



Village of Winnetka

Village Council Special Study Session

April 14, 2026 at 7:00 PM
Village Hall
510 Green Bay Road

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Public Comments**
3. **Discussion**
 - a. Open Space Policy Discussion
4. **Closed Session**
5. **Adjournment**

NOTICE

Village Council meetings are video recorded. All agenda materials are available at villageofwinnetka.org (Governance > Agendas & Minutes); the Reference Desk at the Winnetka Library; or in the Manager's Office at Village Hall (2nd floor). The Village of Winnetka, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, requests that all persons with disabilities who require certain accommodations to allow them to observe and/or participate in this meeting or have questions about the accessibility of the meeting or facilities, contact the Village ADA Coordinator, 510 Green Bay Road, Winnetka, Illinois 60093, 847-716-3543; T.D.D. 847-501-6041.



Agenda Item Executive Summary

TITLE: Open Space Policy Discussion

PRESENTER: Scott Mangum

AGENDA DATE: April 14, 2026

CONSENT: No

ITEM TYPE: Presentation

ITEM HISTORY:

At the June 10, 2025 Village Council Study Session, the Council identified open space context and evaluation as a key policy initiative to be discussed further.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At the April 14, 2026, Village Council Study Session, the Village Council is scheduled to discuss the concept of open space and options to protect and regulate the use of open spaces within the Village.

Winnetka Council Caucus (WCC) Survey. The last two years, the WCC Survey has included questions about open space, and the 2025 survey asked respondents to personally define open space in the community. Based on responses provided by the community in 2024 and 2025, the WCC Plank #2 - Protecting Our Open Spaces offered the following insights and recommendations:

The 2024 WCC Survey shows that most respondents (55%) are satisfied with the Village's open space and a significant majority (75%) feel the open space should be protected from development or sale. This year, we sought clarity on what residents consider to be "Open Space" and learned that almost 90% of respondents consider "Open Spaces" to include "Parks and natural areas", and almost 50% think "Open Spaces" can also mean "Public gathering spaces (e.g. plazas or athletic fields)". Less than 14% consider spaces without buildings (such as parking lots) to be "Open Spaces".

Given this very clear direction that residents value and want to protect our Open Spaces, and that Open Spaces are defined as parks, natural areas, and public gathering places, the Village Council should develop and implement specific measures to preserve and protect our existing Open Spaces in the Village from being developed in ways that would not be consistent with this definition of an "Open Space". Open Spaces may still be enhanced or modified, but should remain Open Space. Furthermore, the Village Council should not be limited in considering alternate uses for spaces without buildings (such as parking lots).

Open Space Definitions

As background, the following definitions of “Open Space,” which are found in the American Planning Association’s publication, *A Planners Dictionary*, illustrate how different communities define “open space” within their zoning ordinance:

Any land or area, the preservation of which in its present use would: (1) conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources; or (2) protect streams or water supply; or (3) promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches, or tidal marshes; or (4) enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, or sanctuaries; or (5) enhance recreation opportunities. (Redmond, Wash.)

Land and water areas retained for use as active or passive recreation areas or for resource protection in an essentially undeveloped state. (Cecil County, Md.)

Land used for recreation, resource protection, amenity, and/or buffer yards. In no event shall any area of a lot constituting the minimum lot area of said lot nor any part of an existing or future road or right-of-way be counted as constituting open space except that buffer yard areas may be included in the area of a lot constituting the minimum lot area. (Lake County, Ill.)

That area suitable for passive recreational use or which provides visual relief to developed areas, exclusive of typical trapezoidal type flood-control channel rights-of-way, area devoted to parking, vehicular traffic, or private use, and any other area which does not significantly lend itself to the overall benefit of either the particular development or surrounding environment. (Santa Rosa, Calif.)

Those areas of a lot which except as provided by this zoning bylaw are to remain unbuilt and which shall not be used for parking, storage, or display. (Maynard, Mass.)

An area or portion of land, either landscaped or essentially unimproved and which is used to meet human recreational or spatial needs, or to protect water, air, or plant areas. (Clarkdale, Ariz.)

Current Zoning Definition and Regulation

While the Winnetka Zoning Ordinance references open spaces in a variety of contexts, there is no definition of open space as a land use category. As a result, there is no comprehensive inventory of open spaces within the Village. Since the Zoning Ordinance does not currently define or have specific regulations tailored to open spaces and there is demonstrated community interest in protecting open space from development, the Village Council is asked to provide policy direction regarding the following options:

Option 1 - Comprehensive Plan Recommendation: Establish Specific Zoning District or Standards for Open Spaces. The current Comprehensive Plan, *Winnetka Futures 2040*, does include a land use designation for “Open Space” land uses, which includes public parks and recreation facilities, pocket parks/plazas, and Cook County Forest Preserve Land. The Comprehensive Plan includes several references to open space. Pillar 6: Healthy & Engaging Lifestyles contains information and analysis of existing open spaces and related Goals 6.1-6.5. Additionally, Goal 1.7 and Initiative 1.71 (Attachment 1) are directly related to the regulation of open space:

Winnetka Futures Goal 1.7 - The Village will continue to ensure that open space uses, such as Park District parks, beaches, and facilities, are compatible with the residential neighborhoods in which they are located.

