

CHAPTER 5.5 – ENVIRONMENT

A new Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Village in 2005 after being guided by the original plan adopted in 1969. The new plan took a significant step in obtaining citizen input, making it more understandable, and studying how demographic, social, housing and economic data affected the land use plan for the Village. Although both plans were considered the leading policy statements for guiding physical improvements in the Village, they were developed before sustainability started to become a comprehensive plan component during the early 2000's. Since that time, the Village has become more aware of environmental issues and how they affect every component of land use, transportation, housing and our daily lives; thus, this Environmental Section has been added to the Comprehensive Plan.

The Village was moving towards sustainability by establishing an environmental policy in 2008 which recognized that, "...municipalities should accept the challenge to create sustainable economies, environment, land development and communities." The policy further stated that the Village should move toward becoming a "Sustainable Community" where "(1) the Village's residents, property owners and businesses are achieving economic prosperity while protecting the planet's natural systems; and (2) the needs of our community are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" which is the basis of sustainability.

The environment policy was followed by the adoption of "The Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan." The Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission (SEAC) adopted "The Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan" in 2016. Around the same time, the Village adopted a "Complete Streets Policy" (2016), and in succeeding years, the Village endorsed the "Greenest Region Compact" (2018) and the "Climate Action Plan for the Chicago Region" (2022) with both efforts organized by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. The Village completed a Greenhouse Gas Inventory in 2021 and is completing an update to the sustainability plan.

The Environment Chapter, currently, incorporates the objectives and programs of the 2016 Sustainability Plan that relate to land use and development into the Comprehensive Plan. This step is the initial step in a two-step process. Once the update to the current sustainability plan is completed, SEAC will work with Village staff to begin another process to amend the Village's Comprehensive Plan which will incorporate any new or revised land use, transportation, and development objectives, as well as broader sustainability objectives.

The components of the 2016 Sustainability Plan are:

Water Management

The Sustainability Plan recognizes that even though water is abundant in the Chicago area, due to its proximity to Lake Michigan, there is a need to conserve water to protect our natural resources and meet legal guidelines. The Sustainability Plan also recognizes the ecological impact storm runoff can have on this resource. From a land use and development standpoint, steps can be taken to ensure water is conserved in building operations by enforcing the Illinois Plumbing Code, which limits water usage by requiring low-flow appliances and is part of the Village's permit review process. In addition, storm runoff can be controlled by enforcing

drainage requirements that allow for the infiltration of water runoff into the ground to recharge groundwater and the storage of runoff during rain events to reduce instances of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) through Village or MWRD permit processes.

The following objectives and programs from the Sustainability Plan apply to Land Use & Development:

Objectives:

- Reduce commercial, industrial and residential water usage through conservation.
- Use natural systems to reclaim used water and storm runoff.

Programs:

- Continue the enforcement of the State Plumbing Code that requires the use of Water Sense and other water conservation measures.
- Review Village Codes for opportunities to promote the use of permeable surfaces in Skokie.

Air Quality

The Sustainability Plan addresses the health effects of air pollution, which it states is largely caused by human activity. The plan promotes increasing energy efficiency and using renewable energy to reduce the use of gasoline and diesel fuels for transportation to reduce air pollution. The Village currently enforces the International Energy Conservation Code, during the permit review process, which requires energy-saving construction techniques for buildings.

The following objectives and programs from the Sustainability Plan apply to Land Use & Development:

Objectives:

- Continue to improve Village infrastructure to increase energy efficiency.
- Consistently apply complete street policies to reduce dependence on motor vehicles.

Programs:

- Continue enforcing local energy codes and promoting the use of Energy Star efficient furnaces and appliances to reduce air pollution.
- Review land use decisions for how they may impact air quality.

Energy Conservation

The Sustainability Plan says, "in order to be sustainable, new development needs to shift from nonrenewable to renewable sources of energy, and existing development must be made more energy efficient." As stated in the Air Quality section, the Village enforces the International Energy Conservation Code during the permit review process. In addition, LEED-rated buildings are used as an incentive for greater density or floor area ratio (FAR) in mixed-use developments.

The following objectives and programs from the Sustainability Plan apply to Land Use & Development:

Objectives:

- Increase energy efficiency of new and existing development.
- Establish land use policies that maximize energy conservation.
- Increase surface cooling shared by updating landscaping design guidelines.

Programs:

- Continue to enforce national and local energy codes for building construction and renovations.
- Promote LEED and Energy Star building construction.
- Review zoning and other Village Code regulations to promote energy efficiency through building density changes, site planning, new renewable energy technology, and conservation requirements.

Transportation

As stated in the Sustainability Plan, Village of Skokie residents support alternative forms of transportation, including trains, buses, bicycling, and walking. The Village adopted a Complete Streets Policy in 2016, which provides a formal engineering and policy framework for developing a transportation system that balances motor vehicle, pedestrian, transit and bicycle transportation needs. The policy is also used to evaluate development proposals to identify connections to mass transit and bike/ped facilities. Part of this review includes a code provision that requires dedicated bicycle parking. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance was amended to allow shared parking within mixed-use developments.

The following objectives and programs from the Sustainability Plan apply to Land Use & Development:

Objectives:

- Effectively implement the Complete Streets Policy according to the outlines in the Policy, and measure and evaluate the performance standards.
- Reduce the dependence on automobiles by promoting walking, bicycling, and public transportation.

Programs:

- Assess land use and zoning regulations regarding parking and promote shared parking in order to encourage “park once” trips and reduce underutilized parking.
- Apply Complete Streets Policies and implement elements when roadways are improved or rebuilt and for private developments.

Waste Management

According to the Sustainability Plan, although Skokie has a comprehensive recycling program, the Village lags behind national recycling rates. The plan recommends the adoption of additional recycling programs. Potential programs include requiring multi-family and commercial

properties to recycle and expanding food composting programs to restaurants. If recycling is required, multi-family and commercial property owners will be required to reserve space for the safe and sanitary storage of recycled materials and food waste. These areas will be reviewed by staff during site plan and permit review processes. In addition, steps can be taken to ensure building materials are sent to approved clean construction and debris landfills instead of solid waste landfills when a site is redeveloped.

The following objectives and programs from the Sustainability Plan apply to Land Use & Development:

Objectives:

- Increase the amount of material recycled and decrease the amount of material transferred to landfills.
- Set a goal for increasing the percentage of materials recycled as a Village.
- Explore expanding recycling to include food scraps, textiles and other materials.
- Explore additional opportunities for recycling.

Programs:

- Continue to work with the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County to promote recycling, and the appropriate disposal of hazardous materials.
- Promote recycling for multiple family and commercial properties.
- Set standards for the amount of construction debris that is recycled.
- Explore options to develop food scrap composting in Skokie.

The continued adherence of objectives and programs of the Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan, and future amendments, incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan will help guide the Village to achieve its vision of becoming a "Sustainable Community".