

SAIL CHICAGO :: STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE FOR 2013

2012 was a watershed year for Sail Chicago. Three accomplishments stand out of many in what has been our most successful year yet:

- We obtained 501(c)(3) status from the IRS.
- We implemented the very successful “Sail into Summer” program, more than doubling the number of new sailors participating in our instruction program.
- We acquired two additional Colgate 26s, bring the fleet to four.

These were key goals of the 2012 Strategic Plan update. We also completed the fleet consolidation, freeing up resources for fleet renewal. All of this was accomplished in the context of a moribund economy and a general decline in the sport of sailing.

Lessons learned:

- We have “turned the corner” on our fleet renewal project. The Colgate 26 is by far the most popular boat in our fleet. We must continue to acquire them as our finances permit.
- Sail into Summer enhanced the appeal of Sail Chicago membership. Instead of fewer new members in 2012 as we thought might happen, we recruited slightly more new members than in 2011 as well as almost 100 Sail into Summer sailors.
- There is significant demand for access to sailing lessons and to shared boat usage beyond what we experienced in years past. We enrolled 60% more students than 2011 yet still were unable to meet the demand for quality sailing education.

The key challenges facing Sail Chicago are **managing growth** and **building membership**. This report is organized slightly differently than the past two reports. We found that some of our past goals became moot in the light of our 2012 experience and need no further discussion.

Goals for 2013

1. Adopt a Mission Statement that will consistently appear in our materials, website, etc.

Proposed Mission Statement:

Sail Chicago is a not-for-profit community sailing program. Its mission is to offer quality instruction in sailing and boating safety, and to provide affordable sailing opportunities to its members and others in the Chicago area.

2. Build on the success of Sail into Summer by incorporating Intermediate Sailing and Skipper Training classes into Sail into Summer. Students may enroll in more than one Sail into Summer class per season without becoming a member. The fee of \$250 shall remain the same.

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3. Address the continued decline in membership, down an additional 10% in 2012. Undertake a major effort to recruit members. Initiate a program to involve more members in coordinating the programs of Sail Chicago. Establish the following standing committees:
 - a. Membership and Marketing committee: tasked with promoting the benefits of membership through our website and other channels, reaching out to Sail into Summer and other potential membership sources, developing specific membership options such as upgrades to membership as well as an electronic process to do so. Promote all aspects of Sail Chicago activities to the general public.
 - b. Membership Involvement committee: organize members into meaningful volunteer work in keeping with the needs of Sail Chicago and the current skills and time availability of our members. Identify needed “jobs” and publicize them to members. Identify mission-critical program coordinators and encourage the creation of succession and backup plans to ensure smooth operation.

4. Managing growth: we are close to exceeding the capacity of our current volunteer structure to meet the demand for sailing classes and program sails for our members. Without undermining the volunteer contributions of our current members, we need to look at some additional options for taking advantage of the attractiveness of our program.
 - a. Investigate the possibilities, advantages and disadvantages, and administrative requirements of adding select paid staff, such as paid instructors, to augment our current dedicated group of volunteers and/or a part-year paid administrator. Note that we already contract out some maintenance work.
 - b. Expand our definition of volunteer to include people who may be willing to donate time and effort but not necessarily become members in the sense that it is currently defined. For example, competent sailors may be willing to volunteer as instructors. They would not have access to the reservation system but could be rewarded with limited access to boats when they are not otherwise in use.

5. Fee structure: no change proposed for 2013. Dues, instruction, and rental fees to remain the same. However, we should consider the pros and cons of creating a lower threshold membership (Crew Membership) that would allow access to program sails, racing, and social events. This would be similar to the “non-skipper” dues we had in the past.

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6. Fleet renewal and geographic location:
 - a. Maintain core instructional fleet at Monroe Harbor. Continue to acquire Colgate 26s to build our fleet. All instruction will be switched to the Colgates in 2013, so we will need additional boats to meet demand for classes, program sails, and private usage.
 - b. Keep Recess at Belmont, primarily for private usage and program sails, to be budgeted separately from Instruction. Reduce Rhodes 19 fleet to two boats. Ideals are popular among our new skippers and will be used more for instruction.
 - c. Maintain and expand the cruising program. Short and long term goals are to expand educational offerings, e.g. advanced cruising, navigation; expand the instructor base as well as instructor capabilities by investing in various trainings (OUPV [“Six Pack”] and US Sailing Cruising Instructor); and expand and modernize the fleet.
 - d. Re-affirm the guiding principles of prior years’ Strategic Plan documents: Continue to modernize our fleet. Get out of the boat rehab business. Maintain multiples of new boat types (except cruising boats) to simplify maintenance and training.

7. Maintenance: maintenance and Summer Maintenance have not been functioning adequately over the past year, leading to boats being out of service for simple repairs. Maintenance goals for the coming period:
 - a. Implement the team plan for the Colgates developed by Joe Kucharski
 - b. Establish maintenance procedures to minimize fleet downtime
 - c. All boats to be uniform, standardized to the “as built” plan, to simplify maintenance work.

8. Board of Directors: establish a Bylaws committee to review
 - a. Board structure and organization
 - b. Board functioning
 - c. Board development