

Executive Summary



Village of Niles

Strategic Plan and Goal Development 2020

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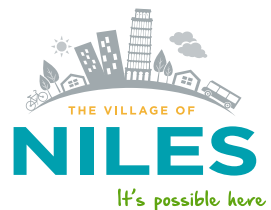
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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**Center for
Governmental Studies**

Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development



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Strategic planning is a preferred approach to guiding an organization’s future rather than making decisions issue by issue. The Village of Niles (“the Village”) engaged the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS) at Northern Illinois University (NIU) to facilitate a strategic planning workshop with Board and senior staff members in September of 2020. Prior to the two half-day workshops, two online surveys were sent to the Finance and Planning and Zoning committees and a Village front-line staff focus group was conducted to gather input on the Village’s future vision and goals. It is important to note that the Village refrained from undertaking a more extensive/broader community input effort as part of this strategic planning process because of recent and on-going community engagement efforts underway. These include a Citizen’s Survey conducted in 2019 and the current development of the Comprehensive Plan which will seek community input.

With surveys and focus groups as a starting point for discussions, the strategic planning workshops provided a positive atmosphere for the Board and senior staff members to collaboratively review and develop a vision for the Village’s future. Ultimately, workshop participants created strategic goals focusing on where the Village wants to go as an organization in both the short- and long-term. As discussed and reviewed during the workshops, executive-level strategic planning sessions are a staple of good governance and leadership for progressive organizations and is recommended to be done every other year.

Strategic Priorities

Ultimately, five key strategic priority areas were identified as an outcome of the process highlighting activities and initiatives that the Village should focus on in both the short- and long-term. The strategic priority areas identified as a result of the strategic planning process are illustrated below [in no particular order] and a brief explanation of each priority area is also included.



Diversified Economic Development

Economic development is a vital tool in creating a thriving community and enhancing revenue streams. This is especially important for the Village of Niles which depends heavily on a diverse sales tax base and much less on property taxes as compared to surrounding municipalities. It is important for the Village to identify diversified development and redevelopment opportunities to support the Village's financial stability and add to the quality of life for all community members and visitors. No matter the size of the development, follow-through and completion of projects will be critical.

Infrastructure Planning and Funding

Physical infrastructure are the building blocks of any community. It is critical to plan for, and adequately fund, infrastructure improvement projects to ensure sustainability, high-quality delivery of core services, and improved quality of life. In an ever-changing world where technology allows people more options for where they work and live, meeting the needs and expectations of potential and current residents and businesses is even more important.

Marketing and Communication

It is important that the Village of Niles markets and communicates its unique character, variety of service offerings and community assets to attract and retain residents, businesses, and visitors. Through marketing and high-level engagement efforts, Niles can demonstrate its value of building a sense of community and belonging for all community members, which will help set it apart from other surrounding communities.

Financial Stability and Transparency

Maintaining fiscal strength and stability is key for any organization, public or private. Routinely undertaking financial assessments to understand the Village's current financial profile, recognize changing trends, and identify opportunities for revenue enhancements and/or cost-cutting measures is vital to give elected officials a high level of confidence to make tough decisions. This type of financial stewardship will allow the high level of service that Niles is known for to continue.

Strategic Goals

After discussions regarding the participants' visions for the future, important Village issues, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the Village, participants were asked to identify short- and long-term goals. Participants were asked to use agreed upon criteria to classify a goal as short-term (1-3 years) or long-term (3 -8 years).

After the workshops, the Board was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. The top three highest-ranking short- and long-term goals are offered below as a process "snapshot" representing the most important strategic goals or priority areas for the Board and staff to address in the months and years ahead. The top three goals listed below are a result of the calculation of the goal prioritization survey, which consisted of "forced ranking" where the ranking of each identified goal is averaged by the rankings given by all participants.

For example, if a goal were given the scores of 2, 5, 6, 6, 1, 2 and 3, the average total would be 3.57. **The lower the score, the higher the priority.** In total, the group developed seventeen short-term goals and twelve long-term goals. For a description of the ranking process and a full review of all strategic goals and priority areas presented, discussed, and ranked please refer to the full report.

Short-Term Goals - Top Three High Priority

1. Undertake a financial analysis to explore revenue enhancement options.
2. Complete the Golf Mill Shopping Center redevelopment agreement and phase 1 of construction.
3. Identify incentives and strategies to attract developers for development and redevelopment opportunities throughout the Village and specifically in the TIF Districts.

Long-Term Goals - Top Three High Priority

1. Implement revenue enhancement strategies identified in the financial analysis.
2. Implement economic development strategies aimed at attracting new retail development, offering experiential entrepreneurial incubators to residents and businesses and enhancing development around the potential train stop.
3. Finalize Grainger re-development plans, select developers, and complete builds to improve Touhy Triangle redevelopment.