“The earth belongs to each generation during its course, fully in its own right, but no generation can contract debts greater than can be paid during the course of its own existence.”

~Thomas Jefferson (1789)~
June, 2016

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the Village of Skokie’s Environmental Sustainability Plan. The Plan represents the culmination of countless hours of work and research to provide Skokie residents with a snapshot of our place in time as we think about and work towards creating a sustainable community. The Village has taken a number of steps in recent years to help create a more sustainable community. These efforts have included, amongst others, achieving a Gold Level certification as a Clean Air Counts community, construction of a new CTA train station to further encourage the use of mass transit, achieving LEED certification\(^1\) for the Village’s Police Station, thirty consecutive years of Tree City USA designation, and the adoption of a Complete Streets policy. While we are proud of these achievements, climate change and increasingly limited natural resources are challenges that call for even more thoughtful planning and urgent action as we look toward creating our future.

One of our most important roles is to engage with, educate, and provide leadership for our community, as well as to inspire our residents and businesses to action. To that end, the Village Board directed the establishment of a strategy and action plan that would be comprehensive in its scope and, going forward, help guide the behaviors of residents, property owners and businesses. This Sustainability Plan provides that direction. Our hope is that this Sustainability Plan helps every resident and community member understand the unique ways in which they can each contribute to achieving the goals articulated in the Plan. Each of us has an important role to play, and everyone’s participation is needed in order for us to achieve our vision of a sustainable community.

I would like to thank all of those who were involved in this effort. This particularly includes the staff of the Health, Community Development and Public Works Departments, without whose efforts this project would still be but an idea. We also owe a large debt of gratitude to the significant role played by Dr. Sherry Brandt-Rauf and the members of the Environmental and Occupational Health Policy Seminar from the University of Illinois – Chicago, who provided so much of the research and plan development. And lastly, thank you to all of those who will take the time to read this Sustainability Plan and consider how each of us can make a difference.

Sincerely,

Max Slankard
Director of Public Works

\(^1\)Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED): an international green building certification program.
**GOAL:**
Reduce the amount of water that is consumed in Skokie, and ensure the quality of our water supply.

**OVERVIEW:**
The usage of water is often taken for granted in the Chicago area as we are located next to Lake Michigan and have what most people believe is an unlimited source of water for drinking, recreation, manufacturing and other uses. However, the supply is limited and pollutants from pesticide runoff, pharmaceutical disposal, and battery disposal can have a negative impact on water quality. There is a need to conserve water both to protect this valuable resource and to meet legal guidelines. Illinois is a party to the Great Lakes — St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, an agreement between eight Great Lakes states to protect, conserve, restore, improve, and manage the renewable but finite water resources. There is also a U.S. Supreme Court Consent Decree under which Illinois use of Lake Michigan water is controlled. As a result, the amount of water that can be drawn from the lake is limited and with rising regional population growth water shortages could develop. The Chicago metropolitan area uses about one billion gallons of water every day, and Skokie alone uses 7.6 million gallons daily. Conservation and education programs will be needed to reduce water consumption. Clean, adequate, and affordable water supplies can also provide economic development benefits to a municipality.

One approach to reduce water consumption in the Village is through restrictions on the use of lawn sprinkler systems. Older sprinkler systems often use a lot of water that is wasted. Some older irrigation systems deliver as much as four inches of rainfall equivalent in a day. Overwatering wastes a substantial amount of money and water and the resulting soil saturation can have detrimental effects on lawn health and appearance.

Property owners are not allowed to use automatic or oscillating sprinklers during the hours of 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. and sprinkler use is restricted to every other day. All new sprinkler systems are to be equipped with plumbing fixtures and irrigation controllers that conserve water and bear the Water Sense label (as designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Water Sense Program). Reducing sprinkler use is just one way that water usage can be reduced at the Village level.
Where Do We Go From Here?

OBJECTIVES:

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

PROGRAMS:

- Determine the highest commercial water users in Skokie and work with them to conserve water.
- Encourage the use of free rain barrels provided by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District.
- Continue to investigate and correct water loss issues in the Village water supply system.
- Continue the every other day lawn sprinkler system usage restrictions and requirements for water saver controllers.
- Continue the enforcement of the State Plumbing Code that requires the use of Water Sense and other water conservation measures.
- Explore intergovernmental opportunities for water management.
- Review Village Codes for opportunities to promote the use of permeable surfaces in Skokie.

