

**Memorandum**  
**Manager's Office**

TO: John T. Lockerby, Village Manager

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nicholas Wyatt, Assistant Village Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Max Slankard, Public Works Director

DATE: April 21, 2023

**SUBJECT: Environmental Sustainability Plan First Quarter Accomplishments**

As you know, the Skokie Environmental Sustainability Action Team has been hard at work implementing the strategies and goals of the updated Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan. This active group consists of over 30 Village staff members representing every Village Department. After the plan was formally adopted by the Village Board, the Action Team was developed, and individual Sector Teams were formed. The Sector Teams were then tasked with creating a one-year action plan with quarterly goals. I am pleased to present below their first quarter accomplishments. As this is an eight-year plan, the work is just getting started; however, I am pleased with what they have done in such a short time.

**Transportation and Mobility**

- TM1-1 – Applied for a grant to fund the creation of a new Transportation Plan. Waiting for results.
- TM1-2 – Identified area improvements that could be made to enhance safe routes to school and created a map to assist with the process. The Village will be proposing new sidewalks on five blocks near/around Highland School.
- TM1-3 – Communications created a handout to assist with promoting the benefits of new sidewalk locations to homeowners who may be reluctant to put in new sidewalks in front of their homes.
- TM2-1 – Finance and Human Resources are finalizing the pre-tax transit benefit program for Skokie employees. This will be live in Q2 2023.
- TM3-1 – Staff has been working on proposed changes to the Village Code regarding electric vehicles. The Skokie Plan Commission is expected to hear them in May and then to the Village Board in summer 2023.
- TM3-3 – Existing federal/state/manufacturer/supplier EV charger and vehicle incentives have been identified. There is an EV charger installation underway at the public parking

lot at Oakton Street and Lacrosse Avenue near the Oakton CTA station. Village is exploring possible incentives that could be implemented.

- TM4-1 – The Village began using a 5% biodiesel alternative fuel at Public Works. The fuel increases fuel economy by 2%, reduces NOx by 11%, reduces CO2 emissions by 2%, reduces DEF usage by 3-6%, extends the life of Diesel Particulate Filters, doubles the life of fuel filters, improves performance and reduces regens. A No/Low Emission Diesel Vehicle Fuel Alternative Feasibility study will be conducted in FY24.
- TM6-1 – Identified manufacturer/supplier incentives for converting fuel-burning lawn equipment to electric.
- TM6-2 – The Village's Code Committee reviewed the Regional Leaf Blower Working Group Final Report. This group is actively working to create a Skokie leaf-blower phase out plan with the goal of moving to other lawn equipment in the future.
- TM7-1 – Staff reviews EV/hybrid alternatives for every new fleet vehicle included in the Village's fleet capital improvement plan, including right-sizing the overall fleet. Included in the FY24 Fleet CIP are three hybrid police vehicles and one electric police investigations vehicle.
- TM7-2 – Human Resource and Automotive staff are working together to update the Village's anti-idling policy. The revised policy and the Auto Alliance's Eco Driver's Manual will be shared with existing employees and become part of employee orientation in Q2 2023.

### **Land Use & Housing**

- LH1-1 – The Plan Commission held four meetings to review and discuss affordable housing. On March 16, 2023, the Plan Commission made a positive recommendation regarding a draft affordable housing policy recommendation that was presented to the Village Board on April 17, 2023. A key goal is to rehabilitate existing housing to support preservation of affordable housing; and additional goal is the development of new affordable housing which includes a strategy to create an inclusionary housing ordinance. Additional work on studying Skokie's supply and sustainability efforts are underway and will be ongoing.
- LH1-2 – Staff has initiated the study of parcels that are vacant or underutilized through GIS analysis. Next steps include analysis of which would be appropriate development or potential green space.
- LH1-3 – The consideration of allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) is part of the affordable housing policy recommendation from the Plan Commission to the Village Board. Additional zoning code changes would be reviewed and considered by the Plan Commission in 2023 if this moves forward with Board support and approval.
- LH1-6 - Staff from Community Development and Engineering Departments have been reviewing current Skokie parking requirements as well as implementation and incorporation of EV charging requirements into new development. Anticipating code and zoning changes in the next 12 months on this matter.
- LH2-1 and LH2-2 – LH2-1 and LH2-2 are part of the affordable housing recommendation from the Plan Commission that was recently presented to the Village Board that seek to

address housing rehabilitation in support of preserving affordable housing and recognizing implications for energy usage by low and moderate-income households and reducing high energy poverty.

- LH3-1 – Staff has studied changes to allow certain business uses in residential areas. There may be some additional zoning changes to potentially expand mixed-use districts and this will be brought to the Plan Commission for discussion in late 2023.
- LH3-3 – The Board has approved the introduction of a demonstration project near the Dempster CTA station that will have higher density and lower parking on-site as a test to see how higher density projects are absorbed by the market and the impact on the neighborhood. The implementation of ADUs in Skokie could potentially increase the number of affordable units in neighborhoods that are largely unaffordable to low and moderate-income households.

