
Comprehensive Plan 1990

Village of Oak Park, Illinois

Adopted September 4, 1990



Dedication

This comprehensive plan is dedicated to the memory of two former chairpersons of the Plan Commission who have provided unique leadership and inspiration to the community.
They are sorely missed.

Howard A. Rosenwinkel

Robert G. Schultz



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Chapter I:

Introduction

This 1990 Oak Park comprehensive plan is predicated on the community's commitment to human values: a sense that the village exists for its citizens, that the physical manifestations of the community—housing, parks, businesses, streets, etc.—are there to serve its constituents.

Structurally, this plan is based on the award-winning format of the village's *Comprehensive Plan 1979*. It is both an update of that plan and the product of a complete re-analysis of that plan. Assisted by volunteer members of its working committees and by other contributors, the plan commission interviewed key village personnel, studied major issues, analyzed the 1979 plan, and listened to the public before recommending this 1990 version of the plan.

Oak Park's first known plan was published in 1925. It was a relatively simple plan that suggested specific projects for a much simpler time. In the 48 years that followed, long-range planning was largely piecemeal. It wasn't until 1973 that the village adopted its first thorough comprehensive plan.

The 1973 comprehensive plan represented the village's first attempt to enunciate its approach to redevelopment and to guide future changes in the community. Its greatest accomplishment was not the document itself but the process that prodded the community to confront issues and develop philosophies.

The *Comprehensive Plan 1979* was an outgrowth of the 1973 plan, although its format was substantially changed to that of a policy plan. It presented statements of goals, objectives and policies to provide guidance to the village's decision-makers as they weigh the many and varying needs of residents and businesses, and as they weigh the expenditure of tax dollars. The 1990 plan retains the basic format of the 1979 plan.

Historically Oak Park developed its basic physical character with little planning, let alone a comprehensive plan to guide its growth. First settled in 1835, two years before Chicago was incorporated as a city, Oak Park developed rapidly following the great Chicago fire in 1871. Establishment of rail service to Chicago helped spur development in Oak Park as its population grew from 200 in

1870 to over 10,000 by the turn of the century.

By the 1920's, extensive development swelled Oak Park's population to 40,000. By 1930 single-family homes, apartment buildings, and strip commercial development covered most of the village. Population had risen to 64,000, the village was virtually completely developed, and land-use patterns were fully established, generally without the guidance of long-range or comprehensive planning.

In 1940, Oak Park's population peaked at 66,000, then declined to 61,100 in 1960, 62,500 in 1970, 54,900 in 1980, and 53,600 in 1990. The decrease in population from 1970 to 1990 is almost entirely the result of the national trend toward smaller household sizes, because the total number of housing units increased during that decade.

Oak Park is now a mature, successfully integrated community. Its proximity to the region's major metropolis affords Oak Parkers the convenience and amenities of urban living that most suburbanites lack, while its status as an independent municipality gives its citizens a control over their destiny that residents of most large cities rarely enjoy.

Goals

The 1990 comprehensive plan focuses on six goals in five general areas. The general areas are critical elements of Oak Park's commitment to improve the quality of life for its citizens. They are as follows:

Housing. To preserve and enhance Oak Park's stable residential environment so persons of all ages, races and income levels can continue to live here in sound, affordable housing.

Transportation and Parking. To preserve the residential character of neighborhoods and improve the health of business districts while achieving the safe, fuel-efficient and cost-effective movement of people and goods within and through Oak Park.

Public Facilities and Services. To provide in the most efficient manner those public services and facilities which maintain Oak Park as a desirable community.

Economic Development. To expand the village's tax base in order to maintain a high level of services, programs and facilities. To encourage a broad range of convenient retail and service facilities to serve Oak Park residents and others.

Citizen Participation. To maintain a high level of citizen involvement in village affairs.

The plan states objectives that will help the village reach those goals. The plan also specifies policies to be pursued to fulfill the objectives, and suggests some ways to implement the policies.

This process of deriving policies from objectives and goals serves several purposes. The policies provide a framework for the thought process, guidelines for decision making, and continuity of approach to problem solving. They also serve to clarify to the public the village's position on issues. Essentially, they provide a tool for decision making and a basis for public evaluation.

Planning and policy formulation, however, is a dynamic, rather than static, process. Although the plan's goals and objectives remain constant, the appropriate means of attaining them may change. As knowledge is enhanced, conditions and assumptions will change, requiring refinements in objectives, policies and tactics.

Plan commission policy

Because of the dynamic nature of the planning process, the Oak Park Plan Commission assumes responsibility for continuously monitoring progress toward meeting the objectives of this comprehensive plan, and for reviewing the effectiveness of the plan's policies. To do this, the Plan Commission intends to assume a pro-active role, regularly seeking information from various departments and advisory boards, analyzing that information in terms of objectives and policies, and making recommendations to the president and board of trustees as warranted.

It is the plan commission's expectation that the village board and other bodies will develop specific action plans to help implement the goals, objectives and policies of this plan. It is the plan commission's intention to make

regular recommendations regarding both substantive programs to help implement the plan and amendments to the plan itself.

Plan format

Following this introduction, Chapters II through VI address the five general areas noted above. Within each of those chapters, statements of goals, objectives and policies are accompanied by discussions of issues and problems that face Oak Park. Objectives are assigned alphabetic designations while policies are assigned numbers within each chapter.

The relationship between goals, objectives and policies is as follows:

A **goal** is a destination or final purpose which the community seeks to attain. A goal is the most general level of policy and, by itself, isn't very helpful in the decision-making process. It needs further refinement.

An **objective** is the route which specifies in general terms the way (route) by which the goal (destination) can be reached. An objective indicates the kinds of actions that should be used to achieve the goal.

