



# Village of Skokie Community Forum II November 10, 2019

## REPORT

# **INTRODUCTION AND TABLE OF CONTENTS**

On November 10, 2019 nearly 90 Skokie residents participated in the Village of Skokie's second Community Forum that was held at Skokie Police Headquarters. The first Skokie Community Forum was held on November 2, 2014 at Oakton Community College.

At the November 2019 Skokie Community Forum, participants participated in small-group discussions responding to three questions:

- “Why did you choose to live in Skokie and why do you stay?”
- “What do we need to do individually and collectively to maintain and strengthen the things that we value about living in Skokie?”
- For the third question participants selected a topic from question 2 and answered, “What do you need to do and what does the Village need to do in order for the idea you have chosen to become a reality?”

The following is a catalogue of the responses from the forum and is divided into four sections.

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## Why do you live in Skokie and why do you choose to stay?

- Acceptance
- Access to the Loop
- Access to village officials
- Affordability (16)
- Amenities
- Calmer pace of life
- Close to Chicago (3)
- Close to highway, city, Wisconsin
- Comfortable here – lack of pretense
- Convenient to city/jobs
- Convenient to highway and shopping (2)
- Community feel (2)
- CTA
- Diversity (24)
- Diversity = ideas, view
- Downtown Skokie
- Downtown Skokie needs more help – like the direction, but still have to leave the community for dining or Old Orchard
- Easy access to Chicago via expressway and public transportation
- Excellent services
- Facing/embracing diversity
- Family close (2)
- Family ties over generations – people come back
- Fire Department is great (2)
- Four seasons
- Geography
- Great health department
- Great neighborhood
- Great place to raise a family (2)
- Great services (plowing/shoveling sidewalks)
- Greening
- Home prices
- Homey feeling
- Housing
- Housing is affordable compared to Evanston and Chicago
- Level S.E.S. community (socio-economic status)
- Library (12)
- Location (7)
- Location to city
- Lots of parks
- Lower home prices

- Movie theater
- Old Orchard mall (2)
- Open-minded community
- Park District is good (11)
- Park District services
- Parking
- Police Department is good (3)
- Police are professional
- Property values good relative to taxes
- Proximity to Chicago (6)
- Proximity to work (2)
- Public transit (2)
- Quality of schools
- Reasonable taxes
- Religious community
- Resources/services (2)
- Returning to where I grew up
- Safe community (9)
- Schools (29)
- Schools are generally good
- Second generation comes back to raise families, teach
- Senior Services
- Services (3)
- Services are good – people need to report concerns – esp. police – see something, say something – for betterment of the Village
- Skokie is an ideal location due to its close proximity to Chicago and other suburbs.
- Skokie is diverse and people get along very well
- Skokie welcomes everyone
- Sidewalk plowing (2)
- Transportation is a great asset – would like to see buses run longer and expansion of the Skokie Swift to Old Orchard – more walkability
- Transportation (5)
- Transportation to Chicago
- Taxes (2)
- Taxes (originally '91)
- Theaters
- Trees
- Village response
- Village services are great (9)
- Walkable – everything is between one and two miles away
- Walk score
- Walkability
- Watchfulness by community
- Welcoming community (2)

- Well-run Village

## What do we need to do individually and collectively to maintain and collectively to maintain and strengthen the things that we value about living in Skokie?

### ***Attract Young Families***

Attract Millennials who will go out and spend money in Skokie to visit and live here (4)  
Try to encourage younger people/families to move to the Village and become more engaged

Need younger families

Young involvement

Attract our own young people

Boomerangs – people who grew up in Skokie and returned with their own families

Rental community buildings to attract young people

### ***Community Involvement***

Easy to get involved

Get involved – “the more involved we are, the more we are part of the community and care for each other”

People from Village involved with commissions

Remove barriers to service on boards/commissions

There are ways to get involved – get on a commission

Involvement increases with specific information; general volunteer requests don't motivate as well.

Increase community involvement

Skokie could do a better job letting residents know all of the ways they can become involved

Skokie offers many ways to become involved in the community, not just with the Village, but at the parks and library, too

Encourage and involve young families

Collectively engaged through unique community events

Know about resources in the community

Welcome 'swag'

Volunteer directories

### ***Communication***

Communication important to help community share ideas amongst them to get involved

Use electronic signs throughout Village to promote events and Village board meeting dates

Village needs to do a better job promoting Village services and resources, like home care assistance for the elderly and food for people in need

Village and organizations should submit stories to the *Skokie Review* since there is so much to tell and no reporters to tell it.

Who is leading social media messaging from the Village?

Let Village know what you are thinking – how can they be better?

Aggregate information between village and other sources

Utilize library as information source  
 Department tweets and Facebook posts at Village Hall  
 Community members education on services  
 How can info be dispensed to the village to be informed by citizens?  
 More two-way communication  
 Semi-open communication  
 Promote diversity  
 One information source with complete calendar for park district, library and village all in one place  
 Talk up community

### ***Cycling***

Bike safety – better lanes and better driver education (2)  
 Divvy bikes to help facilitate use of mass transit (4)  
 More bike lanes  
 Opportunity to expand walking and biking trails to connect where people live, work and play  
 For safety concerns, reduce speed limit on Howard from 35 mph to 30 – especially in areas as the bike path that crosses Howard. This is a dangerous area with people crossing Howard's bike path.  
 Connect and finish bike paths  
 Finish connecting the Skokie Valley Trail

### ***Diversity***

Bring together people and families of different cultures together  
 Do more on commission/board recruitment also Village staff  
 Lack of diversity of Village officials  
 Leadership needs to focus on the fact that diversity doesn't always mean that groups feel included  
 Making diversity a greater focus of the community  
 Many types of diversity, including age, singles, non-traditional households, renters, income, etc.  
 Try to not meet people like ourselves – display our own culture  
 Increase outreach to ethnic groups in Skokie so that they participate in civic discussions  
 SEED program  
 Festival of Cultures  
 Increase representation of minorities at events like this forum  
 Do more on recruitment  
 Getting resources for those who may need them but whose English may be limited

### ***Downtown***

Downtown; need more interesting, boutique stores, etc. for people to sit and be social;  
 book store, record store, where people can gather  
 More outdoor dining options  
 Vibrant downtown  
 Missed opportunity with Road Diet in Downtown Skokie

Bring more businesses into Downtown Skokie (restaurants and shops)  
 More walking and outdoor dining spaces on Oakton Street  
 Need to attract more artists to the community, especially within Downtown Skokie  
 Optimistic about hotel and 8000 North in Downtown Skokie as being catalysts for more restaurants and pubs that could enhance nightlife and provide something to do after dinner  
 Libertad is a draw but nothing to do before or after

