

INTRODUCTION AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

On November 2, 2014 over 140 Skokie residents participated in the Community Forum. The forum consisted of participants responding to three questions including:

- “What are the qualities of our community that you value most?”
- “What would you like Skokie to be like in 2020?”
- For the third question participants selected a topic from question 2 and answered, “What do you need to do and what does the Village need to do in order for the idea you have chosen to become a reality?”

The following is a catalogue of the responses from the forum and is divided into four sections.

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What are the qualities of our Community that you value the most?

- Ability to access so many things within and outside of community
- Access to shopping local, cultural and major commercial
- Accessibility to government officials; Skokie officials are responsive
- Accessible
 - a. Yellow Line
- Accessible to surrounding areas: Glenview, Evanston, Chicago, Wilmette
- Activities (Farmers' Market/Backlot Bash)
- Affordable town - brings in diversity
- Always opportunity to get involved
- Appropriate services provided by local government – Animal control, health, police, fire and public works
- Availability of ethnic restaurants and niche shops
- Backlot Bash
- Block party program is good way to bring neighbors together
- Business-friendly
 - a. Government and business working together to create a vibrant community
 - b. Great shopping at Old Orchard and Village crossing
- Camaraderie among Village government, parks and businesses
- Camaraderie of Village government and residents of Skokie
- Celebrations
 - a. Backlot Bash
 - b. Festival of Cultures
 - c. July 4th parade
 - d. Wednesdays on the Green
 - e. Car Show
 - f. 1st Fridays
- Census reflect the diversity in government
- Centrally located to Loop and airport, good road network
- Citizen participation opportunities – bring feeling of ownership
 - a. Boards and commissions
 - b. Workgroups and events
- City access
- Clean town with twice a week refuse pick-up
- Cleaning from the Village is very much appreciated
- Collaboration (sense of community)
- Commercial areas
- Commitment toward education as evidenced in the quality of schools and the Library in Skokie
- Commitment toward the environment as evidenced through the quality of our parks and the persistence of the Bike Path
- Convenience
 - a. Public transportation
 - b. Old Orchard

- c. Close to Lake Michigan
- d. Many restaurants
- e. Near Chicago

Crime is a world problem, not necessarily a Skokie problem.

Cultural diversity

Cultural inclusion

Developing community

Diverse background of residents from an occupational and cultural perspective

Diverse community

Diversity (8)

Diversity – ethnic, racial and financial

Diversity – melting pot

Diversity and appreciation of it – bring people together

Diversity and how the community tries to address it

Diversity

- a. We are talking about this a lot but when I look around the room, it seems that most people here tonight are middle aged and white.
- b. We can converse with people from different backgrounds
- c. We can talk, be friends, know people
- d. But we don't, the community is pretty divided

Doesn't see gang problems in Skokie like Chicago

Downtown Skokie

- a. New downtown was mentioned frequently as to how well it was done
- b. The walkability and inviting characteristics of downtown was mentioned

Downtown Skokie businesses

Ease of dealing with Village employees

Ease of living in Skokie

Economic development is cutting edge; Tech Park is great

Education

Education system

ELL center

Emily Oaks is amazing and leaves lasting impression

Ethical government with appreciation for the people served

Ethnic backgrounds and community diversity are appreciated

Excellent schools

Family involvement in schools – District 73.5 is like a Village within a Village

Farmers' Market

Feels safe

Feels that as big as Skokie is, it still has a small town feel. Knows most neighbors and has good relationships with them.

Festival of Cultures

Financial/fiscal responsibility

Fire/Police

Follow through from Village government – “they plan it, then they DO it.”

Food! – terrific new restaurants, ethnic eateries

Friendliness, professionalism and responsiveness of the Village staff

Friendly
 Garbage pickup twice a week
 Good proximity to city
 Good services for seniors once they retire – classes, synagogues, bridge club
 Good transportation
 Great Library
 Great location – close proximity to the city, other suburban areas, expressway and airport
 Great municipal services
 Great park district
 Great parks, recreational facilities, walkability
 Great place to raise a family
 Great restaurants, including four Michelin-rated restaurants
 Great Village services – people are responsive and helpful when you call Village Hall
 Groups like IMODS, Caucus Party are dedicated
 Health Department
 Health facilities and the fact that the Village seems to lead positive initiatives with regard to health (example given was the smoking ban)
 Health services
 Health services/Agencies
 Helping people in need

- a. Food pantry

 Holocaust Museum
 How the governmental entities work together

- a. It was discussed a lot how the Village, the Library, the Park District work together better than they did in the past
- b. It seems that it is a closer knit community now with better communication

 Identity, willingness to evolve
 IMODS
 IMODS Events
 IMODS seen as marketing plus to boost downtown
 Improved streetscape to build upon
 Interested in Block Watch program
 Leaf collection program
 Less politics
 Library (10)
 Library – Nationally known
 Library is great
 Like the diversity of the Village, low amount of racism, richness of culture and professionalism of the Village Board and Village employees.
 Like to see more economic development
 Like Village to draw the “right” upscale businesses to town
 Likes the diversity of the Village
 Likes the Know Your Neighbor program that Village sponsored a few years ago
 Location (6)
 Location – Close to downtown, shopping, expressways, etc.

Long-standing celebration of our diversity with events such as the unique Festival of Cultures

Lots of long-time residents

Lots of things to foster community and get people involved

- a. Regular block parties (“We had one around September 11, 2001 and it was very comforting.”)
- b. Sense of community
- c. Good for families
- d. “Downtown is coming alive”

Low taxes

Loyalty to Skokie

Loyalty to small business and family-owned business

Loyalty, shopping and eating locally

Middle class neighborhoods

More community forums

More green space

More parking to go downtown

More walking and bike paths

Moved to Skokie five months ago from Andersonville in Chicago. Feels Skokie is spacious in comparison.

