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Residents Like Niles' Plan To Go Green

People who came to an Open House Tuesday to give input on a sustainability plan-in-the-making thought the suggestions on water conservation, recycling, open space, transportation, etc., were forward-thinking.

By [Pam DeFiglio](#) | [Email the author](#) | December 6, 2012

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Looking at a poster that described how Niles could step up its recycling efforts, Michael Magdongon approved.

"So far I really like everything," said Magdongon, of Niles, who is majoring in sustainability at Roosevelt University. "Niles is trying to raise awareness and bring sustainability to the community."

He was looking at posters of Niles' Environmental Action Plan, which is in development. One noted that the Niles community only recycles 19.5 percent of its trash, lower than the national average of 34 percent; it had ideas for increasing the level of recycling.

Officials from the village and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning put the posters up Tuesday evening at a public open house, to get input from residents and keep them informed of the ideas the village is considering. The event took place at the Niles Public Library.

What exactly is the Niles Environmental Action Plan?

In a nutshell, it's a plan for the village to become more environmentally friendly while also benefitting residents.

"We're looking to enhance services we have in the village now and offer them in a more environmentally friendly way," said Niles Trustee Louella Preston, who was at the event.

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Many of the ideas for the plan came from [residents and business owners at a July workshop](#). Planners broke attendees out into small groups, and by the end of the evening, they identified eight areas they wanted Niles' "go green" plan to focus on:

- Transportation (Example: Create more sidewalks and bike paths; work with Pace to improve bus service; establish car sharing locations.)
- Water conservation (Example: encourage people to collect and use rainwater)
- Open Space (Example: create a community garden)
- Energy (Example: Investigate energy from renewable sources)
- Greenhouse gases (Example: adopt an anti-idling policy for cars)
- Land use (Example: Build new village buildings according to "green building" standards)
- Waste (Example: Expand recycling opportunities; start a pilot composting program)
- Education (Example: Create a monthly event that would educate people on all the aforementioned topics).



PHOTOS (3)



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An environmental approach for residents, businesses, factories

Christopher Zalinski, a Niles resident and business owner who has become involved with developing the Environmental Action Plan, said it has something for everyone: residents of single-family homes, residents of multi-family buildings, commercial businesses and factories.

Since much of Niles was built in the 1950s and 60s, the plan encourages retrofitting buildings of that era to today's LEED-certified, or sustainable, standards, he said.

"A lot of the plan is to get the village's building department and code enforcement staff to think in new terms," he observed. For example, the plan might encourage the village to allow people to plant native grasses and plants in their front yards.

[Earlier: Residents brainstorm to make Niles greener](#)

That, or rain gardens, help to retain water during rainstorms instead of sending it all into sewers and potentially causing flooding.

That idea found a ready audience with resident Rene Usdrowski, who said her home has flooded.

Usdrowski said this is the third time she has come out to a village-sponsored open house.

"I appreciate that the village is communicating with residents so we know what's going on, and can get our input to the people making decisions," she said.

Niles Trustee Rosemary Palicki, who chairs the village board's Environmental Practices Committee, noted the Environmental Action Plan also meshes well with the Go to 2030 Comprehensive Plan, which the village board adopted this year.