Initiative 1.7.1 - Study and consider establishing a specific zoning district for open space uses, or specific zoning standards for such uses within existing residential districts. This would allow more appropriate zoning standards for these uses.

The Village Council is scheduled to discuss the content of a pending rewrite of the Village Zoning Ordinance at a study session in June. The first half, \$75,000, of that anticipated total cost of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, \$150,000, was included in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget. One option is to include the establishment of a specific zoning district for open space in a draft Request for Proposals that would be responded to by land use consultants. A specific zoning district for properties categorized as open space could designate permitted and special uses and establish bulk and setback regulations specific to the type of improvements allowed. This option is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan recommendation.

Option 2 - Expand Overlay Zoning District. The Lakefront Preservation Overlay District was established in 2023 with the purpose to preserve and maintain the character of certain publicly owned properties along Lake Michigan in the event they are no longer publicly owned, specifically including, without limitation, the open space and open vistas provided by properties along Lake Michigan in the Lakefront Preservation Overlay District and to otherwise promote the preservation of existing open space and existing landscaped areas along Lake Michigan. While this purpose is tied directly to the location of the properties along the lakefront, the overlay could either be extended to other open space properties with an amended purpose of the overlay district, or a new overlay district could be established that could also regulate the future use of such properties.

Option 3 - Negotiate Inter-Governmental Agreements with Applicable Agencies. A third option for regulation would be to explore negotiating Inter-Governmental Agreement(s) with the property owner(s) of open spaces within the Village, including the Winnetka Park District, the Cook County Forest Preserve, the School Districts and the Library District. The agreements could include voluntary limitations on future development of those properties; however, the limitations would be subject to negotiation with the respective property owners. Both the Winnetka Park District and the Cook County Forest Preserve reference the protection of open space in their respective mission statements.

The Winnetka Park District (<https://www.winpark.org/comprehensive-master-plan/cmp/>) mission statement is located on the bottom of page 5 of the Comprehensive Master Plan:

Our mission is to provide a balance of quality recreation and leisure opportunities while protecting assets, natural resources, and open space to benefit present and future generations.

The Cook County Forest Preserve (<https://www.cookcountyil.gov/agency/forest-preserves>) purpose states:

To acquire, restore, restock and manage lands for the purpose of protecting and preserving natural communities including, prairies, forests, wetlands, rivers, streams, and all their associated flora and fauna for the purpose of providing educational, leisure and outdoor recreation opportunities for Cook County residents now and in the future.

After Council discusses the various options to protect open spaces within the Village, and provides policy direction to staff, additional analysis will be required to identify the open space within the Village as well as identify existing documentation which provides protection for certain parcels. A good example of this would be the Village Green, donated by Charles E. Peck in 1869 for "park purposes" with a stipulation that "no structure shall ever be built upon it."

RECOMMENDATION:

Following a presentation from staff and after hearing comments from the public, the Council is requested to provide policy direction regarding pursuing one or more of the following potential options to define and regulate open spaces within the Village:

- Option 1 - Comprehensive Plan Recommendation: Establish Specific Zoning District or Standards for Open Spaces
- Option 2 - Expand Overlay Zoning District
- Option 3 - Negotiate Inter-Governmental Agreements with Applicable Agencies

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Winnetka Futures, 2040 Comprehensive Plan, Goal 1.7 and Pillar 6 (Goals 6.1-6.5)

ATTACHMENT 1

Initiative 1.6.3

Incentivize the conversion of upper-story office space and non-residential space to residential use. Examples of incentives might include reduced or waived building permit fees for conversions, and administrative design review for exterior modifications.

Initiative 1.6.4

Discourage other alterations of mixed-use buildings that compromise residential occupancy. This includes eliminating required building components or systems, such as means of access, mechanical systems, etc.



Live Work Space © David Delgado/Bloomberg/Getty Images

Initiative 1.6.5

Allow the creation of live/work uses in the downtown commercial districts.

As of November 2022, the Chicago metro area continued to report peak office weekday occupancy of only 56%. In the post-pandemic era, where people are working from home more than ever before, it is increasingly important to provide live/work spaces close to where the workforce lives. Winnetka has historically been a bedroom community. Since many residents no longer commute to job centers daily, the Village has the opportunity to provide creative working spaces closer to home.