### ***Economic Development***

Address empty storefronts/buildings  
 More commercial activity  
 Build small businesses for the 'experience economy' that offer live music, destination dining and coffee shops  
 Encourage not just local shopping, but local businesses that provide experiences above and beyond retail, i.e., Ignite and entertainment opportunities for adults and families  
 Good strategies for economic development  
 Need Dave & Busters or arcade  
 More nightlife/entertainment in Skokie  
 More restaurants; farm-to-table would be good – fresh food; have restaurants that bring people to Skokie to dine but not at Old Orchard  
 Mom and Pop – small biz creates community  
 Need more plazas and places to gather  
 TIF should be tracked and evaluated  
 Too many empty businesses on Dempster Street – need better transportation and restaurants which will improve foot traffic  
 Outdoor dining opportunities  
 Too many shuttered businesses  
 Good strategies with economic development  
 Restaurants embedded in neighborhoods  
 Concerned about marijuana dispensary  
 Need higher-end restaurants (3)  
 Better use of sites for potential developments  
 More boldness on Dempster corridor  
 Be more visionary  
 Experiential retail, boutiques and unique shops  
 More parking garages to encourage destinations  
 Rebrand  
 Bookstore  
 Cool shops/boutiques  
 Road diet

### ***Entertainment***

Alternative entertainment once a month, special night  
 Jazz club  
 More entertainment  
 Northbrook Library had an evening jazz series on Sundays

Experiential events  
 Evening music at the Skokie Theatre or library  
 Increase entertainment options  
 Unique new destination venue

### ***Environmental Sustainability***

Ban plastic bags  
 More information about recycling (2)  
 Recycle more items  
 Composting service should be offered (3)  
 More emphasis toward becoming greener; energy efficiency (2)  
 Solar panels should be installed on top of street lights  
 Solar panel collective – look for grants  
 Help homeowners access advanced solar technologies  
 Flat roofs with either gardens or solar panels  
 Village doesn't plant enough trees for public enjoyment  
 Add trees for air quality  
 Upkeep of parkway trees  
 Trees on parkways  
 Plant more trees – the Village only plants in parkways, offer this up to residents as well  
 – tree canopy in many neighborhoods do not compare favorably to Evanston, Chicago,  
 North Shore Suburbs  
 Encourage or insist on native plantings  
 Village needs to ask the community for help planting trees through block captains,  
 newsletter, NextDoor, other social media  
 Village needs to do more to encourage cleaner air and stem global warming  
 No police or Village vehicle idling  
 Ban watering grass between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.  
 More Talking Farm and local food emphasis  
 Allow chickens in yards  
 Change building codes to improve insulation  
 Litter on Crawford from weekend  
 Litter Issue  
 Trash can stations with plastic bags for pet waste

### ***Government***

Before a large community forum, the Village should host several 'feeder' forums via the  
 Neighborhood Watch program for residents who cannot participate in the big forum  
 More community forums should be held  
 Hold a community forum like this each year with real follow up on issues  
 Informal community meetings four times per year in which residents can express  
 concerns and input on a regular basis; meetings in which residents don't have to  
 publicly give their name and address, etc., in order to give their input  
 Have informal community meetings  
 Village committees should hold informal introduction to community periodically and get  
 input; once issue goes to board decisions have been made

Create more opportunities for people to share ideas and issues  
 Have more frequent forums like today; annually would be better as five years between is too long  
 Information from village in more open format  
 Increased transparency in government; more discussion and openness (example minimum wage) (3)  
 More development, but what types of development; citizens should have input prior to development before decisions are made  
 More outreach to commissioners  
 Need more citizen input about issues, such as video arcade  
 Opportunities to solicit input should come from the Village  
 Providing an atmosphere for community input that is more informal than Village Board meetings which can be intimidating; people afraid to speak up; informal gatherings twice a year where people can give input  
 Residents should have designated elected official, like an 'alderman' to communicate with in order to express concerns or complaints about Village matters (2)  
 Subdivide Village into feeder councils to meet and give ideas  
 Village officials should be more inclusive or residents viewpoints before major decisions are made about building developments  
 Village officials should host monthly informal/no agenda coffee sessions with residents  
 Wasn't enough effort to gather input on 8000 North  
 Why no historic preservation commission? How can residents wish that Skokie was more "like it used to be" when there's no appreciation for historic preservation?  
 More discussion and citizen input  
 Increase advertising of meetings  
 Are Village committees and department meetings ever open to the public/community?  
 Transparency in Village government  
 Run for something  
 Join a commission  
 Village of sharing with the community about planning

### ***Housing***

Concern over property taxes  
 Concern over property values relative to making a good investment  
 Offer tax incentive to revitalize single-family homes  
 Affordable housing  
 Housing is affordable here and meets the demand of a largely middle-class population  
 Lack of affordable housing at 8000 North  
 Skokie has positive housing value for young families  
 Transportation, commerce and social improvements will enhance the residential housing market  
 Grants for homeowner beautification  
 Private property enhancements maybe using corporate sponsorship, volunteer-person power or neighbor-facilitated

**Image**

Address reality vs. perception about Skokie; i.e.; demographics, Section 8, housing  
 Skokie has an image issue that hasn't been dealt with by the Village that originated with  
 a 2010 reference on a WTTW program calling Skokie an "Ellis Island" or way-station  
 instead of a place for people from other countries to feel welcome  
 Skokie is a destination community

**Mental Health**

Continue to offer mental health awareness and responsible use of cannabis education  
 at the library, health department and park district

**Miscellaneous**

Art fair on Oakton Street would be nice

Backlot Bash needs more of an arts component – too much emphasis on carnival,  
 music and food

Disappointed in Skokie hospital no longer being traditional hospital for the community;  
 loss for community with only orthopedic services, plus shuttle service problems at  
 hospital (2)

Community Forum a waste of time because not everyone hears and dominant  
 personalities who reported out only reported their own issues and not those discussed  
 at the table

How will people under the influence of cannabis be tested for a 'DUI'?

Concerns about cannabis and vaping

People who grew up in Skokie often return here to live; when planning, don't forget what  
 they loved about the Skokie of yesterday

Reach out and engage diverse community in 2020 Census

Senior resource fair well-attended; because a senior fair is reasonable, but what about  
 for people with children

**Neighborhoods**

Become personally involved in your block

Block parties are a great way to meet lots of people

More block parties needed

Get to know neighbors

Host "Meet Your Neighbors" nights at neighborhood parks

Establish community/neighborhood liaison

Break down barriers between different age groups

Foster a greater sense of neighborhood and be inclusive of renters, especially those  
 renting single-family homes; block parties are good but see if there are other ways that  
 the VOS can help renters feel home and foster a sense of community

Have a neighborhood park day so that every park would have a food truck, July 1  
 (example) as a way to meet neighbors in a comfortable setting

Welcome neighbors and be open-minded about them, especially those from new or  
 unknown cultures or age groups

### ***Parks***

Festival of Cultures needs a fresh re-work, it's sort of useless and needs to focus more on what makes Skokie unique as opposed to showcasing the different cultures  
 Instead of Festival of Cultures, have an arts festival or more festivals in general  
 Need more places for community gathering; public spaces for community gathering (2)  
 Extend swimming pool hours  
 Need an outdoor ice rink  
 Excellent parks  
 Continued funding for parks  
 In summer, improved lighting in parks  
 Expand trails  
 Emily Oaks  
 People should be encouraged to clean up after themselves in parks and report any suspicious activity  
 Indoor activities

