

# **North Allegheny Soccer Club Strategic Plan**

**February 1995**

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**This strategic plan has been prepared by the members of the Board of the North Allegheny Soccer Club. The purpose of this plan is to define a vision for the future of the Club and to identify mechanisms to achieve that vision. The plan is prepared for Board members, parents, players, and friends of the Club.**



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## Forward

The North Allegheny soccer Club is the second largest soccer club in the western half of the state of Pennsylvania. Our club provides opportunities for approximately 1200 players in the fall season and for over 700 players in the spring season. Our players participate in both in-house and travel programs and many of our players are also members of Classic league teams sponsored by other organizations.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of our club. It is appropriate to both look back at what we have done as a club, but more importantly, to look forward. This strategic plan is intended to provide vision for the future of our club.

This plan has been under development for the past year. Many individuals on the Board have contributed ideas, expertise, and energy to developing this plan. There has been much discussion about many areas where we believe that we can better serve our players, and their parents, in our soccer community. We also expect that this plan may help other clubs as they address similar concerns.

It would be easy for a reader of this document to conclude that our Club is in a state of disarray in the way that we provide services to our soccer community. That is certainly not the case. Our Club is successful in providing opportunities to hundreds of players and their families.<sup>1</sup> It is clear, however, that our Club does not have a *managed framework* for the way we conduct business. We believe that other Clubs are in a similar position. This strategic plan should be viewed in the context of our attempt to define a managed process for the way we provide services to our soccer community.

This strategic plan, like all others, represents but a first step in a process. However good, and however much vision this plan represents, there remains the task of implementing the plan in order to meet the goals identified here. It is pleasing to note that concurrent with the development of this plan, we have taken steps to implement parts of the plan. These are steps on the path to making significant improvements in the operations of our club to better serve our soccer players and their families. This then, is our ultimate aim.

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<sup>1</sup> A simple illustration of this is that an estimate of the total amount of time that coaches spend volunteering to support the Club during a fall season is about 10,000 hour.! This figure does not count the hundreds of hours that members of the Board spend in volunteer work.

This strategic plan was approved at the Board meeting of February 13, 1995. During final discussions, we were reminded of our friend and colleague, Larry Olson. At the first meeting to discuss this plan in December 1993, Larry had kindly scribed the notes from a brainstorming session. The next day he passed away suddenly. He made many contributions to our Club through his unselfish giving to our players as a coach. We shall miss him.

B. Craig Meyers

January 1995

## Executive Summary

This strategic plan has been under development during the year 1994. After an initial brainstorming meeting, the following major areas were identified:

- organization
- player development
- coaching development
- referee development
- community relations
- field development
- financial

The development of goals for each of the above areas was completed by small groups and reviewed by the Board. The following tables provide a summary of each goal for each major area. These tables provide a quick overview of this plan.

## Organizational

**Table 1: Organizational Goals**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Statement</b>
1	The Club shall better define the bylaws under which it operates.
2	The Club shall develop a process to assure continuity of corporate knowledge.
3	The Club shall develop a process by which meetings can be conducted in an effective manner.
4	The Club shall define a Board structure such that the Club may operate more efficiently.
5	The Club shall institute an Executive Committee to coordinate the operation of the Board, provide vision for the future development of the Club, and to act on issues of a timely nature.
6	The Club shall develop a process to monitor the implementation of this Strategic plan.
7	The Club shall develop a process that defines the policies under which it operates.

## Player Development

**Table 2: Player Development Goals**

Goal	Statement
1	The Club shall identify the techniques expected of a typical player by age group.
2	The Club shall fix the size of teams in order to allow players to develop skills in an optimal manner.
3	The Club shall define in-house age groups to be in single year increments for players under the age of 11.
4	The Club shall seek to increase the amount of participation in the Club.
5	The Club shall establish a code of conduct for players.
6	The Club shall encourage participation by teams in tournaments.
7	The Club shall provide opportunity and encouragement to soccer players and coaches having special needs.
8	The Club shall seek to increase the participation by players in summer camps.
9	The Club shall document and implement a uniform policy and procedure for the selection of travel teams.
10	The Club shall encourage participation of teams in the Classic league.

## Coaching Development

**Table 3: Coaching Development**

Goal	Statement
1	The Club shall hire a consultant to serve as Director of Coaching.
2	The Club shall establish a code of conduct for coaches.
3	The Club shall establish a mentor program to assist less experienced coaches.
4	The Club shall develop a process to better educate its coaches.
5	The Club shall develop a process to obtain feedback from coaches.
6	The Club shall develop policies and procedures for the selection of travel coaches.

## Referee Development

**Table 4: Referee Development Goals**

Goal	Statement
1	The Club shall provide mechanisms to train referees.
2	The Club shall develop an assessment program to evaluate the capabilities of our referees.
3	The Club shall institute a process to assign referees to matches.
4	The Club shall develop incentives in order to retain referees.
5	The Club shall develop a process to educate coaches, players, and parents regarding the Laws of the game.
6	The Club shall develop a process to educate the next generation of referees.

## Community Relations

**Table 5: Community Relations**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Statement</b>
1	The Club shall develop and disseminate a mission statement.
2	The Club shall develop and disseminate a calendar that lists dates of important Club activities.
3	The Club shall develop a process by which more people can be involved in the activities of the Club.
4	The Club shall define a process for assisting those persons who volunteer to serve as team parents.
5	The Club shall develop processes that allows it to communicate information to members and the general public.
6	The Club shall develop a process to obtain feedback from parents.
7	The Club shall foster better interaction with other soccer Clubs, with emphasis on the relationship with PA West.

## Field Development

**Table 6: Field Development Goals**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Statement</b>
1	The Club shall expand use of existing facilities.
2	The Club shall define a process for the management of existing fields.
3	The Club shall define a process for both short term, and long term, maintenance of existing fields.
4	The Club shall establish a program to develop additional fields, with emphasis on a multi-field complex.

## Financial Matters

**Table 7: Financial Goals**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Statement</b>
1	The Club shall develop a budget for its activities.
2	The Club shall use budget information to forecast future expenses.
3	The Club shall seek out business sponsors for appropriate Club activities.
4	The Club shall seek to develop additional sources of revenue.
5	The Club shall equitable set player fees based on level of participation.



# **1 Background**

## **1.1 Structure of this Plan**

This plan addresses the following major functional areas of Club operation: organization, player development, coaching development, referee development, community relations, field development and financial matters. These areas were identified as a way to organize the goals of the Club as this plan was developed. There are goals associated with each functional area and these are described in the following chapters.