### **Buildings and Energy**

- BE 1-1 – Building and Inspection Services staff are reviewing the ICC Green Energy Codes and anticipate moving forward with adoption in early summer 2023.
- BE 1-2 – A post was published in the February 7, 2023 Enews on the ComEd Home Assessment program. Continued education on various programs is on-going.
- BE 1-3 – A sub-team has been established consisting of two members of SEAC and one from Go Green Skokie. The team met in February to begin developing a Skokie energy efficiency challenge.
- BE 1-6 – Public Works has begun updating their meter reading software to Neptune 360, a cloud-based software, where residents can log into their accounts to see their usage over the last 90 days. The software will show them their peak usage as well as any possible leaks that are detected.
- BE 2-1 – A Solar-Ready Checklist has been created as well as a Solar Energy webpage. The checklist has been posted to a newly created webpage (<https://www.skokie.org/1336/Solar-Energy>).
- BE 3-1 – A list of resources regarding the benefits of replacing fossil fuel-burning heating equipment has been compiled and a post in Enews was published which advertised a few of the resources. This education will be ongoing.
- BE 4-1 – A Citizens Utility Board (CUB) event was held on April 11, 2023 at Skokie Village Hall.
- BE 4-2 – Several posts went out in Enews and on Social Media promoting the North Shore Community Solar Program. Continued marketing of this program will be ongoing.
- BE 4-3 – The Village is one requirement away from achieving Solsmart Gold. The final piece requires an ordinance change which is expected to appear before the Plan Commission soon. Also, the Village has committed to a three-day turnaround time for completed Solar Permits, created a solar energy webpage which has a number of solar resources (<https://www.skokie.org/1336/Solar-Energy>), and participates in community solar through the North Shore Electricity Aggregation Consortium. Each of these are requirements for achieving a Gold rating.

- BE 7-1 – The Village is looking at the ComEd Energy Savings Program to reduce the electrical carbon footprint within Village Hall, Public Works, Police and Fire facilities. This would consist of retrofitting or replacing all existing lighting to LED. A major factor in energy reduction is called "Controllable Watts" which means most of the light fixtures would have individual motion sensors to automatically turn on or off when needed. These can all be calibrated as to not interfere with personnel during working hours. So far ComEd estimates an annual cost savings of \$27,115, a reduction of 165 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is equivalent to removing 36 cars off the road. Village Hall alone could save \$7,558 with a reduction of 46 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, equivalent to removing 10 cars off the road.
- BE 8-1 – Staff is compiling policy language from other municipalities and refining a draft for a Skokie policy regarding new municipal facilities being 100% electric. Draft policy language will be reviewed and finalized for implementation in Q2 2023.
- BE 9-1 – A Solar Feasibility Study has been budgeted in the Proposed FY24 Budget.

### **Waste Management**

- Overall WM-1 goal – Staff continued to help plan and run the annual Skokie Spring Greening event.
- WM 1-1 – Staff submitted an EPA Recycling Education and Outreach (REO) grant for \$250,000 for an ambitious plan to promote zero waste education to residents, schools and businesses.
- WM 1-2 and WM 4-1 – Education regarding waste reduction including paper cup recycling, transition to once a week refuse, promoting refillable water bottles, and composting is on-going and includes videos and weekly tips and suggestions in Skokie Enews, on the Village webpage and on the Village's social media platforms. Staff developed and ordered educational toter hangers that will be used in a pro-active refuse toter educational audit campaign in summer 2023 that will be run by a sustainability intern.
- WM 1-4 – The Village Board approved reducing refuse collection to once per week. Staff analyzed tonnage estimates and number of households to develop new routes for the transition to once-a-week refuse service on May 1, 2023. A policy was developed related to requests for a second refuse toter.
- WM 1-8 and 4-4 – Staff met with a recycling professional on the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission to discuss strategies to increase opportunities related to plastic film and Styrofoam recycling.
- WM 3-1 – An email list of all Village grocers, restaurants and food pantries has been created. Locations will be contacted after action items in local and agricultural have been completed.
- WM 3-4 and WM 1-2 – Staff budgeted funds for ongoing composting and education related to waste management.
- WM 3-4 – The Village launched a 15% incentive discount for new customers for the Collective Resource curbside compost program (the orange bucket program).

- WM 3-5 – The Village formed a partnership with the Skokie Park District to offer drop-off composting at five locations. An additional two sites will be launched in early May 2023.
- WM 4-2 – Village Hall, Public Works, and the Police Station staff began composting food scraps in their lunchrooms.
- WM 4-2 – The Village hosted its first Zero Waste holiday party (end of 2022). All internal Village events are encouraged to be zero waste, including the recent Skokie budget hearings.

