



**CLFLWD**  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

# Strategic Plan

**Comfort Lake-Forest Lake  
Watershed District**  
Adopted April 29, 2025

Image (above): Aerial of Shields Lake outlet channel

# Introduction

The Comfort Lake–Forest Lake Watershed District (CLFLWD) is a special unit of local government established in 1999 to address water-related issues. Our Watershed District encompasses 49 square miles in northern Washington County and southern Chisago County, including portions of the cities of Chisago City, Forest Lake, Scandia, Wyoming, Chisago Lake Township, and Franconia Township.

This strategic plan is intended to organize the District's top priorities and the associated initiatives, actions and outcomes. Timeframes for each initiative are indicated in the Top Initiatives List; some are ongoing, some have milestones within the next 1-3 years, and some initiatives are long-term (10+ years). Additional detail is provided for some initiatives, and a list of future board meetings and workshops is provided at the end of the plan. The District's mission, vision, and values are included in the strategic plan as well.



For more information  
visit [www.clflwd.org](http://www.clflwd.org).





# Contents

Mission, Vision, Values	4
Top Initiatives	5
Greenbelt & Open Space Detail	8
Education & Outreach Detail	9
Public Engagement Detail	10
Building Detail	11
HR & Leadership Detail	13
Future Workshops & Meetings	14

# Our Vision, Mission, and Values

Our **Vision Statement** describes the future we are striving to achieve; it is aspirational, forward-looking, and represents the ultimate goal of the organization. Our **Mission Statement** defines our purpose and what we do on a day-to-day basis to serve our stakeholders; it focuses on the present actions that drive us toward our vision. Our **Values** convey what is important to us and what we stand behind.

