained, Projects watered, volunteer hours
Action 1.2.2: Develop and track baseline information about tree planting and maintenance status.	Year 1: Incorporate historical plantings into new baseline database; Develop baseline data plan and define level of detail Years 2-3: Collect, analyze and share data		Baseline data plan, baseline data published annually
Action 1.2.3: Ensure that every project owner receives maintenance information and/or plan and makes a commitment	Years 1-3		# plans; # commitments; information shared with landowners and/or through the City and other partners

Goal Two: Build partnerships to increase the effectiveness of tree planting

Objectives and Timeline	Timeline	Tracking Metrics
Objective 2.1: Meet regularly with the City of Helena staff and elected officials		
Action 2.1.1: Meet regularly with arborist and other city officials	Years 1-3	Semi-annual meeting with City Manager, other key staff; at least 1 annual board meeting with arborist
Objective 2.2: Meet and coordinate with area partners with aligned interests		
Action 2.2.1: To identify and maintain a list of partner organizations and contacts	Years 1-3	Annual review and update
Action 2.2.2: Communicate regularly with all partners about GFH and partner activities	Years 1-3	At least 1x per partner/year
Action 2.2.3: Coordinate and build relations with partners through cross-attendance at meetings, public events and trainings	Years 1-3	Target: 1-3 coordinated efforts pr events/year
Action 2.2.4: Build new partnerships with entities that align with GFH's mission and interest in trees.	Years 2-3	Add 1-2 per year to the partner list as contact is made
Action 2.2.5: Assess health of current partnerships and opportunities to build new partnerships.	Year 2	Conduct every 2 years

Goal Three: Engage and increase community understanding and support for trees and their benefits.

Objectives and Actions	Timeline	Tracking Metrics
<p>Objective 3.1: Increase community understanding of the importance of trees and GFH work.</p>		<p>Targets: 1 educational event/year for each action</p>
<p>Action 3.1.1: Conduct educational programming on trees, shrubs and their benefits, in coordination with the City and other partners</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p>Materials, # educational events/year</p>
<p>Action 3.1.2: Provide information and training on pruning and other planting and maintenance topics to members of the community.</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p># trainings/year;</p>
<p>Action 3.1.3: Provide education through school and youth-based organizations to children.</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p># educational events/year</p>
<p>Action 3.1.4: Mark Arbor Day and use it as a platform to increase knowledge of the importance of trees and Growing Friends of Helena</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p>Action completed annually (may cross-coordinate with other actions in this objective</p>

Objective 3.2: Increase public knowledge of GFH activities.			
Action 3.2.1: Seek consistent media coverage of major activities on local media outlets	Years 1-3		Press releases; # of articles, TV or radio spots
Action 3.2.2: Provide information on activities and GFH for partner newsletters and social media posts	Years 1-3		# of articles, mentions and posts/year
Action 3.2.3: Inform and education members, partners and the community through GFH mailing lists, website and social media.	Years 1-3		# social media followers, annual website views, news sent out, project mailings
Action 3.2.4: Review and update GFH educational materials including the GFH <i>Putting Down Roots</i> booklet.	Years 1-3		Annual review, update as information changes
Objective 3.3: Engage in relevant policy decisions			
Action 3.3.1: Communicate with elected officials and department directors regularly regarding tree policies, tree-focused budget planning, and planting projects.	Years 1-3		# annual connections
Action 3.3.2: Engage with elected officials and department directors on policy issues that affect trees as needed.	Years 1-3		As needed only. Note policy and response

Goal Four: Maintain and build a thriving organization.

Objectives and Actions	Timeline	Tracking metrics
<p>Objective 4.1: Maintain and diversify memberships</p> <p>Action 4.1.1: Update membership database and track active members on a regular basis</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p>Dates of membership role updates. At least 2 board members know how to do this</p>
<p>Action 4.1.2: Maintain overall membership numbers</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p>Annual review, member numbers; response rates for membership renewal</p>
<p>Action 4.1.3: Build membership information and recruitment into projects and educational opportunities</p>	<p>Year 1: Build system/info products to always bring in member info Year 2 -3: Implement system and track memberships through this method</p>	<p>Calls for membership; response rates by effort</p>
<p>Objective 4.2: Increase volunteer engagement</p> <p>Action 4.2.1: Maintain and build system for volunteer recruitment for projects</p>	<p>Years 1-3 Year 1: Review current methods. Year 2: Build system for recruiting, tracking and thanking volunteers</p>	<p># volunteers/yr, returning volunteers</p>