### ***Property Standards***

Keep properties in the best shape possible  
 Keep properties in good shape  
 Litter was specifically called out as a concern overall – Village has issues with litter all over  
 Property upkeep – picking up litter and having more trash cans around for dog walkers  
 Vigilance needed on property maintenance of single-family rental properties  
 More realistic parking ordinances, as single-family residences were not designed to accommodate four to six cars, so the streets are clogged  
 Residents need to take ownership of their neighborhood – esp. picking up trash, dog litter, report concerns to Village  
 Review residential parking on single-family streets

### ***Public Safety***

Concern about gun legislation and legal processes around gun ownership  
 Guns/violence – greater emphasis on neighborhood watch and expanding to other areas; focus on see something – say something  
 Concern about police cars idling, with suggestion that police fleet be converted to all electric vehicles  
 Need informal meeting about crime, gangs and guns  
 Violence  
 More communication between police and the community, especially following public safety incidents and crime  
 Report crime  
 Greater clarification of PD non-emergency number 847-982-5900 – emergency is 9-1-1  
 Increase pro-active policing to deter crime  
 Lobby Springfield if needed about crime issues  
 More Neighborhood Watch captains needed  
 Police should put more information on social media  
 Promote social services, including victim services that already exist in Skokie and make

people more aware of them; more communication with PD  
 Sub-divide Neighborhood Watch programs and meet as a group once or twice a year  
 Timely information is important  
 Use bicycle officers to enforce dog laws, including use of leashes and no dogs in parks  
 Get ready for legal cannabis as a community  
 Advance social media to update community on incidents  
 Continue the citizen police academy  
 Report suspicious activity  
 Ring website for all citizens to get access

### **Schools**

Good schools attract residents  
 People appreciate the good public schools  
 Highly rated  
 Top notch  
 How to have a more equitable distribution of school property taxes in Skokie (2)  
 Too many school districts in the Village  
 School consolidation needs to be addressed before we continue to build new school buildings \$\$\$  
 Different school districts; playing field is not level  
 Too high proportion of property tax going toward schools  
 District 219 spent \$42,000 per pupil; Illinois average \$20,000  
 Support teachers  
 Electric school buses

### **Senior Citizens**

AARP Livability plan, become an aging-friendly community  
 Better transit options for seniors, Skokie has good options but seniors have no way to get there  
 Public transportation \$10 month as a selling point  
 Care for aging population – as aging continues, make sure we have the right service mix for aging population and right housing mix (2)  
 More affordable senior housing  
 Housing for seniors, assisted living  
 Skokie programs for seniors – “Communicating to a diverse community”  
 Communicate using various platforms

### **Services**

Appreciate services provided by Fire, Police and Public Works, as they have top-notch customer service and response times (2)  
 As individuals, we should appreciate service providers and keep funding them  
 Library is great but some not aware of presentations and activities available  
 Maintain sidewalks across alleys that become wet and muddy, posing a tripping hazard  
 Park District is good but would like to see more indoor teen opportunities such as a sporting complex for soccer, basketball, volleyball, etc.  
 Village services attract and retain residents

Village should trim low-hanging bushes  
 Working with staff on private tree issues has been surprisingly pleasant  
 Promote social service resources, including mental health resources and other non-profit services  
 Building Department needs process improvement  
 Street cleaners at 6:30 a.m.  
 Potholes in alleys

### ***Shop Local***

Shop local! (4)  
 Support local economy  
 Kneads & Wants  
 The Boiler  
 Kabul House  
 Libertad  
 DeJred to go  
 The Curragh  
 The Village Inn  
 Jets  
 Larsa's

### ***Social Media***

How are we using social media to advance Village's values, positives and negatives

### ***Teens/Youth***

Encourage school districts, park districts, library to offer programs that keep teens busy and involved (2)  
 More activities for teenagers  
 Parks offer youth camps  
 Indoor playground for older elementary students and teens  
 How does Skokie engage younger adults and even teenagers? These forums seem to always have more older residents  
 Weber used to have events on Friday nights  
 More events at Weber and/or indoor activities for kids/teens to stay occupied in the winter  
 Student opinions

### ***Traffic and Transportation***

Calm traffic on local streets with speed bumps for children's safety  
 Crosswalk across Oakton street perpendicular to the Library is problematic  
 Use public transportation more as residents  
 More late-night transportation  
 Yellow Line – increase service hours later in the evening and extend to Old Orchard (3)  
 Extend hours of bus service  
 More benches at bus stops  
 Increased parking

Install speed bumps  
Road Diet in Downtown Skokie would have been great and the Village missed an opportunity  
More stop signs  
More public transit  
Trolley  
Potholes in alleys  
18-wheelers on Howard Street in residential area

***Walkability***

Crosswalk by Library is a problem  
Expand Complete Streets initiative awareness to the community  
Improve condition of bike routes – inconsistent throughout Village  
Improve connection to bike facilities  
Measure bike and pedestrian traffic via Strava app  
More benches needed on trails  
Too many drive-through facilities throughout Village resulting in too many curb cuts  
Way too much space dedicated to parking lots and parking in general  
More cross-walks  
Leisure trails to live, work and play

## TABLE IDEAS

What do you need to do and what does the Village need to do in order for your idea to become reality?

### Care for Aging Population (5 people).

- Stroke ambulance in Skokie to respond to stroke victims; ambulance is expensive but necessary to save lives and prevent disabilities. Could partner with surrounding communities.
- Improve transportation and communicate about it, especially in a way they can get it, as most seniors don't have access to the web.
- Better communication about property maintenance improvements.
- Need better communication about programs in a way that seniors can get it.
- Support groups or education for family caregivers; it would be nice if they were at the library.

### Conservation/Green Initiatives (11 people)

- Village should make it easier for homeowners to go solar and insulate their homes; better programs to encourage solar cells and energy efficiency as well as grants and seed money.
- Village should help mid-income homeowners make homes more energy efficient relative to lighting, insulation, etc.
- Ban plastic bags.
- Village should have public drop offs for plastic bags.
- Village should provide curbside composting collection as well as education on home composting.
- Reduce garbage collection to once a week.
- Hire college students to prune and water trees.
- Encourage community and commercial buildings with solar panels on top.
- Offer bee-keeping service.
- Community-supported agriculture in back yards.
- Expand green roofs.
- Provide rain barrels for everyone's yard.
- Plant milkweed.
- Streetlights should be solar powered.
- Provide natural habitat to teach individuals and companies.
- Additional outreach about benefits of natural gardens and trees.
- No gas-powered leaf blowers or heavily restrict their use.
- Enforce lawn watering restrictions.
- Ban idling in school zones.
- Have police monitor vehicle idling on their rounds.
- Use electric police cars.
- Improve sidewalk infrastructure by installing sidewalks on all streets.