Like all strategic plans, we have included a discussion of the goals for the Club. This discussion includes, for example, the rationale for the goal. We have, however, added material that may not typically be found in a strategic plan. In our case, we have included a discussion of implementation aspects for each goal, as well as a discussion of the issues surrounding the goal. Although these are not often found in a strategic plan, we have included them here for completeness reasons. This allows us to capture the corporate knowledge that was demonstrated as the plan was developed.

It is expected that this plan will continue to evolve as we initiate implementation of the goals outlined here. We also believe that there may be further goals added, or existing goals may be modified. This document summarizes the state of the club as a significant first step to improve the operation of the club. It is through the improvement of the club that we can improve the quality of soccer that we provide for our members.

## **1.2 A Brief History of the North Allegheny Soccer Club**

The North Allegheny Soccer Club began in the spring of 1974. It represented an attempt by Bruno Schwarz, then, as now, head soccer coach at the high school to develop soccer within the NA school district. The Club idea and philosophy was organized along the lines of established clubs in Germany.

The original plan divided the Club in two equal, but independent, sections. The In-house program was considered to be the backbone of the Club. The purpose of this program was to develop players and allow those players who loved the game an opportunity to play in a less competitive atmosphere. The Traveling program was provided for those players who were capable of playing at a higher, more compet-

itive level, and to take advantage of the limited number of coaches. Originally, the Club fielded only traveling teams, as there were not enough players to form In-house leagues.

The Club was formally organized in the spring of 1975 with George Mandl elected as the first president. Teams were fielded in the U-12 through U-19 age groups. Members of the Club were also elected to the Western Pennsylvania Youth Soccer Association, indicating commitment to organized soccer in the Pittsburgh area.

As the Club grew, more fields were required. Chris Wright's appointment by the Allegheny County Commissioners in 1976 as County Soccer Developer resulted in new fields being placed in North Park and the Intermediate High School. Franklin Park also donated the fields at Lynbrook, which have been a mainstay of the Club for many years.

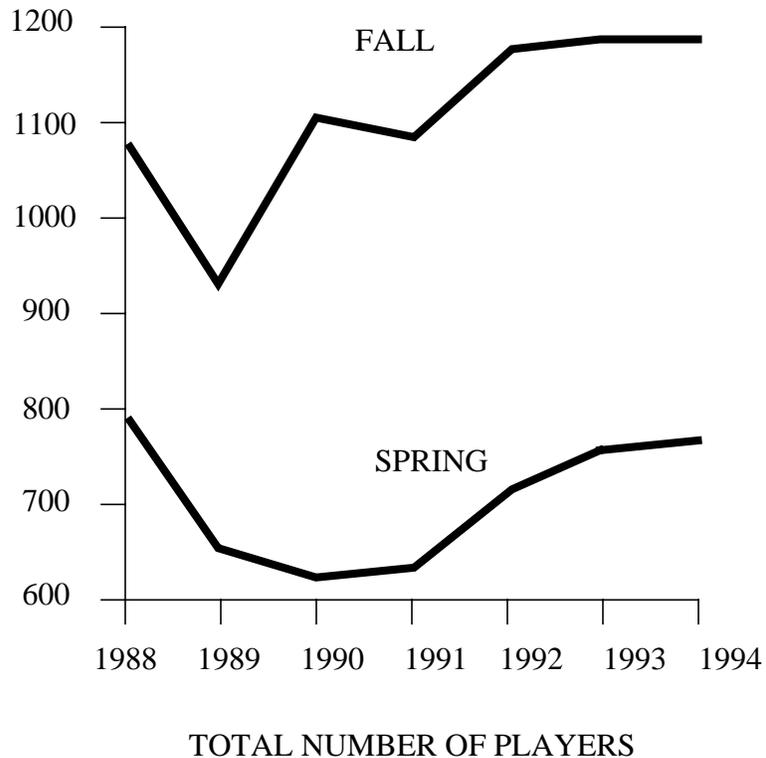
The continued growth saw the development of the Yoest fields in September of 1991. The fields are named after Ken Yoest, who was the NASC Field Acquisition Coordinator for many years. Through his leadership and the cooperation of the county the Club was able to raise the \$55,000.00 need to install the fields. The installation included games played by different age groups, free hot dogs and soda, and many honored guests. The North Allegheny high school band was also present for the dedication.

Recently, the Club has continued to recognize the need to provide more fields for its players. We have completed arrangements with the North Allegheny school district for a new field that is currently under development developed.

The growth of the Club reflects both the growth of soccer and the population in our community. As the population of the areas from which our players originate, namely Bradford Woods, Franklin Park, Marshall and McCandless are stabilizing the number of players representing the Club is also stabilizing. Our challenge is now to continue to achieve the goals of the Club founders, and to continue to provide opportunities for players to play this wonderful sport.

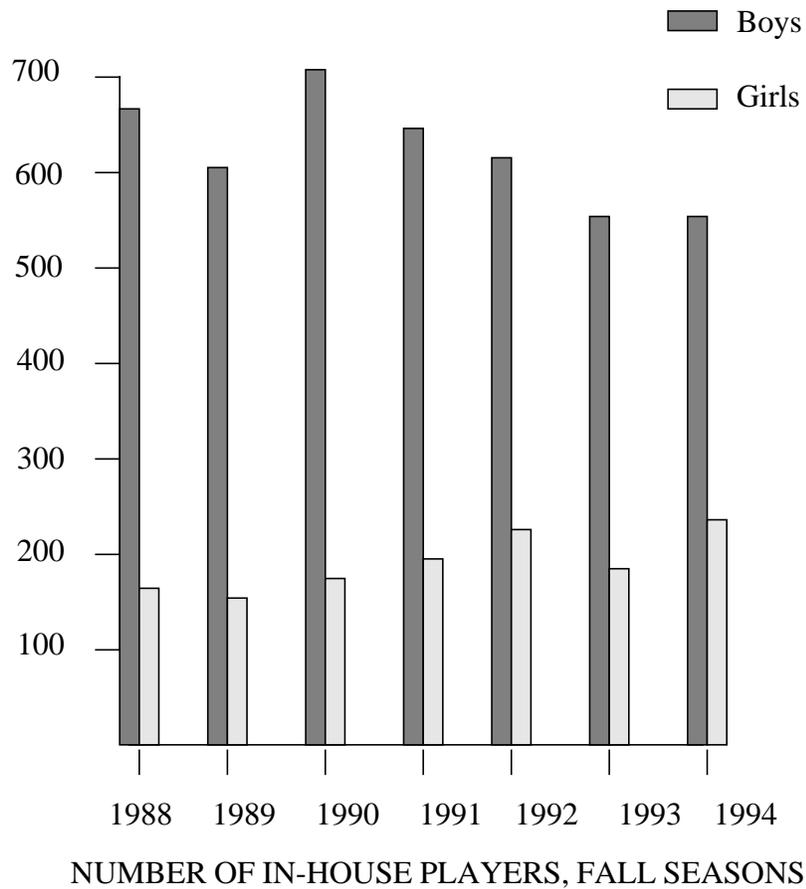
### 1.3 Remarks About the Growth of the Club

The North Allegheny Soccer Club is currently the second largest soccer club affiliated with PA West, which administers soccer programs in the western half of the state of Pennsylvania. The growth of our Club is demonstrated in the following figure which shows the total number of players registered for the fall and spring seasons for the period 1988-1994.



