

Niles Environmental Plan Moves Ahead

The Niles village board held a public hearing on the plan last week; it envisions a future with more recycling, green buildings, water conservation and more ways of protecting the environment.

By Pam DeFiglio | [Email the author](#) | February 21, 2013

[Tweet](#) [Email](#) [Print](#) [Comment](#)

After a planning agency spent months interviewing Niles residents, studying residents' transportation patterns, recycling, water use, homes and commercial buildings and more, their efforts may soon result in a greener Niles.

The village board is scheduled to vote Tuesday on approving the Niles Environmental Action Plan. It looks at eight different areas: Land Use and Development, Transportation and Mobility, Open Space, Waste, Water, Energy, Greenhouse Gases and Education.

Kristin Inhchak of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, which developed the plan, appeared before the village board Feb. 12, though no vote was taken that night.

The plan makes priority recommendations in each of the eight areas.

Earlier: [The complete list of all eight areas](#)

Inhchak talked with the board and Acting Village Manager Steve Vinezeano, who has worked with CMAP on the plan, about some of them.

Stepping up recycling efforts

One key area in which the village can become greener is recycling.

"One thing we heard (from talking to residents) is that the recycling bins people are using are too small. They'd like bigger containers to accommodate the amount of recyclables they have," she said.

"When you go through your negotiations for a waste hauling contact, you can try to include that."

Trustee Louella Preston agreed the village can try to increase recycling levels, saying CMAP found that the recycling rate in Niles is 19.5 percent, while according to information she got from the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County, the average for its 22 member suburbs (mostly nearby) is around 35 percent.

Creating perception of more Open Space

On the topic of Open Space, Trustee Joe LoVerde, who is also executive director of the Niles Park District, asked Inhchak if CMAP has had success working with the Cook County Forest Preserve District to get additional usable acreage for residents' recreation.



PHOTOS (2)



PDFS (1)



[Upload Photos and Videos](#)

"It's a complicated process to work with the county on that," she said. "In the plan we talk about making sure people are able to get to forest preserves from where they live.

"Doing that would increase perception there was more open space."

Vinezeano noted the plan aims to improve bike access and pedestrian access.

"Niles a landlocked community, and sometimes it's frustrating to see that acreage fenced off and sitting there," said LoVerde. "You can't use it for recreational purposes."

"Yes, we heard that from the community," Ihnchak responded.

Green building construction, remodeling

Another recommendation calls for the village to use green construction materials and energy-saving approaches when it builds or remodels its buildings.

Vinezeano noted the Niles Family Fitness Center has put in energy-saving lights and used other methods to increase energy savings.

Trustee Rosemary Palicki, who has led the village's environmental committee, noted that the village doesn't have to aim at LEED certification for every project.

"I wanted to mention there are all sorts of levels leading up to LEED certification," she said. "There are all sorts of things you can do that still...would support this sustainability plan."

Ongoing monitoring

Ihnchak mentioned the village needs to monitor of the plan.

"There are several reasons monitoring and reporting is important," she said. "This is time sensitive; you don't want this to become a shelf document."

"We recommend the village report back on an annual basis to community. It doesn't have to be complicated."