A **policy** is a means of transportation along the route. It is a course of action which, if followed, will achieve an objective. A policy is more detailed than an objective, and can be readily translated into specific action recommendations or design proposals.

In some instances, the plan will suggest implementation alternatives for carrying out policies. Examples include zoning regulations, capital improvement programs and other techniques.

Using this plan

Governmental decisions often involve trade-offs between competing interests. The village presents the comprehensive plan to all elected and appointed village bodies to help them make those difficult choices between competing interests and to serve as a guide for decision making. For example, bodies that hear applications for rezonings, variations, or special-use permits should evaluate them not only in terms of specific zoning ordinance

standards, but also in terms of how well the proposed action would help attain the goals and objectives of this plan and fulfill its policies.

Similarly, applicants and citizens who wish to make proposals or to testify on an application ought to address how the proposed action will or will not contribute to meeting these goals and objectives.

Likewise, when the appropriate village bodies consider development, public works, and program proposals, they ought to determine if the proposal's effects will help achieve the goals and objectives presented in the comprehensive plan.

To assist village staff and interested applicants in these reviews, Appendix A brings together in one listing all of this plan's goals

and objectives. It presents a checklist to identify whether a proposed action complies with the comprehensive plan by providing several columns in which to note whether or not a proposal contributes to meeting the plan's goals and objectives and conforms to its policies (columns 2 and 3). In addition, it provides space (column 4) in which to briefly state, for example, how a proposal contributes to meeting each goal or objective. Copies of this checklist are available from the village planning division or may be photocopied from this document.

Appendix B consists of a glossary of technical terms and acronyms that are used in this plan or which may be useful to the reader. It also includes a description of the functions of the various departments of village government.

Chapter II:

Housing

Chapter II: Housing

Goal:

To preserve and enhance Oak Park's stable residential environment so persons of all ages, races and incomes can continue to live here in sound, affordable housing.

Objective A

To support racial integration throughout Oak Park and prevent resegregation in any part of the village.

Policies:

- 1 Promote strong multi-racial demand for housing in all parts of the village.
- 2 Promote an open, unitary housing market throughout the metropolitan area to expand the choice for homeowners.
- 3 Support efforts to improve services in, and revitalize the Austin neighborhood.
- 4 Review all major proposed governmental actions, including, but not limited to, zoning, development, schools, and public works proposals, to identify their impacts on promoting integration and preventing resegregation.

Objective B

To support an economically diverse housing stock for all income and age groups living or working in Oak Park.

Policies:

- 5 Preserve and expand a variety of housing types to help meet the shelter needs of existing income groups living and working in Oak Park.
- 6 The village shall maintain a Housing Assistance Plan for the benefit of its residents.
- 7 Encourage the provision of equal housing opportunities for all residents of the village.

Objective C

To enhance and maintain the quality of housing stock for all income and age groups living or working in Oak Park.

Policies:

- 8 Continue the Housing Code enforcement program for multiple-family and single-family dwelling units.
- 9 Continue the village's active roll in encouraging the rehabilitation of multiple-family and single-family housing.
- 10 Support high-quality management practices, and create an understanding of the rights and options of tenants.

11

Develop educational and promotional programs to encourage the maintenance of homes and multiple-family housing.

Objective D

To maintain and enhance the residential character of existing residential areas.

Policies:

- 12 Promote a visually attractive environment in residential areas.
- 13 Protect the integrity of land uses in residential areas.
- 14 Maintain an atmosphere in which residents feel safe to walk around their neighborhoods day or night.
- 15 Provide the highest affordable level of village services to all residential areas.

Objective E

To preserve and maintain structures of significant historical or architectural value and their immediate environment.

Policies:

- 16 The village will foster respect, pride and appreciation for its historical and architectural heritage.
- 17 The village should promote private initiative and public stewardship in maintaining and improving its landmarks and historic districts.
- 18 The village should maintain a public commitment to preservation of its historical and architectural heritage through appropriate legislation, the encouragement of sensitive developments and adaptive re-uses of properties, and the careful design of public improvements and projects.

Objective F

To stabilize the size of Oak Park's population.

Policies:

- 19 Encourage the selective construction of multi-family residential buildings. The size of units—in terms of the number of bedrooms—should meet the needs of households not served by existing housing.
- 20 Permit the development of higher density residential buildings at reasonable intervals in accord with development principles in this plan.

Oak Park is well known for its stately old homes and outstanding architecture. In fact, the village offers a wide variety of sound housing. Its single-family homes range from grand mansions on large sites to modest bungalows on 25-foot lots. Only 55 percent of the total housing units are owner-occupied. Nearly half of Oak Park's housing units are in buildings of more than one unit, including townhouses and condominiums as well as rental apartments and apartment hotels. As a result of this variety, people of all income levels, races and ages call Oak Park home. Therefore, the village's housing policies are geared to a single overall goal:

Goal

To preserve and enhance Oak Park's stable residential environment so persons of all ages, races and incomes can live here in sound, affordable housing.

To further this goal, six objectives have been formulated dealing with: racial diversity, economic and age diversity, physical maintenance, residential character, historic/architectural preservation, and population stabilization.

Racial diversity and equal opportunity

Oak Park is nationally known for its extensive and innovative programs that have helped to produce a stable, racially-integrated environment, the essence of its first housing objective.

Objective A

To support racial integration throughout Oak Park and prevent resegregation in any part of the village.

Through deliberate community actions, Oak Park has defied the traditional pattern of block-by-block resegregation common to most

Chicago-area communities that have integrated. Through its diversity policy statement adopted by the president and board of trustees in 1973 and re-adopted by each succeeding village board, the village has "committed itself to equality, not because it is legal, but because it is right; not because equality is ethical, but because it is desirable for us and for our children." The full text of village diversity policy, as re-affirmed in 1989, is reproduced on the following page.

