

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The early research, mapping and analysis along with stakeholder interviews and other community engagement input helped establish some early themes and topics for expanded analysis and focus.

NEIGHBORHOODS, CENTERS/ DISTRICTS AND CORRIDORS

Niles' history and development, physical layout and distribution of uses is conducive to organizing the Village in terms of neighborhoods, districts and corridors.

Neighborhoods

Niles' neighborhoods include 24 areas of Niles intended for residential living. These areas include homes, parks and schools, and represent family life in Niles. The housing stock in Niles exists in these neighborhoods and is an important factor in the evolution of the Village. Housing demand is projected to increase from young professionals and families, as well as seniors and active adults. Future housing development should occur consistent with housing types that will be most beneficial. The neighborhoods are also important locations for maintaining and improving the quality of life in Niles and its strong reputation as a community for families.



A Neighborhood in the Village of Niles, Illinois

Centers/Districts

The two primary commercial, shopping and entertainment centers or districts in Niles include the Golf Mill site including the area around the Golf Road/Milwaukee Avenue intersection, as well as the Touhy Triangle. These areas represent the two hearts of the Village, each serving a separate market area focused either to the north or to the south. They both provide an opportunity for two complementing commercial, service and entertainment districts serving the local population while also solidifying themselves as regional destinations.

Corridors

The primary corridors, including Milwaukee Avenue, Golf Road, Dempster Street, Oakton Street, Touhy Avenue and Harlem Avenue, represent a challenge since most of them are under jurisdiction of IDOT or Cook County. Partnerships, communication and collaboration with all transportation agencies remain an important strategy to achieve mobility and corridor goals related to pedestrian safety, bicycle facilities, Niles' identity, streetscape design and transit connections.

Niles 2040 Project Website: Brainstorm Tool

“This area (Golf Mill) has been rundown for a while; take down the mall and redevelop into a community area with residential buildings, eateries and businesses.”

Community Virtual Speak-Out

“The Southern edge of the Village needs a new development approach—more mixed use like Edison Park and less random small commercial buildings and strip malls.”

MOBILITY ALTERNATIVES AND SAFETY

Niles' regional location and proximity to Interstates results in a large amount of regional and through traffic in the Village. The Village will continue to work with other jurisdictions to manage safe and efficient traffic circulation through Niles. Traffic management will remain a priority given its importance in managing traffic flow, but mobility alternatives, autonomous vehicles, and electric car technology offer innovative solutions to transportation challenges. Niles' local neighborhood streets and continued implementation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan will also remain a priority, as well as corridor improvements related to streetscape, landscaping, sidewalks, pathways and accessibility. Pace and CTA service provide regional and local service to the Village; Pace provides more comprehensive service with higher ridership. Pace's plans for expansion of its PULSE routes through Niles also increase TOD opportunities.

Niles 2040 Project Website: Brainstorm Tool

"There should be a safe connection to the North Branch Trail north of Oakton Street. There should be a connection to the path at a light so people can cross safely."

Niles 2040 Project Website: Brainstorm Tool

"Niles has become a very walkable area, that is until daylight saving time kicks in. Add streetlights to brighten up the blocks. There is an average of two on a block. More people would walk later into the evening if it were brighter, especially the dog walkers."

Phase One Community Survey

"There should be more dedicated bicycle lanes, e.g., along all parts of a "bicycle route" (Cumberland Avenue), and Milwaukee Avenue from Golf Road to Devon Avenue."

FISCAL RESILIENCY

The COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020 began during the initiation of this Comprehensive Plan Update and provides an uncertain future in regard to many financial, social and health issues. The Village's long-term fiscal resiliency will no doubt be affected by this pandemic. However, prior to this and leading up to the pandemic, jobs in Niles were the highest they had been in ten years.

Retail trade, an important economic consideration for Niles, had also expanded. Although this may be affected in the future due to changing shopping behavior. Regardless, retail trade and increased tax revenue will remain significant considerations and the Village must create opportunities to expand its tax base and increase jobs, especially amongst its smaller, local retailers. The Village has a significant amount of retail and shopping center space. Reassessment and possible repositioning of this space may be needed in the future. The healthcare, social services and manufacturing sectors have all expanded in Niles. Although office space is not expected to be in high demand, Niles does provide a variety of office space with low vacancy rates.

