

Town of Merrillville  
**QUALITY OF LIFE PLAN**  
Indiana CLEAN Community Challenge

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**Plan Coordinated by:**

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## I. Town of Merrillville Clean Community Mission Statement

*The Town of Merrillville is committed to enhancing the quality of life by providing a cleaner and healthier community by assuring the municipality operates in compliance with relevant environmental regulations, strategic planning, and conservation of resources as well as voluntary efforts to protect the environment through continuous environmental improvement. We will work to increase awareness of good environmental practices to citizens, businesses, tourists and municipal departments through partnering, and education.*

Project classifications will focus on five (5) broad areas, each having its unique environmental impacts.

1. **Low Impact Development/Green Retrofits**: The town will work with local business owners to provide technical assistance and education in order to encourage best management practices (BMPs) that encourage the infiltration of stormwater and enhance the aesthetics of commercial or industrial properties.
2. **Fuel & Emission Reductions**: The town will identify and establish “no mow zones” for air emission reduction strategies and promote natural areas management by planting and maintaining native perennial plants within each area. Additional activities will occur through education and partnerships with South Shore Clean Cities.
3. **Parkland Litter Reduction**: The town will evaluate and implement necessary strategies within park properties to minimize litter which has become unsightly and can become a health hazard with regards to pet waste. Proper disposal receptacles, enforcement, and education will be the key aspects to achieve this goal.
4. **Stormwater Quality (stream velocity reduction)**: Utilizing hydraulic and hydrologic data, the stormwater utility will evaluate waterways and implement strategies to reduce runoff velocities and therefore in-stream sediment loading.
5. **Curbside Yard Waste & Recycling**: The town will pursue contractual changes with their waste hauling company to help assure proper yard waste disposal. They will also encourage and educate residents about alternative uses for yard waste such as composting and mulching.

In order to fulfill this policy commitment, the Town of Merrillville will:

- Establish annual environmental objectives, benchmarks and targets for continual improvement of pollution prevention and energy savings measures.

- Maintain a group of environmental resources who are committed to developing and implementing a Quality of Life Plan.
- Foster environmental leadership, awareness, education and cooperation among its employees, residents, business entities, as well as neighboring communities and industries, by sharing its environmental decisions and performance information.

A copy of Town Council President executive order adopting this mission statement is attached.

## **II. Responsibilities Defined**

### **Environmental Resource Committee:**

The Town of Merrillville Environmental Resource Committee is responsible for the following:

- Completing the requirements of the Indiana CLEAN Community Challenge and for implementing Merrillville's Quality of Life Plan.
- Each person on the environmental resource committee has a defined role in coordinating with the various boards, committees, and commissions in the Town.

The environmental resource committee is ultimately responsible for the preparation of the Quality of Life Plan in accordance with the Indiana CLEAN Community Challenge program, submitting the Quality of Life Plan for IDEM approval, and implementing Quality of Life goals. The roles and responsibilities of the environmental resource committee members are designed to be specific to the Quality of Life Plan development and implementation.

The environmental resource committee is comprised of various key Town representatives:

### **Town Manager:**

The Town Manager (or his designee) is responsible for the following:

- Inviting department representatives to participate with the environmental resource committee.
- Serving as a liaison between town administration, town council, as well as Merrillville's business community.
- Ensuring a mission statement is adopted through Executive Order.
- Preparing and presenting all policies and ordinances associated with the Quality of Life Plan objectives.

### **Environmental Committee Leader:**

The Environmental Committee Leader (ECL) is responsible for the following:

- Scheduling and facilitating meetings with stakeholders.
- Submitting all annual reports/renewals to IDEM in accordance with the requirements of the Indiana CLEAN Community Challenge program.
- Revising and updating the Quality of Life Plan documents.
- Coordinating internal audits.
- Managing all Quality of Life Plan documents.

### **Local Government Coordinators**

Local Government Coordinators (LGC) are department directors, superintendents, or Chiefs. LGCs are responsible for the following:

- Participating in meetings as needed.
- Providing data/reports associated with the Quality of Life Plan objectives.
- Implementing specific portion of the plan that pertain to the respective department to meet Quality of Life Plan goals.
- Ensuring compliance with all applicable environmental laws, regulations, and permits within respective departments.
- Communicating objectives and targets created by the environmental resource committee to their departmental employees.
- Ensuring their employees' environmental awareness and competence.
- Implementing, monitoring, and maintaining Merrillville's Quality of Life Plan procedures and targets within their respective departments.
- Reporting all progress toward environmental goals and policies to the environmental resource committee.
- Identifying and documenting the aspects and impacts associated with Town operations.

