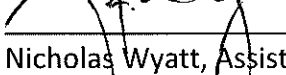


Memorandum
Manager's Office

TO: John T. Lockerby, Village Manager

FROM: 
Nicholas Wyatt, Assistant Village Manager


Max Slankard, Public Works Director

DATE: July 19, 2023

SUBJECT: Environmental Sustainability Plan Second Quarter 2023 Accomplishments

The work of implementing the Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan continues with some very exciting accomplishments to be proud of in the second quarter of 2023. Notably, the Village hired a Sustainability Coordinator who is tentatively scheduled to start in late August 2023. This candidate comes to the Village with over a decade of experience in a similar role in a university setting. They distinguished themselves out of a large and strong candidate pool. We are excited for them to join the team in pushing forward the Skokie Environmental Sustainability and other initiatives with the goal of reducing community-wide green house gas emissions by 35% below 2020 levels by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Below, please find a list of second quarter 2023 Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan accomplishments and updates organized by sector. As a reminder, 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

- TM1-2 – The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan is underway and about 75% complete. The goal is to communicate with School District representatives about the upcoming SRTS grant in August 2023 by the end of July 2023. The deadline for the grant is October 1, 2023. The federally funded grant uses a multidisciplinary approach to improve conditions for walking or biking to school. Additionally, school districts will be contacted regarding the Village SRTS plan and input for coordination on how to work together to make a safe SRTS plan.
- TM2-1 – The Commuter Benefits program has been launched to Village staff. The new pre-tax Commuter/Parking Benefit program is administered by WEX and benefits Village employees who use public transportation to commute to work.
- TM7-1 – The Village Board approved the purchase of a 100% Electric Ford E-Transit for the Water Department, the first fully electric vehicle for the Skokie Public Works

Department. This vehicle will be used daily by the Skokie utility locator. The Skokie Automotive Division will continue to research all Hybrid and EV options when replacing vehicles within the Village fleet.

- TM7-2 – The Village anti-idling policy has been revised and is presently in effect. Also, the “EcoDriver’s Manual” sponsored by the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers has been adopted by Human Resources and will use both the policy and the guide as resources for a sustainability presentation soon to be incorporated into the new employee orientation program scheduled to be launched later this year. Human Resources also is loading flash drives with the HR Policy Manual and the Eco-Driver’s Manual for distribution to new hires during new employee orientations. The Village is saving trees, granting employees direct access to Village policies and seeking to do our part to inform employees regarding emissions reduction and promoting sustainability.

Land Use & Housing

- LH1-1 – The Village’s work on affordable housing continues. The Village Board adopted measures to form a sub-committee to review and update the Village’s Comprehensive Plan as it relates to Housing. The Village Board is presently considering an inclusionary housing ordinance which would require on-site affordable housing development in new developments of certain sizes.
- LH1-2 – A list of potential development sites for parcels that are vacant or underutilized has been established and will be reviewed with the Economic Development team for further study of potential marketing and development opportunities.
- LH1-3 – The consideration to include and update the Village’s zoning code with ADUs was part of the Plan Commission’s recommendation to the Village Board. The Village Board did not move forward with these zoning updates and rather is updating the comprehensive plan first before making any zoning changes.
- LH1-6 – Zoning Code text amendment to clarify EV parking regulations and allow EV spaces to count towards minimum off-street parking requirements was approved by the Plan Commission in June and was presented for approval of the Village Board on July 17.
- LH 2-1 and LH2-2 – The Village’s rehabilitation program and neighborhood enhancement program will be publicly promoted following some recent improvements. Staff continues to work to study potential opportunities to develop rehabilitation programs to support sustainable building improvements.
- LH 3-1 – Staff continues to review potential zoning changes that relate to establishing and expanding mixed use districts as they relate to residential land uses. This may follow work on updating the Village’s Comprehensive Plan’s Housing Chapter.

Buildings and Energy

- BE 1-1 – The State of Illinois will soon be adopting Stretch Codes which will be stricter than Green Building Codes. Last staff have heard, adoption will be in summer 2023. Staff are waiting for State adoption and will move forward once complete.