Multiculturalism

Municipality is fiscally sound – top bond rating

New government leaders have provided more outreach to residents

New ethnic restaurants in downtown

Nice neighbors, engaging community events

Open elected officials

Open Government – felt Board was honest and open

Other entities

- a. Other schools

- b. Skokie Public Library (I read that the library has 2,000 transactions/day!)

Overall involvement in community – people know each other

Overall safety, even though not as safe as Skokie used to be

Park District (3)

Park districts

Park system

Parks (4)

Parks are pretty

Parks are very well kept up

Peace and order

People of Skokie – friendly and supportive

Personal, one-on-one connections and service

Police and Fire

Positive thinking people

Premier library

Proximity to city

Proximity to regional amenities – downtown Chicago, universities

a. Accessibility of commuting – easy access to highways and mass transit

Proximity to the City and many attractions/events

Public Art

Public art program to build upon

Public library

Public services (twice weekly garbage collection)

Public Works

Public Works – twice/week garbage pick-up

Public Works Department is second to none

Public Works services

Quality of life, cultural diversity

Quality of schools

Quality of village services

Quality schools

Raising families

Recent change in Village leadership

Recycling program

Religious and cultural diversity

Responsive small-town environment

Responsive to residents

Restaurants

Safe and secure – happy with police

Safe place to live

Safety

Safety

a. Not afraid to walk in Downtown Skokie area

b. General feeling of safety

c. Top-notch police department

Safety – well patrolled and fast response from police. “I’m not afraid to walk around at night.”

Safety and security is important. The Police Department does a great job, but more can be done.

Safety and security is very important. Doesn’t always feel it is present near his house near Winnebago Park. Individuals do not bother him, but sometimes groups congregating are frightening.

School

School System

Schools (8)

Schools are good (2)

Senior Programs

Sense of community, diversity and appreciation

Service and sense of community

Services

Services – snow removal, recycling & garbage pickup twice a week

Services of the Health Department

Shopping (2)

Sidewalk snow removal program
 Skokie has a feeling of community
 Skokie has really good community services
 Skokie is less political than other towns
 Skokie parks (all of them, "It's nice that they serve all ages")

- a. Emily Oaks
- b. Devonshire Park

 Skokie Park District

- a. Weber Park
- b. The variety of opportunities

 Skokie Public Library (2)
 Skokie Public Library – It's the best; they have everything; like an entertainment venue!
 Small business focus, especially in Downtown; not being overrun by chains
 Small business, i.e., neighborhood Ace
 Strong Police
 Strong tax base
 Talking Farm
 Taxes (low compared to other communities)
 The availability of public transportation
 The homes
 The safety

- a. My table stated they feel that Skokie is safe and that the articles and concerns are an overreaction; to what is occurring everywhere
- b. The Police Department newsletter is liked

 Top rate library district – reading, audio visuals, used book sales
 Top rate park district – park district tennis facilities are top notch and friendly
 Top rate school systems
 Transit
 Transit and transportation network
 Transit systems
 Transportation (2)
 Trolley to get around downtown
 Twice a week garbage pickup, full recycling service, great snow removal, excellent services
 Two-way communication with Village
 Two-way street
 Values education
 Variety and efficiency of services provided by the Village
 Vibrant downtown, music venues, coffee houses, outdoor markets
 Village Government
 Village government and all the services provided
 Village government/services/multiple services
 Village services
 Village services – Police, Fire, Public Works. Five people pleased with the level services and the fast response for service requests.
 Village services

- a. Free flu shots/Health Department
- b. Public Works/twice weekly garbage collection
- c. Human Services

Walkability

- a. In the downtown and in general

Walkable

Water quality/cost

Welcoming spirit and neighborliness of everyone

Well-run and efficient public services including FD, PD, PW and Library

Well-run community

Youth Outreach Program – great program for helping out youth in the community

What would you like Skokie to be like in 2020?

Attract Young Families

Appeal to youth (young families)
 Attract young people
 Attract younger people
 Attracting more young families as well as single people
 Bring in younger families
 Make Skokie appealing for younger families
 More young families
 Subsidize younger families
 Want to bring in younger families/affordable housing for a younger generation

Community Involvement

More civic engagement needs to occur
 More community involvement from Latinos; support for Latino residents
 More community events
 More events like the community forum
 Create more community involvement and neighbor interaction
 Create outreach for welcoming everyone to Skokie
 Enhanced feeling and reality of knowing your neighborhood and your neighbors

- a. More block parties and block activities
- b. More supportive interaction with the community, school district and neighborhood perspective

 Need to have more block parties
 Like the Village engage in or foster the Open Communities program
 More community involvement from individuals in neighborhoods to individuals and government to community groups reaching farther and including other groups
 Promoting a more courteous culture in the Village
 Reach out to first generation residents

Cycling

Consider Divvy Bikes
 Continuation with installation of bike paths
 Expanded Bike path program
 Promoting bike paths and public transportation
 More and better linked bike lanes – direct links to the Forest Preserve
 More bike lanes
 Biking and creating lanes on Village streets

Dempster Street

Dempster Street should be revitalized and beautified
 More business development on Dempster Street

Diversity

Home of “integrated diversity”
 Increased diversity – lots of Asians but very few African Americans and Latinos

Like the diversity of the community to be continued as well as economic diversity too
 Attract more people of diverse ethnic backgrounds
 Better integration of the diverse Skokie population to provide for the needs of all and to have a resilient community that would be resistant to violence and drugs.
 People say they live in Skevanston and may not even know they actually live in Skokie. Those residents say they live in Evanston.
 25% of population is Asian, by 2020 this could be 30%, where is Asian representation in this room?
 Greater recognition of communities within the Village
 People and government work together to reflect diversity in many places. Political structuring to reflect diversity in many places.
 Home of “integrated diversity”

Downtown

More dynamic downtown
 More variety downtown
 More vibrant downtown
 More vibrant downtown. Plenty of places to eat but what to do after dinner?
 Need a destination place downtown
 Need more entertainment venues (especially in Downtown area)
 Pedestrian friendly Village, especially downtown
 Thriving Downtown - franchise type anchor tenants in downtown
 Thriving downtown with more diverse businesses
 Vibrant downtown – A destination place
 Continued downtown improvements