As illustrated in the figure, the current enrollment has been steady at about 1200 players in the fall season for the past three years. This is roughly 80 teams that the club is responsible for. The fall season is of special importance because that is when the greatest demands are made for coaches and fields. While there has been some growth, the recent trend indicates a steady number of players.

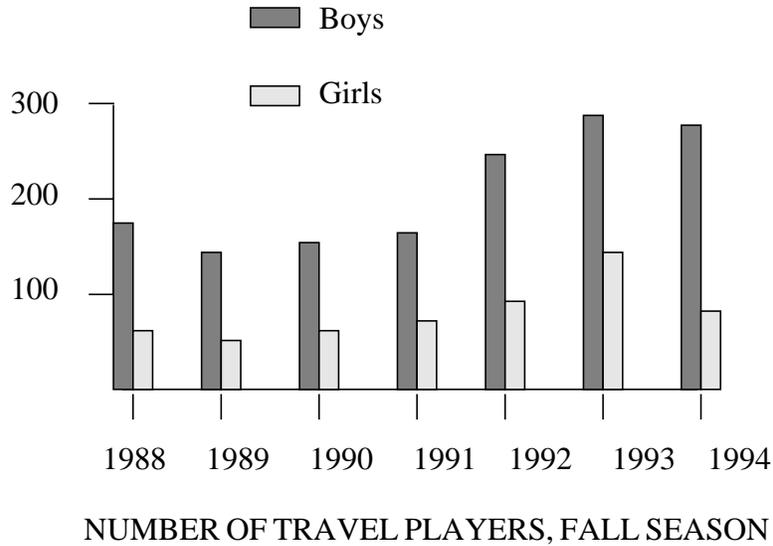
Players in our Club participate in two different programs. The In-house program is less competitive in nature and covers both boys and girls from the age of six to about 12. The following figure shows the number of players in this program for the period 1988 to 1994 for the fall season.



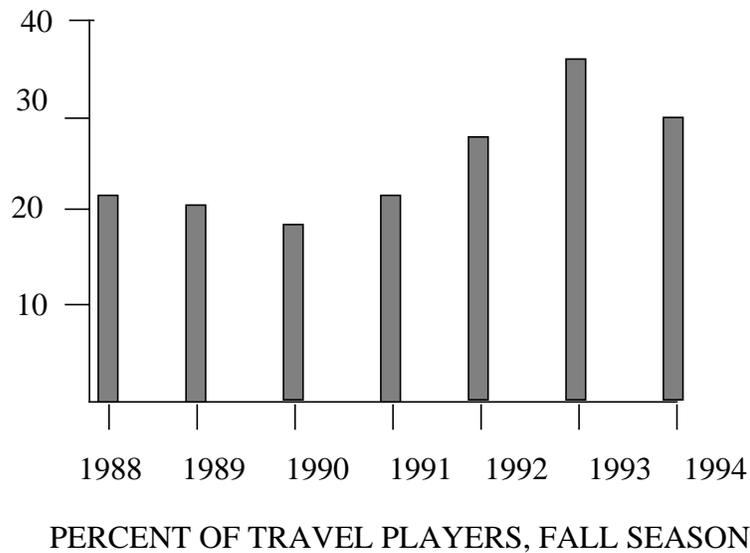
This figure shows a decline in the number of boys to a level of about 550 and a slight growth in the number of girls to a level of slightly over 200.

The second program that the Club offers is the Travel program which is more competitive in nature. Players are eligible for travel in the Under-10 age group, and continue to the Under-19 teams. The number of boys and girls in the travel pro-

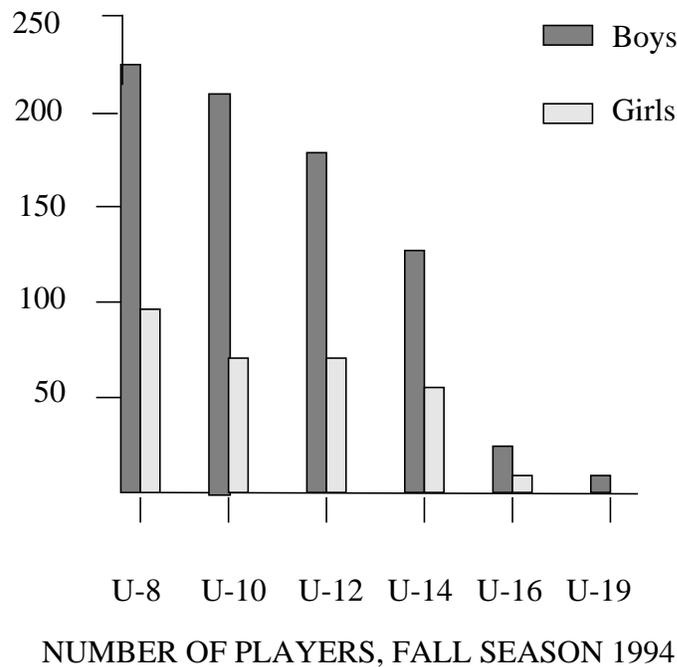
gram is shown in the following figure, again for the fall season in the years 1988-1994. The figure indicates a growth in the boys to about 250 players and a level of about 100 girls.



The distribution of players between In-house and Travel programs is shown in the Figure below. This indicates a growth in the travel program. At the present time roughly one-third of our players are a member of a travel team.



The preceding figures do not show enrollment of players by age group. This information is presented in the following diagram for the total number of players in the various age groups for the Fall 1994 season. What is striking about this Figure is the number of players in the Under-8 and the Under-10 age groups. It is in these two age groups, of whom the vast majority are playing in-house, where the players in the Club are found.



Several points are apparent from this figure, namely:

- Approximately 55% of our players are in the U-8 and U-10 age groups.
- There is a decrease in the number of players as they become older. This is perhaps to be expected, with other activities taking more of their time.
- The number of boys is roughly twice the number of girls. This is apparent even in the youngest age group.
- The retention rate for girls is better than that for boys. For example, from U-8 to U-14, the number of girls decreased by about 33%, while the corresponding decrease in the number of boys was roughly 45%.

