

# Niles 2040

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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## Community Speak-Out Question & Answer Summary

The Village of Niles hosted the first Community Speak-Out for the Niles 2040 Comprehensive Plan! The virtual workshop was held on Thursday, December 3rd, 2020, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM. Thanks to everyone who attended the workshop and shared valuable feedback about the Village. Was not able to attend? No worries! Read the summary below to learn more about all the questions asked during the event. Do not forget to take the first community survey.

### 1. How many of these sessions will the Village be hosting?

This was the first of three larger community events. The two others will be later in the process and announced on [www.Niles2040.com](http://www.Niles2040.com) and through Village news outlets. There will also be other ways to participate and learn more about the project throughout the process. Check the website for other ways to become involved and share your thoughts.

### 2. Will Golf Mill continue to be enclosed?

The Sterling Organization, owners of Golf Mill Mall, have discussed preliminary concept plans for the mall which may include the demolition of the enclosed portion of the mall.

### 3. How much of the 2030 plan has been accomplished already? What are the items on the 2030 plan that are no longer relevant because of changing times?

According to the Village, approximately 85% of the 2030 Plan has been implemented to date. Specific actions completed include a comprehensive amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, the new 2018 Stormwater Management Plan, beautification improvements along Milwaukee Avenue, and securing a new water source for Lake Michigan Water. Other actions are ongoing and will be carried forward. There are still a lot of relevant policies to bring forward, but our focus will be on prioritizing specific recommendations that will meet the interests of the community and Village. The full implementation reports can be found on the Village's website at: [www.vniles.com/375/Niles-2030-Implementation-Committee](http://www.vniles.com/375/Niles-2030-Implementation-Committee).

### 4. How does the Village prioritize what projects get attention more than others?

There is not a one-size fits all response to this question. Capital projects have a much different response than other projects and are prioritized by analyzing data including, but not limited to, pavement condition studies, a water master plan, stormwater management plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan and more. Overall, the Village Board sets priorities for budgeting and policies, which staff execute. Village staff utilize the Niles 2030 Comprehensive Plan and now the Strategic Plan, as well as other guiding Village plans as roadmaps for making recommendations to the Board on future projects. Budget and other funding can influence timelines and prioritization. Some projects may be cyclical or dependent on economic conditions such as redevelopment or business assistance.



- 5. Can Golf Mill be considered to continue building (around the) perimeter stand-alone businesses like is being done? I.E. Chase Bank, Panera, Chic Filet. Eventually phase out the mall which is gradually falling into obsolescence. Possibly put in residential, more in the vein of townhomes... (multi story buildings for condos are not the rage with the virus) Morton Grove did successful Traflagor at Waukegan and Dempster. Also, the development in Prospect Heights, Rob Roy is an example of this. The residence area will have excellent access to services and restaurants and there's green space to the south of the property.**

Thank you for the comments and suggestions. Yes, Golf Mill is a priority focus area. Residential and other uses will be explored.

- 6. We seem to have a scarcity of public parks. Where I live off Waukegan 2 blocks north of Touhy, there is only one park, Kirkland behind Super H-Mart. It is also run down.**

Thank you, comment noted. The Niles Park District has been involved in the comprehensive planning process and we will continue to collaborate with them. Throughout the planning process, the Village and project team will map all park distances from neighborhoods and other areas, listen to community feedback, and determine best locations for future parks. Problems arise related to land availability and cost but the Village and Park District remain proactive in providing a range of park and recreation facilities.

- 7. What exactly is considered "Open Space"? Unused private and/or public lots?**

In Niles, open space refers to both public and private land that is used for a variety of light uses and purposes but does not include permanent structures or buildings, other than small accessory buildings. Examples include public parks, recreation areas, trails, forest preserves, river, wetlands/woodlands, floodway, cemeteries and other open areas. It does not include vacant land where development is permitted or assumed.