Oak Park continues to disprove myths about integrated communities. Fear of financial loss is the most frequently cited reason for the flight of whites from integrating areas, as many people perceive that property values decline when a neighborhood integrates. However, as Figure II-1 illustrates, the average price of a single-family home in Oak Park has more than quadrupled between 1970 and 1988 as minority population increased from less than one percent to 22 percent (18 percent black).

One program to allay such unfounded fears was established in 1978, after studying a 1973 proposal by the First Tuesday Club called equity assurance. This program guaranteed homeowners that they would receive 80 percent of the difference between the home's appraised value at the time of entry into the program and its actual sales price (subject to certain restrictions). The village could confidently offer this program, because property values had increased nearly 22 percent from 1970 to 1975, with greater increases in those parts of the village with a higher minority population. Because property values have consistently increased, the program has served largely as a psychological boost; fewer than 150 homeowners have enrolled, the vast majority prior to 1980.

Another myth suggests that a decline in public services characterizes integrating communities. Oak Park, however, continues to provide a high level of services to all portions of the community, as discussed in Chapter IV: Public Services and Facilities.

The village recognizes that it must not relax its efforts to maintain its stable, integrated residential environment. To that end, four policies have been adopted:

Maintaining Diversity in Oak Park

The people of Oak Park have chosen this community, not so much as a place to live, but as a way of life. A key ingredient in the quality of this life is the diversity of these same people, a broad representation of various occupations, professions, lifestyles, and age and income levels; a stimulating mixture of racial, religious, and ethnic groups. Such diversity is Oak Park's strength.

Our proud traditions of citizen involvement and accessible local government give us a unique opportunity to show others that such a community can face the future with an attitude of change for the better, and yet preserve the best of the past.

Since the passage of its Open Housing Ordinance in 1968, this Village has tried to abide not only by the letter of the law, but by the spirit of all appropriate legislation and court decisions guaranteeing equal access in the sale and rental of homes and apartments. Oak Park has committed itself to equality, not only because it is legal, but because it is right, not only because equality is ethical, but because it is desirable for us and for our children.

Housing patterns in large metropolitan areas of this country have worked against equality and diversity. Block-by-block racial change has fostered inequality by creating de facto segregation. Efforts to achieve diversity are nullified by the resegregation of neighborhoods from all white to all block. We, individually and as a community, have worked long and hard on behalf of open housing in Oak Park; we must not succumb to Big-City-style residential patterns.

A free and open community—equal and diverse—can only be achieved through dispersal; a mixture of racial and ethnic groups throughout the Village. Oak Park is uniquely equipped to accomplish this objective. Not only do we possess a varied housing stock at all price levels and in all parts of the Village, but more importantly Oak Park has the resources of all its people...a people whose chosen social and ethical goals include integration, not re-segregation.

The President and the Board of Trustees of the Village of Oak Park re-affirms its dedication and commitment to these precepts. It is our intention that such principles will be a basis for policy and decision making in Oak Park.



This policy statement was presented and unanimously adopted by the President and Board of Trustees of the Village of Oak Park on Monday, April 9, 1973. It was unanimously reaffirmed by the Board of Trustees in April 1977, 1981, 1985, and 1989.

1 Promote strong multi-racial demand for housing in all parts of the village.

One of the first actions the village took to implement this policy was to become one of the first communities in Illinois to enact a fair housing ordinance. Passed in 1968, this ordinance lays the groundwork for preventing block-by-block racial change and guiding the balanced integration of the whole community by promoting demand for housing throughout Oak Park from members of all racial groups.

Like other fair housing ordinances, Oak Park's outlaws racial discrimination in the sale and rental of residential property, as well as in lending and insurance practices. It also prohibits blockbusting; racial steering, in which a prospective purchaser or renter is shown listings only in areas in which his racial group predominates; and some forms of solicitation.

Oak Park's ordinance goes further than others by providing an effective means of enforcement. The village's Community Relations Division (CRD) is charged with administering the fair housing ordinance. One of its major tasks is to monitor rental buildings to identify patterns of segregation or resegregation before they become pronounced. Monthly reports on the racial composition of all rental apartment buildings provide this information. CRD staff meet with the managers of buildings that evidence segregation or resegregation to discuss ways to remedy the racial imbalance. In addition, the CRD regularly counsels building managers, owners, and real estate agents twice a year to update rental building management practices and review the village's fair housing ordinance.

As part of the ongoing cooperation between the CRD and building owners/managers, the latter refer rental applicants to the CRD for counselling. Staff explains the village's

policy of racial diversity to the prospective tenants, and furnishes data regarding the racial composition of blocks, neighborhoods and area schools. Staff provides copies of the Tenant Handbook, as well as advice on how discrimination occurs and what tenants can do if they feel they have been discriminated against. CRD staff encourages prospective tenants and buyers to seek housing in areas where they are underrepresented, i.e., to make non-traditional moves. The point is emphasized that the community as a whole is racially diverse and that no area is identifiable by its racial makeup. Prospective tenants are referred to the Oak Park Housing Center, a private not-for-profit corporation, for a listing of available apartments for rent. The Housing Center also encourages non-traditional choices. In every case, however, the final choice of where one rents is up to the individual.

The CRD also attempts to resolve charges of racial discrimination in housing. Nearly all complaints are conciliated at the staff level; those that are not are brought before the Community Relations Commission for public hearings and resolution.