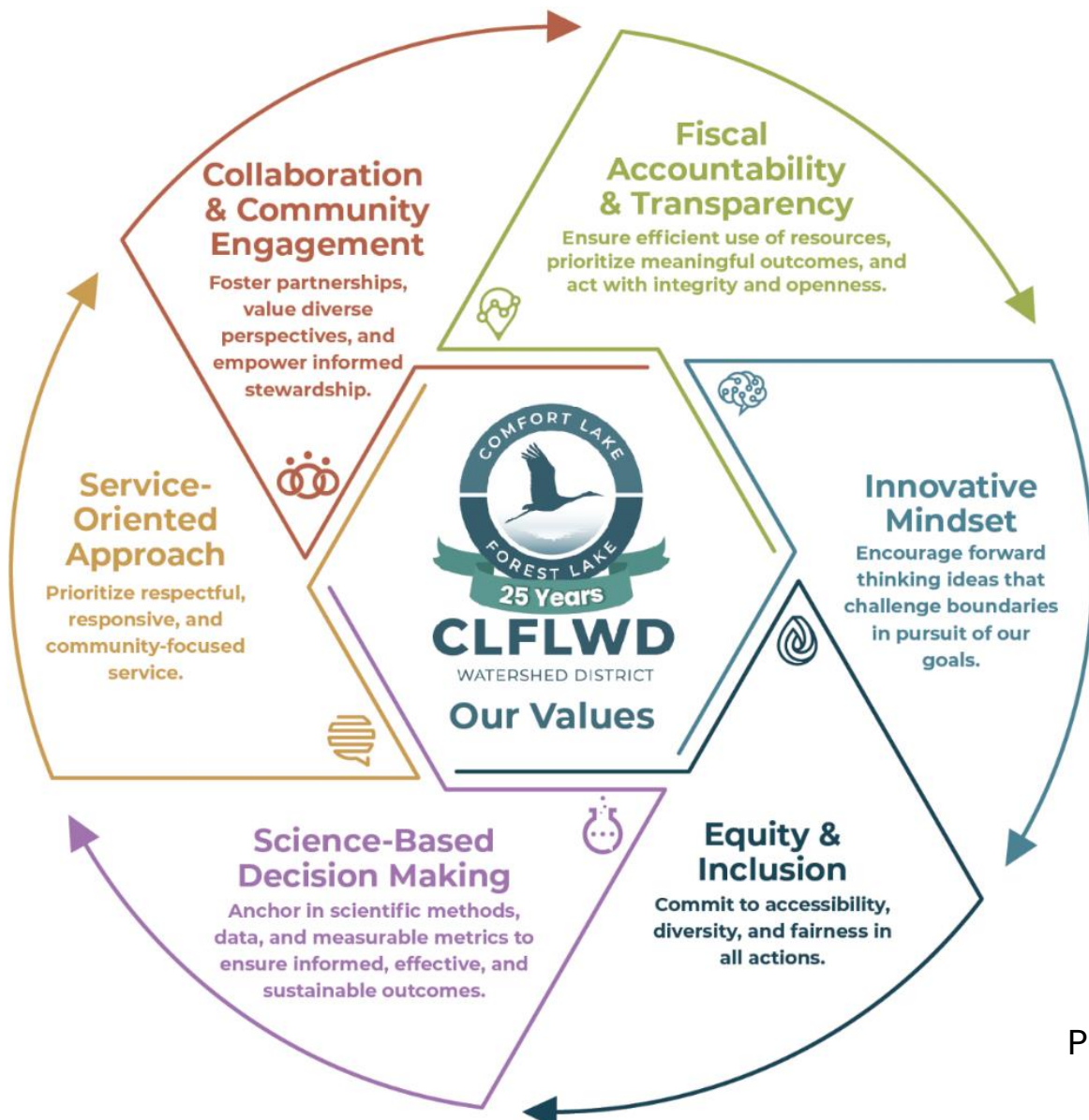
## Vision

We see a future of continued collaboration with our citizens and communities that improves and sustains the quality of water resources.

## Mission

Our mission is to protect and enhance local ecosystems and natural water resources.

## Values





# Top Initiatives

<b>Water Quality Improvement</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
Ongoing/Implemented	Achieve long-term water quality goals for all nine priority lakes by implementing diagnostic study action plans
Ongoing/Implemented	Shoreline restoration and protection initiatives
Ongoing/Implemented	Restore the highest priority wetlands to achieve multiple benefits
Ongoing/Implemented	Explore wetland bank opportunities
1-3 years Milestone	Implement Non-Point Source Pollution Abatement Program including cost-share for residential, community, agricultural, and municipal projects
Ongoing/Implemented	Expand aquatic invasive species prevention and management
Ongoing/Implemented	Sunrise River restoration to pre-development conditions
Ongoing/Implemented	Improve the municipal stormwater mapping and details
Ongoing/Implemented	Ground and surface water hydrologic & hydraulic (H&H) modeling

<b>Project Operations &amp; Maintenance</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
Ongoing/Implemented	Implement Comprehensive O&M Plan including regular inspections, reporting, and maintenance activities
Ongoing/Implemented	Maintain/update online O&M database for program documentation and efficiency



# Top Initiatives

<b>Greenbelt and Open Space</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
This Year	Build Greenbelt and Open Space Plan
1-3 years Milestone	Review and validate Greenbelt and Open Space Plan
This Year	Statutory authority review for Greenbelt and Open Space work

<b>Education and Outreach</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
Ongoing/Implemented	Develop a comprehensive Community Water Resource Education Program
Ongoing/Implemented	Expand education and outreach for shoreline restoration and flood resiliency
Ongoing/Implemented	Support school programs, internships, and salt watch initiatives
Ongoing/Implemented	Enhance interagency communication and collaboration

<b>Public Engagement</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
1-3 years Milestone	Develop and implement a Public Engagement Plan (with Marketing/Public Relations Agency)
Long Term (10+ Years)	Increase public recognition and engagement in District activities
1-3 years Milestone	Implement targeted marketing and digital outreach campaigns



# Top Initiatives

<b>Office Space Building</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
This Year	Confirm internal building goals
This Year	Select architect
This Year	Complete pre-design report
This Year	Review pre-concept renderings
This Year	Final review & approval
1-3 years Milestone	Launch next phase (site/funding/design RFP)
1-3 years Milestone	Site search and/or land acquisition
1-3 years Milestone	Launch design RFP process
1-3 years Milestone	Secure funding strategy
1-3 years Milestone	Design and construction
1-3 years Milestone	Community engagement during build