Single-family Home, Winnetka

GOAL 1.7

The Village will continue to ensure that open space uses, such as Park District parks, beaches, and facilities, are compatible with the residential neighborhoods in which they are located.

Consideration must be given to compatibility to ensure non-residential uses do not conflict with the residential nature of the surrounding area.

Initiative 1.7.1

Study and consider establishing a specific zoning district for open space uses, or specific zoning standards for such uses within existing residential districts. This would allow more appropriate zoning standards for these uses.

Under the Village's existing zoning ordinance, uses such as parks are allowed as special uses in all Village zoning districts. Establishing specific zoning standards for open space uses would result in more transparent zoning regulations and allow for greater customization of zoning standards to address the different building and siting requirements of these types of uses.

ATTACHMENT 1

PILLAR 6:

Healthy & Engaging Lifestyles

***Vision Statement:** A unique lakefront community that values a variety of carefully-managed and well-connected parks and open spaces, and that treasures access to natural resources, recreational opportunities, and cultural pursuits, helping residents achieve a balanced and fulfilled quality of life.*

Goal 6.1: The Village will continue to promote and encourage partnerships with other units of government and agencies to conserve, restore, and enhance natural features and ecosystems, to ensure accessibility to natural areas, parks, and other open or public spaces, and to support recreational facilities and programs that support the health of residents of all ages and abilities.

Goal 6.2: The Village will support and promote community institutions and other units of government in advancing programs and facilities that provide life-long educational opportunities that broaden all Winnetka residents' understanding of the world in which we live.

Goal 6.3: The Village will continue to support community-wide arts and cultural efforts that provide enrichment to community members through active participation, promotion, and programming efforts with other businesses, community institutions, and arts entities.

Goal 6.4: The Village will support health and wellness through innovative and diversified recreational, learning, and cultural opportunities in its public parks, plazas, trails, and open spaces.

Goal 6.5: The Village will support policies that preserve and protect the unique natural resources of and the recreational opportunities provided by the Lake Michigan shoreline and bluffs.

Winnetka Futures 2040 Plan includes ten Community Pillars. The following section describes Winnetka's vision for *Pillar 6: Healthy & Engaging Lifestyles*. A summary of the existing conditions analysis along with community input received over the course of the process are shared in the next few pages. Following that is a list of actionable initiatives for each of the goals listed above.

Note that the order of goals and initiatives does not reflect their level of priority.