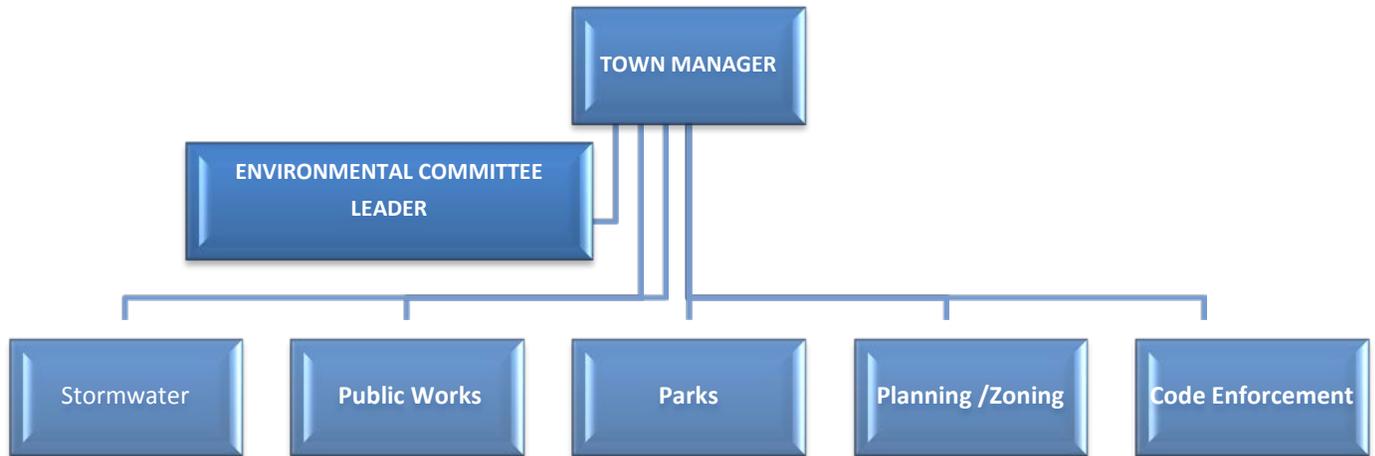
The Town operations included in Merrillville's Quality of Life Plan are:

- Merrillville Stormwater Utility
- Merrillville Public Works
- Merrillville Parks Department
- Merrillville Planning & Zoning
- Merrillville Town Administration

### **Audit Team**

Town Employees will conduct yearly audits by evaluating the Quality of Life Plan and verifying that projects and processes are documented and adequate measurements are in place towards the attainment of goals. An annual performance review will be prepared for the Town Manager and for submission to IDEM's CLEAN Community Challenge office.

Position	Name	E-mail
Town Manager	Bruce Spires	<a href="mailto:bspires@merrillville.in.gov">bspires@merrillville.in.gov</a>
Environmental Committee Leader	Matt Lake	<a href="mailto:mlake@merrillville.in.gov">mlake@merrillville.in.gov</a>
Local Government Coordinator	Matt Lake	<a href="mailto:mlake@merrillville.in.gov">mlake@merrillville.in.gov</a>
Local Government Coordinator	Kevin Markle	<a href="mailto:kmarkle@merrillville.in.gov">kmarkle@merrillville.in.gov</a>
Local Government Coordinator	Dorinda Gregor	<a href="mailto:dgregor@merrillville.in.gov">dgregor@merrillville.in.gov</a>
Local Government Coordinator	Parks Director	



### III. Environmental Goals

#### Departments and Operation Activities

The following entities resolve to commit the operational assets required to achieve the Town of Merrillville's goals:

- **Merrillville Town Management:** Merrillville Town Administration oversees the daily operations of all departments including policies, finances, procedures and personnel.
- **Town of Merrillville Stormwater Utility:** This award winning department that is dedicated and federally mandated to improve the environment and quality of life for residents by implementing stormwater quality management plans and flood control projects as well as many other engineering and environmental best management practices (BMPs). Some activities include but are not limited to; construction plan review and site inspection; drainage, storm, street, erosion/ sediment control complaints and inspection; issuance of site work application, erosion control, stormwater and floodplain management; survey and design of Town projects; coordination and management of new street design and green infrastructure improvements.