The collection of data such as displayed in the above figures is important for two reasons. First, they clearly show the growth in the Club and the distribution of players between the In-house and Travel programs. More importantly, however, statistics such as those presented here may be used in a predictive manner. For example, if we can predict the number of players in a given age group, it allows us to predict the number of coaches, referees, and fields, that are needed. This allows us to better manage the Club.



## 2 Organizational Goals

The first major area to be addressed in this strategic plan concerns the organizational aspects of the Club. A subcommittee consisting of Mike Brady, Craig Meyers, Lynn Powdrell, and Bob Blosat was formed to address this topic. Six goals were identified that are discussed below.

### 2.1 Bylaws

**The Club shall better define the bylaws under which it operates.**

It is generally recognized that the by-laws of the Club need revision. This has been illustrated on several recent occasions. When a lawyer reviewed the bylaws he indicated problems in interpreting them and suggested improvements. For example, the present bylaws need to be clarified in regard to obtain non-profit status.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.2 Continuity of Corporate Knowledge

**The Club shall develop a process to assure continuity of corporate knowledge.**

There are many occasions where an issue is raised that has been addressed previously in Board meetings. There is also the realization that as new members join the Board they lack sufficient information specific to their Board position, and the Club as a whole, in order to effectively participate on the Board.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1.</sup> At the present time our Club is incorporated, and we are in the process of obtaining non-profit status.

<sup>2.</sup> There is an unwritten understanding that if a person leaves the Board or assumes a new position, that person should find a replacement for the vacated position. There was a case of a member who left the Board, and convinced a new person to join the Board. To inform the successor what the duties of the position were, the person was given a one-page, hand-written note that listed about 8 items. This was for an in-house coordinator and the current *Guideline* document is 17 pages long, typed, single-spaced!

## 2.3 Conduct of Board Meetings

**The Club shall develop a process by which its meetings may be conducted in an effective manner.**

This point has been raised on several occasions. Recently, meetings have operated in a more efficient manner through the conduct of the meeting and the use of agenda items. We believe that the current practice is a step in the right direction. However, we also believe that more can be done. Some possibilities are indicated below.

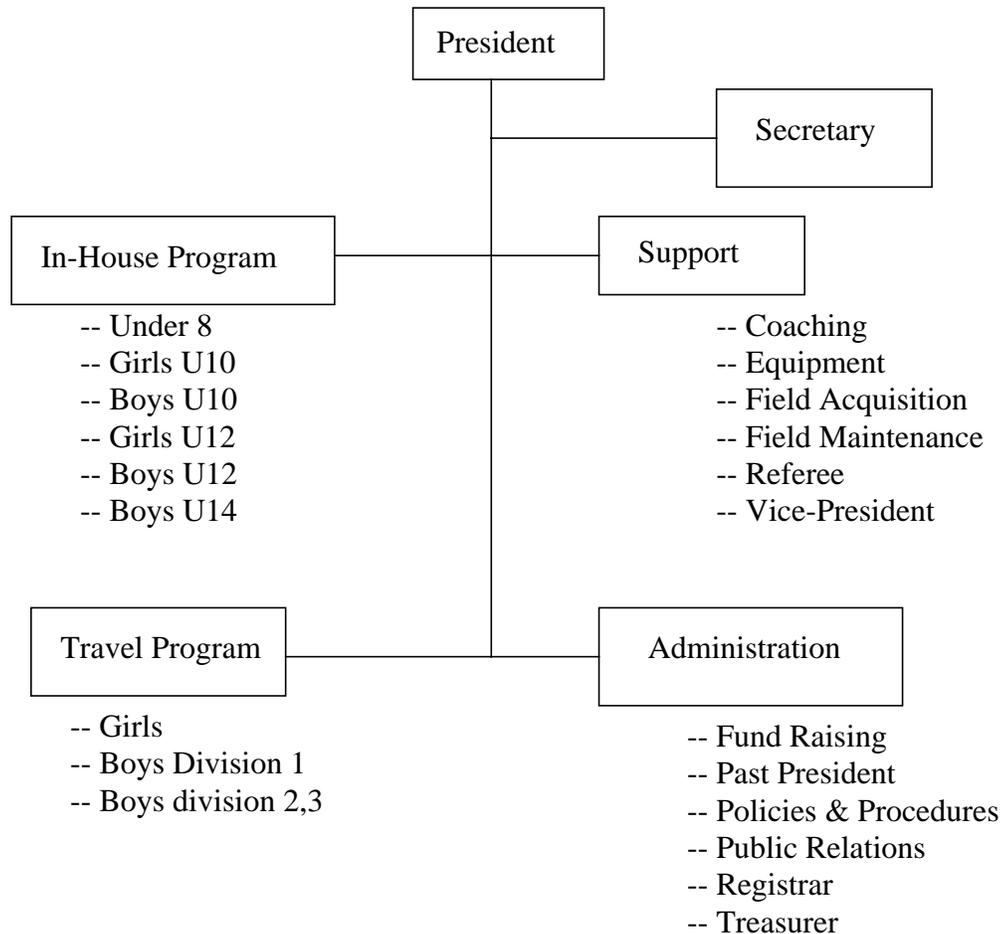
## 2.4 Structure of the Board

**The Club shall define a Board structure such that the Club may operate in a more effective manner.**

The current structure of the Board is a *flat* structure. That is, there is a president, and the remainder of the Board positions are related directly to the president. Such an organization lacks structure. The committee realized that it is possible to provide structure to the Board by grouping the current Board positions into the following four functional areas:

- In-house program
- Travel program
- Support elements
- Organizational elements

Given the above functional areas, a possible structure for the Board is shown in the following figure:



The rationale for distinguishing between support and administrative functional elements is that Board positions for the support area are directly related to the players, while administrative is related more to the operation of the Board.

We believe that the structure shown is a natural division of responsibilities and that such an organization would be advantageous to the Club. Full realization of the benefits from such a structuring are expected to be realized by establishing an executive committee, discussed below.

## 2.5 Executive Committee

**The Club shall institute an Executive Committee to coordinate the operation of the Board, provide vision for the future development of the Club, and to act on issues of a timely nature.**

There was considerable discussion of this goal in the subcommittee. It was felt that the need for having an Executive Committee is justified, if only to operate on behalf of the Board on timely issues.<sup>3</sup> It is important that members not be threatened by the existence of an executive committee.