Parks, Open Space, Bluffs, & Lakefront



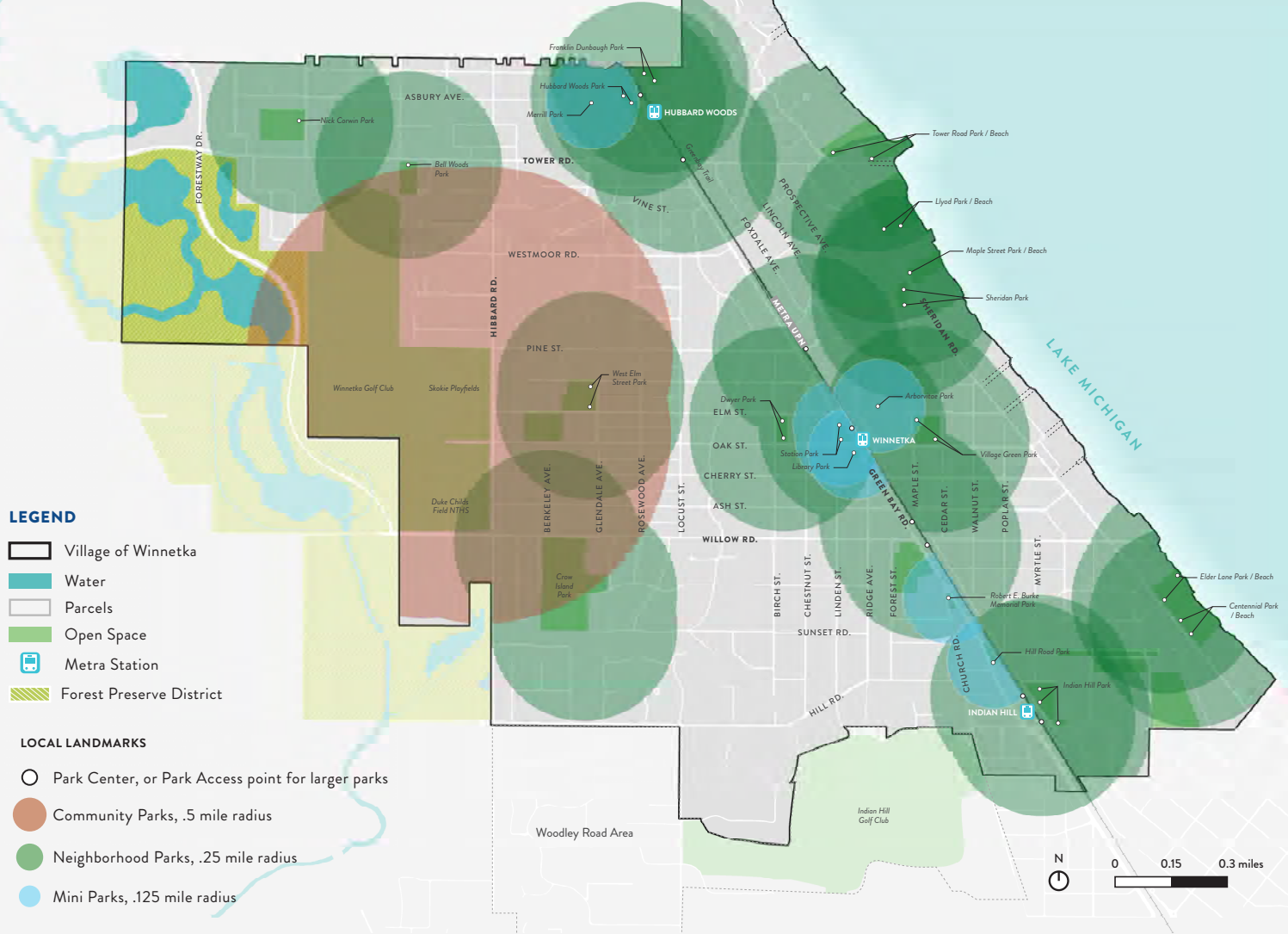
Winnetka has always been a community that values its lakefront, parks, and open spaces. Residents often cite the abundance of these resources as one of the Village’s most attractive features. Winnetka’s open spaces are well-planned and spread throughout the community. The Village has approximately 388 acres of parks and open space, which comprises roughly 16 percent of Winnetka’s total land use. The open space acreage includes parks, forest preserve lands, beaches and bluff areas, and recreational areas. However, open space goes beyond parks; a comprehensive approach must be taken to ensure adequate open space resources and preservation of the natural environment. Open space for parks and recreation, resource conservation, public health and safety, and character-defining features should all be considered. Winnetka’s open spaces are highlighted in Figure 31.



Dwyer Park © Winnetka Park District

ATTACHMENT 1

FIGURE 31: PARKS LEVEL OF SERVICE



WINNETKA PARK DISTRICT INVENTORY INCLUDES PARKS, BEACHES AND BLUFF AREAS, AND RECREATIONAL AREAS.

<p>2.6 acres of mini parks</p>	}	<p>26 acres of beaches and ravines</p>	<p>205 acres ACTIVE RECREATION - includes programmable parks that offer special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment.</p> <p>38 acres PASSIVE RECREATION - includes simple parks or environmentally-sensitive open spaces - typically not programmed.</p>
<p>79 acres of neighborhood parks</p>		<p>9.4 acres of the Green Bay Trail</p>	
<p>162 acres of community parks</p>		<p>43.6 acres of additional parks and open spaces</p>	

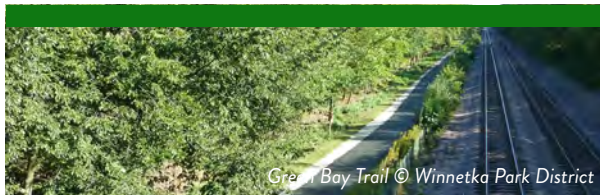
COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE

Public parks and open spaces in Winnetka are managed by two agencies: the Winnetka Park District and Forest Preserves of Cook County. The combined park and open space acreage for both agencies in Winnetka is 372.25 acres. The Winnetka Park District is the largest provider, operating more than 25 parks and open spaces. These fall into one of three categories:



Mini Parks

Mini Parks are small-scale open spaces that meet a variety of needs, including: small event spaces; play areas for children; and spaces for relaxing, meeting friends, taking lunch breaks, etc. *Examples include: Merrill Park, Station Park, Hill Road Park, Happ Road Park, etc.*



Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood Parks are generally designed for informal active and passive recreation and community gathering. Elements include playgrounds, picnic areas, sports fields, and trail systems. *Examples include: Centennial Park, Elder Lane Park, Hubbard Woods Park, Lloyd Park, etc.*



Community Parks

Community Parks are larger parks that focus on meeting regional and community-wide recreation needs. They host athletic teams and affiliate programs on courts and fields. Skokie Playfield is the only Community Park in the Winnetka Park District's boundary.