<p>Action 4.2.2: Provide training for volunteers, tiered to skill level</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p># trainings, type of trainings, # attendees, # who volunteer</p>
<p>Action 4.2.3: Build cadre of volunteers that specialize in specific aspects of the organization</p>	<p>Year 1: Identify types of high skill volunteers needed Year 2: Recruit volunteers Year 3: Maintain and refresh as needed</p>	<p>Volunteer needs inventory, # specialty positions filled</p>
<p>Objective 4.3: Increase board and organizational capacity to fulfill the mission of Growing Friends of Helena.</p>		
<p>Action 4.3.1: Develop and maintain organization required skill set, identify board skill set and develop recruiting process to match unmet skills.</p>	<p>Year 1: Develop board skills list Year 2: Develop recruiting plan Year 2-3: Implement and review annually</p>	<p>Board skill list, #unmet skills</p>
<p>Action 4.3.2: Grow and maintain number of working board members</p>	<p>Year 1: Set board size target and schedule for recruitment Years 2-3: Implement</p>	<p># Board members,</p>
<p>Action 4.3.3: Orient and continue to train board members and update the Growing Friends of Helena new board director package</p>	<p>Year 1: Create board orientation materials. Year 2: Create a training plan based on org required skills, board skills and unmet skills. Update board orientation materials as needed. Year 3: Implement training plan.</p>	<p>Annual board survey and identification of training needs</p>

<p>Action 4.3.4: Establish and maintain committees to facilitate GFH work</p>	<p>Year 1: Identify committee types and start establishing them, including identification of areas where non-board member volunteers would be helpful. Years 2-3: Continue establishing committees and maintain them</p>	<p>Committee plan, committees established; annual review of effectiveness</p>
<p>Action 4.3.5: Evaluate whether to use grant-seeking capacity, contractors or staff to further build capacity</p>	<p>Year 2-3</p>	<p>Evaluation and decision completed</p>
<p>Objective 4.4: Sustain financial operations</p>		
<p>Action 4.4.1: Maintain financial records and reporting</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p>Annual report filed; monthly treasury reports</p>
<p>Action 4.4.2: Maintain member and donor tracking system</p>	<p>Years 1-3 Year 3: Evaluate current donor database</p>	<p>System in place; quarterly updates</p>
<p>Action 4.4.3: Maintain GFH grants distribution program to leverage GFH capacity to plant trees</p>	<p>Year 1: Evaluate whether to have grants managed by an outside entity Years 2-3: Implement decision</p>	<p>Evaluation completed; funds granted, # of grants, # of trees, Maintenance or events supported</p>
<p>Action 4.4.4: Ensure that financial tasks and policies are well understood by at least two people at all times</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p>Finance policy, 3 of people who know group finances and tracking</p>

<p>Objective 4.5: Build and maintain organizational communications</p>		
<p>Action 4.5.1: Maintain and improve website</p>	<p>Years 1: Update/modernize website Year 2-3: Maintain and update</p>	<p># website hits</p>
<p>Action 4.5.2: Maintain email and distribution lists for easy access</p>	<p>Years 1: Update email distribution list and create plan for maintenance/continued updates Year 2-3: implement plan</p>	<p>Contact database updates, group lists and news group updates.</p>
<p>Action 4.5.3: Maintain newsletter, social media, email, print mail, and news presence</p>	<p>Years 1-3</p>	<p># newsletters, posts/mailings; # facebook followers; # instagram followers any response data (opens, likes, comments); # of news articles about GF</p>
<p>Action 4.5.4: Use virtual methods to share information storage and communication.</p>	<p>Year 1: Implement storage and communication system Years 2 and 3: Maintain and refine.</p>	<p>Use of Google Nonprofit or other electronic method</p>

Objective 4.6: Maintain and improve systems for managing and tracking projects and programs		
Action 4.6.1: Annual report for members and community	Years 1: develop report structure and publish Years 2-3: update and publish	Report completed and distributed
Action 4.6.2: Annual strategic plan review. Track and review tracking metrics and targets.	Years 1-3	Annual review completed; Record tracking metrics and review annually

Review Process

The board will review progress in each of its four goal areas on a semi-annual basis, as part of its board meetings. Typically, this is something short and informative, with discussion focused only on those areas requiring decision-making. It is suggested that you take one goal per meeting, so goal progress would be highlighted 2x/year.

Annually, the board will review the strategic plan in its entirety in January.

The board will look at the tracking measures and targets and timeline for each objective and action in the plan. This will be used as a beginning point for the discussion. Discussion questions that are useful starting points include:

- What went really well?
- What didn't work as well?
- Were there things we didn't get to that we intended to? How come?
- Are there actions that are completed?
- Are there actions that are no longer important?
- Are there new actions that are important and not included in this plan?

Record what you want to keep doing, stop doing or change. If you need to change a timeline, do so. Make a record of those changes for the coming year and sign.

In 2026, schedule in a strategic planning session in the fall so that you have an updated plan, starting in 2027.

Strategic Plan Signatures:

MacKenzie Peterson 2024
Adopted, Board Chair and Date

_____ 2025
Reviewed, Board Chair and Date

_____ 2026
Reviewed, Board Chair and Date