Long-term infrastructure and capital program improvements must acknowledge the economic reality which will require prudent decisions that consider Niles financial standing. Ensuring the Village has the financial resources it needs to maintain its excellent services and provide a safe and healthy community will always be a priority.

Niles 2040 Project Website: Brainstorm Tool

"Build out a village-owned ISP Service for residents. This lower cost option will ensure accessibility to the internet which is so critical to everyone from young students to grandparents."

Phase One Community Survey

"Encourage new family and businesses relocating in Niles. Let the people know the financial health of the Village."

PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Niles’ reputation for excellent park spaces and facilities reinforces its reputation as a family-friendly community with a high quality of life. Niles benefits from an array of local parks, the Cook County Forest Preserve and North Branch Trail and a variety of community facilities including a Fitness Center, Niles-Maine District Library, and the Senior and Teen Centers. While Niles parks are in good condition and well maintained, the challenge will be to increase parkland and facilities in the coming years. Park programming and facilities must also respond to changing user needs in the Village and provide active or passive park space for all user groups. Since Niles is landlocked and does not include significant amount of vacant land that can be used as park space, the Village and Park District will need to work creatively to increase park and recreation options in the Village. Communication and partnerships between schools and Village representatives appears strong and should continue to be a primary focus to achieve the interests of the community.

Community Virtual Speak-Out

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

Niles 2040 Project Website: Brainstorm Tool

“Niles needs a dog park! Our dog owners are leaving and giving their money to neighboring towns, when they could be gathering here.”

Community Virtual Speak-Out

“The parks are my biggest dissatisfaction with Niles. As a taxpayer, I support the parks, but all the spaces are focused on organized sports that are not of interest to me.”

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Diversity has been increasing in Niles and today the population includes a wide mix of people from different ethnic backgrounds. In 2020, 22 percent of the population identified as Asian, and this is evident by the many different ethnic businesses throughout the Village. Niles is proud of its diversity and will seek opportunities to celebrate and promote this diversity and culture while also fostering similar values such as inclusion, acceptance and tolerance. Stakeholder interviews helped confirm the community’s interest in promoting Niles as a diverse and welcoming community.

The Arts in Niles represents another opportunity to capitalize on cultural and artistic programs and events to further promote culture and diversity. Niles has begun to recognize its art and culture amenities by adoption of its Arts and Culture Master Plan. Moving forward, continued implementation of this Master Plan while also promoting diversity and inclusion will help the Village meet future goals related to these important themes. Cultural events and other programs, as well as continued partnerships through the local religious community and cultural groups, can help advance these aims.

Niles 2040 Project Website: Brainstorm Tool

“Niles needs expert and focused guidance in crafting and implementing Racial Equity Impact Assessments for the Village of Niles to ensure an equitable and inclusive community for ALL Niles residents and visitors.”

Phase One Community Survey

“Please make diversity, inclusion, health and sustainability the central core of Niles’ policies and plan for development!”

Phase One Community Survey

“We need to highlight the cultural diversity of the community through public cultural events.”

IDENTITY, DESIGN AND CHARACTER

Niles' design character can primarily be seen in its residential neighborhoods and iconic design of public buildings such as the Leaning Tower. Stakeholder interview helped indicate that some residents feel Niles lacks a cohesive identity and design character. However, interest in design is evident and residents feel that a combination of good design and public art can enhance the identity of Niles.

Character and identity can be seen through public buildings, residential neighborhoods, streetscape, landscaping, and architectural design and a number of other methods to improve the overall image of a community. The roadway corridors that traverse Niles provide the most opportunities to bolster identity in Niles with streetscape, landscape, signage and other design elements. However, this will require collaboration and negotiation with IDOT and other jurisdictions who manage corridor appearances. Strengthening the identity of its residential neighborhoods, providing a consistent design theme and style for its two districts, and focusing on the corridors as locations where people first see Niles will all further improve design character and help strengthen Niles' identity.