<b>Human Resources &amp; Leadership</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
1-3 years Milestone	Administrator succession planning
Ongoing/ Implemented	Implement and nurture a performance-based culture
1-3 years Milestone	Explore incentive frameworks for public sector
This Year	Confirm every staff position has clear job descriptions, task lists, metrics, key performance indicators, etc.
This Year	Update staff onboarding process (include purpose statement from the Board)
1-3 years Milestone	Identify human resources support for the future
This Year	Recruiting: Business and Operations Manager

# Greenbelt & Open Space Initiative Detail



Initiative	Action	Outcome
<b>Build Green Belt and Open Space Plan</b>	Finalize the Green Belt and Open Space Plan with EOR, incorporating collected data and project prioritization.	A comprehensive, actionable plan ready for implementation by late 2025.
<b>Review and Validate Green Belt and Open Space Plan</b>	Conduct Board and Staff reviews to validate priorities, strategy, and goals; finalize adoption.	Plan is officially adopted and aligned with Board/Staff direction for use in strategic execution.
<b>Strategically Implement Projects to Increase Volume Storage and Alleviate Flooding</b>	Prioritize and initiate projects based on the Plan that maximize flood storage benefits (e.g., wetland restorations, reforestation).	Measurable flood mitigation and enhanced stormwater management within critical areas.
<b>Protect Groundwater and Natural Resources as a Secondary Benefit</b>	Design projects (e.g., wetland restorations, infiltration basins) that not only mitigate flooding but also protect groundwater recharge and ecosystem integrity.	Dual-impact projects that improve flood resilience and safeguard water quality.
<b>Implement Greenway Strategy for Flood Mitigation and Community Access</b>	Establish greenway corridors that serve both flood mitigation and public recreation purposes, incorporating trails and education opportunities.	Enhanced community access to nature while simultaneously supporting floodplain functionality and resilience.
<b>Strategically Acquire Land and/or Easements for Protection</b>	Identify and acquire priority lands (wetlands, floodplains, riparian corridors) using purchase or easement agreements.	Protected critical natural areas and expanded greenbelt infrastructure, supporting long-term water quality and habitat goals.
<b>Coordinate with Governmental, Nonprofit, Business, and Other Partners</b>	Engage partners in project planning, funding, and community engagement initiatives related to flood resilience and greenbelt expansion.	Amplified impact and resource efficiency through collaborative project development and funding strategies.
<b>Statutory Authority Review for Greenbelt and Open Space Work</b>	Board to Review existing statute authority (Minnesota Statutes 103B/103D or others) to ensure legal clarity on land acquisition, easements, and stewardship activities.	Clear, defensible legal foundation for greenbelt/open space efforts; any necessary amendments or policies identified.

# Education & Outreach Initiative Detail



Initiative	Action	Outcome
<b>Develop a Comprehensive Community Water Resource Education Program</b>	Design and launch a district-wide education initiative focused on clean water, ecosystems, groundwater, and community stewardship principles.	Increased public understanding of water resource issues and measurable growth in community participation and stewardship activities.
<b>Expand Education Outreach for Shoreline Restoration and Flood Resiliency</b>	Build targeted outreach campaigns promoting shoreline stabilization practices and flood resilience strategies, including workshops, online resources, and field tours.	Higher landowner adoption of shoreline and flood-resilient practices, contributing to improved lake and watershed health.
<b>Support School Programs, Internships, and Salt Watch Initiatives</b>	Strengthen partnerships with local schools by expanding environmental science curriculum support, student internship opportunities, and volunteer monitoring programs like Salt Watch.	Greater youth engagement in watershed protection; long-term cultivation of future stewards and informed citizens.
<b>Enhance Interagency Communication and Collaboration</b>	Build stronger collaboration networks with municipalities, school districts, nonprofits, and agency partners to unify education and outreach messaging and programs.	Broader reach, amplified messaging impact, and improved efficiency in delivering education and outreach programs through shared efforts.