EDUCATION:

- Utilize a home audit to target and reduce wasteful water use.
- Provide information on the most suitable landscaping for local Skokie conditions requiring little additional water and create a preferred plant list.
- Engage students to develop family action plans to track water consumption and reduction.
- Provide information on the Village laws regarding lawn sprinkler use.
- Provide information on the best times to water lawns and landscaping in order to minimize the amount of evaporation. Promote best practices for sustainable lawn care.
- Provide information on ways to check for leaky pipes, toilets, and faucets.
- Provide information about pollutants and their effect on water quality.
**GOAL:**

Reduce the production and release of air pollutants and greenhouse gases in the Village.

**OVERVIEW:**

Air quality has a significant influence on human health and well being. Exposure to air pollutants, such as particles, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and ozone, increases the risk of illnesses such as asthma and heart disease, which leads to lost work days and significant healthcare costs. Other sources of air pollution are greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide and methane.

Air pollution is primarily caused by human activities, but can be reduced by the every day actions of Skokie residents, businesses, schools and other organizations. The main ways of reducing sources of air pollution in our area are through activities that are covered in the next three sections:

- Increasing energy efficiency and using renewable energy.
- Reducing the use of gasoline and diesel fuels for transportation.
- Waste reduction.

The Village already has many policies and programs in place to protect air quality and minimize the release of air pollution.

Initiatives include reducing fleet vehicle emissions through use of biofuels and prohibiting idling. Currently, the Village of Skokie also has two hybrid vehicles, one fully electric vehicle, and a number of vehicles that run on Flex Fuel. Improving energy efficiency Village-wide is being accomplished by the replacement of all existing street lights with more energy efficient lighting, and having new public buildings have a minimum LEED silver rating. We are making improvements to existing buildings by replacing lighting, windows and mechanical equipment. The Village has responsibility for designating bicycle routes, building paths where feasible, and making streets pedestrian friendly by completing the sidewalk system. A Village-wide recycling program is also crucial to reducing the amount of waste that causes air pollution.
Where do we go from here?

**OBJECTIVES:**
- Hire a contractor to conduct a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for Skokie by 2021. Local data will guide best practices.
- Increase the number of electric, biodiesel, and Flex Fuel vehicles in the Village fleet.
- Continue to improve Village infrastructure to increase energy efficiency.
- Consistently apply complete streets policies to reduce dependence on motor vehicles

**PROGRAMS:**
- Decrease the amount of gas powered lawn mowers and other lawn equipment used by resuming an electric and/or manual lawn mower exchange or rebate program.
- Reduce vehicle emissions, through encouraging use of greener vehicles, including commuter buses, exploring with schools the use of greener buses, and by continuing to purchase energy efficient Skokie fleet vehicles.
- Continue enforcing local energy codes and promoting the use of Energy Star efficient furnaces and appliances to reduce air pollution.
- Promote “green business” practices by developing a Green Business of the Year program.
- Encourage a higher level of recycling to reduce energy consumption and the related production of air pollution.
- Examination of the Air Quality Action Day Plan for Village operations on Ozone Action Days.
- Review land use decisions for how they may impact air quality.

**EDUCATION:**
- Produce an education outreach program for local businesses that use vehicles on a daily basis.
- Conduct a roundtable session to engage local businesses to promote green business practices.
- Provide information on the Village website regarding code requirements for energy efficient building construction and heating equipment.
- Provide information on the air quality benefits of recycling household and other materials.
Energy Conservation

**GOAL:**
Reduce overall energy use in the Village and increase the use of renewable energy sources.

**OVERVIEW:**
Everything we do in daily life requires the use of energy. Most energy sources that we use are nonrenewable, such as fossil fuels like oil, natural gas and coal. These sources of energy contribute substantially to air pollution. Renewable energy sources include solar, wind, and geothermal. As the following chart shows; in the United States renewable energy sources only account for 10 percent of energy usage.

In the future, overall energy consumption is expected to grow at the same rate as population. **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.** This shift in energy usage will not only reduce the demand for nonrenewable resources but will reduce the amount of air pollution.

U.S. Energy Consumption by Source, 2014

- Total: 98.5 quadrillion Btu
- Petroleum 35%
- Natural Gas 28%
- Coal 18%
- Nuclear Electric Power 9%
- Renewable Energy 10%
- Net imports of electricity and coal coke <1%
- Geothermal 2%
- Solar/PV 4%
- Biowaste 5%
- Wind 18%
- Biofuels 21%
- Wood 23%
- Hydroelectric 26%

Where do we go from here?