LAKEFRONT BEACHES, PARKS, AND BLUFFS

Winnetka's lakefront is one of its most prized assets. Although most of the lakefront is lined with single-family homes and large private estates, there are ample opportunities for public access. The Winnetka Park District has developed and adopted the Winnetka Waterfront 2030 Master Plan in 2016. The plan provides a sustainable strategy for the preservation, protection, restoration, and enhancement of Winnetka's lakefront for both Winnetka residents and a broad range of Lake Michigan user groups. This plan is meant to serve as a conceptual guide for future projects designed to preserve and enhance Winnetka's lakefront beaches and parks, strengthen resiliency measures, and guard against bluff and shoreline erosion.

Tower Road Park and Beach

Tower Road Park and Beach anchors Winnetka's lakefront on the north. It will continue to serve as the primary swimming beach and the northern hub for the Park District's boardwalk/fitness trail course.



Winnetka Beach

SHORELINE STABILIZATION

Due to current fluctuating record-high water levels, high wave action, and other environmental factors, shorelines along Lake Michigan are experiencing erosion and significant destruction at unprecedented rates. Some shorelines are eroding at a rate of 17 feet per year. Winnetka's lakefront, both publicly and privately owned, has been negatively impacted by shoreline erosion.

Bluffs of Winnetka

The bluffs of Winnetka's lakefront are an iconic natural land form recognized early on as a symbol of the community. Winnetka's prior comprehensive plans have noted the need to protect and enhance its natural features and environmental resources, including the bluffs. The Lake

Michigan bluffs and the ravines leading to the lake are important features of the Village, providing pleasant wooded areas and affording beautiful views of the lake. Bluffs and ravines are fragile ecological resources that should be properly managed. Building too close to the edge of a bluff or ravine can weaken it, possibly leading to collapse and affecting neighboring properties. Failure to maintain proper plantings on the slope can lead to erosion. Lake Michigan bluffs, if not properly protected from waves and high water, can be severely eroded by the lake.

The Park District has taken efforts at monitoring and restoring its parkland. As with shoreline erosion, bluff erosion is a major concern across Lake Michigan.

SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Residents find community in many different Winnetka Park District (WPD) spaces and programs. For example, the **A.C. Nielsen Tennis Center**, a Winnetka Park District facility, features eight indoor and 12 outdoor courts (five lighted), a nursery, complete pro shop, and shower/locker room facilities. Group and private lessons are available for all ages and abilities, as are permanent court time rentals. Community meetings and public engagement gatherings are often held in the WPD's Community Room, located near the WPD offices in the relatively new addition to the Nielsen Tennis Center, and in the Tennis Lounge, with its fireplace and living room-style furniture.

Additional special use facilities in Winnetka include:

- » The **Winnetka paddle tennis facility**
- » The **Park District's Winnetka Golf Club**
- » The indoor **Winnetka Ice Arena**
- » The **Skokie Playfields**.

PARKLAND LEVEL-OF-SERVICE ANALYSIS

Level-of-Service (LOS) analyses evaluate how well parks and amenities serve the current needs of the community. Benchmarks for park and recreation agencies by the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) measure the total acreage needs of communities. LOS is assessed through multiple avenues: acreage, distribution, and amenities.

Acreage

Acreage LOS is the calculation of the recommended minimum land required to support recreation activities and facilities for a given population. NRPA's population ratio method (10 acres / 1,000 population) focuses on the direct relationship between recreation space acreage and people served. A community with a population of about 12,000 should have about 120 acres of total park and open space, per the NRPA's ratio. With 372 acres of parks and open space, Winnetka is well-served and has more than three times the minimum LOS recommendations.



372 acres of parks and open space in Winnetka

Distribution Level-of-Service

Distribution Level-of-Service (DLOS) Analysis studies the geographic distribution of parks and evaluates how equitably these sites are placed throughout the community. This may reveal that some areas are under-served or that the district is serving its residents and should shift its efforts towards maintaining and updating existing sites. The LOS of Winnetka's parks is highlighted in Figure 31.

Mini park service areas (blue discs) and neighborhood park service areas (green discs) are adjacent to or truncated by Green Bay Road, a major barrier. Conversely, the community park service area (red disc) is not interrupted. The overlapping service area discs create a gradient ranging from light to dark, illustrating to which degree residents are served. Residents who fall within a dark area are served by multiple parks and their amenities.

Overall Park Distribution Analysis

Given that Winnetka exceeds the recommended acreage for parks and open space, typical service area metrics have been altered to show potential gaps in service. The overall park service area map shows a 0.125-mile, a 0.25-mile and 0.5-mile service area radius around the existing mini parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks, respectively. Residents living east of the Green Bay Trail are highly served by neighborhood parks. The Green Bay Trail, categorized as a neighborhood park, has an uninterrupted service area that extends west of the trail. To the west, Skokie Playfield, Winnetka's only community park, is the main recreation space, along with several neighborhood parks.