## 2.6 Policies

**The Club shall develop a process that defines the policies under which it operates.**

A *policy* is a statement of intent that has been approved by a majority of the voting members of the Board at a Board meeting. The most obvious case in which Club policies are documented is in the bylaws. However, there are other policies. Most of them are *ad hoc* in nature and based on some traditional way of completing some activity. Still some other policies are those that are formally approved through a vote at a Board meeting. A recent example was the decision to reimburse referees for the cost of recertification courses. It is true, but unfortunate, that most of the policies under which the Club operates are not documented. One consequence of this is that continuity of corporate knowledge is adversely affected.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> An example of timely issue is the death of a Club member where it is desired to provide an expression of sympathy to the family. For example, under the current bylaws, an expense for flowers can *only* be authorized by calling a special meeting of the Board. What has happened is that someone would make the expense and then be reimbursed for it at the next Board meeting.

## 2.7 Implementing the Strategic Plan

**The Club shall develop a process to monitor the implementation of this Strategic plan.**

If the Strategic Plan is to be implemented successfully, it is important that we monitor its implementation. We believe that the monitoring of progress, and possible changes to goals, or the addition of new goals, is best coordinated by a single entity. This will allow us to bring a managed, disciplined approach to the implementation of this plan.

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4. Not only the lack of knowledge of policies, but the much larger issue of *procedures* applies here as well (a procedure is a document that describes the manner in which a policy should be implemented). A while ago the Board recognized such difficulties and created a position called *Policies and Procedures* which is responsible for the development of appropriate documents.



### **3 Player Development Goals**

The objective of NASC is to provide opportunities for players to participate in the sport of soccer. It is fundamental, therefore, that we examine aspects of player development as part of this strategic plan. A subcommittee consisting of Malcolm Whipkey, Robin Schooley, Mark Torisky, and Jim Williams was formed to address this topic.

#### **3.1 Identification of Skills by Age Level**

**The Club shall identify the techniques expected of a typical player by age group.**

Many people who volunteer to coach soccer in the younger age groups do so because of their willingness to work with children. The vast majority of these beginning coaches have little experience with the game, yet are willing to learn. It is incumbent upon us to find ways to provide information for these coaches that helps them develop players.

The implications of satisfying this goal is that the Club should be able to develop guidelines for selected techniques for each age group. The term *technique* refers to the ability to demonstrate a *skill* under game conditions. Hence, this differentiates from the ability to receive a pass in a practice, from receiving the pass under game conditions. Clearly, there is a progression by which players develop and at the basis of the development are skills and knowledge of the game.

There are several factors that are involved in the development of soccer players. One is techniques, and these need to be presented in the form of challenging exercises for the players. A second component refers to tactics (decision making) which should be introduced after techniques have been successfully demonstrated. A third component is knowledge of the game. The combination of techniques, the ability to make tactical decisions, and knowledge of the laws of the game will promote the development of successful players.

The above three questions are at the basis of knowledge and skills required of players. They illustrate the challenge that faces us in addressing this goal.

It is also recognized that if there were an identified set of techniques that an *average* player should have at a given age such information would help in other ways. For example, it could be used as criteria to evaluate candidates for traveling teams. It could then also be used to assess the overall level of ability of a travel team.

### 3.2 Team Size

**The Club shall fix the size of teams in order to allow players to develop skills in an optimal manner.**

If it is possible to reduce the size of teams then it allows for players to obtain more touches on the ball, and thereby develop better players. Players also enjoy practices more where there are more touches on the ball. The notion of more touches on the ball that has been endorsed at all levels in the soccer community. In fact, this was the rationale why the Club has recently instituted the *micro-soccer* program in the Under-8 age group. Hence, the above goal has been successfully implemented with the Fall 1994 season.

### 3.3 Age Group Organization

**The Club shall define in-house age groups to be in single year increments for players under the age of 10.**

At the present time each in-house age group is organized into periods of two years. This means, for example, that both 8 and 9 year olds play in the Under-10 age group. Past practice has been to form teams with roughly equal number of players from each of these years.

There are believed to be advantages to having single-year age groups, including

- it may allow for players of similar skills to be grouped together, thereby facilitating more team play.

### **3.4 Participation in Club**

**The Club shall seek to increase the amount of participation in the Club.**

We all recognize that soccer is a wonderful sport for children of all ages, including adults. While the number of players registered in the Club appears to be constant over the past few seasons, it is clear that there are many more young people who could be involved in the Club. This applies especially to girls. The statistics indicate that the number of boys is approximately twice the number of girls. Yet the retention rate for girls is stronger than that for boys. We could conclude from this that those girls who are playing are sufficiently satisfied that they continue to play. We believe it is important to increase the number of girls, as well as the number of boys, playing in the Club.

### **3.5 Code of Conduct**

**The Club shall establish a code of conduct for players.**

It is helpful for players if they understand what is expected of them as members of not only a team, but the Club as a whole. We must be able to communicate our goals to the players, as well as our expectations of them as they represent the Club. This topic has been discussed in the Club, but no formal code of conduct has been adopted.

### 3.6 Tournament Participation

**The Club shall encourage participation by teams in tournaments.**

The present position of the Club is that the cost of tournament participation for travel teams is paid for by the Club for one tournament per season. It is believed that the development of players at a competitive level requires participation in tournaments. Also, the reputation of the Club is enhanced when our teams do well at tournaments.<sup>1</sup>

Tournaments are also available for in-house teams to attend, although they are not as well known as travel team tournaments. In fact, our Club recently sponsored an in-house American Cup tournament which consisted of a combination of games and skills competition. This tournament, conducted in the Under-10 age group at the end of the Fall season was a clear success. In part, the success was because the tournament was a round-robin format, and no winner was declared. There were also activities for the players between games, including skills competitions. This created more of a friendly atmosphere than some previous in-house tournaments. American Cup is one of two tournaments sanctioned by PA West for U-10 players.

### 3.7 Players With Special Needs

**The Club shall provide opportunity and encouragement to soccer players and coaches having special needs.**

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<sup>1</sup> However, let us not allow ourselves to equate the reputation of the Club with *winning* at tournaments. Developing a winning team may often contradict the philosophy of developing *players*.

Recently, we have been made aware of opportunities that are available for players and coaches having special needs. This information has been disseminated in articles of *Touchline*, a publication of PA West. We believe that we can provide similar opportunities for players in our Club who have special needs.

### **3.8 Summer Camps**

**The Club shall seek to increase the participation by players in summer camps.**

In the past the Club has been involved in sponsoring summer camps for players. One advantage of this is simply to allow players to have an opportunity to play during the off-season. Another reason is that it allows players to learn more about the game. Still another reason is that it provides opportunities for players who are interested in the competitive aspects to hone their skills. The summer camps that we have held have been oriented toward general skills.