OBJECTIVES:
- Create an energy reduction goal for the entire Village and promote the use of renewable energy sources.
- Increase energy efficiency of new and existing development.
- Establish land use policies that maximize energy conservation.
- Increase surface cooling shade by updating landscaping design guidelines.
- Continue to participate in the Tree City USA program, try to return to the Tree City Growth Award.

PROGRAMS:
- Evaluate conversion of Village streetlights to LED, and continue conversion of parking lot lighting to LED lights using grants and local funds.
- Take part in Community Energy Challenges through ComEd and Nicor.
- 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.
- Create a public property tree canopy map to identify and fill in gaps.
- Advocate for changes to State laws that relate to Energy Conservation.

EDUCATION:
- Utilize a home audit to target and reduce wasteful energy use.
- Use the Village website to give residents and businesses ideas for decreasing energy consumption.
- Promote the importance of proper insulation and other home energy conservation methods.
- Provide educational resources on solar panels, wind turbines and other renewable energy sources.
- Have educational sessions for developers on the importance of LEED and Energy Star standards and the long- and short-term impact they can have on energy use.
Transportation

**GOAL:**

Promote transportation infrastructure that incorporates multiple modes of transportation, while optimizing the efficient use of motor vehicles to maximize energy efficiency and reduce emissions.

**OVERVIEW:**

Nearly half of all Americans live in areas that do not meet federal air quality standards. In the Chicago area passenger vehicles and trucks are the main sources of this pollution, which includes ozone, particulate matter, and other smog-forming emissions. In 2012, 86% of all passenger transportation in the United States used vehicles. However, according to the 2015 Skokie Citizens Survey, 56% of respondents said that they used public transportation instead of driving. 68% of respondents said they walked or biked instead of driving. **In addition, approximately 10% of Skokie households do not own a vehicle, according to the 2010—2014 American Community Survey.**

The Village is a strong supporter of a multi-modal transportation system to reduce the use of motor vehicles. Skokie has a well developed public transportation system with two train stations, two regional bus transfer stations and numerous bus routes. To supplement this system the Village has miles of multi-use paths, bike lanes and bike routes. There is also an extensive system of sidewalks, connecting all parts of the Village.

In February 2016 the Board of Trustees adopted a Complete Streets Policy which provides a formal engineering and policy framework for developing a transportation infrastructure that balances motor vehicle, pedestrian, transit and bicycle transportation needs. The vision of the complete streets policy is to “improve the quality of life for (Skokie) residents, workers, and visitors by enhancing its existing multi-model transportation system. This will be accomplished by developing a well-designed, inter-connected, and integrated system of complete streets and corridors.”

The objectives and programs outlined in this section seek to reinforce these policies, leverage the work that has been done to date, and build on the preferences expressed by Skokie residents in the Citizens Survey.
Where do we go from here?

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.
- Enhance biking and walking routes to schools.
- Evaluate and assess the feasibility of bicycle sharing with the possible extension of the Divvy program into Skokie.
- Continue to support local/regional farming efforts such as The Talking Farm and Village Farmer’s Market to reduce the transportation distance for food.

PROGRAMS:

- Improve bicycle infrastructure. Including completing the segment of the Skokie Valley trail between Dempster Street and Golf Road.
- Assess land use and zoning regulations regarding parking and promote shared parking in order to encourage “park once” trips and reduce underutilized parking.
- Work with local school districts to promote safe routes to schools for bicycling and walking.
- Apply Complete Streets Policies and implement elements when roadways are improved or rebuilt, and for private developments.
- Work with regional transit agencies to promote the expansion of bus and rail services within and through the Village.
- Conduct bike and pedestrian audits to prioritize improvements in sidewalks and biking facilities.

EDUCATION:

- Explore hosting annual events that promote bicycle and pedestrian safety. Examples include Walk to School Week, Bike to Work Day, Community Bicycle Safety Fair, Bike Skokie, and Open Streets programs.
- Promote anti-idling within the Village.
- Create promotional materials on bike facilities within Skokie.
- Start a public information program on the health and economic benefits of using alternative modes of transportation.
Waste Management

**OVERVIEW:**

Nearly everything we do leaves behind some kind of waste. Households create ordinary garbage, while industrial and manufacturing processes create solid and hazardous wastes. Most of this garbage and waste ends up rapidly filling landfills. In 2013, the average person in the United States generated 4.4 pounds of garbage each day. Although recycling rates have been increasing in the country, in Skokie the rate of recycling lags behind the national trend. To reduce the amount of waste being collected, recycling programs are necessary. Skokie has a comprehensive recycling program that diverted over 5,300 tons of waste from landfills. Recycling needs to be increased because of the significant benefits it produces. Some of these benefits include:

- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators.
- Conserving natural resources such as timber, water, and minerals.
- Preventing pollution by reducing the need to collect and process new raw materials.
- Saving energy.
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global climate change.
- Helping create new well-paying jobs in the recycling and manufacturing industries in the United States.