- a. All the downtown storefronts fully occupied
- b. An awesome development at northwest Oakton/Lincoln
- c. More evening entertainment so that it is a destination after hours
- d. Development in Skokie Blvd. next to the new train station

 Downtown should be more competitive with surrounding areas (restaurants, night life, microbrewery)
 Improved downtown
 Increased development of downtown

- a. Improve housing south of Oakton Street and north of OCC
- b. Village should buy/re-develop residential properties in that area

 Jazz/bar/live music venue downtown
 Need more shops

- a. More hip, cool, trendy stores
- b. Make more like a mall

 Attract a Starbucks
 Find a “draw” since it doesn’t have a Naperville riverwalk, Evanston lakefront or San Antonio canal
 Ice rink at Desiree site (short-term)
 Maximize use of land where Desiree was
 Comedy club/entertainment
 Establish a missing anchor

Premier destination to live and shop

Provide a boutique hotel to accommodate visitors and short-term stays for IS+TP employees...northwest corner of Oakton and Lincoln was a suggested location

Find a “draw” since it doesn’t have a Naperville riverwalk, Evanston lakefront or San Antonio canal

Economic Development

Improved economic development – attract more tech jobs to lower property tax levels

Like to see economic development of commercial and residential areas

Like to see empty lot development along Skokie Boulevard near the new Oakton Street

Skokie Swift station as well as Village-owned lots along Dempster Street near the

Dempster Street Skokie Swift Station.

More business development on Dempster Street

More specialty businesses, not “boxes” for developments

Speed up development – too many empty storefronts, etc.

Aesthetic improvements to commercial areas along Dempster, Main and Skokie

Boulevard: Village did a great job with Downtown, but what about the other shopping corridors?

Continued business district improvements – east/west Dempster, Downtown, East Oakton

See more business development, but also concerned about resulting traffic congestion

Vibrant Main Street

Accelerated acquisition of distressed residential properties in key areas and invest in redeveloping these properties

Change is slow and Old Orchard is trendy

Destination for shopping/dining/entertainment-broaden offerings with facilities that we have

Get boutiques

Expand the Science and Technology Park

Many empty storefronts – would like to walk to nearby shopping opportunities

More interesting uses in our commercial area – craft brewery, techy businesses

More pleasant opportunities to stroll and shop in Skokie

More shops

No vacant store fronts

Revitalize older shopping malls

Attract trendy shops and the art community – people will come to eat and shop

Like to see “positive” businesses move into town

More attention to community gateways; appearance of train stations and related parking lots, more “north shore” appearance of Dempster corridor

Fully developed areas so that taxes can be collected from them

Speed up development – too many empty storefronts, etc.

Preserve the history of some of Skokie’s buildings

Not compete with Old Orchard or Evanston – at least one downtown Evanston

restaurant struggles in the summer when the Northwestern students go home for the summer

Stronger manufacturing base with emphasis on technology

Employment

21st Century employment opportunities in the community

Entertainment

More entertainment events for younger adults 20-40

Enhanced Arts and Theater – including plays and cultural activities

Provide entertainment

Schedule more events

Environmental Sustainability

A showcase for environmental sustainability

Caring for the environment

Greener Village

Greener Skokie

Home to an organic food co-op, community garden

Incentivize homeowners with making green choices

Restaurants mandated to utilize bio-degradable, environmental friendly materials

Finances/Taxes

Financial Stability – Develop ways where citizens can invest in the community. Pool local resources to put back into the community. A place where citizens will invest their time to make it a better community.

Healthy tax base

Reducing TIFs (hurt schools)

Using 100% grants for projects (not for overhead/staff)

Flood Control

Flood control

Flood control improvement

Flooding problems should be eradicated in most instances

Less street ponding in rainstorms

Government

People and government work together to reflect diversity in many places. Political structuring to reflect diversity in many places.

Diversity in Government

Government should reflect the diversity

More community involvement from individuals in neighborhoods to individuals and government to community groups reaching farther and including other groups

Political restructuring to reflect diversity

Political restructuring to encourage more diverse voices to join a commission

More diversity of Skokie's leaders – leadership should reflect the diversity of Skokie

More diversity throughout Village organization

Better enforcement of current ordinances – parking/commercial vehicles “Broken Window Theory”

Village Management/board should be more representative of the Diversity in the Village
 Diversity in Government
 Increased communication

Housing

Affordable Housing (2)
 Better understanding of Section 8 – has an undeserved bad rep
 Formulate a “mid-century architectural appreciation commission for local landmark status
 Free of Section 8 housing
 Low interest loans to upgrade housing stock
 No foreclosed residences
 Revitalization of neighborhoods/improve residential districts/Use of federal funds to incentivize. Rental properties are already doing this.
 Revitalization of older housing stock and multi-family structures
 Skokie should have a more interesting and varied housing stock (Floral Avenue is a start)
 Upgrade the housing stock. We need unique and affordable housing
 Viable and affordable housing stock

Image

Skokie as a “destination” place – more culturally vibrant
 Skokie has an image issue, when Optima went up, Skokie was not mentioned. A new part of the Village was created called “Old Orchard Woods.”
 More desirable image for Skokie (better branding) – need a cool, hip image
 Change the image of the community which is currently older, white and Jewish
 Make Skokie more trendy and sexy
 Greater sense of community – pride in community
 Improved image
 Remove the “old sense” of the Village

Miscellaneous

Consider gaming opportunities
 Clean
 More of the same great qualities
 Have neighborhoods establish identities within the larger Village
 More social services available to residents

Parks

Defined closing time on parks
 Skate Park

Property Standards

Accelerated acquisition of distressed residential properties in key areas and invest in redeveloping these properties
 Better enforcement of current ordinances – parking/commercial vehicles

“Broken Window Theory”

Enhance/improve multi-family housing

Would like more focus on property standards enforcement for multi-family residential properties. Building Department VERY involved and demanding in my recent home addition but most multi-family buildings are in poor shape.