### **3.9 Travel Teams**

**The Club shall document and implement uniform policies and procedures for the selection of travel teams.**

The objective of travel teams is to allow players to participate at a more competitive level. The selection of a travel team is an extremely difficult process. In a two-hour period one must often choose 15 players from a group of about 50 to form the highest level team. We must recognize that our emphasis should be to provide opportunities for players to *participate*, under the guidance of a coach, with the expectation that the team can be competitive.

### **3.10 Classic League Teams**

**The Club should encourage participation of NA teams  
in the Classic league.**

The Club has traditionally entered teams in the travel league program which plays its games on Sundays. In the past, we have occasionally fielded teams in the Classic league (and this is permitted under the current bylaws). Classic league games are played on Saturdays and are supposed to be more competitive than the highest division of travel team play.

## **4 Coaching Development Goals**

The main interaction between the Club with players and their parents is through the coach. For our Club to be successful, it is imperative that we do all that we can to better educate the coaches. This section addresses several ways to improve the process of coaching development. A subcommittee consisting of Mike Brady, Craig Meyers, and Robin Schooley was responsible for the development of this section of the plan.

### **4.1 Director of Coaching**

**The Club shall hire a consultant to serve as Director of Coaching.**

The emerging trend in some soccer clubs in the Pittsburgh area is to have a paid professional who serves as Director of Coaching. This has several advantages to the Club. First, it assures the Club that a professional will be available to help develop beginning coaches, as well as improving existing coaches. A second reason is that such a person would help to define the processes that are used by the Club to improve *all* coaches. Finally, having a Director of Coaching may help to alleviate some concerns about politics in the Club with regard, for example, to the selection of coaches and players for travel teams.

### **4.2 Coaches Code of Conduct**

**The Club shall establish a code of conduct for Coaches.**

The coach is extremely important as a role model for both players and their parents. It is the coach is ultimately responsible for the behavior of the team and their parents; as such, it is extremely important that the coach set a good example. It is incumbent upon us as a Club to provide coaches with our expectations about their conduct. One way to satisfy this need is to have all coaches know, and agree, to a code of conduct.

### **4.3 Mentor Program**

**The Club shall establish a mentor program to assist less experienced coaches.**

There are various ways that we as a Club can assist coaches. Certainly one mechanism, described below, is to provide them with written materials concerning a variety of subjects. More important perhaps, is the ability for new coaches to interact with successful, experienced coaches. This allows new coaches, or relatively inexperienced coaches, to obtain information about problems that are unique to them.

### **4.4 Information for Coaches**

**The Club shall develop a process to better educate its coaches.**

At the present time, when a person indicates a desire to coach on the registration form, they are contacted by an Age-Group coordinator and then assigned a team. We do not presently provide sufficient information to coaches, ranging from what our expectations are to information to help them become a better coach. Yet, we recognize that the coach is crucial in the success of the Club.

### **4.5 Coaches Feedback**

**The Club shall develop a process to obtain feedback from coaches.**

The role of the coach is crucial for the success of a team, from both a soccer perspective, but also from the perspective of personal development of the players. At one time in the past, an age-group coordinator requested feedback from the coaches in the U- age group. The purpose was to provide these coached with an opportunity to give feedback to the Club. This effort was a success in that over two-thirds of the coaches responded. By and large they were very satisfied with the program (for example, every coach felt that they would coach again in the fall season), there were some issues raised. We as a Board would may not be aware of such issues had the survey not been conducted.<sup>1</sup>

## **4.6 Selection of Travel Coaches**

**The Club shall develop policies and procedures for the selection of travel coaches.**

In principle, there is no distinction between a coach of an in-house team and a travel team. That is, each has similar responsibilities to players, parents, and the Club. In practice, however, there are differences. For example, there are often more candidates to coach a travel team than there are teams. It is therefore necessary for us to define the selection process that is in the best interests of all concerned. There are also some impressions among parents that the selection of coaches is made on the basis of partiality. If we cannot document the selection process, then it is difficult for us to be able to refute such statements, whether credible or not. We must recognize the investment of energy, time, and money that a coach makes in a team. It is the coach, whether in-house or travel, who will be the single most important factor for the players and their families.

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<sup>1</sup> See the minutes of the Board for December 7, 1992.



## **5 Referee Development Goals**

The area of referee development was recognized as an important topic to be addressed in this strategic plan. The Club has had difficulty in the past in retaining certified referees for a variety of reasons. Future success of the Club requires that certified referees be available. A subcommittee consisting of Pat Martin, Bill Brown, Don Brozick, and Tracey Tischuk addressed this topic.

In order to understand what follows, it is important for the reader to understand how the Club classifies referees. At the present time there is two-tier system with level two referees being more experienced than level one referees. Upon certification all referees are classified as grade 8 according to FIFA standards, which is equivalent to our Level 1 classification. Through game experience and training referees gain knowledge and experience. It is recommended that each referee be assessed annually to determine if they demonstrate sufficient skills to be classified as level 2. The role of assessments is described further below.

### **5.1 Referee Training**

**The Club shall provide mechanisms to train referees.**

It is crucial that our referees be knowledgeable about the Laws of the Game. This can be satisfied, in part, by better educating the referees about the Laws. Another aspect of the educational process for referees is to allow them to apply their knowledge to game situations.

### **5.2 Referee Assessment**

**The Club shall develop an assessment program to evaluate the capabilities of our referees.**

We recognize that being a referee is a life-long learning process that formally begins when a referee is first certified. It is important that we provide feedback mechanisms to our referees so that they continue to better learn the game and improve their skills. The use of a referee assessor is one mechanism that can be used Club to seek out these sources for assistance in establishing an assessment program.

### **5.3 Assignment of Referees to Matches**

**The Club shall institute a process to assign referees to matches.**

There is a clear and obvious difference in skill and competitive play among our soccer teams based on age and level of play. This also holds true for our referees in the areas of game experience, knowledge, and attitude. It is to everyone's advantage that referees be assigned to games that will provide them experience without over challenging them.

### **5.4 Incentives**

**The Club shall develop incentives in order to retain referees.**

The Club should make every effort to retain our referees. Incentives are believed to represent a positive step in this direction.

## **5.5 Education of Coaches, Players, and Parents**

**The Club shall develop a process to educate coaches, players, and parents regarding the Laws of the Game.**

Part of the problems that we have encountered in interactions between parents, players, and coaches with referees is that people do not always understand the Laws of the Game. A referee is sometimes questioned about a call, but if the person understood the Laws, the question would not be raised. Two major cases where this type of behavior is observed deal with the offside and handling Laws. Another area deals with the level of physical play permitted.