- **Town of Merrillville Public Works:** This department is involved with the maintenance and enhancement of town-owned roadways. Some activities include but are not limited to: Right of Way (ROW) mowing; roadway deicing, infrastructure repairs, recyclable collection, leave & branch pickup, tree pruning and replacement, yard waste collection, appliance/scrap removal, fleet maintenance, street paving and crack sealing.
- **Town of Merrillville Parks Department:** This department provides educational programming and activities to help promote healthy lifestyles through park and recreational services.
- **Merrillville Planning/Zoning Department:** This department oversees the permitting and enforcement of all town codes pertaining to new or redevelopment for residential, commercial and industrial.

**Identifying Aspects and Impacts**

The stakeholder committee is tasked with identifying the aspects and impacts each department’s operations have on the environment. This is accomplished through a close working relationship with IDEM through a site visit of municipal facilities and through the use of IDEM’s *Environmental Impacts for Municipal Operations Database*. The stakeholder committee utilized this database of environmental impacts to determine the Town’s priority needs. Any aspects not represented within the database were added to the list of aspects and those that did not pertain to current operations were removed.

**Prioritizing Aspects**

After determining aspects and departmental requirements pertaining to them, prioritizing the aspects was required to establish the overall importance of each. This was accomplished by the committee evaluating each aspect based on the following criteria:

**DEGREE OF IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

- 4 = Serious (likely to result in severe or widespread damage to human health or the environment)
- 3 = Moderate (may affect resources beyond the property line, correction will take planning and resources)
- 2 = Minor (may be self-correcting or corrected easily and quickly with minimal time, effort, impact, and cost)
- 1 = No impact (unlikely to have an adverse impact on human health or the environment)

**POTENTIAL REDUCTION IN WASTE, EMISSIONS, OR RELEASES**

- 5= Very significant potential for reduction in waste, emissions or releases
- 4= Significant potential for reduction in waste, emissions or releases
- 3= Moderate potential for reduction in waste, emissions or releases
- 2= Minor potential for reduction in waste, emissions or releases
- 1= Little or no potential for reduction in waste, emissions or releases

**POTENTIAL FOR LEGAL AND REGULATORY NON-COMPLIANCE**

- 4= High potential for regulatory oversight, permit or regulations
- 3= Moderate potential for regulatory oversight, permit or regulations
- 2= Minor potential for regulatory oversight, permit or regulations
- 1= Little or no potential for regulatory oversight, permit or regulations

## POTENTIAL TO IMPACT HUMAN HEALTH

4= Serious potential (likely to result in severe or widespread damage to human health)

3= Moderate potential (may affect resources and human health beyond the property line, correction will take planning and resources)

2= Minor potential (may be self-correcting or corrected easily and quickly with minimal time, effort, impact and cost)

1= No potential (unlikely to have an adverse impact on human health)

After identifying operations and impacts from municipal operations, the stakeholder committee prioritized each of the aspects using the ranking criteria identified above. Any aspect receiving a total score of **ten (10) or higher** was determined to be significant.

Upon completion of the prioritization process the stakeholder committee decided on the five projects determined to be in the Town's best interest. The projects were selected through a combination of Town need and prioritization.

The prioritized list of aspects including evaluation criteria and rating definitions is included within this document as *Attachment B*.

### **Identifying Objectives and Targets**

After months of meetings, deliberations and consultations with IDEM, the stakeholder committee determined the five most prolific objectives for the Town of Merrillville to be:

- **Implement Low Impact Development Retrofits**
- **Implement no-mow reduction strategies and associated natural areas establishment**
- **Implement park litter reduction strategies**
- **Implement wetlands conservation ordinances and projects**
- **Implement yard waste program to minimize illegal dumping**

The targets, legal requirements, action plans and all other necessary information required to meet the proposed objectives are included in Attachment C.

## **IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION PROCEDURES**

### **Corrective Action**

In the event of an environmental emergency the department responsible will take corrective action in accordance with standard operating procedures following state and federal guidelines as applicable.

All environmental emergency corrective actions will be properly documented and the records will be stored within the applicable department for future reference.

The department head for the responding department will review all emergencies with departmental supervisors at their weekly staff meeting. During these meetings

effectiveness of emergency response procedures will be critiqued and amended as needed.

### **Employee Training**

Departments are responsible for employee training on environmental awareness, potential environmental hazards and emergency responses. All departments are required to maintain internal training records on all employees.