### **Water and Wastewater**

- W1-1 and 1-3 – Top 25 water customers have been identified. Technical resources have been prepared and shared with the top customers in Q2 2023. Staff will continue to expand the program into other sectors and to additional customers after initial implementation.
- W1-4 – Consultant has completed audible water leak detection throughout the entire Village. Repairs have been completed in 3 of 5 distinct areas. Staff will soon begin testing water meters of largest customers for accuracy.
- W1-5 – Staff is currently polling neighboring communities to see if anyone has successfully implemented a tiered water rate structure that promoted water conservation.
- W3-1 – Staff is finalizing water reduction public education pieces for inclusion with water bills.

### **Local Food and Agriculture**

- LF1-1 – GIS staff has prepared a list of vacant properties and is currently working on mapping the locations.
- LF1-2 – Sustainability representatives from the local school districts, the Park District, Library and Oakton College have been emailed a request to provide their level of interest in participating in a “Grow Skokie” program to increase community garden plots.
- LF1-3 – The Park District has provided locations where community gardens are currently located. GIS will be mapping the locations and posting the map on the Village website.
- LF2-1 – The Village has contacted The Talking Farm to discuss possible collaboration to assist food insecure individuals.
- LF3-1 -A food access analysis map has been created to determine what percentage of Skokie residents are within a .5 mile of a grocery locations. The NW sector of the Village has the least access to grocery at only 8%. The next step is to determine the percentage of food insecure residents in the area.
- LF3-2 - Health and Human services staff are currently assisting residents with enrolling in SNAP and other food assistance programs. HHS will be working with Advocate Health Care to identify residents that are food insecure and ensuring that those residents are aware of provided programs.

- LF3-6 – HHS is currently communicating with Red Cross on emergency food supplies procedures. An agreement with local food establishments is being drafted which would provide assistance to the Village of Skokie during a food emergency.

### **Green Space and Trees**

- GS1 – The Beautification and Improvement Commission and staff planned the annual Arbor Day event.
- GS1-3 – Staff reviewed the 2022 Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, and Carbon Sequestration Study and communicated with the Park District the tracts prioritized for tree plantings.
- GS1-3 – Commercial and other large properties have been added to the Village’s tree planting program; they can elect to plant trees through the Village contract at wholesale cost.
- GS1-4 and GS 2-1 – A staff review of the codes regarding turf and other landscape maintenance has begun. The objective is to amend any codes necessary in order to promote reduced turf, native and pollinator plantings, rain gardens, and vegetable gardens. A draft of code changes would be brought to the SEAC and Beautification & Improvement Commission prior to taking it to the Board.
- GS1-5 – Staff budgeted for contractual assistance to increase the number of trees planted in FY 2024. FY24 budget includes funds to increase tree plantings by 75% over the previous year.
- GS2-2 – Staff attended seminars on rain gardens and native plants at the I-landscape show.
- GS 2-3 – Staff updated the list of approved parkway trees to indicate which species are native.
- GS 2-4 – Staff budgeted and started purchasing battery powered landscape equipment. Communicated sustainable maintenance procedures and goals to internal staff and contractors.
- GS2-4 – Staff reviewed the pilot zero-emissions robot mower program launched in 2022 at Public Works and the Fargo water tower and is working with our mowing contractor to expand the program for the 2023 growing program.
- GS2-5 – The Beautification Commission developed a new property awards program that encourages turf reduction, native and pollinator plants, and vegetable gardens and a new website to promote the program.
- GS3-3 – Tree debris management has been added to the tree pruning contract as an additional per unit cost in the event of a storm that causes significant tree damage.
- GS4-3 – Staff met internally and with the Beautification & Improvement Commission and the Sustainable Environmental Commission to develop a campaign and educational material on delayed mowing as an alternative to “no-mow May.”
- GS4-3 – Staff was educated on delayed mowing benefits and they will delay mowing on Village maintained grounds where feasible.
- GS 5-1 and 5-3 – Staff reached out to its native plant contractor to coordinate a summer native plant walk on the Skokie Valley Trail and to create signage to inform ComEd contractors of no-mow / native areas.