## **Crime Prevention (9 people)**

- Increasing cameras and street lights and making information about beat numbers more accessible; police drive alleys.
- Police work with schools regarding underlying causes of crime to work with children early on.
- Alleys are poorly lit and residents are unaware of alley lighting program through which residents can purchase a light for their alley.
- Lights should be installed in alleys to create safer walking spaces at night.
- New ComEd LED lights are not bright enough and the light does not percolate like traditional bulbs.
- Better advertise Beat Officers in each neighborhood so that residents can build relationships with the officer and have a specific contact number for him or her.
- Implement an alert system or bulletin board that displays where a crime occurs and when to help residents be aware of a crime in their area because they don't feel informed when they see police on their street.
- Install emergency phones in high-crime areas.

## **Encourage and Involve Young Families (category identified; no participants)**

## **Encourage Property Standards (8 people)**

- Permit enforcement; good, robust property standards that are hard to monitor and enforce permit standards in place.
- Residents must be aware that the Village requires permits for most significant work – protects the integrity of the property and values in neighborhood. General Contractors must also play by the rules.
- The Village seems to have arbitrary enforcement of property standards. Many cases when concerns are reported, it may take a week for staff to respond/inspect properties.
- Broken Window Syndrome is real – rental properties of concern, especially with absentee owners and/or those who do not vet tenants.
- A former problem home was renovated and then sold. More of this going on throughout the Village – younger families moving in – many diverse groups who feel welcome here.
- Enhance Beautification Commission award grants to homeowners to improve their landscaping.
- Vacant buildings on the periphery of residential neighborhoods are a great concern as these are often first impressions. Village needs to do more to help renovate or bring in new uses while understanding that retail is declining.
- People need to speak up, Village can't do it all.
- Not about people or discriminatory – property-focused.
- Beautification Commission should give grants to beautify yards.

- Neighbors can get together to beautify yards, with volunteers and donated supplies.
- Plant more trees.
- People don't know that the village plants new trees – better communication.
- The Village does a great job of removing trees but only offers to plant new trees twice a year. Large tree root systems can cause great damage for homeowners, so many choose not to replant trees, especially those who have had prior damage.

### **Encourage, Support and Enhance the Local Economy (7 people)**

- Restaurants – create new destination venues that are unique, outdoor dining, embedding in neighborhoods to make Skokie a dining destination.
- Need unique, 'cool', experiential places to dine.
- Have restaurants in various neighborhoods.
- Redevelop strip commercial areas as newer retail or mixed-use, clearing out entire blocks if necessary.
- Parking structures might be needed, even in strip commercial areas on Dempster and Main Streets.
- Development of O'Reilly's on Dempster street was a wasted opportunity, and the land could have been used to solve the retail parking constraint in the Dempster Street area.

### **Encourage Youth Involvement (8 people)**

- More indoor activities during cold weather months to stay active at night and in cold temps.
- More opportunities for high school students to provide input.
- Hold a community forum just for young people.

### **Enhanced Communication (5 people)**

- Have more opportunities for community meetings like this on a regular basis to meet people and so the Village can hear from residents with two-way conversations.
- Begin a citizen blog similar to NextDoor.
- Kiosks at Village Hall, the Skokie Public Library and Skokie Park District facilities displaying daily or weekly updates of citizen-related inquiries; example is to alert citizens to surplus of skunks in the community, which was confirmed by an animal control officer; the Village should provide an alert and education on how to handle the increased skunk population.

### **Enhanced Public Transportation (3 people)**

- Yellow Line and buses run until midnight down Golf, Church, Oakton; precedent with Yellow Line for Cubs games and should do routinely.

- Internal bus system similar to STAR for monthly fee where people could travel internally.
- Button near buses to know when next bus will arrive.
- Divvy bikes.
- Enterprise should offer weekend specials on vehicle rentals.

### **Expand Walking and Biking Trails (2 people)**

- Skokie has done a good job; bike routes could use improvement and better connections between bike routes.
- Lights and emergency station on bike trail.
- Art on water tower on trail near Oakton Street.
- Trail sign across Oakton Street.

### **Foster Neighbor Relations (6 people)**

- Have Know Your Neighbor coffees with village reps; block captains could be involved; more opportunities for neighbors to go to others homes to get to know each other.
- Establish block leaders, possibly in conjunction with block captains, with neighbors having each other's numbers for communications.
- The Village could collect stories from neighbors.
- Village website could focus on different areas of the community under the title "Neighbors You Should Know".
- Spot light areas in Village communications.
- It takes effort to be a good neighbor.
- Younger people see their community as 'virtual'.
- Contact lists are helpful.
- Concerns about homes being rented out and the need to make renters more informed.
- With cultural and ethnic diversity, how to engage families when they stick to themselves?
- Welcome to Skokie mailing.
- Differences in owner and renter mentalities.
- Encourage block parties.
- Explore other ways to communicate, such as through social media, to get younger people involved.
- Have 'pink flamingo' neighborhood gatherings.
- Have community reading teams.
- Have neighborhood walking clubs.
- Include renters!
- Dog walking clubs.
- Have cultural ambassadors, using existing models through schools.
- Have a book bike, like the bookmobile.

## **Increase Transparency (7 people)**

- Make Village board meetings more welcoming and have citizen comment before any vote by the board.
- More information regarding the when and where of meetings.
- More welcoming at board meetings with citizen comments at start, prior to any vote.
- More public promotion and publicity of the agenda items.
- Being able to email directly to board members and other officials with written response.
- Ability to directly contact elected officials.
- Coffee times with trustees (informal).
- More community gathering with trustees and village officials attending.
- Surveys before key village decisions.
- Encourage participation in elections.
- Expand police reports.
- More social media updates on police activities and traffic incidents.
- More town hall meetings.
- Follow up on this November 10 citizen gathering.

## **Maintain Services (3 people)**

- Increase services; biggest hurdle is funding; property taxes tapped out; no increases in fees; spread out tax burden as 75% goes to schools; should be capped at 25%; swap it out for general services and income taxes.
- Prioritize and evaluate the need for all current Village services.
- All current services are high priority and should not be diminished.
- Priority services include:
  - Police/Fire – emergency services
  - Streets and sanitation
  - Health Department
  - Community Development
  - Parks and recreation
  - Public transportation
- Decrease the amount of property taxes going to schools and increase revenue going to the Village to maintain or expand services.
- District 219 per-pupil costs too high.
- Local elected officials and leaders should initiate an effort for school consolidation and tax redistribution.
- Pay outs for all outstanding pensions, with a one-time payment to convert to 401K.

## Promote Diversity (6 people)

- Get more people of different backgrounds on Village boards and commissions; more diversity in Village staff, leadership, fire and police.
- Expand existing programs like Coming Together in Skokie, Festival of Cultures and other, more frequent programs.
- Came to Skokie because of the “Skokie Welcomes Everyone” signs which portray Skokie as a safe, welcoming suburb.
- Holding events at Police Headquarters can be intimidating for some groups.
- Get diverse communities involved, with note that most Village staff and forum participants are white.
- Many of Skokie’s challenges can be celebrated as opportunities. Being a highly multi-lingual community can be an asset rather than just a translation difficulty.