The CRD maintains a "testing" program to monitor real estate sales and rental practices, whereby trained volunteers pose as potential

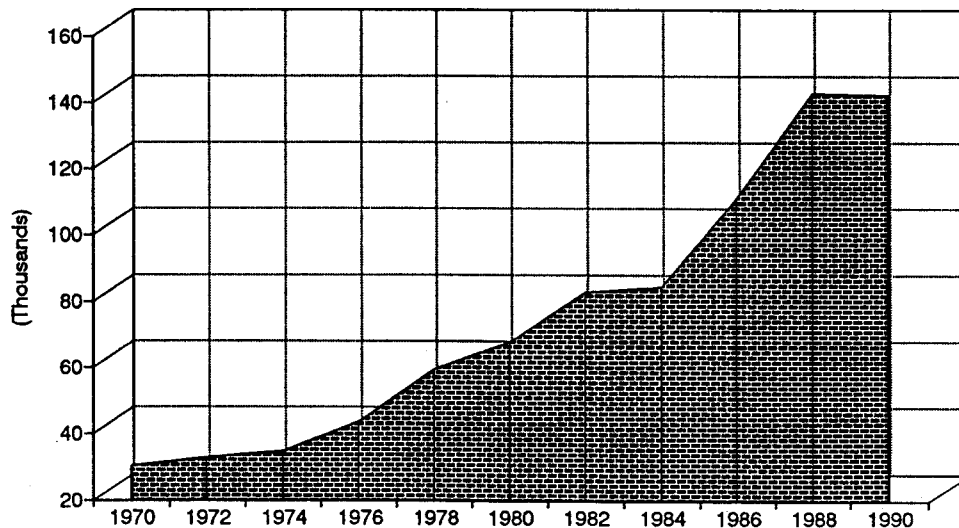
buyers or renters. By comparing the treatment of minority and white testers, the CRD can determine if a real estate agent or building manager discriminates against minorities or steers whites away from integrated areas and blacks away from predominantly white neighborhoods.

The CRD works closely and cooperatively with the local real estate industry, conducting seminars and workshops. And, because some people would inadvertently interpret even a normal number of "for sale" or "for rent" signs as an indication of instability, Oak Park realtors and residents have voluntarily honored the 1973 ban on such signs.

As part of its workload, the Community Relations Division will, in a typical year, offer diversity counselling to 1,000 persons, assist 1,200 tenants or managers, handle 3,500 general information requests, investigate 30-some discrimination complaints, compile 900 rental reports, record 250 anti-solicitation affidavits, and attend hundreds of local or regional meetings.

In May of 1984, after eleven months of study, the village-appointed 28-member Task Force on Racial Diversity issued a report on the progress of racial diversity in Oak Park. The report included nine major recommenda-

Figure II-1: Average sale price, Oak Park owner-occupied single-family homes—1970–1990



tions, which are summarized here:

- Devise a program of financial incentives to apartment building owners who develop and maintain integrated buildings. (See the paragraph on Diversity Assurance, below.)
- Designate a body to plan for redevelopment of residential and commercial areas, with special emphasis on East Oak Park. (See Chapter V: Economic Development regarding the Oak Park Development Corporation.)
- Improve the village's communications program with citizens, developers and potential residents.
- Fully staff code enforcement functions to maintain housing and commercial structures. (See policy number eight.)
- Fund an East Oak Park association.
- Increase efforts to promote an open housing market in the entire Chicago area. (See policy number two, below.)
- Re-evaluate the traditional separation of local governmental functions as it relates to School District 97's responsibility for maintenance of racial diversity, i.e., its busing program to maintain racial balance throughout the school system.
- Identify and develop sources of funding, including tax increases, if necessary, to implement the Task Force's recommendations.
- Attract more minorities for citizen involvement activities. (See Chapter VI: Citizen Participation.)

In 1985, largely as a result of the recommendation of the Task Force, Oak Park pioneered another local program to help maintain multi-racial demand and racial diversity in the village. Within the office of the village manager was established the Diversity Assurance Program (DAP), designed to help affirmatively market rental apartment units, encourage fair housing practices, expand options for prospective renters, and improve the quality of dwelling units. By working closely

with the Oak Park Housing Center and building owners, the DAP offers monetary, marketing and management assistance to encourage the integration of segregated multi-family buildings and the continued stable operation of already-integrated buildings.

Oak Park is one of the few Chicago-area communities that gives both blacks and whites who wish to live in a stable, integrated community the opportunity to do so. However, the long-term success of Oak Park's efforts to maintain this status is related to achieving a single, unitary housing market throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. A unitary housing market exists when members of all races can compete for the same housing, and when housing traffic, demand, and occupancy throughout all parts of the market area reflect the racial composition of all the races' members who desire and can afford the housing that is available.

Currently there is a dual housing market in the Chicago area that separates the housing supply into one virtually all-white market and another separate, but hardly equal, market for members of most other racial groups. Prior to 1968, this dual market, in which blacks and other minority consumers were relegated to limited geographic areas, existed legally throughout the country. In fact, racial discrimination was considered a normal practice in the real estate and lending industries. The result was highly segregated residential markets and communities.

The 1968 Oak Park Fair Housing Ordinance, the National Housing Act of 1968, the 1970 Illinois Constitution and the 1981 Human Rights Act ban discrimination on the basis of race in the sale or rental of virtually all housing. Nevertheless, a *de facto* dual housing market continues in Chicago and other areas, partially due to unlawful but deeply ingrained patterns and practices of housing suppliers, and partly due to the psychological residue of past practices on consumers.

Whatever the reasons, the dual housing market persists. Blacks are steered, or steer themselves, to predominantly black communities or to those few communities like Oak Park which have gained reputations as open

to minority residents. Most whites continue to be steered, or steer themselves, to virtually all-white communities. The long-term effect is a continuation of residential patterns in which blacks and other minorities reside in one community and white in another. Interracial communities seeking stability continue to find it difficult to remain racially heterogeneous because a disproportionately large share of the minority market is channeled toward them.