- BE 1-2 – Multiple articles have been posted in *SkokieNews*, social media and the Village website with the most recent being the 10 tips of weatherization and reducing summer energy bills.
- BE 1-3 – A sub-team, which consists of two members from SEAC and one from Go Green Skokie, have met twice and a draft online award nomination form has been created for a Skokie energy efficiency challenge. In addition, a resource list is being developed to educate residents on sustainability incentives and rebates that are available to them as homeowners and/or renters.
- BE 1-6 – Letters were sent out to the top 25 water consumers in mid-June asking to make an appointment with a Skokie water meter tech to provide an inspection of their facility. The meter techs will advise on ways to lower consumption by replacing worn-out leaking toilet parts as well as adding more efficient equipment. One meeting has already occurred where numerous leaking toilets were found (the most common cause of water loss). The property has already replaced parts.
- BE 2-1 – The solar energy webpage (<https://www.skokie.org/1336/Solar-Energy>) was created and promoted during Earth Week.
- BE 3-1 – A summer window weatherization post was published.
- BE 4-1 – A Citizens Utility Board (CUB) event was recently held where 15 people were advised on sustainable ways that they can reduce their utility bills. Another event is being explored for fall 2023.
- BE 4-2 – Two posts went out in *SkokieNews* and on social media promoting the North Shore Community Solar Program. As the waitlist continues to decline, more posts will be published.
- BE 4-3 – The Village is one requirement away from achieving Solsmart Gold. The final piece was approved by the Village Board in July 2023 and staff will work with Solsmart to achieve the Gold rating.
- BE 6-2 – Staff are working to update the Appearance Commission application to allow projects that involve Green Roofs to be placed first on the agenda.
- BE 7-1 – Upgrades from ComEd Energy Savings Program are currently underway. Fire Stations 16 and 17 are complete with work currently occurring at Public Works and Fire Station 18 and finishing up at Village Hall. The project has moved very smoothly and ComEd estimates that the Village will see a reduction of 165 metric tons of CO₂, which is equivalent to removing 36 cars off the road.
- BE 8-1 – Draft policy language regarding new municipal facilities being 100% electric has been written and is undergoing staff review.
- BE 9-1 – A Solar Feasibility Study has been budgeted in the Proposed FY24 Budget.

Waste Management

- WM 1-2 – Public Works hired a Solid Waste Intern to provide individual household feedback on recycling, waste reduction and composting.
- WM 1-4 – Completed! Public Works transitioned from twice a week refuse collection to once a week collection for single family homes and residential buildings up to four units.

- WM 1-7 – The Green Economy Taskforce (GET) was started by Economic Development staff and reduction of single use products through an incentive program is an on-going discussion and part of the Green Business award program.
- WM 3-1 – A survey has been emailed to Village grocery stores and restaurants requesting detailed information on food waste management. Upon receiving their feedback, strategies to reduce food waste will be developed and implemented.
- WM 3-2 – Staff regularly communicates with SWANCC and expresses interest in a local composting facility.
- WM 3-4 – Participation and composting tonnage continues to increase, with 47.6 tons of food scrap composted in Q2 of 2023. The Village continued its 15% discount program for annual subscription services.
- WM 3-5 – Three new food scrap drop off sites have opened and a new partnership for a drop-off center was formed with Niles Township Food Pantry.
- WM 4-4 – Styrofoam recycling is now available to Skokie residents in Mount Prospect through a grant partially funded by SWANCC.
- WM 1-2 and WM 4-1 – Numerous Enews/social media pieces on waste management – transition to once a week refuse, spring greening, compost week, and PW staff presented a seminar on changes to the refuse service and an overview of Skokie’s programs.
- WM 5-4 – Notified SWANCC of interest in hosting a household hazardous waste event.