- 8. Walking toddlers past busy streets is dangerous and totally difficult. Semi-trucks, speeding cars make it difficult to get to Pioneer Park which is at Harlem on the south side of Touhy. Mostly it appears Chicago Edison Park, uses Pioneer. Again, this is very difficult to take kids to.**

Thank you, comments noted and will be shared with IDOT. We will consider pedestrian safety throughout the Village and make this a top priority of the plan.

- 9. One thing I find difficult is that there is not a strong sense of neighborhood where I live. People are very silent and do not even respond to a hello "Grennan heights and Ransom Ridge."**

Thank you, comment noted. That is the kind of the information we are seeking. We hope to help change that and provide more identity and sense of community through implementation of this plan.



**10. Can we get a bike / walking path around Maryhill Cemetery? It would be good because there would not be dangerous cross traffic. Also, we could see the wildlife (deer etc.) in the cemetery. It would only require sidewalk installation on Milwaukee Ave., Dempster St. and Cumberland Ave. which should have sidewalks anyway.**

Thank you, comment noted. We will explore this idea. Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity will be considered in the comprehensive plan.

**11. I have read the price for the acquisition of the tiny corner lot formerly Byline Bank cost us like \$1.5 million ... is that a misprint... is commercial really that expensive? Were proper appraisals vetted before the acquisitions?**

That is correct, the purchase of Byline Bank was \$1.5 million. Proper appraisals (two) were acquired before the purchase, as with any Village purchase. The Village was required to pay a premium since private developers would not do so. The Village plans to initiate a redevelopment of the bank property and the properties to the north.

**12. Why Niles? What steps is the group taking to zero in on our particular identity and WHY someone should move here vs Morton Grove, Park Ridge, Edgebrook, etc. Who are we and what do we want to be in the future?**

Why not Niles? Great questions! Thank you, we will explore these ideas and work toward confirming Niles' identity and vision moving forward!

**13. Can the bike crossing at the river be designed safer? It's a miracle no one has been killed yet.... The Howard crossing has just been improved with single lane car traffic, medium strips and alert signs. Touhy is an accident waiting to happen!**

Thank you, comments noted. Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity will be considered in the comprehensive plan. IDOT has the Touhy bridge replacement in their 5-year plan. The proposed bridge plan includes widening for a separated bike trail on the north side of the bridge. The crossing will still include a traffic signal. We will pass along this specific information to IDOT and consider it in the plan.

**14. With all the empty stores in town why is the village buying all the extra property Greenwood Ave, Touhy and Waukegan Leaning Tower?**

The former bank property on Greenwood was purchased as part of a stormwater relief effort for residents and businesses. The plan at Greenwood is to construct a stormwater detention basin on the land. The basin will provide stormwater relief to properties located along Milwaukee Avenue, North Maryland Street and Courtland Drive, a section of Niles that has historically suffered from flooding problems. More information on that project can be found here: <https://www.vniles.com/1187/Golf-Mill-Park-Redevelopment>. The Leaning Tower of Niles was purchased from the YMCA in 2017. Ownership of the local icon allowed the Village to secure its place on the National Register of Historic Places. The goal of the current restoration project is to allow visitors to go up to the top of the tower and hear the bells again. It is part of a larger redevelopment project in the Touhy Triangle.

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**15. According to the 2030 Plan Vision #9 - Economic Development Goal 1 Priority Objective 3 talks about Promote and renovating aging shopping centers and commercial areas. - As I drive around Niles there are many strips of vacant rundown store fronts along major roadways. i.e. South Milwaukee, Spots on Dempster- west of Harlem to name a few. Are there plans to aggressively focus on these locations and what is the plan?**

Yes, certain actions of the previous plan still need to be implemented. The corridors in the Village will be focus areas. We will analyze those areas and make recommendations for priority improvements. The future operation of the Pace PULSE route along Dempster Street is one way to help stimulate investment and encourage maintenance of public and private property.

**16. Is the Village prepared for Golf Mill down-sizing or maybe going away?**

Yes, part of the purpose of this process is to identify specific areas of the Village that may warrant changes and prepare for those.