Overall, the vast majority—90%—of Winnetka residents have access to a mini, neighborhood, or community park within zero to 0.5 mile of where they live.



of Winnetka residents live within a 10-minute walk from a neighborhood park.



Winnetka Lakefront

Recreation Programs

In addition to parks, the WPD provides residents and surrounding communities with numerous annual recreation and leisure programs that include fitness, sports, creative arts, education, social activities, and special events. The District's offerings cater to all generations, including infants, toddlers, young adults and seniors. WPD has robust programming for children, including a variety of summer camps, special events, and sports.

WPD provides a variety of adult recreation programming, including golf, ice skating, paddle tennis, and tennis. WPD also offers a variety of fitness programs, including fitness bootcamp, High Intensity Training (HIT), and yoga.

The North Shore Senior Center (NSSC) in Northfield is the primary senior center available to Winnetka seniors. NSSC provides a variety of services and programs to Winnetka seniors, including a range of fitness and recreation courses and classes. Recreation classes are offered in tennis, exercise and dance, health and wellness education, and personal fitness.

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE RESULTS

What big ideas do you have for park and open space do you think are suitable for Winnetka?

There were numerous responses to this question from all demographic groups. Dog park and dog beach were among the more popular responses. The need to improve the Green Bay Trail and park bathrooms was mentioned. Participants also mentioned a desire for additional open space at the post office site, as well as additional amenities, such as an expanded marina and food options or restaurants along the beaches and lake front.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

The spiritual health needs of Winnetka residents are met by the following religious institutions:

- » Christ Church, an Episcopal church
- » Congregation Hakafa, a Reform Jewish congregation
- » Grace Presbyterian Church
- » Lake Shore Unitarian Society
- » Sacred Church/Divine Mercy Parish, a Catholic church
- » Saint Faith, Hope & Charity Church, a Catholic church
- » Winnetka Bible Church
- » Winnetka Congregational Church, an independent congregation-led Christian church.
- » Winnetka Presbyterian Church



Winnetka Presbyterian Church

OTHER COMMUNITY SPACES

Winnetkans gather in other non-public spaces as well. Residents often mention running into friends when at the grocery store (Grand Foods especially, but also Lakeside Foods). They also congregate at Winnetka's various coffee shops, including Peet's, Starbucks, and the recently-opened Hometown Coffee and Juice. One non-public space that serves an important community function is The Book Stall. This private locally-owned bookstore is a natural gathering space partly due to its connection to Peet's Coffee. The Book Stall's knowledgeable employees (several of whom are former schoolteachers) provide a high level of service to adults and children alike. The store hosts numerous gatherings and lectures by visiting authors, book clubs, and even a regular comedy series.



Hometown Coffee and Juice © Patch

ATTACHMENT 1



Improvements at Tower Beach

PILLAR 6:

Healthy & Engaging Lifestyles

Vision Statement: A unique lakefront community that values a variety of carefully-managed and well-connected parks and open spaces, and that treasures unlimited access to recreational opportunities and cultural pursuits, helping residents achieve a balanced and fulfilled lifestyle.

GOAL 6.1

The Village will continue to promote and encourage partnerships with other units of government and agencies to conserve, restore, and enhance natural features and ecosystems, to ensure accessibility to natural areas, parks, and other open or public spaces, and to support recreational facilities and programs that support the health of residents of all ages and abilities.

Public park and open spaces, facilities, and program offerings are provided by several agencies in the Village of Winnetka. While all these agencies provide open space and recreation opportunities, they do so in varying capacities. Providing access to a variety of open spaces through agency collaboration is key to increasing quality of life and mental health benefits for current and future Winnetkans. While the 372 acres of open space exceed the minimum level-of-service analysis, the Village should continue to consider ways to collaborate with other providers as opportunities arise.

Initiative 6.1.1

Continue to collaborate with the Park District, local school districts, Forest Preserves of Cook County, and others to create opportunities that enhance accessibility to the open spaces of Winnetka. (refer to initiative 8.3.5)

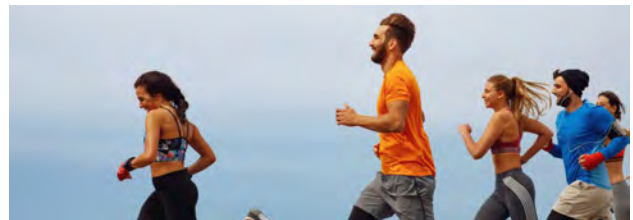
Consider eliminating barriers to access by completing and expanding paths in parks, connecting segments of existing trails, and providing opportunities for improved pedestrian crossings and connection points, among other approaches.