## Health & Safety

- HS1-1 – The Village updates and publishes Warming/Cooling Center information at least twice annually and utilized social media to distribute recommendations for dealing with extreme weather.
- HS1-2 – Emergency communications and drills have been implemented utilizing Smart911/Rave with Skokie Health & Human Services (SHHS), the Public Safety Consortium and Medical Reserve Corps, with success. Utilization of multiple languages are available on Smart911/Rave.
- HS1-3 – To prepare employees for climate change impact, Fire, Health & Human Services, Police and Public Works staff have implemented training and are exploring additional needs and resources.
- HS1-4 – This phase II action item to improve home resiliency will build upon accomplishment of several phase 1 goals.
- HS1-5 – The Skokie Emergency Management Planning Team (EMPT) met with Red Cross and identified resources for securing busses during extreme weather conditions and emergency sheltering.
- HS1-6 – Health and Human Services staff are developing and maintaining mental health community partnerships and conducting research to support educational campaigns targeting mental health resiliency to climate change.
- HS2-1 – Health and Human Services staff has conducted research and is analyzing methods and tools to educate and prepare vulnerable populations including various forms of communication.
- HS2-2 – Health and Human Services staff has identified community partners and several methods of communication to utilize for educating the public on pollution and climate change hazards.
- HS2-3 – Research is underway to maximize effectiveness of Smart911/Rave and other methods to ensure communication of extreme conditions, warnings, and potential resources or mitigation strategies that could assist the public.
- HS3-2 – The Village has taken several steps to identify community risk and promote resiliency. The Skokie Emergency Management Planning Team has been meeting to review/revise the Skokie Emergency Operations Plan.
- HS3-3 – The Public Works Department has secured contract pricing for debris management as part of the FY24 Budget preparation.
- HS4-1 – SHHS has vetted members of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and is developing partnerships with Lake and Cook County MRC networks, with participation in a MRC conference in June 2023.
- HS4-2 – Skokie Health and Human Services staff are continuing to maintain a Human Services Directory and developing coordination with internal and external stakeholders
- HS4-3 – The Village, Engineering, Fire and Public Works staff recently completed the Cook County Hazard Mitigation Annual report to review progress and establish new mitigation strategies.

## **Economy**

- EC1-1 – Members of Green Economy Task (GET) Force have been identified (members of Consumer Affairs Commission, SEAC, and EDC) and will soon meet with the Village’s Economic Development staff. The first order of business will be to start to develop a work plan.
- EC4-1 – The Consumer Affairs Commission discussed the creation of green leadership recognition and awards at their March 2023 meeting and will consider adding additional awards along with “Business of the Year” at future meetings.
- EC 4-2 – Staff is working with the Consumer Affairs Commission and the Economic Development Commission to develop programs in coordination with businesses to incentivize merchants/encourage shoppers to shop businesses that have adopted green practices. Potentially this could include a green local certification for businesses and the Village and Chamber could recognize these businesses and encourage shoppers to visit.

## **Cross-Cutting**

- CC1-1 – Under the direction of the Village Manager, staff have developed quarterly and annual goals as well as individual sector workplans with implementation tasks for achieving each action item.
- CC1-3 - The FY24 Budget funds the continued implementation of the Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan and includes \$670,563 of expenses directly tied to the plan. This includes the creation of a Sustainability Coordinator position to advise and assist the Village Environmental Action team in the ongoing task of implementing the plan. Additional sustainability initiatives in the FY24 Budget include \$147,000 in funds for tree plantings, allowing for 75 percent more trees to be planted than the previous fiscal year, one electric and three hybrid police vehicles totaling \$199,206, \$40,625 to incentivize and expand composting within the Village, \$20,000 to hire an electric wiring consultant and install one charging station in the Public Works automotive garage to accommodate current and future electric fleet vehicles and an additional \$55,935 to hire a water reduction consultant, conduct a solar panel engineering study for Village facilities, replace Public Works lawn equipment with electric alternatives and other miscellaneous costs to advance the sustainability plan.
- CC1-3 – Staff has researched and applied for a number of grant opportunities, a Sustainability webpage has been created, a number of Village Boards and Commissions have been engaged and are developing programs and/or awards that include sustainability (STAT Commission, Beautification Commission, SEAC, Consumer Affairs, etc.), and the internal Skokie Sustainability Team, which consists of staff from each department, has been created and meets monthly.
- CC1-4 – An internal Village Sustainability Team has been created and consists of key staff from each department. The Team meets monthly and each sector lead is required to provide an update on their progress in achieving their quarterly sector goals.
- CC1-5 – All policy and ordinance changes are being reviewed against the Sustainability plan.
- CC2-1 – SEAC has been identified as the primary community partner in supporting the Sustainability plan and their expertise is already being used to assist in implementing



action items across all sectors. Additionally, each SEAC Commissioner has been identified as a Commission liaison to each sector.

- CC2-2 – A communication and education campaign has been established. All sectors have had educational materials published on the website, Enews, social media, etc. A sub-campaign also has been created on composting as the Village approaches the transition to once-a-week refuse pickup.
- CC2-3 – The Village has shared resources and successes of the sustainability plan with its neighboring communities.
- CC3-1 – The proposed FY24 Budget contains \$670,563 in funding for sustainability related expenses.