

# ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLAN

## STEERING COMMITTEE

### MEETING SUMMARY

Wednesday, September 5, 2012 at 6:15 p.m.

The following persons were present: Chair Rosemary Palicki, Steven Vinezeano, Donna Hriljac, Peggy Reins, Debbie Graham, Dan Janicki, Pat Knoll, Chris Zalinski and Kristin Ihnchak of CMAP. Peggie Maniscalco, Bob Johnson, and Jim Majewski were absent.

I. Summary of Thursday, July 19, 2012: The meeting summary of Thursday, July 19, 2012 was approved.

II. Project Update and Public Meeting Re-Cap: Kristin Ihnchak discussed the timeline at first mentioning that we were incredibly half way through the process and on schedule. There is hope to wrap up the project at the end of the year. She mentioned that tonight was to discuss the issues identified by CMAP planners regarding the existing conditions and not to expect everyone to have read the document.

Kristin gave an update on what was heard at the public workshop. She stated there was an introduction PowerPoint, small table discussions, reporting back to the group, and then a wrap-up by her with the next steps. She discussed in brief the interesting things that were heard in the public meeting. The main items were listed on the PowerPoint for this meeting. There was a comment about how this confirmed what the committee developed.

Vinezeano mentioned it was favorable that the Niles 2030 Implementation Committee was represented at the workshop by at least three members. The Chair was pleased with the enthusiasm of the cross-section of the community represented. She thought that they had great ideas and the facilitators did a good job of drawing the discussion. It is important to know what came from the committee and the workshop was very similar meaning the plan will be representative of the community.

III. Review of Existing Conditions Report and Major Findings: Utilizing a PowerPoint, Kristin began her discussion. The overall outline showed an introduction, plan chapters of the eight topic areas, and monitoring and reporting. The monitoring and reporting is important because it shows how the community is progressing with implementation.

Kristin stated she would now key on the findings of each of the eight EAP chapters. First was Land Use & Development, which begins with an Existing Land Use Map. The unincorporated area within Niles is Mary Hill Cemetery. She described the land use and development pie chart.

## Land Use & Development

- Uniformity in housing age and architectural style presents opportunity for the plan because one is good for one is good for many.
- Diversity of housing is good for seniors, low income, etc.
- The ART corridor will help to improve transportation opportunities for residents. She discussed transit supportive density. Having enough people living near a transit stop to help support it. Nine dwelling units per acre. She mentioned the use of mixed use developments and clustering them near the stations.
- Commercial development seems to be very diverse from large box to small ethnic on Milwaukee. Some are more conducive to pedestrians than others.
- 88 % of residents can walk to a commercial land use, but some of it lacks connectivity for the walkers.
- There are only a couple of zoning districts in the commercial areas, so it may be beneficial to create a third that promotes mixed-use. Vinezeano brought up an issue discussed during the first Milwaukee Avenue Corridor Study relating to streetscape. The zoning code does not provide detail to whether or not a commercial development build to the sidewalk with parking in the rear or setback with a parking lot in the front. Kristin mentioned that if there is a chance for conflict with a vehicle, then people are not going to choose to walk. Zoning allows for both to happen right now. The Chair mentioned that it happens across the street from each other on Milwaukee Avenue. It should be one way or the other or at least planed out in zoning areas.
- Green building practices have occurred in the private sector and a recent EPA study will help to guide that planning.

## Transportation & Mobility

- She stated that in their study, they found that PACE ridership in Niles has seen a decrease in the past 5-years. The decrease is about 10%, but it tends to trend with the 2008 financial crisis and now there is a rebound occurring. Residents seem to be very dependent on their cars in Niles, but with the future of ART in Niles on Milwaukee Avenue and Touhy, Dempster, and Golf transportation options will become more streamlined with improved efficiency, so the number of Niles riders should improve.

Peggy brought up an issue with something within the report about Metra on Page 21. Donna stated that her concern is that Jefferson Park adds to her commute and does not run at night late enough for her. Kristin mentioned that access to the trains in Park Ridge and Morton Grove lacked timely support from PACE. They are also about one mile or more from Niles, so walking to the train station is unrealistic. The Chair mentioned the “free bus” and whether or not it could serve the work crowd to the trains, but PACE does not allow us to leave our Village boundaries. Vinezeano mentioned that we have the opportunity now to ask PACE for this with route changes that support train stations, but the problem is that staff has been asked to reduce costs and this is a service increase. The Chair asked if

we can recommend this in the plan to have the free bus to work with PACE to improve connectivity with train stops, ART, and businesses. Kristin stated that we could setup a meeting between PACE and Niles on this issue. Sure and Coke mentioned this would be very valuable. Dan mentioned that there are just no good ways from the train to Coca-Cola off of Howard. The train that goes to Jefferson Park is the train that runs to Park Ridge. Donna stated that the Morton Grove stop is scary dark at night. Peggy mentioned the fact there is no parking in some lots.