The head of every department within the Town, as well as key supervisors, have received certifications for FEMA's Emergency Management Institute's ICS-300 (Expanding Incidents) and ICS-400 (Advanced ICS Command and General Staff-Complex Incidents). Emergency response chain of command will be activated and maintained as the situation warrants.

## **V. DOCUMENT CONTROL**

### **Document Management**

All Quality of Life Plan documents, procedures, and records will be kept and maintained at Merrillville Stormwater Department under the supervision of the stakeholder committee leader Matt Lake. As such only the stakeholder committee leader or his designated representative will have access to edit documents. Access to view Quality of Life Plan documents is unrestricted and printed copies are not controlled.

### **Document Development**

Any revisions to the Quality of Life Plan document may be addressed by any employee through the chain of command and via their respective departmental representative to the stakeholder committee. Upon receiving recommendations from a stakeholder committee member, the committee will determine the best course of action and make recommendations in accordance with the best interests of the Town.

### **Corrective Action (Document)**

Stakeholder committee members will be responsible for identifying environmental and pollution issues within their respective departments, particularly when municipal services or processes are modified or developed. Corrective action needed for ongoing environmental planning as it relates to new or modified services will be brought to the committee throughout the year as such situations arise. The committee will then evaluate the environmental impacts associated with these new and/or existing processes and services during the annual audit of the Quality of Life Plan. In addition, the committee will be responsible for making revisions to the Quality of Life Plan and its associated documents as needed. Any changes to the plan between annual audits will be denoted in *italics* and will be made permanent in the plan at the audit. An updated version of the plan will be promulgated after each audit.

The stakeholder committee will make recommendations to the respective department on any Quality of Life Plan objective being found deficient or not meeting expectations, however the final determination on corrective action must be made within the department.

The stakeholder committee leader or his designated representative is responsible for making corrections and revisions to the Quality of Life Plan and associated documentation.

### **Archiving Documents**

Should the Quality of Life Plan be amended in any way, all changes shall occur electronically within the Public Works Department and upgraded documents will be forwarded to all stakeholder committee members. All previous revisions of the document will be stored electronically at Merrillville Public Works with the version date printed on the cover page of the document. All associated documentation will be updated and marked accordingly.

## **VI. RECORD KEEPING**

### **Tracking and Indexing Records**

All records (e.g., permits) will be maintained, tracked, and stored within their respective departments.

### **Legal and Regulatory Requirements**

Environmental legal and regulatory requirements are determined within each individual department. Any changes to requirements will be promulgated by the department head responsible for instituting the change. Open communication with the community will be maintained at all times to ensure exchange of pertinent information.

Each department will maintain current legal requirements in accordance with industry standards as necessary through a variety of sources, these include (but are not limited to) trade associations, boards, consultants, professional organizations, etc. The determination of required sources will be made by the respective department head and his/her staff.

## **VII. COMMUNICATION**

### **Internal Communication**

Internal communications will be initiated by the stakeholder committee leader via departmental chain of command and will encompass the initiatives set forth by the stakeholder committee and reflected within this document.

Inter-departmental communications should originate at the bi-weekly leadership meetings conducted by all department heads. All relevant information can be communicated within departments at departmental weekly staff meetings.

### **External Communications**

Communications with residents and the business community will be conducted via; the Town's webpage, the Chamber of Commerce, Town council meetings, press releases, reverse 911 calls, and the Town's newsletter.

## **VIII. MONITORING AND PROGRESS REVIEW**

### **Internal Audit**

The stakeholder committee will be responsible for tracking and reporting on the progress of each initiative incorporated within the Quality of Life Plan. Quarterly meetings will be conducted to report on the progress of each initiative with audits being conducted semi-annually. The stakeholder committee leader will generate a written report documenting all findings and/or resolutions determined necessary by the stakeholder committee.

The stakeholder committee leader, or his designated representative, is responsible for ensuring all Quality of Life Plan deficiencies found during an audit are addressed. Audit results will be stored within the Public Works department and copies will be issued to all stakeholder committee members.

Additionally the stakeholder committee leader will prepare and submit to IDEM an annual progress report by the first Monday of March for the duration of the CLEAN membership.

## **IX. COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS OUTREACH**

### **Environmental Performance**

All issues related to environmental performance, including objective and target progress, will be conveyed to the public via the various external communications methods cited above.

**ATTACHMENTS:**