A small but growing number of municipalities are opening their doors to minorities. This movement away from the dual housing market and toward a unitary market will help communities such as Oak Park maintain their integrated status. Until such a unitary housing market is established throughout the metropolitan area — and that may be a long way off — Oak Park must continue to implement its second housing policy:



- 2** Promote an open, unitary housing market throughout the metropolitan area to expand the choice for homeowners.

Oak Park's staff and elected officials participate in two regional groups that actively advocate this aim: the Illinois Municipal Human Relations Association and the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance. Both organizations lobby at the local, state and national levels for regulations and enforcement of laws that will create a *de facto* unitary housing market.

While local realtors have generally cooperated to create a unitary housing market in Oak Park, others in neighboring communities have not. In 1976, efforts by Oak Park and the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities resulted in the suspension of 18 real estate agents' licenses in two communities adjacent to Oak Park. Agents representing five firms signed a consent order in

response to pending complaints charging unlawful racial steering. Another result of those efforts was the establishment of the Near West Housing Center in nearby Westchester, an agency that is financially assisted by the village and the Oak Park Housing Center.

In 1987, a U. S. Justice Department suit with a Chicago-area suburb resulted in an agreement with that community to make housing and employment opportunities more accessible to minorities. In 1988, the Leadership Council sued three southwest communities over discriminatory housing practices, and a fair housing center was established there as well. Oak Park and other agencies worked with the Leadership Council in examining the Illinois real estate licensing law, which was up for review in 1989, with a view toward toughening its language and sanctions regarding racial steering, and strengthening requirements for community

input into the licensing review process. As a result, strong steering sanction language was retained, and public representation on the disciplinary board was increased from two to three voting members (out of nine).

The Oak Park Housing Center, supported in part by the village's share of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, also participates in a metropolitan-wide effort to break through the dual housing market. In helping prospective tenants make non-traditional housing moves, the Housing Center works with the National Fair Housing Alliance, the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance, and the Near West Housing Center. These organizations provide free housing information and assistance to people of all races. They engage in joint research, seminars, advertising and public relations, and joint meetings — all geared to opening up other communities to non-whites so that integrated communities such as Oak Park can stay integrated.

In 1977, Oak Park initiated and hosted the first Oak Park Exchange Congress, a national

program of exchanging information and concepts with other communities engaged in promoting and maintaining racial diversity and economic development. For many years Oak Park alternated with other communities, hosting the event every other year. Although the Congress has been a valuable educational and promotional tool, its future status is under evaluation.

Similarly, conditions in adjacent communities affect Oak Park's ability to maintain stable integration. For example, improvement efforts in Austin, the Chicago neighborhood immediately east of Oak Park, improve the marketability of nearby properties, and create a more pleasing environment along Austin Boulevard for both communities. Accordingly, Oak Park will

3 Support efforts to improve services in, and revitalize the Austin neighborhood.

Oak Park's elected officials and staff recognize that as long as a dual housing market exists in the Chicago metropolitan area, Oak Park will have to remain vigilant to protect its unitary housing market. The village further recognizes that a primary issue for Oak Park's citizens continues to be race relations. Racial fears and suspicions can influence all aspects of community living, from real estate to school curriculum, from public safety to economic development.

In the next decade, it will not be enough for Oak Park to fall back on the tried and true to overcome adverse racial perceptions. The community will once again have to resort to creative and educational processes to demonstrate its commitment to full and equal opportunity for its citizens and employees. To assure that the village remains alert, it will

4 Review all major proposed governmental actions, including, but not limited to, zoning, development, schools and public works proposals, to identify their impacts on promoting integration and preventing resegregation.

For example, the role of maintaining integration is well known. Communities that have stabilized racially have adjusted their school attendance boundaries to promote integration. The village will continue to support the readjustment of attendance boundaries by Elementary School District Number 97 for the purpose of maintaining the stability of Oak Park's integrated neighborhoods.

Within the village government itself, two activities need to be strongly supported. The first is an effective affirmative recruitment program for attracting and promoting minority employees—a program that should also be complemented by efforts to increase the use of minority-owned businesses for village purchases. The second is a systematic training program for village employees in the areas of cultural diversity and the village's diversity policies.

In addition to being racially integrated, Oak Park is economically diverse. Table II-1 illustrates that, while a greater than average proportion of Oak Park residents are in the higher income brackets, there are also residents whose incomes relative to the rising cost of housing are such that they may no longer be able to afford to remain in the community.

Objective B

To support an economically diverse housing stock for all income and age groups living or working in Oak Park.

Throughout the 1980's, however, rapidly escalating housing costs — a national phenomenon particularly pronounced in high-demand, limited-supply housing markets such as Oak Park — coupled with an extremely tight housing market, are making it difficult for many residents of long standing to continue to afford to live in Oak Park. Housing costs have risen as a result of increasing utility rates, insurance, interest and other mortgage costs, real estate taxes, and maintenance expenses. Low- and moderate-income households in Oak Park, as elsewhere, are particularly troubled by rapidly inflating housing costs.

To help these households to continue to live in Oak Park, the Village will encourage programs and activities to

5

Preserve and expand a variety of housing types to help meet the shelter needs of existing income groups living and working in Oak Park.

There are several approaches for implementing this policy. Some are available; others will need to be developed. First, the village can carefully monitor its housing stock, perhaps including an examination of the effects of condominium conversions on the displacement of existing residents. Second, the village can explore alternative housing opportunities, including the conversion of

holds. For several years, the village has provided direct low-interest down-payment assistance loans to village personnel who were required to live in Oak Park.