Public Safety

A safer place with a greater image of safety

An increase in arrests for more serious crimes; don't arrest for less serious crimes.

Help people rather than arrest (decriminalizing small amounts of drugs)

Better integration of the diverse Skokie population to provide for the needs of all and to have a resilient community that would be resistant to violence and drugs.

Better proactive communications with community on how police are utilized, i.e., where is the mobile unit?

Continuation of Skokie being a desired destination

- a. The presence of people makes you feel safe and in various areas of the Village there are more people.

Continue vigilance on crime. Early intervention programs in schools

Crime rate down

Crime-free walkable space from Crawford Avenue to Library with a Starbucks attached (to library)

Less crime and same high level of safety in all neighborhoods

Like more safety programs (People for a Safer Society)

Like to feel safe walking anywhere in Skokie at night

Lower crime

Lower crime (reversal in what they see as increasing crime)

Maintain the safety level

Police focusing on gangs/drugs in Skokie

Safe to live (police presence with recent shootings)

Safety could be improved – one shooting, one mugging or one battery is one too many

Safety in the community perceived on reality no fear and reaction

Village should explore the impact of the Concealed Carry Law and discourage it

Schools

Address disparities between school districts – fewer school districts

Attract more businesses to school district. General unequal distribution on retail taxes by school district

Consolidate Skokie School Districts

Consolidated grade schools

Consolidation of some of the Skokie school districts

Elementary school districts should be consolidated – share the wealth!

Equity in funding for school districts

Expanded Oakton Community College

Raise the performance of schools to reflect top 5%

School district consolidation is group's primary concern. Funding disparity between grade school districts – need to give all students in Skokie equal opportunities to

succeed academically. We pay so much in taxes, too much duplication in administration?

School districts consolidated

Solvent community college

Strengthen the school-parent partnership

The attainment of a feeling of being one community, fostered by Consolidation of School Districts

Services

Continued excellence with school systems, park districts, village services, library services

Have better snow removal, including clearing paths through the mounds of snow between the sidewalk and street, so the visitors using the parallel parking spaces don't need to walk in the street to the corners to access the sidewalks and businesses.

Relocate overhead utilities to be underground

Technology

More tech friendly Village

Springboard off tech park – more jobs, more tech curriculum in schools, tech fairs in schools

Village wide Wi-Fi

Teens/Youth

Assistance for younger people

Economic Opportunities for Youth

a. Supporting college-bound and trade bound students

Focus on programs for youth to keep them away from gangs and criminal activity

Traffic and Transportation

As a community face problems with honesty toward finding solutions

a. Be cognizant of development creating traffic concerns (Touhy & McCormick)

Better traffic enforcement

Better transportation (bicycles, pedestrian, inter-Village bus)

Bus shuttle

Direct rapid transit to O'Hare

Enhance public transportation

Have more traffic-calming, as Oakton Street is a "highway".....flashing beacons, speed bumps, etc.

Increased safety when walking under Skokie Boulevard viaduct just south of Oakton Street

Less cars

More Yellow Line stops

No pot holes

Safer roads

Sound barrier on Edens

Transportation center

Trolley service to have a route in town – a free local shuttle
Village takeover of more roads
Village to assume responsibility for state and county roads

Walkability

Better, safer pedestrian ways
Continuation with enhancing walkability in the Village
More pedestrian friendly
Pedestrian friendly Village, especially downtown

TABLE IDEAS

What do you need to do and what does the Village need to do in order for the idea you have chosen to become a reality?

Expand bicycle paths and bike lanes, better link the community path system, and enhance public awareness and use of bicycles for both work and recreational use.

- Bike paths and links need to be enhanced, expanded and improved. Physical improvements should include some combination of the following:
 1. Extend the Union Pacific path the entire length of the Village and link to other paths
 2. Construct a path that links directly from the community to the Forest Preserve path
 3. Coordinate with Morton Grove for a Lincoln Avenue bike lane extending to the Forest Preserve near Dempster Street
 4. Consider another north/south path in the center of the community possibly in the median of Crawford Avenue or along Keeler Avenue
 5. Establish east/west bike lanes or a path that would connect the North Shore Channel path to the Union Pacific path and others
 6. Promote bike lanes in Skokie's industrial areas and along all major streets where feasible
- Bicycle enthusiasts need to be more vigilant in promoting desires/demands relative to bike usage
- The Village should adopt the "Complete Streets" policies regarding bike path expansion and enhancement.
- Bike enthusiasts to coordinate/promote bike safety training curriculum.
- Consider establishment of bicycle rental business or bike transfer service.

Mental health and homeless

Participants at the table discussed the issue and came up with an idea that the Village and the volunteers could work together to formulate a study of homeless and mental illness in Skokie.

Environmental Sustainability

- It was felt that the Village was missing an overall comprehensive approach to this. In the big picture we don't want to have Lake Michigan to be the next Aral Sea. "Let's do our part."
- The Village could be a leader in this subject.
- Investigate into Star Communities: Evanston is.
- Investigate into Cool Cities.
- "What does the Village need to do?"
 1. Research the topic
 2. Determine and summarize what does the Village do now?
 3. Remove all the Emerald Ash Borer trees and replace with diversity
 4. Be a model community and provide vision
 5. Decision makers need to make this part of their focus and plan
 6. Continue with Spring Greening
 7. Recycle more
 8. Plant more trees
 9. Drop down to one garbage pick up a week. Twice a week pickup is a waste of resources
- "What do you need to do?"
 1. Allow me to raise chickens
 2. Recycle more

More transparent use of TIF and grant funds

- Clearly identify the concerns and communicate them to the Village
- TIF burden spread amongst all schools
- Accountability of how TIF spent
- Favor developers who do not require or ask for TIF district
- Fund more actual charitable organizations not sidewalks
- Absorb the administrative cost by the Village

Public Safety

One resident told his story of basketball games at parks in the summertime, from there, everyone went around and told their own stories/issues/fears about public safety. Also, the recorder for this session kept notes in her own small notebook and wrote nothing on the table paper.