In the past 5 years the Village of Skokie has increased refuse collection approximately 4 percent while recycling has declined approximately 2 percent, despite marketing and education efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Refuse (tons)</th>
<th>Recycling (tons)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>17,550</td>
<td>5,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>17,298</td>
<td>5,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>17,580</td>
<td>5,439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>17,092</td>
<td>5,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>16,895</td>
<td>5,446</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unless increased waste recycling occurs, waste products will primarily be placed in landfills and the potential benefits of recycling will be lost.

**GOAL:**

Reduce, reuse, and recycle and use as much of the Village waste stream as is economically and technically feasible.
Where do we go from here?

**OBJECTIVES:**

♦ Increase the amount of material recycled and decrease the amount of material transferred to landfills.
♦ Evaluate disincentives for using plastic bags at stores.
♦ Set a goal for increasing the percentage of materials recycled as a Village.
♦ Encourage the use of reusable water bottles to reduce plastic waste.
♦ Explore expanding recycling to include food scraps, textiles and other materials.
♦ Explore additional opportunities for recycling

**PROGRAMS:**

♦ Promote recycling for multifamily and commercial properties.
♦ Use recycled paper and other recycled products for Village processes.
♦ Change labels on garbage cans to “landfill”—possibly include pictures for those with limited English proficiency.
♦ Continue the Skokie Spring Greening annual recycle drop off for various household items.
♦ Encourage residents to compost leaves and yard waste.
♦ Continue to work with the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County to promote recycling, and the appropriate disposal of hazardous materials.
♦ Set standards for the amount of construction debris that is recycled.
♦ Explore options to develop food scrap composting in Skokie.

**EDUCATION:**

♦ Continue to develop the Environmental Sustainability portion of the Village website.
♦ Develop a promotional campaign on the benefits of recycling.
♦ Inform contractors about recycling practices for construction debris and deconstruction operations.
♦ Show the benefits for yard and soil when composting leaves.
The *Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan* was developed over an eight year period, by the Skokie Community Development, Public Works, Legal and Health Departments. Over time we have had substantial input and support from other Skokie community members and outside entities.

A brief outline of the timeline is below:

2007  Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission established and meets for the first time.

2008  Village Trustees adopt the Environmental Policy proposed by the Legal Department, Community Development, and Public Works. (Chapter 2, Article XIII, Skokie Village Code)

2011  Health Department Conducts Community Health Survey—70% of respondents consider environmental pollution to be of medium or high concern, and encourage the Village to take active steps to “Go Green”. (1,361 surveys were completed)

2012  “A Healthy Environment” is established as a priority of the *Skokie Community 2012 Health Plan*. The top environmental goal: by 2017 create a comprehensive environmental plan for the Village. This goal is formally approved by the Board of Health and Board of Trustees.

2014  Skokie Community Forum: 150 Skokie residents participate in a visioning process sponsored by the Village Manager’s Office. Environmental sustainability emerges as an important concern.

2015  UIC School of Public Health Environmental and Occupational Health Policy Seminar class assists Village team by analyzing municipal environmental plans, interviewing members of the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission and surveying residents.

2015  Survey is conducted of Skokie residents attending the “Spring Greening” event, seeking input for the *Environmental Sustainability Plan*. (145 surveys were completed)

2016  *Skokie Environmental Sustainability Plan* approved by the Sustainable Environmental Advisory Commission and the Board of Health, and presented to the Board of Trustees.

This plan is dedicated to Mr. J. Patrick Hanley, Corporation Counsel for the Village of Skokie during 2002 – 2012. Mr. Hanley was instrumental in developing the “Skokie Environmental Policy”, adopted by the Board of Trustees in 2008. Without his unwavering leadership, encouragement and support, this plan would not have been created.
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Village of Skokie Awards and Distinctions

All American City Finalist
American Public Works Association (APWA) Accreditation
Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA)
Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI)
Gold Level Clean Air Counts Community
Governor’s Hometown Award
Government Finance Officers Association Budget Award
Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
Illinois Law Enforcement Accreditation (ILEAP)
Insurance Services Office (ISO) Class One Fire Department
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Tree City U.S.A. Distinction