## **5.6 Developing the Next Generation of Referees**

**The Club shall develop a process to educate the next generation of referees.**

Many players in NASC go on to become referees, but there is no training at a young age. It may be the case if we can start educating future referees earlier, we may increase the retention rate for referees. Hence, this goal aims to bring in younger players who may have an interest in refereeing.



## **6 Community Relations Goals**

Community relations refers to that set of activities that the Club performs in relation to the community of parents and players. It also includes the broader community of the NA school district and the Pennsylvania West Soccer Association, of which our Club is a member. A subcommittee consisting of Jim Myer, Larry Conley, and Jan Double addressed the topics identified below.

### **6.1 Mission Statement**

**The Club shall develop and disseminate a mission statement.**

It is important that parents of our players understand the mission of the Club. At the present time there has not been adopted a mission statement that the Club can disseminate to its members. This includes information regarding code of conduct for parents, which has been discussed at several times in the past.

### **6.2 Calendar of Events**

**The Club shall develop and disseminate a calendar that lists dates of important Club activities.**

At the present time, many of the dates of important activities are decided in short order at Board meetings. There is, generally speaking, little coordination of activities in regard to the dates chosen. It is also necessary to identify the role of PA West in the development of overall dates for Club activities. Readers must understand that some dates are determined by PA West and some dates are determined by the Club, independent of PA West.

### **6.3 Get More People Involved in Club/Board**

**The Club shall develop a process by which more people can be involved in the activities of the Club.**

There is the belief that if more parents can become involved with the Club that the Club would be better served. Certainly there is an untapped wealth of expertise available and we should try to maximize the resources available to support the Club. One example of this idea is the recommendation to create *Associate Board Member* positions, discussed in the section dealing with Club organization. There is the concern, however, that the Club needs to be kept to a manageable size in order to be effective.

### **6.4 Team Parents**

**The Club shall define a process for assisting those persons who volunteer to serve as team parents.**

Team parents are extremely important in that they serve as an interface between the coach and the other parents of the Clubs. Traditionally, they have helped coaches by developing phone chains and orange and drink schedules, thereby relieving the coaches of some administrative duties.

### **6.5 Parents Feedback**

**The Club shall develop processes to obtain feedback from parents.**

Much of the discussion about community relations involves communication. We recognize that this is a two way street, and it is important for us to obtain feedback from parents. Such a process was conducted on an experimental basis during the fall 1992 season in the U-10 in-house age group.<sup>1</sup> The result was that overall the parents were very satisfied with the coaching that their children were receiving. Of equal importance, over 90% felt that the parents feedback should be conducted on a regular basis.

## **6.6 Distribution of Information to Members and the Public**

**The Club shall develop processes that allows it to communicate information to members and the general public.**

There are several mechanisms currently in place that relate to how we communicate with the public. Theses include:

- A *Newsletter*, typically published once a season.
- A *hot line* that may be called to obtain information about upcoming registration, tryouts, etc.
- Distributing flyers to schools announcing forthcoming registrations.
- A general meeting of the Club, although attendance at this meeting is essentially the members of the Board.
- A coaches meeting, held before each season, when uniforms and schedules are distributed.

Although we are currently doing a fairly good job of communicating to the public, we believe that we can do better. Most of the communication is driven by the schedule of a season, i.e., when registrations are to be held, for example. WE feel that there is more of a story to tell about the Club, and it is this aspect that needs improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the rationale for conducting the parents feedback was based on discussions in Board meetings about perceived problems in the U-10 in-house age group. In particular, there were concerns about level of physical play, and overly zealous coaches. The fact that the results were overwhelmingly positive indicates that we had lost, to some extent, touch with the majority of what the parents felt. See further the minutes of the Board meeting of December 7, 1992.

## 6.7 Interaction With Other Clubs

**The Club shall foster better interaction with other soccer Clubs, with emphasis on the relationship with PA West.**

The North Allegheny Soccer Club is affiliated with PA West which is the governing body for soccer clubs in the western half of the state. It is through PA West, for example, that our players receive insurance in case there is an injury at a game or practice. The publication *Touchline* is produced by PA West as a vehicle to provide information to its members. All members of our Club are automatically members of PA West.

## 7 Field Development Goals

### 7.1 Background

As background to the discussion of goals related to field development, it is appropriate to consider the current field situation. This information is presented in the following table for the major fields used by our Club during the fall 1995 season.<sup>1</sup> The first column is the name of the field. The second column lists the degree to which the field is used for practices in terms of allocated *slots*. A slot is one half of a field, and a typical field is equal to two slots. An entry of 9/10 means that 9 of a possible 10 slots are used, meaning the field is used 90% of the available time. The last two columns provide the number of games that the field is used for on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

**Table 8: Field Usage, Fall 1994 Season**

Field	Practices	Saturday Games	Sunday Games
Lindbrook Small	9/10	3	1
Lindbrook Large	9/10	0	0
McCandless Small	10/10	3	0
McCandless Large	9/10	2	3
McKinney Small	6/10	U-8	3
McKinney Large	5/10	U-8	2.5
Novakowski	10/10	0	3
Yoest 1	10/10	4	3
Yoest 2	10/10	4	3

It is apparent that the above fields are heavily used for practices.<sup>2</sup> Not shown in this table are other fields that were used by U-10 for practices. They also practiced at Hosack Elementary (3 slots), Knob Hill Park (6 slots), Peebles Elementary (1 slot), Pie Trainor (10 slots), Sloop (10 slots), and North Allegheny Intermediate,

<sup>1.</sup> We thank Bob Craddock for providing this information.

<sup>2.</sup> The reader should understand that our Club does not have control over all of the fields listed; for example, some of the available slots are used by other teams, such as the Strikers, who used McKinney large for practices.

for example. Also not shown are the various nooks and crannies that are used by the Under-8 teams for practice. Clearly, majority of all the fields that we have access to are heavily loaded. This discussion does not address the need for makeup games due to inclement weather. For example, if all Saturday games are cancelled, we try to make up the games during the week. The recent acquisition of <WHAT> Field will help to alleviate the loading that is placed on our fields.

Understanding the degree to which our fields are used is important in that it helps us to develop a managed framework for the use of fields, particularly in view of other issues. For example, some appropriate questions to ask in view of the above statistics include

- If we used fields longer in the day would it allow us to rest a field for an entire season for maintenance?
- If the number of girls playing in the Club doubled, how would we accommodate them?
- If the number of teams is increased by 20% (due to playing smaller sided games, for example), are there sufficient fields to support such an increase (not to mention the need for additional coaches and referees!)?