In June of 1989, the Illinois Affordable Housing Trust Fund was established, financed by an increase in the State real-estate transfer tax. The Fund will assist in financing home acquisition, construction or rehabilitation of single- and multi-family housing for lower-income households, through grants, mortgages or other loans at below-market or zero interest rates.

The village can continue participating in federal housing assistance programs. For example, as of July, 1989, 410 households received assistance under the federal Section 8 housing subsidy programs (up from 157 households in 1979). The Oak Park Housing Authority operates the federally-funded 199-unit Mills Park Tower and 76-unit Oaks senior citizen residences. Heritage House, a privately-owned development financed through the Illinois Housing Development Authority, houses an additional 200 assisted senior-citizen households.

The federal Rental Rehabilitation Program provides the village with limited funding for the purpose of awarding matching grants to apart-

ment building owners for rehabilitation, provided that the majority of the units are rented to low- or moderate-income households — an exception to the general policy of limiting the number of assisted family units to 20 percent in multi-family buildings.

Other assistance is provided through the village's CDBG single-family low-interest loan program for lower-income persons, and the housing bond loan program established in 1973. These programs are noted in the discussion of policy number nine.

Table II-1: Income profiles for Oak Park and the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area

Household income range	Per cent of households in each range	
	Oak Park	SMSA
Below \$10,000	19.8	23.0
\$10,000-19,999	28.6	25.0
\$20,000-34,999	30.7	31.9
\$35,000-49,999	13.5	12.8
\$50,000 and over	7.4	7.3

Source: 1980 U.S. Census

rental units to low- and moderate-cost limited-equity cooperatives. Third, the village might explore the possibility of requiring a certain proportion of units, perhaps 10 to 20 percent, in new multi-family construction, to be reserved for low- and moderate-income households, and that a similar percentage of units in a condominium conversion be retained as rental. Fourth, the village can look into a cooperative arrangement with local lending institutions for establishing a low-interest mortgage program for qualifying house-

Finally, while the village makes these and other efforts to keep housing affordable for existing moderate-income and residents with disabilities, care needs to be taken to help insure economic diversity at the higher end of the scale as well. To that end, new major market-rate residential developments were facilitated during the 1980's, and the village remains alert to the potential demand for new residential development for the more well-to-do elderly who wish to remain in Oak Park.

6 The Village shall maintain a Housing Assistance Plan for the benefit of its residents.

The Housing Assistance Plan (HAP) provides a framework for organizing efforts to enable current low- and moderate-income residents of the village to enjoy quality housing at reasonable costs. Preparation of a three-year HAP and housing needs study is a prerequisite for receiving federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds — approximately \$1.5 million per year, which are used for housing rehabilitation, street improvements, economic development, fair housing activities, public services and other programs of significant benefit to the community.

The 1988 Housing Needs Study indicated that there were some 2,400 dwelling units suitable for rehabilitation, of which 1,300 were owner-occupancy units, with more than one-third occupied by low- and moderate-income households. Of the 1,100 rental units, data is not available on the percentage occupied by lower-income households, but it is thought to be in excess of 40 percent.

The Housing Needs Study also indicated that some 2,900 existing rental households (out of 10,600 units) might qualify for rental subsidies according to federal guidelines. Table II-2 indicates the income limits for housing assistance as established by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as of December of 1988. Under the federal Section-8 assisted housing programs, the federal government pays the difference between the monthly cost of a unit and 30

percent of the gross monthly income of an income-qualifying household. The Section-8 income limits are also used as qualifiers for the village's single-family rehabilitation loan program, discussed at policy number nine.

The village's Community Development Department also administers, in conjunction with the Family Service and Mental Health Center, the federal Emergency Shelter Grant Program, which provides limited, short-term emergency housing for the homeless.

Coupled closely to racial and economic diversity policies is that the village will

7 Encourage the provision of equal housing opportunities for all residents of the village.

The village's efforts to promote racial and economic diversity have been documented. In May of 1989, the village also amended its code relating to human rights by extending its policy of equal opportunity in housing, employment and access by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, familial status and mental impairment. This prohibition had previously applied only to discrimination based on race, sex, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, age and physical handicap.

There is a need for coordinated planning for the provision of affordable housing accessible to persons with disabilities, both physical and mental. In addition to the federal Fair Housing Act amendments of 1988, which prohibit discrimination based on physical or mental disabilities, the Illinois 1989 Community Residence Location Planning Act requires home-rule municipalities to develop plans demonstrating how they will serve persons with disabilities. Although the village's zoning ordinance was amended in 1987 to relax restrictions on residential-care homes to allow persons with disabilities more freedom of housing choice, the village will need to re-examine its efforts in this area. The village should consider in its planning an incentive program to encourage the provision of more housing for persons with disabilities.

Existing Housing

Nearly 80 percent of all Oak Park housing units were built prior to 1940, and about 47 percent were constructed before 1920. Although the vast majority of these buildings are structurally sound, their age warrants considerable emphasis on maintenance, together with construction of replacement housing where needed.

Objective C

To enhance and maintain the quality of housing stock for all income and age groups living or working in Oak Park.

There are five policies to achieve this objective.

- 8** Continue the Housing Code enforcement program for multi-family and single-family dwelling units.

The village has inspected multi-family buildings for many decades, at least their exteriors and common areas. Since 1973, however, annual building inspections have also included the interiors of at least 10 percent of the units. In addition, before any four-unit or larger building may be sold, a pre-sale inspection is required. That inspection includes the interiors of all dwelling units, and the seller must provide a copy of the inspection report to the seller prior to closing. Inspectors follow up on code compliance routinely. These two techniques usually result in the

interior inspections of 80 percent of all multi-family dwelling units over the course of five years. Even for routine annual inspections, every effort is made to have code violations repaired promptly, and the village initiates legal action to gain compliance when necessary.