## Promote Social Services (5 people)

- Increase awareness and education of mental health issues and reduce stigma around it.
- Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs) events at the library:
  - Reduce stigma
  - Prevent mental health problems in the future
- Educational offerings around suicide prevention.
- Educational offerings around responsible use of cannabis.
- More awareness of village social workers.
- Trying to get counseling but was Byzantine process.
- Social service navigator.
- Identify needs and resources:
  - Village has some staff, but budget is limited
  - Nami, Turning Point, other groups, religious groups
  - ACEs
  - Diagnostic tool for adults
- Increase awareness of PTSD for veterans and other members.
- Reduce mental health stigma.
- Service providers and front-line staff (teachers):
  - Continued education on crisis awareness
  - Identifying senior abuse
  - Are they trained?
  - Train staff to identify abuse
- Advocate for social services and awareness of services.
- Create poll via text message and web to inquire about education gap:
  - Clearinghouse services
  - What other education do they need
  - Maybe with library

## **Shop Local and Entertainment Improvements (category identified; no participants)**

### **Taxes and Schools (2 people)**

- As a community, take a good look at consolidation; it is divisive as there are five or six school districts with unequal tax base; it should be looked at as it's said that residents don't want it; conduct a feasibility study or referendum; a small community divided results in inequities, with District 69 as an example with Downtown Skokie as its tax base.
- All districts feed to one high school district.
- Different school districts divides community; consolidation way to unify community and provide parity.
- Economies of scale.
- Work toward a state solution.
- Undertake a study.
- "Bully Pulpit" – lead state action.
- Park Ridge Uptown TIF very successful.
- Two buses down the same street.

### **Traffic Calming (category identified; no participants)**

## Village of Skokie – Programs in Progress

A number of ideas recommended at the November 10, 2019 Skokie Community Forum are already in effect, in whole or in part. Following is a summary of some of these initiatives:

### Alley Lights

- Alley lights are typically installed on existing Commonwealth Edison electric poles. The Village helps the coordination with residents who would like a light installed and Commonwealth Edison to install the light. The Village helps with the cost of the program. Information and the application can be found here: <https://www.skokie.org/DocumentCenter/View/299/Alley-Lighting-Application-PDF>

### Attracting Young Families

- In 2016 and 2017, the Village ran an ad campaign on CTA trains, buses and station platforms to promote Skokie as a great place for young families. The Village's "Skokie: the Urban in Suburban" campaign featured posters on both station platforms and inside rail and bus cars, as well as colorful campaign bus wraps covering buses that traveled throughout select Chicago neighborhoods for several months. The campaign received a national award in 2018. This same advertising theme was featured in the 2017 Chicago Cubs Yearbook. Skokie is currently advertising on the Chicago North Shore Convention & Visitors Bureau web page that has some 30,000 unique visitors monthly, to promote Skokie as a destination filled with unique, fun activities for children and families.

### Block Parties

- Village of Skokie Human Relations Commissioners share responsibility for making visits to as many block parties as possible during the season.
- The Human Relations Commission hosted an inaugural Block Party Forum in spring 2019 which was attended by 40 individuals. The forum will be repeated annually as a resource to community members who may need extra encouragement or direction on how to organize a block party.
- The Village's Human Services Division, along with Human Relations Commissioners, have worked with Skokie School District 69's Parent Plus group for a number of years to plan a large block party in one or more of Skokie's multi-family neighborhoods. These block parties have been very successful.

- Regular articles in both *NewSkokie* and *SkokieNews* encourage residents to hold block parties to get to know their neighbors. There were 84 block parties in 2019, marking a 16 percent increase from the 72 block parties held in 2018.

### **Board and Commission Service**

- The Village of Skokie encourages residents to apply for service on one of the Village's 18 advisory boards and commissions. Outreach includes articles in *NewSkokie*, and information about serving on a Village board or commission also is posted on the Village website, including links to the board/commission application on each board/commission page and on several other drop-down menus found on the home page.

### **Building Permits**

- All contractors working in Skokie are required to be registered with the Village and bonded.
- In the past few years, the Village has streamlined the permit review process by implementing use of a new software system that both codes and catalogues all permit requests and sends email updates to applicants by established deadlines. Many permit type, such as for installation of furnaces, air conditioning systems, electrical services, etc., are available over the counter and are issued on the same day as the permit application is received.
- Online permitting is available and is increasing for over-the-counter and accessory structure permitting.
- Educating homeowners on permit requirements is a priority and is accomplished through information on the Village website, *NewSkokie* articles and handouts available at Village Hall and online.

### **Census 2020**

- In partnership with other governmental entities like the Skokie Public Library and Skokie schools, the Village is supporting the Census 2020 effort to "Count Everyone Once, Only Once, and in the Right Place" by focusing its efforts on historically hard to count populations that were identified by Skokie-specific data from previous censuses: renters, low-income persons, young children, senior citizens, "Millennials", ethnic minorities, and non-English speakers. Village staff and community partners will make an extra effort to communicate and provide access to places where households can complete the survey online, since paper copies questionnaires will not initially be sent for this census. It is hoped to engage parents of school-aged children, day care centers, health clinics serving low-income populations, renters, and patrons at the Niles Township Food Pantry, English Language Learners Center and Skokie Public Library.

## Communications

- The Village has several initiatives to foster two-way conversation with residents:
  - In fall 2016, the Village hosted three free community spaghetti dinners, one at each Village fire station. Nearly 500 residents attended these events to meet new friends and neighbors, and interact with Village officials. More than 200 Village residents attended a community spaghetti dinner held at the Skokie Public Works Department in spring 2018.
  - Each year, the Village of Skokie has information booths at the Skokie Festival of Cultures and Skokie Backlot Bash where residents can visit to share thoughts and ideas about Village programs and services.
  - Village Board meetings are held twice monthly and include a public comment period at the conclusion of regular business.
- The Village has two Facebook pages for targeted information outreach. The *Shop Local Skokie* Facebook page has more than 3,250 followers and features information on supporting Skokie businesses. The Skokie Police Department Facebook page has nearly 15,000 followers, with posts including information on public safety matters, crime prevention and more.
- The Village of Skokie launched a new website in spring 2019, with a “Featured Announcements” section on the home page that features information on road construction, surveys, animal control issues and other matters of immediate interest to the community.
- Residents can report an issue or request a service using the *Access Skokie* app available for smart phones. *Access Skokie* is an online and mobile issue reporting and service request system for the Village of Skokie. To download the *Access Skokie* mobile app, search for *Access Skokie* in your app store. Reports also can be made without downloading the app at <https://skokieil.citysourced.com/mobile/>. The *Access Skokie* app should not be used for alerting authorities to public safety emergencies, which should be reported by calling 9-1-1.
- The Village utilizes community events signs throughout the community to provide important information on programs and services:
  - Skokie Boulevard and Niles Center Road
  - Dempster Street at the south entrance to the Skokie Swift parking lot and station
  - Skokie Boulevard and Searle Parkway
  - At the entrances to Fire Station 16 on Niles Center Road and Fire Station 18 on Gross Point Road
- From time to time, the Village requests use of electronic messaging signs of other government agencies, like the Skokie Park District and Niles Township High School District 219 for display of important or emergency messages.