Initiative 6.1.2

Continue to collaborate with the Park District, School District, Library District, Community House of Winnetka, and other community institutions to offer programs that maintain active and thriving Village recreation programs, offering a variety of sports, exercise, arts and crafts, cultural, life

skills, educational, social, and leisure programs for residents of all ages and abilities.

The ongoing success of programming that caters to a multitude of generations in Winnetka will require continued and improved collaboration between public and private recreation providers. This will allow the Village to rapidly respond to the growing and ever-changing needs of the community and its niche users. As the community continues to develop its recreation offerings and expand programming, agreements with affiliate organizations, whether formal or informal, can better track resources, offerings, and scheduling of indoor and outdoor spaces.



Adult Triathlon Prep © Winnetka Park District

ATTACHMENT 1

Initiative 6.1.3

Coordinate the sharing of information with the Park District, nonprofit service providers, private leagues, and the school districts so that the public is made aware of the full range of recreational opportunities.

In an active community such as Winnetka, there is always a plethora of events, programs, and recreational opportunities across multiple agencies. Providing a unified calendar of events that is administered by all agencies, (e.g., through a crowdsourcing platform), is one way to improve accessibility to a larger group of residents.

Initiative 6.1.4

Ensure that local regulations do not discourage businesses and nonprofits from providing private recreational and physical fitness training facilities in the community.

Initiative 6.1.5

Regularly share information with other local governments regarding grant opportunities to fund enhancements to the natural environment, public parks and open spaces, and public recreational facilities and programs.

GOAL 6.2

The Village will support and promote community institutions and other units of government in advancing programs and facilities that provide life-long educational opportunities, helping to broaden all Winnetka residents' understanding of the world in which we live.

Understanding the world that we live in broadens our perspective and provides residents of all ages, and particularly the next generations of Winnetkans, the ability to recognize interdependence and position themselves as global citizens.

Initiative 6.2.1

Support the efforts of community institutions such as the Winnetka-Northfield Public Library, Oakton Community College, and the Winnetka Youth Organization to create programs that provide lifelong learning opportunities about Winnetka and the world.

The ability for Winnetkans to broaden their awareness will continue to enforce a positive attitude to lifelong learning through access to digital and non-digital educational resources and services. For residents of all stages of life, this means continued access to learning opportunities. For the organizations providing learning opportunities, this encourages strengthening their capacity to advance educational curricula, and addressing barriers that limit collaboration and partnerships.

Initiative 6.2.2

Ensure that local regulations and processes do not discourage businesses and nonprofits from providing supplemental educational opportunities for Winnetka parents and their children.



Educational Programs © Winnetka Library

GOAL 6.3

The Village will continue to support community-wide arts and cultural efforts that provide cultural enrichment to community members through active participation, promotion, and programming efforts with businesses, community institutions, and arts entities.

Identifying opportunities to enrich Winnetka’s prosperity and well-being through accessible arts and culture initiatives has the potential to better interconnect the community. A stronger sense of place can be achieved through genuine and unique expressions of the Village’s identity. This goal aims to engage the local arts community and cultural organizations in enhancing community vibrancy and building support for transformative placemaking energy.

Initiative 6.3.1

Collaborate with businesses and community organizations, such as the North Shore Art League, to create programs that encourage participation in arts and culture.

Arts and culture programs are often a reflection of a community’s identity, influences, and traditions. Expanding and growing Winnetka’s art programs would positively impact residents of all ages, as well as provide local artists and not-for-profit organizations the opportunity to be more impactful. Creative arts and culture programs go beyond the visual and performing arts to include applied arts, such as fashion and interior design; literary arts, such as poetry and novels; and culinary arts, such as dining, baking, and wine and beer making.



Winnetka Club - Fashion Show

Initiative 6.3.2

Consider creating a cultural arts advisory board to collaborate with local businesses and organizations, facilitate the programming of additional cultural and arts activities, and consider the installation of public art around the Village. Public art could include temporary installations in public buildings, sculptures in public open space, or school projects displayed in public places.

CHARLOTTE, NC

CASE STUDY:
Arts + Culture Advisory Board

Arts + Culture Advisory Board in Charlotte, NC, created in January 2021, strengthens policies and strategies to stabilize the arts and culture sector in the city. Aside from identifying opportunities for collaboration among artists, locals, organizations, and other partners, the advisory board is focused on increasing annual investment in arts and culture and securing sustainable funding resources for a variety of initiatives. An arts and culture board can further grow the arts ecosystem and respond to community needs and opportunities.

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	PILLAR 5	PILLAR 6	PILLAR 7	PILLAR 8	PILLAR 9	PILLAR 10
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-----------

Initiative 6.3.3

Develop a program by which residents may provide dedications in memory of, or to honor, Winnetka residents and business owners.