# Public Engagement Initiative Detail



Initiative	Action	Outcome
<p><b>Develop and Implement a Public Engagement Plan (with Marketing/PR Agency)</b></p>	<p>Collaborate with the Marketing/PR agency to design a formal Public Engagement Plan including strategies for community input, storytelling, visibility campaigns, and events.</p>	<p>A coordinated and measurable public engagement program that builds stronger community relationships and increases resident participation and support.</p>
<p><b>Increase Public Recognition and Engagement in District Activities</b></p>	<p>Launch campaigns and initiatives (e.g., events, recognition programs, digital highlights) to promote visibility and encourage residents to engage with District projects and programs.</p>	<p>Increased public familiarity with District activities, programs, and successes, measured through engagement KPIs (attendance, survey results, media mentions, social media growth).</p>
<p><b>Implement Targeted Marketing and Digital Outreach Campaigns</b></p>	<p>Deploy audience-specific marketing efforts using digital platforms (social media, email, website, local news) to drive engagement with priority initiatives (education, flood resiliency, green space, etc.).</p>	<p>Higher public awareness and interaction with District initiatives, leading to stronger community buy-in and broader public support for programs and funding efforts</p>

# Office Space Building Initiative Detail



Step	Initiative	Action	Primary Responsibility	Outcome
1	<b>Confirm Facility Needs and Goals</b>	Define high-level program needs, education components, staffing space, public access goals, and sustainability targets	Board & Staff	Set priorities early to guide entire process
2	<b>Architect Identification and Selection</b>	Vet 2-4 recommended firms, conduct interviews, select architect partner	Board, with District Engineer Emmons & Olivier Resources (EOR) support	Focus on mission alignment, experience, and collaborative style
3	<b>Architect Scope &amp; Contract Negotiation</b>	Finalize architect's pre-design scope and fee	EOR	EOR assists with scope negotiation and contract management
4	<b>Conduct Learning Session</b>	3-hour workshop to inform architect of mission, vision, facility goals	Board & Staff	Foundation for pre-design report
5	<b>Pre-Design Report Development</b>	Architect drafts scope, site characteristics, budget, and schedule overview	Architect (EOR to review and assist)	Defines core requirements for the facility
6	<b>Pre-Concept Rendering</b>	Architect creates visual rendering of design intent	Architect (EOR review)	High-level visual for board review, community engagement, and fundraising
7	<b>Internal Review and Refinement</b>	Staff and Board review Pre-Design and Rendering, request refinements	Board & Staff (Architect & EOR support)	One round of revisions planned
8	<b>Final Approval of Pre-Design Package</b>	Approve final Pre-Design Report and Rendering package	Board	Aligns vision for next steps

# Office Space Building Initiative Detail



Step	Initiative	Action	Primary Responsibility	Outcome
9	<b>Site Search and/or Land Acquisition</b>	Begin process to identify, negotiate, and secure land	Board & Staff (possible broker support)	If land is not already secured
10	<b>Launch Design RFP Process</b>	Issue RFP for full architectural and engineering design services	Staff & Board	Competitive process based on finalized Pre-Design documents
11	<b>Secure Funding Strategy</b>	Finalize grants, philanthropy, loans, or levy support needed for project	Board, Admin, & Fundraising Leads	Use pre-concept visuals and pre-design to support fundraising efforts
12	<b>Design and Construction</b>	Hire architect and general contractor, develop full design, break ground	Project Team (Architect, Emmons & Olivier Resources, General Contractor)	Includes schematic design, design development, construction documents
13	<b>Community Engagement During Build</b>	Maintain public updates and transparency during design and construction phases	Staff & Marketing Partners	Supports goodwill, manages expectations
14	<b>Move-in and Facility Launch</b>	Complete construction, furnish facility, launch education programming	Staff & Board	Celebrate with grand opening/community event
15	<b>Post-Occupancy Evaluation</b>	Conduct a review 6–12 months after opening to assess functionality and address any final needs	Staff & Board	Ensure facility meets mission long-term