## Conservation/Green Initiatives

- Solar Energy - With the upcoming 2020 reduction in the federal solar energy tax credit beginning next year, there has been renewed interest in solar energy

systems. Solar companies generally will assist homeowners with applying for any available financial assistance or rebates. In the past two years, the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission (SEAC) has participated in two well-attended public forums relating either to solar or energy conservation items. Village staff, in conjunction with SEAC members, continues its research on the SolSmart program and achieving the highest possible level of distinction for the Village of Skokie. For example, as part of the SolSmart program, the Village is streamlining its solar energy application process. Solar permits have been very active in the last year or so, with approximately one hundred issued to date.

- **Ban Plastic Bags** - The Village has actively studied plastic bag taxes and/or bans, but has not opted to take either step, preferring instead to focus on education and awareness campaigns to attempt to alter behavior. The Village and the SEAC coordinated a public awareness campaign in 2019 that involved dissemination of public information on reduction of plastic bag usage. The campaign included giveaways of over 800 branded, reusable shopping bags at multiple retail locations. The Village and SEAC are monitoring both Illinois Senate Bill 1240 and House Bill 3335 that propose a state-wide tax on plastic bags.
- **Plastic Bag Collection/Drop Off** - The Village is exploring creating such a program with Collective Resources of Evanston, who currently coordinates the plastic bag drop-off program for the City of Evanston. It is anticipated the Village will be able to offer such a program in the first or second quarter of 2020. The above-mentioned proposed state-wide plastic bag tax may create a funding source to assist with plastic bag disposal/recycling programs.
- **Curbside Composting Collection and Composting Education** - The Village is in active negotiations to offer a subscription food scrap composting service through Collective Resources of Evanston. This matter is expected to be considered by the Village Board by the end of 2019. With regard to composting education, the SEAC has hosted a public event on backyard composting, as well as providing information at the Library's "How To" event. The Village has also operated a successful compost bin rebate program to promote backyard composting.
- **Bee Keeping** - Since 2013, the Skokie Health Department has led a multi-disciplinary effort to create a community apiary, to celebrate honeybees and beekeeping, give an alternative route for residents to have hives in the Village, and provide a location for educational programs. Oakton Community College (OCC), 7701 Lincoln Avenue, has stepped forward, and offered to locate the apiary at the Skokie Campus in a partnership with the Village. There is a site on campus that is perfect for this purpose, and a formal plan for constructing the apiary, which will house 20 hives, is being developed along with interested Skokie beekeepers. Village staff expect to bring an intergovernmental agreement with OCC to the Village Board in early 2020, build the apiary using grant funds, and introduce honeybees in early 2021.

## Cycling

- The Village is aggressively expanding the bike trail network. The Skokie Valley Trail currently connects with Lincolnwood at Lincoln Avenue and extends north to the CTA station at Dempster Street. Engineering for the section between Dempster Street and Golf Road is in progress with construction to follow. The portion between Golf Road and Old Orchard Road is in place and the Village is working with other communities to continue to extend the trail to the north.
- On-street bike lanes will be installed on Church Street, similar to those on Main Street, creating another east-west route across Skokie.
- The Old Orchard Road bridge will eventually be reconstructed. This will include a path on the south side of the bridge for bikes and pedestrian. This connects to existing off-street paths already constructed on Old Orchard Road.
- The existing and proposed trails can be seen on the Village web site by following the 'Bicycling in Skokie' link found in the 'Transportation' section of the 'Village Services' menu on the top of the home page.  
<https://www.skokie.org/DocumentCenter/View/711/Bikeway-System-Plan-PDF>
- The Village researched the potential of bringing Divvy bicycles to Skokie in 2016 and concluded at that time that it was not feasible due to cost and the proximity of the existing stations in Chicago to Skokie.

## Diversity of the Village of Skokie's Workforce

- The Village of Skokie continues to enhance its recruitment strategy to attract more diversity in the Village's workforce to better reflect the community in which we serve. Diversity recruiting is a fundamental initiative and an important step in achieving equal opportunity in the workplace. Diversity is broader than ethnicity, race and gender. The characteristics of diversity include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, military experience, religious beliefs, work experience, educational background, geographic location, marital status, parental status and job classification. In addition to advertising in various on-line, print and social media outlets, the Village's expanded outreach includes distributing job postings to over 80 educational, community and faith-based organizations. The Village recently broadened its recruitment scope to include 10 additional diverse networks on which vacant positions are posted. The Village will continue recruitment outreach efforts to ensure the maximum exposure to a diverse pool of top qualified candidates. For the most recent police officer recruitment exam, the Village contacted or used 167 different recruitment resources.
- The gender and ethnic distribution for the Village's workforce of 494 full and part-time employees in accordance with federal guidelines as of June 2019 is as follows:
 

○ Males	77.13%
○ Females	22.87%

○ Hispanic or Latino	8.30%
○ White	80.36%
○ Black or African American	5.87%
○ Asian	4.45%
○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	.20%
○ American Indian or Alaskan Native	.00%
○ Two or More Races	.81%

## Downtown Skokie

- Village of Skokie staff continues to work with existing businesses, potential new businesses, building owners, developers, as well as a myriad of community groups and volunteers to further enhance and develop Downtown Skokie. Between 1990 and 2014, significant investments have been made in and near Downtown Skokie, including 518 new multi-family dwelling units resulting in additional Equalized Assessed Valuation totaling approximately \$30.2 million. Dozens of new shops, restaurants and service providers have opened in Downtown Skokie, resulting in lower vacancies. The Illinois Science + Technology Park (ISTP) is now 100 percent occupied and has over 1,650 employees. New development underway will bring an additional 193 new luxury rental units, a 141-room Homewood Suites By Hilton Hotel and Conference Center, continued expansion at the ISTP and a new public-private parking garage anchoring the eastern portion of Downtown Skokie.
- In recent years, unique and destination-oriented businesses have established themselves in Downtown Skokie or will open soon. Some of these include Ignite Gaming Lounge (e-sports and special event space), Sketchbook Brewing Co. and Tasting Room coming in 2020, Aw Yeah Comics, the Madkap Productions acquisition of the Skokie Theatre and numerous dining options. Additional new development projects also are expected such as a rooftop pub at the new hotel and regional restaurant chain Shakou, which will anchor the 8000 North project at Oakton Street and Lincoln Avenue, as well as new spaces for numerous retail and dining establishments.
- Overall, there are currently 11 major projects either recently completed or underway in Downtown Skokie representing approximately \$190 million in combined private capital investment.
- In the past five years, numerous outdoor murals and sculptures have been installed in and around Downtown Skokie by local, national and international artists. Skokie has received national awards for its video productions showcasing the public art in Downtown Skokie, and an app is available to provide information and self-guided art tours in Downtown Skokie and throughout the community.
- Quarterly updates specifically focusing on activity in and near Downtown Skokie can be found on the Village website by following the 'Business and Economic Development' link under the 'Village Departments' section of the 'Your Government' menu on the top of the home page.  
<https://www.skokie.org/DocumentCenter/View/2379/Downtown-Skokie-Development-Update>