Since 1973, the village's Neighborhood Walk Program has periodically inspected the exteriors of single-family homes, plus two- and three-flats. Housing inspectors conduct house-by-house, block-by-block exterior in-

spections. Owners of homes with violations receive violation notices and follow-up inspections. If an inspector observes deficiencies which are not code violations, the homeowner is sent a deficiency notice informing him or her of the problem. A letter of commendation is sent if no violations or deficiencies are found.

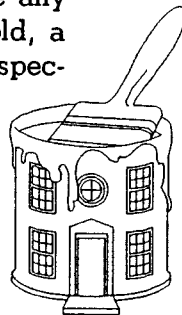
The Neighborhood Walk Program has been redesigned in recent years with the goal of inspecting all areas of the village within a four-year period.

Although most homeowners are willing and able to correct code violations, some experience personal or financial difficulties in complying. In many cases, the owner may be able to secure a low-interest loan from the village's single-family rehabilitation program, discussed in policy number nine.

- 9** Continue the village's active roll in encouraging the rehabilitation of multi-family and single-family housing.

Several public and quasi-public programs have been employed over the years to encourage rehabilitation and modernization of Oak Park's housing stock. Existing programs need to be constantly monitored and evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency.

The village's single-family rehabilitation program, administered through the Rehabilitation Division of the Community Development Department, is actually three programs. Each program is limited to owner-occupied buildings of one to four units, with the majority of the units occupied by lower-income



(Section 8) households.

The first, and by far the major, program is the single-family loan program, which provides rehab loans of up to \$15,000 at five percent interest over 10- to 20-year terms. Loans are generally limited to exterior work, correction of code violations, and weatherization improvements. About 25 of these loans are processed annually, and the owners receive hands-on assistance from rehab staff.

The single-family emergency loan pro-

gram offers zero-interest, ten-year deferred-payment loans of up to \$4000 for emergency repairs. This and the single-family loan program are both funded with CDBG monies.

The Section-312 program uses other federal funds to make loans of up to \$35,000 per unit at three percent interest at terms of up to 20 years. The scope of the work to be performed is greater than that allowed in the other programs, but funding is very limited, with enough to do only one or two loans per year.

In 1973, the village issued a \$1.5 million general obligation housing bond in order to make low-interest loans to apartment building owners for upgrading their properties. The program soon became popular and successful, and additional bond issues of \$3 million and \$2.5 million were sold in 1982 and 1985, respectively. In 1989, the interest rate on these loans was 11 percent over a ten-year period. Loans are used for correction of code violations, modernization of kitchens and bathrooms, and other improvements. Originally administered by the Rehabilitation Division, the program has been administered by, and tied into, the Diversity Assurance Office/Program.

In addition to the village programs, the Oak Park Residence Corporation, a private not-for-profit agency funded in part by CDBG monies, is also very active in housing rehabilitation. One of its major roles is the acquisition of multi-family rental properties that are in need of rehab and/or improved management. Currently, CDBG funds are used for downpayments, and housing bond funds are usually utilized for the rehab work. The goal is to resell the property after several years, then use the proceeds to purchase and improve another property.

A second role of the Residence Corporation is to purchase, directly from the federal government, FHA- and VHA-repossessed homes. This usually prevents such buildings from sitting vacant and boarded up for months, which is a blighting influence on neighboring properties. The homes are usually repaired and resold within six months. A combination of private and CDBG funding sources are used for the purchases, and private loans are

usually secured to cover rehabilitation costs.

Because of the age of its housing stock, the need for rehabilitation, upgrading and modernization will continue. Although considerable progress has been made, more will be needed. Regular monitoring of the housing stock and the continuing development of strategies by the various village and private agencies will be necessary. Housing rehabilitation will continue to remain as a high priority in the allocation of local and CDBG resources. As stated in Chapter III: Transportation and Parking, the village also needs to continue its efforts to relieve parking shortages in multi-family areas so that apartment buildings can be successfully marketed.

Management practices play a major role in maintaining the housing stock and promoting racial diversity. Poor landlord-tenant relations, inferior marketing practices and deferred maintenance frequently lead to a need for renovation. Therefore the village will continue its efforts to

10

Support high-quality management practices and create an understanding of the rights and options of tenants.

The village's Community Relations Division conducts regular seminars on building management. The Oak Park Residence Corporation offers counselling services and technical assistance to apartment building owners and managers, and is active in managing rental properties, both its own and others. The Oak Park Housing Center assists largely in the area of marketing. During 1988, 107 apartment building owners, representing more than 150 buildings, entered into a cooperative agreement with the Housing Center for affirmative marketing and personal escort services for prospective tenants. The Center is the marketing agent for both the village's Diversity Assurance Program and the Residence Corporation, and its educational services extend to real estate agents and management firms, as well as individual owners.

All of these agencies are active in counseling and education with landlords, tenants and real estate agents. The Community Rela-

tions Division is especially active with tenants — counselling, informing, advising and handling complaints and inquiries.

In response to a proposal by the Oak Park Community Action Organization, a grass-roots citizens' group, the village's Community Relations Commission studied the need for a landlord/tenant ordinance. In early February of 1989, the Commission advised the Village Board that such an ordinance was not warranted because the Code Administration and Community Relations departments addressed most of the provisions in the proposed ordinance. The Commission did make several recommendations relating to Housing Code enforcement, notification to tenants of outstanding code violations, a model lease, and the payment of interest on security deposits. The Commission also pledged to encourage aggressive enforcement practices, expand the Tenant's Handbook, increase outreach efforts, provide more informational materials, and encourage citizens to monitor Housing Court proceedings. In the Spring of 1990, the village did adopt an ordinance requiring the payment of interest on security deposits in buildings of four or more units, and adopted a lease addendum which landlords are encouraged to use.