Water and Wastewater

- W1-1 – As noted in Buildings and Energy 1-6, letters have been sent to our top 25 water users offering a free site visit from the water meter division to help identify and implement water conservation methods. So far, we have had one response from the Old Orchard Condo Association with positive feedback. Our technician identified several leaky toilets in various condo units and educated the management team on how to find these leaks in the future.
- W1-3 – Finalizing information for posting on the water billing section of the Village webpage to assist customers with conserving water and lowering bills.
- W1-4 – All known leaks identified during Q1 leak detection have been fixed. However, leak detection efforts are constantly underway. The Water and Sewer Division has recently purchased leak detection equipment in order to be able to conduct in-house leak surveys when flow increases are detected by our water system monitoring software.
- W3-1 – The Water Meter Division has been verbally educating customers about the benefits of low-flow water fixtures during their visits for water meter replacements. They are averaging eight replacements per day.

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. A second email will be sent to the organizations that have not provided a response.
- LF1-3 – The Park District has provided locations where community gardens are currently located. GIS will be mapping the locations and collaborating with the Park District to post the locations on a map on the Village website.
- LF1-5 – Recognizing the numerous benefits that gardening brings to the community, the Villages has taken a step forward in promoting sustainable and inclusive practices. A dedicated area has been created on the Skokie Village Hall Break Room patio for employees to plant and cultivate their own garden items. This initiative has not only fostered a sense of community among staff but also allowed them to experience the joy and satisfaction of growing their own food.
- LF2-1 – The Village has contacted The Talking Farm to discuss possible collaboration to assist food insecure individuals.
- LF3-1 – A food accessibility analysis map has been developed to ascertain the proportion of Skokie residents who live within a half-mile radius of a grocery store. The next deliverable involves formulating comprehensive strategies to enhance food security across the community.
- LF3-2 – Completed! Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) staff are presently engaged in aiding community members to sign up for SNAP and other food aid programs. In partnership with Advocate Health Care, the HHS team is identifying and reaching out to individuals in the community who are experiencing food insecurity, informing them about various programs which include on-site food bag distribution.
- LF3-6 – The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has carried out a comprehensive evaluation to determine the areas and populations most vulnerable to food scarcity in case of an emergency. At present, the HHS team is collaborating with the Red Cross to discuss procedures for emergency food distribution. Concurrently, HHS staff are also reaching out to food establishments in Skokie to evaluate the possibility of putting into action food supply plans in case of an emergency scenario.

Green Space and Trees

- GS 1-1 – The Forestry Division planted 203 diverse genus and species of parkway trees in spring 2023.
- GS 1-2 – The Village promoted MWRD’s free oak sapling program.
- GS 1-3 – PW staff applied for the USDA Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry Inflation Act Grant to provide funding for trees planted on private property, focusing on larger private property such as commercial, religious institutions and schools.
- GS 1-3 – Completed a one-year tree planting plan, based on information obtained from the Village’s 2022 Ground Cover, Tree Canopy, and Carbon Sequestration Study.

- GS 1-3 and GS 2-2 – Planted native plants left over from Emily Oaks Nature Center plant sale at the Oakton Swift Train station and promoted on *Enews* and on social media, which received a lot of positive response.
- GS 1-4 – Created *SkokieNews* and social media posts on good native trees to plant.
- GS 1-5 – Funds were budgeted to increase parkway tree planting and a consultant was hired to assist with identifying planting spaces and administrative work for both parkway and private tree planting.
- GS 2-4 - Village landscape crews went fully electric for their landscape equipment in spring 2023. Crews also participated in delayed mowing until Mothers' Day for Village maintained sites.
- GS 4-3 – Collaborated with SEAC and Beautification & Improvement Commission to create delayed mowing messaging and notified property standards inspectors.
- GS2-5 and GS5-1 – The Beautification Commission began their new property awards program that encourages turf reduction, natives and pollinator plants, and vegetable gardens and a new webpage was created to promote the program.
- GS5-1 – Collaborated with Skokie Park District on Sports Park East regarding native prairie plantings and tree planting.
- GS2-6 and GS4-1 – A rough draft of a natural lawn care flyer with resources was sent to representatives on the SEAC and Beautification commissions for review.
- GS 4-4 – The Beautification and Improvement Commission and staff hosted the annual Arbor Day event at Elizabeth Meyer School. Staff included education on stormwater benefits of trees.
- GS 5-1 – The Beautification & Improvement Commission developed overview information for the Village website and resources.
- GS 5-3 – Staff contacted ComEd representatives about a partnership in planting native prairie under transmission wires.