In some sense our Club appears stable with respect to overall growth in that the total number of players seems constant. However, fields are a resource that we sometimes share with other organizations and there may be more competition for fields in the future. Furthermore, while the overall growth appears constant, the number of teams could increase by moving to smaller sided games. Our goals must for field development must be in harmony with other goals set forth in this plan.

## 7.2 Existing Facilities

**The Club shall expand the use of existing facilities.**

At the present time the Club does not fully utilize all of the available fields. For example, there are blocks of time when our fields are not used and this time may be allocated to games or practices.

### **7.3 Field Management**

**The Club shall define a process for the management of existing fields.**

The fields that are used by the Club are a resource that must be managed like any other resource. In the past, we have not had a process for the management of fields and conditions on some fields have been allowed to deteriorate. To correct this problem, it is necessary that we institute a process for the management of fields, including maintenance. The process of field management must address both short and long term considerations.

### **7.4 Field Maintenance**

**The Club shall define a process for both short term, and long term, maintenance of existing fields.**

A major aspect of the management of fields is the ability to maintain a field. It is deemed of sufficient importance that a separate goal has been identified. In the past, we have not had a process that has allowed us to predict maintenance needs for any given field. This causes a lack of overall ability to identify a strategic plan to maintain fields. Some help in this direction has been afforded with a recent decision of the Board to perform maintenance on Yoest field at an estimated cost of \$5,000. We believe that this represents a first step in the development of a long term maintenance plan.

## 7.5 Long Term Considerations

**The Club shall establish a program to develop additional fields, with emphasis on a multi-field complex.**

There is clearly a utility in having several fields located at the same site. One reason for this is the ability to provide tournaments. Such tournaments could be for our players (such as an In-House tournament) but to allow other Clubs to play at our facilities. Another reason for having a centralized facility would alleviate some problems of parents having two (or more) players who practice on the same night. Still another reason is that it affords greater variety for teams to scrimmage at practice. Finally, and perhaps the most important reason, is that if the Club is able to secure a field complex, it would be under our control and we would not be at the mercy of some other organizations.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3.</sup> For example, our Club used to use fields in North Park. However, they signed an agreement for an Arts and Crafts festival to use their facilities and we were no longer able to use those fields.

## **8 Financial Goals**

It is important that the Club be on sound financial basis. One reason for this is to ensure the operation of the Club in the services that it provides, such as uniforms and referees. Another reason of a long term concern, is the ability to provide fields for the players. To address these issues a subcommittee consisting of Fred Vey and Cheryl Beeman was formed.

### **8.1 Budgets**

**The Club shall develop a budget for its activities.**

The current budgeting process within the Club is done in an *ad hoc* manner. There is little regard to the development of financial goals, or any assessment of income and expenses incurred by the Club. It was recognized that the development of a budget is an important aspect for the financial health of the Club. This is particularly true in the event that an Executive Committee of the Board will be formed as recommended in this plan. In that case, it will be imperative to have a budget process.

### **8.2 Forecasting**

**The Club shall use budget information to forecast future expenses.**

In concert with the development of a budget process, it is important that the Club be able to forecast future expenses. This will allow us to have a managed financial operation and will help to ensure the future financial health of the Club. It is felt that long-range forecasting is not feasible under current operating conditions.

### **8.3 Business Sponsors**

**The Club shall seek out business sponsors for appropriate Club activities.**

In the past the Club has not sought outside business sponsors of for any activities associated with the Club.

### **8.4 Fund Raising**

**The Club shall seek to develop additional sources of revenue.**

In the past the Club required parents of players to participate in a fund raising activity. They were asked to sell candy bars on behalf of the Club, with the intent that this could decrease the cost of registration. This process was terminated when we recognized that parents would prefer to pay an additional \$10.00, rather than have to sell candy. The current position of the Club is that there are fund-raising activities through the cost of pictures, where the Club receives \$1.00 per child. Also, the Club receives some money through soccer camps that are offered by the Club.

## 8.5 Fee Structure

**The Club shall equitably set player fees based on level of participation.**

There is concern in the Club that there is a disparity in the costs and benefits for players at different levels. For example, travel team players typically incur more expenses for the cost of uniforms, the Club pays for some tournament costs, and the cost of referees is greater. In comparison, a player in the Under-8 age group has an inexpensive jersey, there are no referees, and such young players do not travel to tournaments. This clearly indicates a disparity in cost benefits.

An investigation into the costs for several different age groups was completed recently and the results are summarized in the following table:

**Table 9: Percent of Costs in Different Age-Groups**

	Under-8	Under 10/12 In-House	Travel Teams
Administration	8	8	8
Uniforms	10	24	33
Awards	6	6	0
Equipment	4	4	2
Fields	18	10	10
Referees	0	16	18
Insurance	12	12	12
Scholarship	2	2	2
Tournaments	0	0	16
Excess Funds	40	18	0

The above table illustrates that there is a difference in what a parent pays for a child, and the services that the Club provides for that child. Certain costs are independent of the level of play, such as insurance which the Club provides (through PA West), and each player shares in the administrative costs of the Club. However, the Table shows the higher uniform costs, and the cost of tournaments.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note that the money that the Club spends on fields are typically used more by travel teams than in-house teams. Furthermore, the scholarship seems to have always been awarded to a travel player, and so should the cost be apportioned to travel team players?

## **9 Summary**

This document reflects the combined effort of the members of the Board of the North Allegheny Soccer Club. The development of this strategic plan reflects a process that has been under development for the past year. In spite of the effort to produce this plan, and however complete that it may be, we realize that it is a first step toward the improvement of our club. Hence, we also recognize the continuing nature of this plan and expect to update it as necessary.

It is also important to note that this plan may serve as a guideline for the vision of our Club. We are similar to other Clubs in that we are all volunteers, striving for the same overall goal, perhaps in many different ways. Defining a managed framework, such as implied here, is a non-trivial task. Yet, we believe we are on the correct path, and one that will result in the improvement of the club. That is our ultimate goal.



## Appendix A Summary of Enrollment Figures

The main body of this document presented a summary of enrollment data for the Club in the period 1988-1994. We include here the details for the fall and spring seasons in the years 1988-1994. We thank the Registrar, Cheryl Beeman, for providing this information.

**Table 10: Number of Players in Fall Season**

Year	In-House		Travel	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1994	560	236	284	88
1993	565	189	291	138
1992	616	221	240	99
1991	647	200	166	74
1990	705	183	145	67
1989	601	141	130	52
1988	679	165	173	69

**Table 11: Number of Players in Spring Seasons**

Year	In-House		Travel	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1994	288	167	169	128
1993	250	142	241	123
1992	284	151	193	85
1991	264	128	156	80
1990	280	124	128	85
1989	278	143	164	74
1988	363	154	188	87