Niles 2040 Project Website: Brainstorm Tool

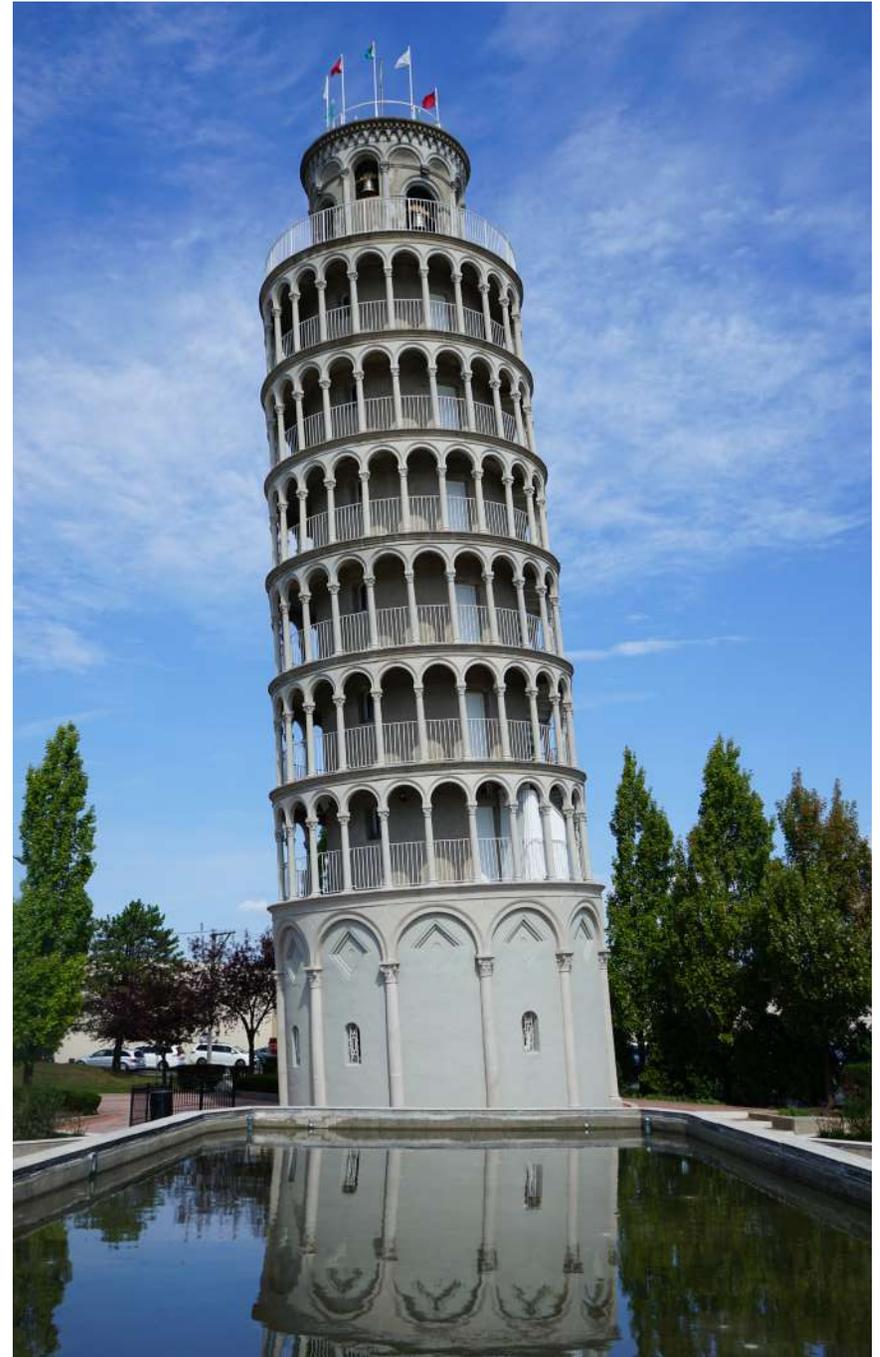
“Add additional streetscape elements to provide more vibrant Milwaukee Avenue. Adding additional features may not have an immediate effect or function but would provide the visual effect of a more vibrant Central Business District.”

Phase One Community Survey

“A central location for gathering. We lack a downtown and sense of place.”

Community Virtual Speak-Out

“North Niles does not feel connection and integrated with Central and South Niles. It is a problem that feeds our identity issues.”



Leaning Tower of Niles, 6300 West Touhy Avenue