Parks in the summer are frequented by teens, they stand in the street and block passage. Park District and police need to referee the games, supervise the goings on, and make it more organized. More neighborhood watch programs, campaign to educate the residents about neighborhood watch – everyone neighborhood should have one. What can be done to prevent issues like the recent shooting death – more cooperation across schools/police/parents, foster trust. More police presence/more police on the street. Have more engagement of officers with the “serve” part of “protect and serve.” Absentee landlords do not control who gets on their property. What do you do when you see a drug deal with your own two eyes? At Kenton and Keeney the mailman says not to go there because of dangerous people. Parenting issues, police need to teach how to be a parent.

Getting parents involved in elements of personal safety and responsibility that is being taught in schools (District 73.5, 219, etc.) Education, communication, block watch, clean. Crime against senior citizens. I (heart) Skokie.

What can residents do? Get personally involved in neighborhood.

What can the Village do? More police presence in and out of police cars.

At another table on Public Safety, the following points were discussed:

1. Additional law enforcement personnel in general
2. Cameras in the park
3. Education for children, starting at a young age regarding gangs and violence and how to avoid
4. Acknowledgement from the Village Board that gangs are in Skokie and that we have a problem
5. Coordination with D219 regarding public safety issues – residency issues
6. Police to become more reflective of the population of Skokie
7. Gun violence education
8. More transparency with regard to the hiring process of police officers (statistical information)
9. Increased training for police regarding dealing with the mentally ill
10. Increased training for police regarding racial profiling
11. Village leaders should work across the borders with neighboring towns to prevent gun violence and access to guns
12. More information to the public with regard to the use of the Mobile Command Vehicle
13. Increased traffic enforcement

Development in Downtown Skokie

1. Resident 1: She would like to see the Downtown area more vibrant. She'd like to see the vacant areas along Skokie Boulevard near the Oakton Street Skokie Swift Station developed. She'd like to see transparency of discussions with developers regarding plans for the Downtown area.
2. Resident 2: Skokie should showcase artists to draw people to the Downtown area. Skokie should increase the density of population in the Downtown area.
3. Resident 3: Skokie should increase wattage in street lights (Downtown). Skokie should add boutique shops. A galleria should be constructed on the Desiree property. Skokie needs to create new branding – Downtown Skokie is not catchy.
4. Resident 4: She believes the Village should buy all of the properties from Oakton to Mulford and Lacrosse to Lincoln to expand the footprint of the Downtown area and redevelop existing commercial properties. She's like a 400-space public parking garage erected in this area. Acquisition of this area would reduce crime and drug dealing. The Village should expand the Façade Program and require a common theme.
5. Resident 5: He believes the Village should encourage eclectic additions to the Downtown area to create a night life area. He believes Crafty Beaver should move to acquire more acreage for Downtown development. He believes Downtown Skokie consists of hodge-podge architecture currently. It needs commonality and a master plan and a uniform look. We need a must-see venue/facility downtown.
6. Resident 6: Skokie needs a multi-use development for the Desiree property.

General comments were made about the Village providing incentives to small businesses in the Downtown area.

At another table on Downtown Skokie, the following was discussed:

Bars and coffee houses with entertainment will create a more vibrant Downtown. Well-known performers got their start in bars and coffee houses. The Village should take steps to ensure that Downtown Skokie can provide the venues for the next generation of performers who will contribute to its vibrant night life. Skokie residents need to visit the Downtown to make it vibrant.

School District Consolidation

It was understood by the group that this topic resides outside the jurisdiction of the Village Board and would take legislative action at the state level to accomplish. However, they felt that there were actions that could be taken, both on the individual and Village level, that could move this effort forward.

1. Develop a committee to educate residents on the topic
2. Grass roots effort to plan/educate/lobby
3. Work with the school boards
4. The Village could assist in facilitating, supporting, educating and lobbying

Improving academic achievement in Skokie schools

What residents need to do:

1. Need increased awareness about where their tax dollars are going in school districts
2. Increased connect between parents and teachers
3. Match seniors with students to provide tutoring and assistance
4. Match college students with a learning disability to elementary or high school students dealing with the same disability. This idea could be expanded to similar life stressors, similar country of origin, similar primary language or culture at home, etc.
5. High schools should serve as models and motivation for elementary schools

What government needs to do:

1. Connect universities with STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) programs to local schools to build job skills
2. Start language programs earlier when they are easier for youth to learn
3. Assimilate test taking and specifically ACT and SAT prep into high school curriculum
4. Create program where students can sample different classes and teachers before choosing them
5. Focus on enrichment programs like arts, music and theater.

Create higher standards for multi-family properties

Residents, actually landlords, must take more pride in buildings to promote cleaner and safer housing. The Village should implement more inspections of areas and be vigilant with fines.

1. Want reasonable/secure housing
2. Foreclosures and low rents have led to an increase in Section 8 renters
3. Worried about crime
4. More police presence
5. Landlords must keep up property – take pride
6. Unannounced Village inspections of properties
7. Don't want Skokie to deteriorate like Evanston

Integrate our diversity

- Skokie is an increasingly diverse community, which is one of our community strengths, but we are diverse in “silos” and not integrated cross-culturally. Cultural events attract participants of that particular culture, but how can we get to a point where we celebrate each other’s cultures as a community?
- New immigrants come to our community with cultural norms and perceptions different from ours; many come from countries where governments are corrupt or unfriendly, not conditioned to our form of government and democracy. Similar lack of involvement at the school level with their children. Suggest the Village have its website and public information translated to many languages to reach these non-English speaking audiences. In addition, suggest Village conduct a Community Vitality Scan; how are public institutions viewed by different cultural groups? Are they welcoming, easy to navigate, or too intimidating to new residents? (primary suggestion for this topic)
- See Lincoln Junior High “Parent Academy” pilot program to educate parents about participating in school programs; Village should provide support to implement this program in all schools.
- There is a degree of anxiety about the changing demographics of our nation and community; the calls for increased police services are rooted in this anxiety. Village should encourage programs that provide an opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other; the community is the sum whole of blocks and neighborhoods – focus on “micro community building.” Examples mentioned were block parties, know your neighbor program. Minimize racism and fear by building local relationships between families and neighbors.
- Recommended to invite Phil Nyden, Ph.D., Evanston resident, urban planning professor at Loyola University to speak about this topic.
- Identify areas/institutions in Skokie that are “social seams” (Jane Jacobs reference); places where different cultures can comfortably and organically interact with one another.