# HR & Leadership Initiative Detail



Initiative	Action	Outcome
<b>Administrator Succession Planning</b>	Conduct a protected Board workshop to define expectations, timelines, internal/external pathways, and transition protocols for the Administrator role.	A clearly documented and Board-approved succession plan that ensures leadership continuity and organizational stability.
<b>Implement Clear Salary and Benefit Structures for Each Role</b>	Benchmark roles against public sector standards, develop salary bands and benefits for each position, and formally adopt the structure.	Transparent, equitable compensation structure that aids in staff retention, recruitment, and financial planning.
<b>Implement and Nurture a Performance-Based Culture</b>	Define what high performance looks like for each role, establish evaluation frameworks, provide coaching, and link performance to advancement opportunities.	A culture of accountability, continuous improvement, and achievement aligned with District goals and values.
<b>Explore Incentive Frameworks for Public Sector</b>	Research and discuss potential incentive models applicable to public entities (e.g., bonuses, merit awards, recognition programs).	A realistic incentive plan that drives engagement and acknowledges outstanding contributions without conflicting with public sector norms.
<b>Confirm Every Staff Role Has Clear Job Descriptions, Task Lists, Metrics, KPIs</b>	Conduct a full audit of current staff documentation; create/validate standardized job descriptions, essential tasks, performance metrics, and KPIs.	Full role clarity across the organization, supporting performance evaluations, goal-setting, and succession planning.
<b>Update Staff Onboarding Process (Purpose Statement from the Board)</b>	Develop a modernized onboarding process that integrates District mission, vision, values, role clarity, and a Board-provided Purpose Statement for new employees.	Stronger employee engagement and faster ramp-up through consistent, values-driven onboarding.
<b>Identify Human Resources Support for the Future</b>	Assess the need for internal HR capacity or external HR partnership to manage growth in staffing, benefits, performance management, and compliance.	Scalable HR infrastructure that supports staff expansion and operational excellence.

# Future Board Workshops & Meetings



Category	Workshop Discussion Topic	Purpose
<b>Green Belt &amp; Open Space</b>	Review and Validate Green Belt and Open Space Plan	Final Board alignment on plan priorities, project sequencing, and implementation strategy.
<b>Green Belt &amp; Open Space</b>	Statutory Authority Discussion for Greenbelt and Open Space	Confirm statutory authority and legal pathways to support land acquisition, greenbelt creation, and open space projects.
<b>Public Engagement</b>	Review and Align on Marketing and Outreach Plan	Review and approve the overarching marketing and public outreach strategy developed with the Marketing/PR partner, ensuring alignment with District goals.
<b>HR &amp; Leadership</b>	Administrator Succession Planning	Define succession expectations, internal vs external pathways, timelines, and governance protocols for leadership transition.
<b>HR &amp; Leadership</b>	Explore Incentive Frameworks for Public Sector	Discuss public sector-appropriate incentive options and alignment with District mission, values, and operational realities.
<b>HR &amp; Leadership</b>	Update Staff Onboarding Process (Board Purpose Statement)	Craft and approve a unified Board Purpose Statement to be included in all staff onboarding and orientation programs.
<b>Building/Facility Planning</b>	Confirm Facility Needs and Goals	Finalize internal priorities for the new headquarters: size, function, public education components, green infrastructure goals, and budget targets.
<b>Building/Facility Planning</b>	Architect Selection Review and Approval	Review recommendations from EOR, interview architecture firms if needed, and approve the selected architectural partner.
<b>Building/Facility Planning</b>	Pre-Design Report Review and Approval	Review and approve the pre-design report including building program, site needs, preliminary budget, and schedule.
<b>Building/Facility Planning</b>	Green Infrastructure and Sustainability Elements	Discuss and finalize Board expectations for sustainability and green infrastructure features to be incorporated into the facility design.
<b>Building/Facility Planning</b>	Finalize Public Engagement Strategy for Facility Project	Align on public messaging, stakeholder involvement strategies, and community rollout plan as part of the facility project timeline.