CHICAGO, IL

CASE STUDY:
Dedication Program

The Chicago Park District developed a tree dedication program, The Green Deed Tree, that allows residents to have a tree planted in the park of their choice, providing lasting recognition of the significant people and occasions in their lives. A small donation covers the tree planting. The tree is guaranteed to stay in place for a minimum of two years from the date of planting.

GOAL 6.4

The Village will support health and wellness through innovative and diversified recreational, learning, and cultural opportunities in its public parks, plazas, trails, and open spaces.

Winnetka is well-known for its one-of-a-kind green spaces and lakefront beaches. Through increased access, varied amenities, and program offerings, the Village and its community partners can continue to provide opportunities for physical activity to support Winnetkans’ health and wellness. In addition to physical health, parks, trails, and open spaces also enhance quality of life and improve mental health by providing access to and connections with nature, which have been vital to communities, particularly during the pandemic.

Initiative 6.4.1

Support and promote health and wellness for all residents through a safe, connected, and accessible pedestrian and bicycle network, and by offering resources for recreation.

Initiative 6.4.2

Continue to encourage information-sharing with local bodies of government and other public and nonprofit organizations regarding open space and recreation to foster the sharing of resources, ideas, and concerns, so as to lead to new solutions or efficiencies.



Outdoor Yoga

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	PILLAR 5	PILLAR 6	PILLAR 7	PILLAR 8	PILLAR 9	PILLAR 10
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-----------

ATTACHMENT 1

Initiative 6.4.3

Improve existing, or create new, non-motorized linkages among recreation and open space facilities for Village residents, businesses, and schools, and among the facilities themselves.

Ensure that adequate linkages to regional trail systems are also in place.



WINNETKA, IL

CASE STUDY: Green Bay Trail

The Green Bay Trail runs along the east side of Chicago's Metra Union Pacific North commuter rail line almost entirely along the route of the former Chicago, North Shore & Milwaukee interurban electric railroad. Improvements to the 2.4 miles of this paved trail, encompassed within the boundary of the Village, would strengthen and support community health and wellness, mobility and connectedness, safety and security, business district vitality, and preservation of open space and natural systems. A master planning process is currently underway to evaluate the trail's usage, appearance, and design for potential upgrades and enhancements, through a community-led study.

Initiative 6.4.4

Support the efforts of the Park District and other community organizations to expand and/or modify Winnetka's recreational programming to fill gaps in services.

Initiative 6.4.5

Partner with the local school districts and other community organizations to enhance local programs that support the social and emotional health of our youth, and that support innovative learning.



© Chicago Tribune

WINNETKA, IL

CASE STUDY: Social Emotional Learning

Winnetka District 36 established SEL (Social Emotional Learning) as a key goal and started implementation during the 2019-20 school year. In coordination with CASEL (Collaborative, Academic and Social Emotional Learning) New Trier High School is planning professional development on a Township-wide initiative to support SEL in all school communities that started in June of 2020. This direction ensures that students have improved academic performances, better attitudes and behaviors, and reduced emotional and social withdrawals. For teachers, it will improve patience and empathy, encourage healthy communication, create safe learning environments, and reduce burnout.



© The Winnetka Public Schools

GOAL 6.5

The Village will support policies that preserve and protect the unique natural resources of and the recreational opportunities provided by the Lake Michigan shoreline and bluffs.

Initiative 6.5.1

Continue to study and consider establishing development regulations addressing construction of shoreline stabilization projects and specific recreational projects in and adjacent to Lake Michigan and its shoreline that will not cause environmental damage to or interfere with the greater recreational opportunities provided by the Lake and adjacent areas.

Such regulations would help protect the natural environment of Lake Michigan by ensuring that construction along the shoreline is done in a responsible way. Second, it would provide guidelines for property owners and developers who wish to build shoreline stabilization projects or recreational facilities, ensuring that they are following best practices and adhering to local laws and regulations.

Initiative 6.5.2

Study and consider establishing development regulations that requires construction on and adjacent to the bluffs along the Lake Michigan shoreline that protects, restores, and manages the stability of the bluffs and natural shoreline and that are contextually sensitive to the natural features of the bluffs.

Bluffs are a unique and sensitive feature of the Lake Michigan shoreline, providing habitat for a variety of plants and animals, providing stability and protection for the tableland at the top of the bluffs, as well as serving as a popular destination for recreation and scenic views. Balancing restoration with the need to protect and preserve the natural environment of the shoreline would ensure that construction on or near the bluffs will aim to minimize the impact on the natural features and preserving them for future generations.



PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3	PILLAR 4	PILLAR 5	PILLAR 6	PILLAR 7	PILLAR 8	PILLAR 9	PILLAR 10
----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	----------	-----------