Peggy commented on page 18. She mentioned how some intersections in town are not pedestrian friendly and it is not known if they are Niles intersections, or IDOT or county. Vinezeano mentioned that the Village has a study request with CMAP for complete streets to actually look at all intersections in Niles for improvement. There was discussion about the limits IDOT may put on the Village when it tries to improve pedestrian friendliness. IDOT is more concerned with speed and volume.

- Metra ridership is stable for the stations closest to Niles. Most drive or walk to these stations and few bus.
- The regional bike lane through Niles is being funded by a CMAQ grant.
- Niles residents voiced a need for improved pedestrian amenities.
- The Milwaukee Avenue Streetscape plan is helping to create a more pedestrian friendly environment. Peggy mentioned how she can really tell the difference.

### Open Space

- The open space ratio is good with 87% of residents being able to walk to a park or open space area.
- There was discussion about a limited diversity of parks and most are “programmed” space.
- Cook County Forest Preserve provides a great value to the Village.
- Residents are looking for more connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The Rain Garden is an important demonstration project.

Vinezeano brought up the issue that the Park District is still claiming that they are short of open space parks for the Village. Page 28 was discussed. Kristin mentioned that public space should only be included. Vinezeano asked if language could be put in the report quantifying and in support of the Park District open space issue. Kristin mentioned she would reach out to the Park District. There was discussion about Notre Dame and Culver Park. Notre Dame may not be open, but Culver is kept by the Park District. Peggy mentioned that the Wetlands Park is in poor condition and may be used by youth at night for drinking.

### Waste

- There are opportunities to increase recycling and reduce tipping. The recycling in Niles is much lower than the national average.

- Dan mentioned that materials at Coke are directed mostly back to suppliers and so there is not much going to the landfill. Vinezeano mentioned that one 95-gallon cart is available to commercial accounts for free. Vinezeano also mentioned that four stores with Jewel will not divert their food scrap from the landfill for compost.
- Kristin discussed construction debris diversion and Chicago's efforts. There was discussion about the level of non-recycling of white paper versus construction debris.

### Water

- The Village average use of water is higher than the County, but this is probably because of the high amount of commercial. Coca-Cola is a high user of water in Niles.
- The North Branch of the Chicago River is an "impaired stream".
- Stormwater management and flooding issues are being addressed with the Stormwater Management Ordinance and Stormwater Relief Program. The Stormwater Management Ordinance could be improved by adding the use of bmps for sustainability.
- The IGIG project and the Niles Community Rain Garden are great demonstration projects.

### Energy

- The similar age in building stock should provide opportunities for energy efficient features and systems.
- The Village has led the way with implementing energy efficiency upgrades.
- The Village will work on enhancing the Zoning Ordinance so as not to block or deter the use of renewable energy systems.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

- Electricity, Natural Gas Consumption and transportation are responsible for the majority of green house gasses in the Village or 76% (high) and Cook County is around 69%. Fewer levels of emissions from transportation than county. The per capita for Niles is much higher because of industrial and commercial users.
- The most impact for improving this would be to approach the industrial and commercial uses within the Village of Niles.
- There are no new renewable systems used by the Village, but Culver School is looking at solar panels.
- There was discussion about the Clean Air Counts Gold award to reduce emissions and improve air quality.

## Education

- The Village shares environmental information via the website, Niles T.V., and newsletter articles. SWANCC and other external partners could provide additional opportunities for residents.
- Schools are working to incorporate learning opportunities.
- There was discussion that at the public meeting the participants expressed a need for more effective distribution of information related to sustainability.

There was discussion regarding “looking forward” with the remainder of the project. Pat Knoll asked about bicycle friendliness and that issue of limited to no places to lock bicycles. As a matter of fact, someone locked their bike to a Shure light pole and walked away. Vinezeano mentioned a future bike plan for the Village and how that may establish the need and locations. Kristen mentioned a plan, a policy, or even regulations could establish the use of bike racks. The Chair mentioned that it should be stressed and addressed in the plan. Peggy mentioned connectivity with open space and how it should be mentioned within the plan for the street network.

Peggy mentioned the promotion of sustainable development as it relates to redevelopment and there being a value in not tearing down structures. Chris mentioned the Nicor energy efficiency program for homes and certain tax rebates. He mentioned how he insulated his home for about \$1,300, saving him about \$130 a year.

- IV. Wrap-Up & Next Steps: September 19 the comments are due to Steve who will compile them for Kristin. Kristin reviewed what will be done at the next Steering Committee meeting in mid October. The topics will be set and prioritized. In November the final plan draft will be ready for presentation to the public in December. Vinezeano mentioned it is important for the group to provide their feedback based on their point of view (residential, business, institution). The next meeting will be brainstorming.
- V. Next Scheduled Meeting: Tuesday, October 16, 2012 at Village Hall.