

A large, mature tree with a thick trunk and a wide, spreading canopy of leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The tree is the central focus of the image. In the background, there is a paved path that curves around a grassy area. The sky is bright and slightly overcast. The overall scene is a peaceful park setting during the fall season.

Village of Vernon Hills Sustainability Planning 2025-2026

Updated January 2, 2025

VILLAGE OF VERNON HILLS SUSTAINABILITY PLAN 2025-2026

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the Village of Vernon Hills has been active in environmental protection activities and enhancement of natural resources through local and regional initiatives, and participation with various stakeholders.

During 2022, by Resolution 2022-004 the Village formally joined the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Greenest Region Compact. The Greenest Region Compact offers support and framework for Mayors and community leaders to identify and analyze initiatives and efforts that contribute to sustainability. The GRC framework focusses on 10 categories that include climate, economic development, energy, land, leadership, mobility, municipal operations, sustainable communities, water, and waste & recycling. By adopting the GRC, the Village thereby formally committed to sustainability both locally and in the region.

Building on decades of previous efforts to include turning a brown space (former Nike base) into a green space; expanding Century Park by reclaiming a former commercial area and turning this area into a green space; converting the former Laschen Center (municipal building) into green space; reclaiming a commercial space at Town Center and turning this into park space; being an early leader in banning Coal Tar for parking surfaces and bans on Phosphate use in order to protect watersheds, the Village continues to utilize the GRC framework to identify initiatives that contribute toward sustainability.

The GRC framework builds on 30 sustainability plans and guiding documents in use by Illinois Municipalities, and incorporates more than 10 documents from regional, national or global organization that guide municipal actions. The GRC framework provides goals and objectives that are broadly applicable and suited to municipal action.

During the December 17, 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting, staff presented several Capital Improvement Projects for consideration. These projects along with the other identified initiatives will provide staff with a plan for FY 25-26.

INITIATIVES

- Continue to engage all stakeholders who are committed to sustainability (SWALCO, Waste Management, Vernon Hills-Lincolnshire Go Green, etc.);
- Continue membership with the Solid Waste Agency of Lake County (SWALCO).

- Extended Producer Responsibility for many products to include packaging, carpet, and other materials continues to be a priority to divert items from landfills. Each of these products costs individuals and communities a significant amount of resources to recover, process and/or dispose of safely. Proposed legislation would require producers to provide resources to SWALCO to support proper disposal, or in the case of paint, require support for handling of excess product and waste; now handled through HHCW collection. Support for this legislation is within the scope of the Greenest Region Compact under Leadership (Advocate for State policies that support investment in municipal advances in sustainability).
- Evaluate SWALCO's request for the Village to participate in a joint-administered recycling program.
- Improved Permit Process – research paper-reduction permit process for Technical Review. A streamlined process will be introduced that will reduce the amount of paper copies required as well as reduce printing costs for the petitioner.
- Residential (Municipal) Waste Contract. Prepare for negotiations and determine strategy to achieve the next contract from WM, or prepare RFP.
- Single Use Plastics Legislation - Monitor pending legislation that proposes a statewide tax and/or ban on plastic and paper bags.
- Continue to engage retailers to determine if sustainability planning is underway and or voluntary steps are being considered.
- Review fleet replacement timeline, vehicle options, and determine if hybrid and/or electric vehicle replacement plan.
- Monitor HHW and HCW disposal options. With the closing of the Lincolnshire Household Chemical Waste Collection point, and with the reduced number of SWALCO regional collection events, explore other options. Waste Management has proposed a subscription service that would be funded by residents (as part of the municipal contract) known as “At Your Door.” SWALCO is promoting numerous one-day events to collect this material.
- Communicate SWALCO HHW and HCW disposal options and events to the community.
- Street Light LED conversion program for Village streets. (Energy - Upgrade Streetlight Equipment) \$250,000 for 2025, \$200,000 for years 2026-2029.
- Plan to implement EV charging station on Village property, (Mobility -Collaborate to provide alternative fuel infrastructure at public sites).

- Implementation of the Master Plan for restoration of Harvey Lake, (Land - Manage public areas landscapes to optimize ecosystems and support biodiversity).
- Development of the Village's Pedestrian and Bike Master Plan, (Mobility - Create a bicycle and pedestrian plan to improve connectivity in the community).
- Pedestrian Safety and APA Improvements \$50,000 per year for next five years.
- Bicycle Way Finding Project – Signage to encourage bicycle transportation and connectivity to Village businesses and attractions.
- Seavey Ditch Stream Restoration – Program to reduce sediment leading into Lake Charles. \$1,800,000 budgeted.
- Lake Charles Sediment Removal (mouth of Lake) and Sediment Trap Project (at Gregg’s Parkway) to reduce sediment leading into Lake Charles.
- Lake Charles Shoreline Restoration and WDR Golf Course Channel Restoration Project.
- Lake Charles Dam Restoration \$140,000.
- RT 60 Median Enhancements – Improve aesthetics and replace aged and dying trees. \$75,000 for FY 26/27.
- ADA Transition Plan \$25,000.
- Pedestrian Safety and ADA Improvements \$50,000 per year for the next five years.
- Village Entry Monument replacement plan \$80,000
- Implement organics collection and education opportunities at Vernon Hills Days.
- Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness - The Village is participating in the [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus EV Readiness Program](#) and hopes to earn an EV Ready Bronze designation in the spring of 2025. Participants in the program are trained on various ways to improve municipal support for electric vehicle infrastructure, such as incorporating electric vehicle provisions in the zoning code and building code. Please see the [Electric Vehicle Resources](#) Electric Vehicle Resources page for additional information.