Health and Safety

- HS1-1 – The Warming/Cooling Center list has been updated and locations were mapped using myGIS. Both documents have been posted on the Village of Skokie website and on the Skokie Fire Department webpages. Staff are attempting to identify community stakeholders to add Warming/Cooling Centers on the east side of town (east of Crawford Avenue).
- HS1-2 – Communications, Health and Human Services and other Village staff are working to identify private/community organizations to assist with translation services that will improve communications and accomplishment of several sustainability action items.
- HS1-3 – A heat related illness article was included in the June 2023 employee e-newsletter. Health and Human Services staff are attempting to identify opportunities to provide climate change impacts and adaptation training for Village staff that work outdoors.

- HS1-4 – As a 2024 action item, the Police Department will soon begin meeting with Community Development, Fire, Public Works and other Village departments to establish a home-inspection referral list and involve other community stakeholders.
- HS1-6 – Health and Human Services staff are conducting research into services available at Skokie Federally Qualified Health Centers to support educational campaigns that improve awareness of the mental health impacts of climate change.
- HS2-1 and HS2-3 – Staff are working to revise/streamline the Skokie webpage on emergency preparedness and create a comprehensive guide with a PDF/print option. Staff identified examples of local and state resources that would help increase awareness of emergency preparedness tips/tools and emergency contact databases.
- HS2-2 – Health and Human Services and Engineering co-wrote an e-newsletter article on Air Quality Awareness Week published in early May 2023. Translation services update provided under HS1-2.
- HS3-1 – As a 2024 action item, Police Department staff will coordinate with Village departments to identify a need for all intergovernmental agreements on behalf of sustainability team. Once all requests have been identified, PD staff will coordinate with the Legal Department.
- HS3-2 – Departments are conducting Community Risk Assessments to identify the probability and impact of risks, including those due to climate change. The Emergency Management Planning Team is meeting to update the Village's Emergency Operations Plan. Staff is attempting to identify specific training needs for Village departments, including a review of National Incident Management System Training for Village staff. Staff is also reviewing staffing levels to ensure the Village's capacity to manage extreme conditions emergencies.
- HS3-3 – Public Works staff is working on renewing a contract for a debris management vendor. This is likely a phase 3 action item.
- HS4-1 – Medical Reserve Corp volunteers have been engaged with CPR trainings quarterly meetings, and monthly drills. The Village's "Active volunteer contact list" has been updated and training through Red Cross for sheltering and collaboration are being scheduled for volunteers in 2024.
- HS4-2 – Health and Human Services staff are in the process of reviewing existing community networks/services directories. Lists are being updated to include additional information, organization websites and contact information.
- HS4-3 – See HS3-2. Additionally, the Critical Infrastructure List is being updated, the Cook County Hazard Mitigation Plan has been updated to include sustainability goals, and work is being carried out to expand communication forms and languages to reach broader population.

Economy

- EC1-1 – Members of the Green Economy Task (GET) Force have met and started to identify opportunities to promote and create both a Skokie Green Business certification program and green awards program.

- EC4-1 – Discussions continued regarding a green leadership award program at the Consumer Affairs Commission but were transitioned to the GET Force following its formation.

Cross Cutting

- CC1-1 – Under the direction of the Village Manager, staff continue to work on and accomplish their sectors quarterly and annual goals.
- 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, continues to meet 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 several 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 across several programs/initiatives (once-a-week garbage, composting, recycling, etc.). All sectors have had educational materials published on the website, *SkokieNews*, social media, etc.
- CC2-3 – The Village continues to share resources and successes of the sustainability plan with its neighboring communities.
- CC3-1 – The final FY24 Budget contains close to \$600,000 in funding for sustainability related expenses.