More productive use of underutilized and commercial properties

What should the Village do?

1. Develop Dempster properties
2. Reduce parking restrictions for hard to develop properties such as large site on Howard – subdivision of large parcels

3. Work with Cook County and other tax bodies on incentives, i.e., Cook County 6B tax relief for two years
4. More flexibility to rezone vacant large properties
5. Create tax incentives to use Skokie-owned business land
6. Determine what kinds of businesses we want and then do outreach to get them here
7. More active Chamber of Commerce

What can residents do?

1. TIF program and tax incentives
2. Encourage shopping in Skokie – Walmart versus Target

Community involvement and community integration

- Make available more information on how to get involved in the community
- Foster more community/location based/block party type activities
 1. Supporting “reach out” to the community
 2. Facilitate a feeling of being welcoming and supportive community
 3. Work to bridge the community and interaction “gap” at the new immigrant level by working through the first generation Americanized children
 4. Relieve the feeling that people are on their own and not supported from a cultural diversity standpoint
 - Neighbors are integrated and not culturally segregated therefore some individuals new to the culture feel unsupported
 - ELO education program expansion to include integration topics
 - Enhanced welcome packet – especially for renters
 5. Development of a Diversity Center – not supported by Village or Park District
 6. Exposing ethnic entertainment at schools to support culture discussions and understanding
 7. Look for other successes in cultural diversity experience that have been successful in other communities
 8. Develop “Myth Busting” public relations with regard to negative rumors associated with the community
 9. Encourage follow-up in the welcoming of new persons to the community
 - Foster the development of a community ambassador pool supportive of various cultures
 - Create more of a personal touch “one-on-one” discussion with new residents
 10. Find leaders in Ethnic Cultures and Cultivate their contacts and sphere of influence to support community togetherness
 11. Produce documents, such as the Village Newsletter in multiple languages
 12. Motivate residents to have block party activities through specific promotions such as:
 - Community-wide block party weekend
 - Toolkits for conducting a successful block party
 - Resurrect/foster an enhanced welcome wagon process in the Village

Brand image to reflect what Skokie is

1. Need new logo and tag line – no more Indian and define meaning of “Village of Vision”
2. Create an “Image Committee”
3. Create new brand that embraces:
 - Cultural arts
 - Architecture (host midcentury/modern festival)
 - Abundance of healthy/outdoor activities
 - Great shopping
 - Great restaurants
 - Affordable, unique living
 - Good housing stock

- Artist community feel
 - Small enough to know your neighbors
 - Clean
 - Family friendly
 - Excellent schools
 - Technology job destination
4. New tag lines:
- Start Here, Stay Here, Play Here
 - Skokie – Live Life Here
 - Move Up to Skokie

Making Skokie known for tech jobs

Only one resident at this table and his comments are as follows:

1. Does Skokie recognize this as an opportunity?
2. There is a need for these jobs, there is a shortage of technical skills set in Skokie
3. Need viable program so companies recognize Skokie as a long term investment in the community
4. Companies want to come here but we aren't doing anything to make that happen
5. Skokie attracts other people from other countries that are here on a Visa but we should offer these tech jobs to U.S. residents that are local

What can the individual do?

1. Learn more about what Skokie already offers.

What can Skokie do?

2. Develop technical skills in the school districts – start with offering trade schools and internships
3. Skokie should look at other communities that are successful in bringing in tech jobs like Naperville, Illinois and Silicon Valley, California – what do they do to attract these jobs and build technology?
4. Provide tax incentives to the tech companies to get them here

Flood remediation

1. Provide “best practices” or standards for home improvements to avoid flood damage
2. Help residents troubleshoot their vulnerability. Clogged line, cracked foundation, poor grading
3. Provide a list of approved Village flood system contractors
4. Use permeable paving when possible
5. Provide residential assistance from grant funds. Any subsidies would be appreciated
6. More communication about why certain areas flood. What exactly is Deep Tunnel and why isn't it helping? Can MWRD or other agencies provide data?
7. Crisis support. Day of flood hotline for assistance
8. Respondents want to be proactive but are overwhelmed by tech issues and cost

Improve use of taxes and lower taxes

What the Village needs to do:

1. Have separate meetings like this forum for each of the following: Police, Fire, Village Leaders, Cook County and School Districts
2. Help schools consolidate
3. Be more transparent
4. Cut where you can
5. Hear out small business owners

6. Have Oakton Community College be self-sustaining financially

What can residents do:

1. Attend meetings – get involved
2. Let their thoughts be known to leadership

More community involvement

1. Citizens
 - Become involved in their neighborhoods
 - Block parties
 - Encourage groups to reach beyond their borders to meet and work with other groups
2. Village
 - Develop, promote and sustain programs aimed at bringing neighborhoods together
 - Communicate better with all the different groups in the Village and bring them together in new ways

Make Skokie attractive to young families

1. Citizens
 - Promote Skokie to people you know
2. Village
 - Promote development of affordable housing targeting young families

Better transportation system within the Village

1. Citizens
 - Utilize, support and promote cycling, walking and public transportation
2. Village
 - Conduct a study to determine the current and future transportation needs (wants) of the residents
 - Implement positive steps towards the results of the study

More green space

There was agreement for the need for more green space. There was a lot of positive feedback on the Main Street median greenery project. There was support for expanding these median projects and also installing them in the multi-family districts. The group supported the creation of more resident community gardens. There was also interest in the greening of the Oakton-Lincoln site.

