2019/2020 Local Technical Assistance and Community Planning Programs

Application Number: 64

Project Title: Niles Oakton Street Corridor Plan

Applicant: Village of Niles

Project Description:

The Oakton Street Neighborhood Greenway is a plan to develop the Niles area into a more vibrant place to live, work and play by developing the Oakton Street corridor into a neighborhood greenway. Oakton Street has a mixture of residential, commercial, educational, civic (library, senior center and fitness center), governmental, recreational and natural resources all located within an area from Caldwell Avenue on the east, to Cumberland Avenue on the west (2.1 miles). As a neighborhood greenway, the area will be redesigned to maintain safe vehicle speeds, reduce non-local vehicle traffic and prioritize people to take advantage of the opportunities available within the corridor.

The section of Oakton Street referenced above is an IDOT highway incorporating three municipalities (Village of Niles, Village of Morton Grove and the City of Park Ridge), as well as the Niles Library District, Forest Preserves of Cook County and PACE transit service. The Oakton Street Neighborhood Greenway is a collaborative effort to take advantage of the area’s many available resources and create connections between communities, advancing local and regional livability, environmental sustainability and economic revitalization.

Connectivity: The Neighborhood Greenway will increase connectivity and access to trails, bike paths and routes, parks, schools, promote non-vehicular improvements and increase pedestrian and cyclist connections to area resources and related corridors.

Restoration: The Neighborhood Greenway will be designed to encourage revitalization of existing urban centers along the corridor and increase greenspace. The corridor will be transformed via a boulevard effect including landscape medians, enhanced vehicular and pedestrian lighting, signage and street art, all meant to encourage pedestrian traffic.

Traffic calming structures, pavement markings and signage will be used to improve safety for all modes of transportation. The greenspace enhancements will naturally encourage motorists to reduce speeds, further enhancing other means of transportation.

Authenticity: The Neighborhood Greenway will establish a clear sense of “place” and identity reflecting the traditional spirit of the area and take advantage of the numerous recreational and civic activities currently available. As neighborhood greenway improvements occur this will lead to increased cross traffic from the various neighborhood centers, reducing destination only motor vehicle traffic.

Partnerships: The focus of the Neighborhood Greenway will revolve around cooperation and reciprocal compromise. Relationships and partnerships must be formed and strengthened to achieve coordination and integration of efforts throughout the neighborhood greenway. Stakeholders from the various governmental and volunteer organizations will work together to develop a cohesive strategy.

Community Based: The neighborhood greenway planning will reflect the preferences and plans of the local communities, while also respecting their individual stated goals.

Overall, once built, the Oakton Street Neighborhood Greenway improvement aims to:

Connect residents to popular natural and civic destinations within the area
Create safe pathways for students to walk or ride to and from school
Connect and strengthen neighborhoods
Promote non-vehicular means of travel

This Oakton Street Neighborhood Greenway highlights the importance of increasing access to connections between the region, and shares the optimism there are many hidden gems to explore within each community if exploration is promoted.

Project Location: Oakton Street from Caldwell Avenue to Cumberland Avenue (2.1 miles)