**17. Are there plans to better develop the retails and offices along Harlem?**

Yes, all of the corridors are priority areas. Although, IDOT has jurisdiction of the street and right-of-way improvements. These uses, as well as others, will be considered along Harlem Avenue based on the location and character of the corridor. Thank you for these comments.

**18. If you are familiar with Franklin Park, years back Mayor Pritchett authorized to put up a 5-6 story prefab condo building... this was a complete flop... there are continued vacancies and the building is going in disrepair. They ruined the ambiance and street scene of the downtown. Please do not fall into this trap and build giant condo buildings.**

Thank you for the comment. Community guidance will be sought in advance of any future plans and developments.

**19. How many people participated in this meeting?**

11 panelists and over 70 people attended the Community Speak-Out held from 7 to 8PM on Thursday, December 3rd, 2020. Not able to attend? No worries. Please take the follow-up Community Survey located on the project website, [www.Niles2040.com](http://www.Niles2040.com).

**20. How much of the 2030 plan is being used as a base for the 2040 plan?**

We will consider the entire 2030 plan as the base for the 2040 plan.

**21. Can I get a copy of this presentation?**

Yes! The presentation and the webinar recording have been posted to [www.Niles2040.com](http://www.Niles2040.com).



**22. We have a beautiful river running through our village and we have almost no way to see it, access it because it is backed up to by industry and commercial or buried in the forest preserve. How do we make better use of our best natural resources?**

Thank you for your comment, this is something we will explore and consider in the 2040 plan.

**23. You mention more Asian people living here. What can the Village do to encourage African American people as well as LGBTQ residents?**

The Village will always support inclusivity and diversity for all people from all backgrounds, races and religions and orientations. We can and will explore such policies promoting social and economic diversity in the comprehensive plan.

**24. What about HMART or Fresh Farms. Don't they consider diverse?**

Yes, these are valuable shopping destinations in the Village! The plan will promote a diverse range of shopping environments throughout the Village.

**25. Isn't "affordable housing" just another way of say that our property values aren't increasing as much as some neighboring villages? Is that really a positive?**

Not necessarily, it is more a reflection of the lack of housing types and options at lower prices in the Village. Niles is primarily comprised of single-family homes. Single-family housing sale prices have actually steadily increased in Niles since the Great Recession, but single-family homes are not affordable to everyone. A greater range of housing types will attract a broader range of the population with diverse housing preferences. This will add both social and economic growth and diversity to the Village.

**26. Why is everything we do B and C level space for industry? Why not more impressive A level spaces like Shure?**

There is limited demand for class A office space in Niles, such as Shure, because of the Village's proximity to the O'Hare office market, which is a premier office destination in the region. Another challenge, particularly for industrial space, is the lack of available land for such large developments. Quality designs and finishes are always encouraged; however, a range of space options can be attractive entrepreneurs and companies seeking more affordable space, which can help boost the local economy.

**27. Why don't we incent and encourage smarter use of gray water and rain runoff instead of inundating our sewers?**

Great comments, these kind of polices support both sustainable and infrastructure policies that we will consider, thank you.

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### **28. I am aware of one rain garden. Where else are there rain gardens**

The Niles Community Rain Garden and Bioswale is located at 7114 W. Touhy Avenue. The Village also has other sustainable initiatives throughout town such as the Neva Avenue Bioswale, Oak Park Bioswale, Pollinator Garden, and Community Garden (Farm on Franks).

### **29. When did Shermer Road become Michigan Avenue?**

We assume this question is referring to traffic conditions on Shermer Road. Please refer to the following document that outlines the Village's Traffic Calming Policy: <https://www.vniles.com/DocumentCenter/View/5033/Niles-Traffic-Calming-Policy>.

### **30. Are you going to look at the targeted demographic populations you want to attract to the Village and a plan to attract them?**

The Village will always support inclusivity and diversity for all people from all backgrounds, races and religions and orientations. We can and will explore such policies promoting social and economic diversity in the comprehensive plan.

Participate in the first **Niles 2040 Community Survey!** The main goal of the survey is to hear your thoughts regarding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the Village of Niles. You know the Village best! Thank you for your feedback.