Better reflection of community's diversity

Village responsibilities:

- Increase diversity of citizens that serve on boards and commissions
- Improve communication to make participation more accessible
 - More targeted communications
 - More targeted invitations to participate

- Recruit diverse people to serve on the boards
- Expand outreach through formal and informal channels
- Make it a point to highlight the importance of diversity in the Village newsletter and explicitly state that more involvement is needed
- Get more people involved in neighborhood activities to instill more pride and ownership of community
- Skokie community forum that specifically targets people of color

Resident responsibilities:

- Participate and get involved

Additional points discussed:

- Instill a sense of “my community, too” among diverse residents
- Photos of NewSkokie do not represent the Village’s diversity
- Intentional focus on minority recruitment
- Provide training for commission involvement

How do we encourage young families to move to Skokie?

1. “The future of Skokie is young families.”
2. Downtown Skokie doesn’t offer much for teens. I have to walk 40 minutes over to Village Crossing on Touhy to find shops that I like.
3. We need a coffee shop, maybe a Starbucks, in downtown
4. How about trendy shops downtown?
 - Bubble Tea
 - Japanese Arcade
 - Second run theater with youth discounts
 - Cool clothing shops
5. How about developing neighborhoods and not focusing so much on downtown? I would like to have a coffee shop on a corner in my neighborhood and maybe a few restaurants in the neighborhood, places I could walk to would be great.

What can we do about distressed properties in Skokie?

1. Distressed properties are a detraction for young families
2. Our housing stocks needs to be good
3. “There are many foreclosed properties in my neighborhood and it is having a big, negative impact.”
4. Maybe turn foreclosed properties into neighborhood coffee shops?
5. Maybe convert foreclosed properties into homes for people with disabilities? Note from Catherine: I put this gentleman in contact with Pete Peyer and mentioned to him that Skokie has far more of these types of facilities than any other community in the area.
6. Maybe turn foreclosed properties into rental properties for young families
 - We need affordable housing to attract young families
7. We need more information to get a handle on the situation
8. What have other communities done to successfully handle distressed properties?
9. Maybe turn distressed properties into parks or neighborhood shops
10. Do we need to rezone those areas?

Village of Skokie – Programs in Progress

A number of ideas recommended at the November 2, 2014 Skokie Community Forum are already in effect, in whole or in part. Following is a summary of some of these initiatives:

At-risk youth

1. The Village of Skokie participates in the Niles Township Youth Coalition that is comprised of local community agencies, governments and other key partners that serve Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Niles and Skokie. Its purpose is to bring together the key social service agencies that support children and families in Niles Township, to help provide a safe and secure community.
2. The Village of Skokie's Youthful Offender Court Call is a special separate court call just for young people under 21 years of age. After appearing in court, youthful offenders may be assigned community service, anger management classes, education programs, or, when indicated, family counseling. The objective of the program is to provide guidance and direction to young people. Information at www.skokie.org/HSYouthOutreach.cfm.

Bicycle paths and bicycle lanes under development

1. Skokie Valley Trail Multi-Use Path (Oakton Street to Lincoln Avenue) - this project has been awarded and work has started, with completion in 2015.
2. Main Street Bike Lane - a bike lane will be placed in each direction for the entire length of Main Street. The pre-final plans have been submitted to the Illinois Department of Transportation and work is expected to be completed in 2015.
3. Old Orchard Road (Skokie Blvd. to Gross Point Road) Multi-Use Path - this path is planned for the south side of Old Orchard Road. The plans are being prepared and construction is expected to begin in 2016.
4. East Howard Street (Crawford Avenue to McCormick Blvd.) - this project will complete the Howard Street Bikeway System and consists of the shared-use lane, a bike lane, and a multi-use path on the north side. Design is slated for 2015 and construction in 2016.

Community Garden

1. The Skokie Park District offers garden plots for lease to Skokie residents. The garden is located behind the Tennis Complex on Niles Center Road, one block west of Main Street. Plots are rototilled and available for planting April 1, depending on the weather, and water is available on-site. Information at <http://www.skokieparks.org/garden-plots>.

Village of Skokie – Programs in Progress Continued

Dempster Street redevelopment

1. The Village established a Tax Increment Financing District in November 2010 to support new retail along West Dempster Street. Since that time, the Village has been actively marketing several ‘opportunity sites’ on Dempster Street west of Kilpatrick Avenue.
2. In the past several years, numerous new businesses have opened on West Dempster Street, including Red Mango, Dunkin Donuts, Oberweiss Dairy and That Burger Joint, Creative Pathways Learning Center and more.
3. A number of existing Dempster Street businesses have remodeled and added amenities to their establishments, including McDonald’s, Kaufman’s Deli and Walgreens. Construction is now underway for the new Pita Inn restaurant at 4700 Dempster Street on the site that formerly housed the Barnum & Bagel restaurant.

Enhanced theater and art – established community venues

1. North Shore Center for the Performing Arts in Skokie, 9501 Skokie Boulevard, is home to the 867-seat Center Theatre and 318-seat Northlight Theatre and features hundreds of musical, comedy and theatrical performances for adults and children throughout the year. Information at www.northshorecenter.org.
2. The Skokie Theatre, 7924 Lincoln Avenue, is owned by MadKap Productions and offers a wide variety of programming and classes in the acoustically advanced 140-seat theatre. Information at www.skokietheatre.org.
3. Devonshire Playhouse, 4400 Greenwood Street, is operated by the Skokie Park District and offers a variety of children’s and community theater performances and classes throughout the year. Information at www.skokieparks.org/devonshire-playhouse.
4. The theatre departments at Niles North and Niles West High Schools present numerous excellent theatrical productions during the school year. Visit www.niles-hs.k12.il.us/ for information.