## Economic Development

- The Village’s economic development efforts focus on growing and sustainable industries and activities which are anchored by major employment centers and institutions. Some of these areas include the Illinois Science + Technology Park, Southeast and Southwest Skokie Industrial Corridors, NorthShore University HealthSystem – Skokie Hospital, Oakton Community College’s Ray Hartstein Campus, Westfield Old Orchard, the Old Orchard Road Research and Office Corridor, Touhy Avenue/Village Crossing and nearby Northwestern University. Over 2,200 small, medium-sized and large businesses in Skokie are supported by more than 65,000 local residents and a daytime workforce population of over 75,000 (Source: ESRI, 2018).
- In addition to the increasing activity in Downtown Skokie, NorthShore University HealthSystem, the largest employer in Skokie, continues to grow. Over the past several years, NorthShore has made over \$400 million in capital investments at Skokie Hospital. As a result, in early 2019, Skokie Hospital was transformed as the only specialty hospital in Illinois focused on orthopedic and spinal surgeries. Future growth is expected in 2020 and beyond as the facility is already well exceeding expectations.
- Apple opened a new flagship location at Westfield Old Orchard in late September 2019. The approximately 9,000-square-foot flagship store is nearly double in size of its previous location, which has been one of the busiest retailers since opening in 2003.
- A TRU Hotel by Hilton is currently going through the approval process in anticipation of spring 2020 construction adjacent to the Holiday Inn & Suites Chicago North Shore.
- Lurie Children’s Hospital is under construction on a new Skokie Outpatient Center on Touhy Avenue. This \$35 million investment will bring more than 60 full-time jobs in anticipation of opening in early 2021.
- Numerous additional retail and commercial developments in the major commercial corridors continue and are in various stages of development/approvals.
- The Village continues to promote the community’s attributes in a key area of focus for Economic Development, Manufacturing and Logistics. Recent activity in this sector includes Amazon Logistics leasing a 240,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art distribution and manufacturing property at 3601 Howard Street for its prototype “last-mile delivery station” facility. Amazon is expected to bring 600 full- and part-time job opportunities to the community.
- In September 2019, the Village Board granted a Cook County Class 6b Property Tax Incentive for vacant and underutilized property located at 8051 Central Park Avenue/3550 Oakton Street to longtime Skokie company Chicago Protective Apparel, Inc. (CPAI), a fourth generation, family-run business which manufactures personal protective equipment. CPAI plans to relocate from their current 40,000-square-foot facility and triple in size at their new location, adding 30 new jobs.

- Another Cook County Class 6b Property Tax Incentive recipient, Panattoni Development, is nearing completion of a new 146,000-square-foot distribution/manufacturing facility at the site of two former obsolete industrial buildings at the intersection of Howard Street and the Edens Expressway. There are numerous letters of intent by firms wishing to lease the entire property when completed in coming months.
- Village staff continuously monitors vacant properties and potential redevelopment opportunities throughout the Village. As such, local initiatives such as the Storefront Enhancement Program have been and continue to be successful in bringing new businesses to formerly vacant or properties in need of improvement. Ordinance modifications which relax restrictions on outdoor dining options and gathering spaces, relaxed signage for businesses allowing for a-frame signs and promotional banners, coordinated marketing efforts for business corridors, an enhanced economic development website, real-time property information as well as the Economic Development Commission's work in creating and adopting the Village's economic development strategy are all examples of efforts to enhance and proactively address the ever-changing needs of Skokie's local business community.
- In 2017, the Skokie Economic Development Commission (EDC) adopted the first targeted Economic Development Strategy and Action Agenda for 2017-2020. The purpose of the Strategy and Action Agenda is to focus economic development efforts towards existing and future opportunities which will bring the highest levels of investment, revenue and quality jobs for Village residents while enhancing the economic and revenue base of the Village. Key elements of the Strategy and Action Agenda include Business Development, Municipal Revenue Enhancement, Employment Growth and Workforce, and Marketing and Community Branding.
- Significant progress within these objectives has been made over the past three years. Some examples include continued employment growth in the Village evidenced by record low unemployment rates (2.9% as of August, 2019); full occupancy of the Illinois Science + Technology Park which now employs over 1650 people; significantly decreasing vacancy rates of industrial commercial properties throughout the Village; transition of Skokie Hospital to the only specialized orthopedic institute in Illinois; active or in-process development of over 200 multi-family rental units in the Village built as such in over 50 years; continued private and public reinvestment in major commercial corridors throughout the Village including Old Orchard, Village Crossing and Dempster Street; enhanced Village investment with the Storefront Enhancement Program to assist small businesses in improving their interior and exterior space; a new economic development website and marketing materials; increased participation in regional efforts and collaborations geared towards enhancing workforce opportunities; promoting Foreign Direct Investment; outreach with new and emerging technology companies as well as promoting redevelopment opportunities within Downtown Skokie and other areas of the Village.
- The Skokie Economic Development Commission along with Village staff will begin updating the Strategy and Action Agenda in January of 2020.

- Updates to Economic Development efforts can be found on the Village website by following the 'Business and Economic Development' link under the 'Village Departments' section of the 'Your Government' menu on the top of the home page.: <https://www.skokie.org/154/Business-and-Economic-Development>

### **Emergency Medical Services – Stroke Ambulance**

- A stroke ambulance is a highly specialized medical unit deployed by hospitals in conjunction with a fire department response of an advanced life support (ALS) ambulance to provide care for a suspected stroke patient. The major benefit of a Mobile Stroke Unit (MSU) is an on-board CT Scanner, which speeds the recognition and confirmation of clots causing a stroke. This allows early administration of Tissue Plasminogen Activator (TPA) which works as a clot buster. TPA cannot be safely administered without use of a CT scan to confirm the stroke symptoms are related to a circulatory blockage and not a bleed. MSU's are typically staffed with a Paramedic Driver, Critical Care Paramedic, Critical Care Nurse, CT Technologist, and have Telemed Connection to a Neurologist.
- There are about 20 MSU's in the United States, with two located in Illinois (Northwestern Medicine located at Central DuPage Hospital and Rush at Oak Park Hospital). Each of these is staffed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and responds to incidents in their surrounding area. Implementation of a MSU is an expensive undertaking with an estimated initial cost of \$950,000 to outfit, and approximately \$1.2 million in additional, annual operation costs. While there are significant costs associated with operation of a MSU, enhanced outcomes of stroke patients as a result of early administration of TPA bear thoughtful consideration. Another factor affecting the cost/benefit analysis of implementing a MSU is the current response capabilities and transport times of Skokie Fire Department ALS Ambulances. With the Village of Skokie's close proximity to two hospitals capable of initiating advanced care for stroke patients (including CT scan and TPA administration), quick recognition and treatment in the field along with transport can and does provide similar favorable results. Further exploration of the need, effectiveness, and feasibility for implementation of a mobile stroke unit would include discussions with NorthShore Hospital System and/or AMITA Health St. Francis Hospital.

### **Enhanced Walking/Bike Trails**

- Sidewalk Gap Program – The Village has a program to fill in missing sidewalk or gaps in sidewalk connections. Suggestions for new sidewalk locations can be made to Erik Cook at [erik.cook@skokie.org](mailto:erik.cook@skokie.org). Locations near schools and routes to schools are prioritized.

## Property Standards

- All property standards activity is tracked through a new software system implemented within the last two years to streamline the inspection process and expedite response times.
- Regular inspections are made of all multi-unit buildings, as well as mandatory pre-sale inspections required since the inception of the Neighborhood Integrity Ordinance in May 2014. Property Standards inspectors have regular survey areas throughout the community, and all complaints are entered and checked within 24 hours. Active management best practices, including tenant screening, are an active part of Landlord Training that also is required by the Neighborhood Integrity Ordinance. Since summer 2014, a total of more than 800 landlords and management agents have participated in the half-day required Landlord Training program.
- The Village's vacant building ordinance is enforced, and a public information forum for vacant building owners is being considered for 2020.

## Public Safety Communications

- In July 2010, the Department of Homeland Security launched a national "If You See Something, Say Something"™ campaign – a simple and effective program to raise public awareness of indicators of terrorism and terrorism-related crime, and to emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious activity to the proper state and local law enforcement authorities.
- The Skokie Police Department frequently encourages citizens to report suspicious activity through articles in *NewSkokie* and in the quarterly Neighborhood Watch newsletter, on [www.skokiepolice.org](http://www.skokiepolice.org) and the Skokie Police Department's Facebook page and Twitter account. Public information emphasizes reporting suspicious behavior and situations, such as an unattended backpack in a public place or someone trying to break into a restricted area, rather than beliefs, thoughts, ideas, expressions, associations or speech unrelated to terrorism or other criminal activity.
- The Skokie Police Department emphasizes that some of these activities could be innocent and it is important to consider the context of the situation. It is then up to law enforcement to determine whether the behavior warrants investigation. The "If You See Something, Say Something™" campaign respects citizens' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties by emphasizing behavior, rather than appearance, in identifying suspicious activity. Factors such as race, ethnicity and/or religious affiliation are not suspicious.
- If a citizen observes something suspicious taking place, the Skokie Police Department encourages citizens to immediately dial 9-1-1. Citizens also can contact the Skokie Police Department at 847/982-5900 for non-emergencies.
- In addition, the Village of Skokie has a 24-hour, anonymous Crime Tip Hotline to allow citizens to report suspicious circumstances or criminal activity. Citizens with information about a crime, suspicious persons or activities, or the whereabouts of a wanted suspect can call the Crime Tip Hotline at 847/933-TIPS (8477) 24-

hours a day and leave a message with information that could assist the police with their investigations. Tips can be left anonymously, and all Crime Tip Hotline calls are confidential. The Skokie Police Department encourages callers to leave a name and phone number in the event investigators needs additional information.

- There are a variety of ways the Skokie Police Department and citizens share information:
  - Facebook: @ skokiepolice
  - Twitter: @ skokiepolice
  - [www.skokiepolice.org](http://www.skokiepolice.org)
  - Online police reporting - accessed via [www.skokiepolice.org](http://www.skokiepolice.org) in the File a Police Report tab. The Skokie Public Safety Portal is provided to enable citizens to easily report non-emergency incidents.
  - CODERED Alert System
  - NIXLE
  - Neighbors by Ring
  - Email: [police@skokie.org](mailto:police@skokie.org)
  - Crime Tip Hotline at 847/933-TIPS (8477) 24-hours a day
  - Text-a-Tip (Text "Skokie and tip to 847411).
  - E-mail: [tips@skokie.org](mailto:tips@skokie.org)
  - TIP 411 (Online Tip, tip411.com)

## Rain Barrels

- Rain barrels are a great way to help keep valuable rain water out of the sewer system. Previously, the Village coordinated with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to distribute free rain barrels to residents. The free barrel program has expired, but MWRD still has a program to acquire rain barrels for residential properties with information at 312/751-5600 or <https://mwrdd.org/rain-barrels>

## Senior Citizens

- Identifying Senior Abuse - Village of Skokie Human Services Division social work staff conduct approximately 10 well-being visits each month. Many of these visits result in referrals to Adult Protective Services. Staff maintains relationships with residents as well as the investigators to be a resource. Further, Village staff advocate for residents to accept services that support them in aging in place, bringing their awareness to programs and services.
- AARP Livability Plan/Become an Aging-Friendly Community - The Commission on Family Services considered but did not endorse a plan to pursue this process without more information. Graduate students are investigating the AARP Age-Friendly model and other models of assessing the needs of people with disabilities to promote livability in the community.
- Better Transit Options for Seniors - The Village's Skokie Senior Transit for Area Residents, or STAR Program, has been in place for nearly two decades and

offers affordable, weekday, curb-to-curb transportation to any Skokie location and to select medical locations outside of Skokie. Human Services Division staff recently spoke with representatives from a company called Via, a ride sharing solution that uses technology, but also provides support to seniors who don't yet use smart phone technology. Other communities in the United States partner with Via to create community-specific transit options, and staff will continue to explore this partnership as an alternative to supplement the STAR Program and other ride sharing system options.

- Skokie Programs for Seniors - Residents born in the Baby Boomer era, in combination with the oldest members of the Skokie community, comprise two to three distinct cohorts of people with different communication and information needs. There is diversity across cohorts of age on top of the cultural diversity in Skokie. The Boomers & Beyond resource fair, held every other year, has been well attended, and additional opportunities to offer educational programming are being explored in partnership with Skokie's well-connected network of providers.

### **Social and Human Services**

- Social Service Navigator - The Human Service Division's social work staff truly function as ombudsmen by spending a significant number of their working hours assessing community members and helping establish connections to the services that will address their needs.
- Increase Awareness of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for Veterans and Other Members – After receiving a suggestion from a Skokie resident, the Human Services Division recently expanded its section of the Village website to include a resource page for veterans, service members and their families. The new page includes an abundance of information and links to referrals and agencies to assist.

### **Tree Planting**

- The Village has had a professional forester for over 30 years. The Forester inspects tree planting sites and chooses locations for trees and select species that minimize conflicts with above- and below-ground utilities.
- The Village is currently offering free parkway trees to all properties, including residential, commercial, schools/churches, etc. This is promoted in *NewSkokie* and on the Forestry Division section of the Village website, as well as through an edition of *SkokieNews* prior to each planting season which receives an excellent response. Tree planting is limited to spring and fall because those are the seasons in which trees can be dug at nurseries.
- The Forestry Division began an internship program in 2016. The intern assists with all aspects of forestry management, including tree watering and tree maintenance.

## Next Steps

The Village of Skokie is reviewing and considering in detail all of the input and comments received at the Skokie Community Forum and will report on outcomes in the future.

Comments from the community are always welcome! Here are a number of ways to contact the Village:

- Email [info@skokie.org](mailto:info@skokie.org)
- Use the *Access Skokie* mobile app or web portal described on page 25 of this report
- Call Village Hall at 847/673-0500, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Stop by the Village booth at the Skokie Festival of Cultures and Skokie's Backlot Bash
- Written comments may be sent to:  
Village of Skokie  
5127 Oakton Street  
Skokie, Illinois 60077  
Attention: John Lockerby, Village Manager