Expansion of the Illinois Science + Technology Park (IS+TP)

1. The IS + TP currently has 20 companies that employ over 1,300 people.
2. LanzaTech, a New Zealand-based, clean-tech/biofuel company moved its global headquarters to Skokie in 2014 and will employ some 140 workers by the end of 2015. Other new nanotech firms include AuraSense Therapeutics, iNfinitesimal and NuMat Technologies.
3. In early 2014, the Technology Innovation Center-Skokie (TIC) business incubator opened at the IS+TP that has leases with three startup companies: Eco Faire, NanoAI and Quality Training Institute with more to come. TIC works closely with students and professors at Northwestern University’s Kellogg and McCormick Schools on business and technology-related matters.

Village of Skokie – Programs in Progress Continued

Flooding – street ponding after significant rainfall events

1. The Village began installation of a comprehensive storm water runoff control program in the late 1980s that includes a combination of on-street storage, detention facility storage and relief sewers.
2. Flow regulators placed in sewer inlets throughout the community facilitate on-street storage, or ponding, after significant rainfall events. The flow regulators restrict the rate at which rainwater enters the sewer system, and are intended to reduce the incidence and severity of residential flooding. Information at www.skokie.org/FloodRelief.cfm.

Foreclosed properties

1. The Community Development Department tracks foreclosed properties in the Village based on information received from a monthly foreclosure reporting service. Most of the foreclosures are single family homes and condominiums, and most of the properties that have gone into foreclosure have been updated and sold to new owners. The rate of foreclosures has dropped significantly since 2012 with foreclosed property sales surpassing new foreclosures as the real estate market improves. Despite the reduction in foreclosures, the Village remains concerned about their effect on surrounding properties and neighborhoods. The monthly foreclosure report is shared with other Village departments, and foreclosed properties are inspected on a regular basis by the Property Standards Division and placed on the Police Department's watch list. When maintenance issues develop, the Property Standards Division works with banks and foreclosed property maintenance companies to assure that they are brought into compliance with code. Failure to make repairs results in further enforcement action including the issuance of citations for each violation. Questions or concerns can be directed to info@skokie.org or to the Community Development Department/Property Standards Division at 847-933-8400.

Job training for young people - NE3I job training partnership

1. The Nanotechnology Education, Employment and Economic Development Initiative (NE3I) is a public-private, job-training partnership between the Village of Skokie, Oakton Community College (OCC), Forest City Enterprises/Illinois Science + Technology Park and local area high schools. In spring 2014, NE3I completed its first year of nanotechnician classes as part of a two-year OCC Nanotechnology Certificate program. Information at www.oakton.edu/academics/special_programs/nanotech/.

Village of Skokie – Programs in Progress Continued

Public Safety Issues

1. Education for children, starting at a young age, regarding gangs and violence and how to avoid:

One of the Police Department's crime prevention officers is assigned to the Officer Friendly Program which is provided to elementary schools throughout the Village. As part of the Officer Friendly Program, the officer interacts with and gets to know the children, creating trust and serving as a positive role model for students to emulate. This program is supplemented with the assignment of school resource officers (SRO) to two junior high schools in the Village.

2. Coordination with D219 regarding public safety issues – residency issues:

The Police Department meets regularly with the administration of School District 219, as well as many other Skokie school districts, to discuss current or potential public safety issues. The Department also communicates and coordinates with the respective Security Directors for each high school regarding everything from issues involving a single student to general school safety and active shooter plans. The Department also has an SRO (School Resource Officer) assigned full-time to each school to act as liaison to both the students and the faculty. The SRO performs myriad functions, including giving topical presentations to students, discussion with individual students, meeting with parents and faculty regarding truancy or similar issues, providing extra school security and acting as a resource for specific crime-related issues. The Police Department does not share in the responsibility of identifying or enforcing residency-related issues.

3. More transparency with regard to the hiring process of police officers (statistical information):

The authorized strength of the Police Department for any given year is broken down by division within the Police Department budget, and is accessible to the public. As position openings occur, candidates are taken in rank order from the existing eligibility list and are invited to commence the selection process that includes a background investigation, psychological examination, polygraph testing and oral interview with the Fire and Police Commission. At the conclusion of the selection process, hiring decisions are solely the responsibility of the Fire and Police Commission. While the Police Department does not collect statistical data regarding the hiring of police officers, that information may be available through the Personnel Division.

Village of Skokie – Programs in Progress Continued

4. Increased training for police regarding dealing with the mentally ill:

The Police Department has a policy specifically dedicated to providing staff with guidelines for recognizing and dealing with the mentally ill, and a second policy focusing on the proper handling of individuals exhibiting excited delirium. Recruit officers are

required to receive instruction regarding each policy during their expanded basic training. Further, police officers receive refresher training annually on excited delirium and at least every three years on procedures for dealing with the mentally ill. Similarly, the Police Department social worker is mandated to meet annually with the training director to assess the need for additional training bulletins on dealing with the mentally ill.

5. Increased training for police regarding racial profiling:

During expanded basic training, all new recruits are required to receive instruction regarding bias-based policing and traffic stop data collection. The training director also is responsible for ensuring that sworn Police Department personnel periodically receive profiling related training, including training on this policy and related legal issues. Supplemental diversity/inter-personal training is provided for any member or employee as circumstances warrant. Similarly, in concert with appropriate disciplinary action, appropriate remedial training is mandated for personnel with sustained bias-based policing (or other discrimination) complaints.

6. Village leaders should work across the borders with neighboring towns to prevent gun violence and access to guns:

Police Department staff at every level is in constant communication and coordination with colleagues from neighboring communities regarding issues of mutual concern, including gun violence, armed robbery and related offenses. In addition to ad-hoc and standing regional task forces, Police Department investigators from surrounding communities meet monthly to share information and intelligence regarding area gang activity, emerging crime trends and possible suspects. Commanders, deputy chiefs and the Chief of Police Anthony Scarpelli meet regularly with their counterparts to coordinate efforts and share resources necessary to address crime issues.