Maintenance of single-family housing stock is equally important. To help homeowners better maintain and improve their properties, the village will continue to

11

Develop educational and promotional programs to encourage the maintenance of homes and multi-family housing.

Both the government and citizens of Oak Park continue to undertake efforts in this

direction. The Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission and the village rehabilitation staff provide technical assistance to homeowners interested in renovation and restoration, and lists of tradespeople are made available upon request. The Planning Division provides information on home improvement exemptions which postpone increases in real-estate assessments for qualifying improvements within

Oak Park's historic districts. The Lighted Schoolhouse Program includes classes in home repair and maintenance, and the Historic Preservation Commission offers

courses in restoration, as well as information brochures on restoration and researching one's home.

The Community Design Commission's annual Cavalcade of Pride

program recognizes exceptional property maintenance and improvements to homes, apart-

ments and businesses. Individual local residents have banded together in a cooperate effort to share information on the preservation of their homes.

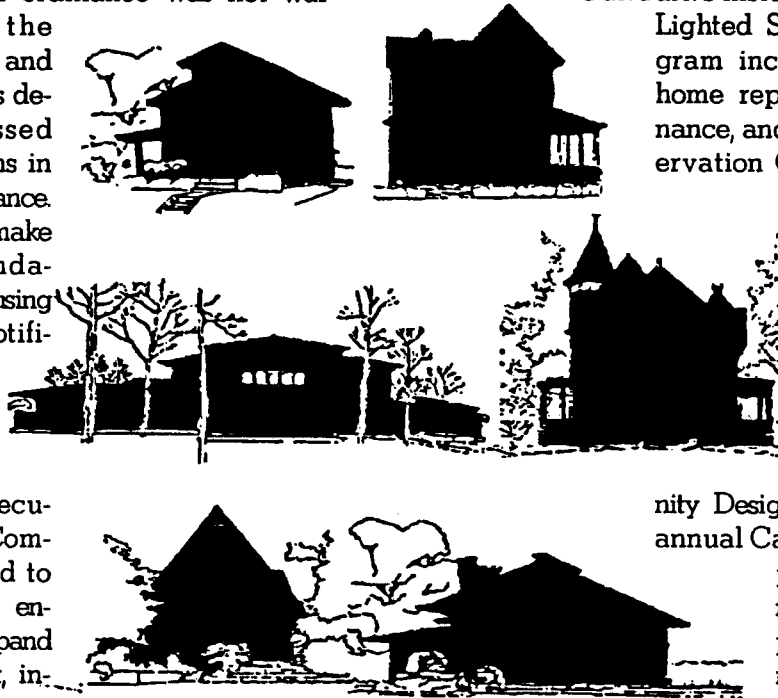
These programs and activities need to be continued, expanded and publicized.

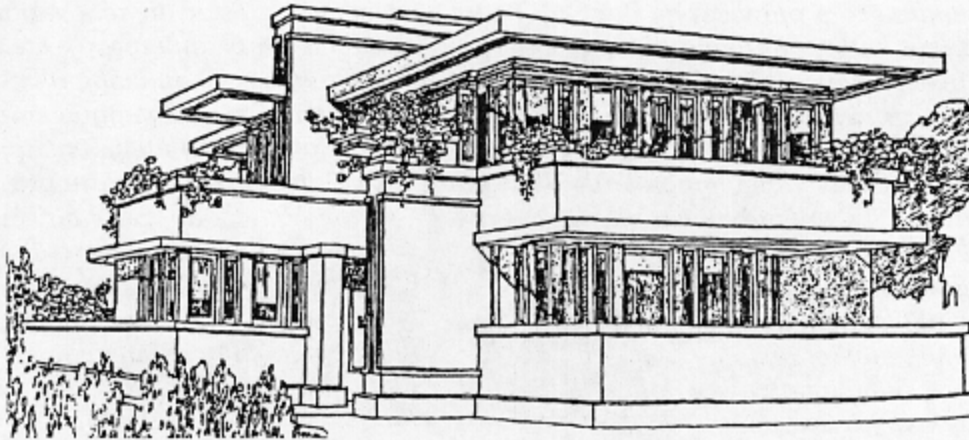
In addition to maintaining the quality of its housing structures, Oak Park wishes to retain the residential nature of its neighborhoods.

Objective D

To maintain and enhance the residential character of existing residential areas.

Four policies will help achieve this objective.





12 Promote a visually attractive environment in residential areas.

Simply put, this policy means that a residential area should look like one. Parkway trees and treatments, culs-de-sac and sign control all help maintain a residential atmosphere. Physical improvements have brightened the "gateways" and peripheries of several neighborhoods such as Austin Boulevard and Harrison Street. Also helpful are physical improvements within business areas, such as at Lake and Austin, Chicago and Austin, South Marion Street and Madison Street. These improvements involve beautification treatments, including installation of landscaping, brick pavers, street furniture, and enlarged pedestrian walkways. These types of improvements need to be supplemented by efforts to reduce litter—both trash and visual, the latter including the sometimes haphazard placement of newspaper boxes and public telephones. In addition, the village should

13 Protect the integrity of land uses in residential areas.

To implement this policy, the village will continue to use zoning district boundaries to protect residential zones from expansion or replacement by incompatible commercial

uses very judiciously. However, the village must balance this policy with its need for economic development, as discussed in the fifth chapter of this plan.

Residential areas are also enhanced by a feeling of safety. The village should

14 Maintain an atmosphere in which residents feel safe to walk around their neighborhoods day or night.

In addition, a full range of public services is needed to maintain the physical appearance of residential areas. The village should

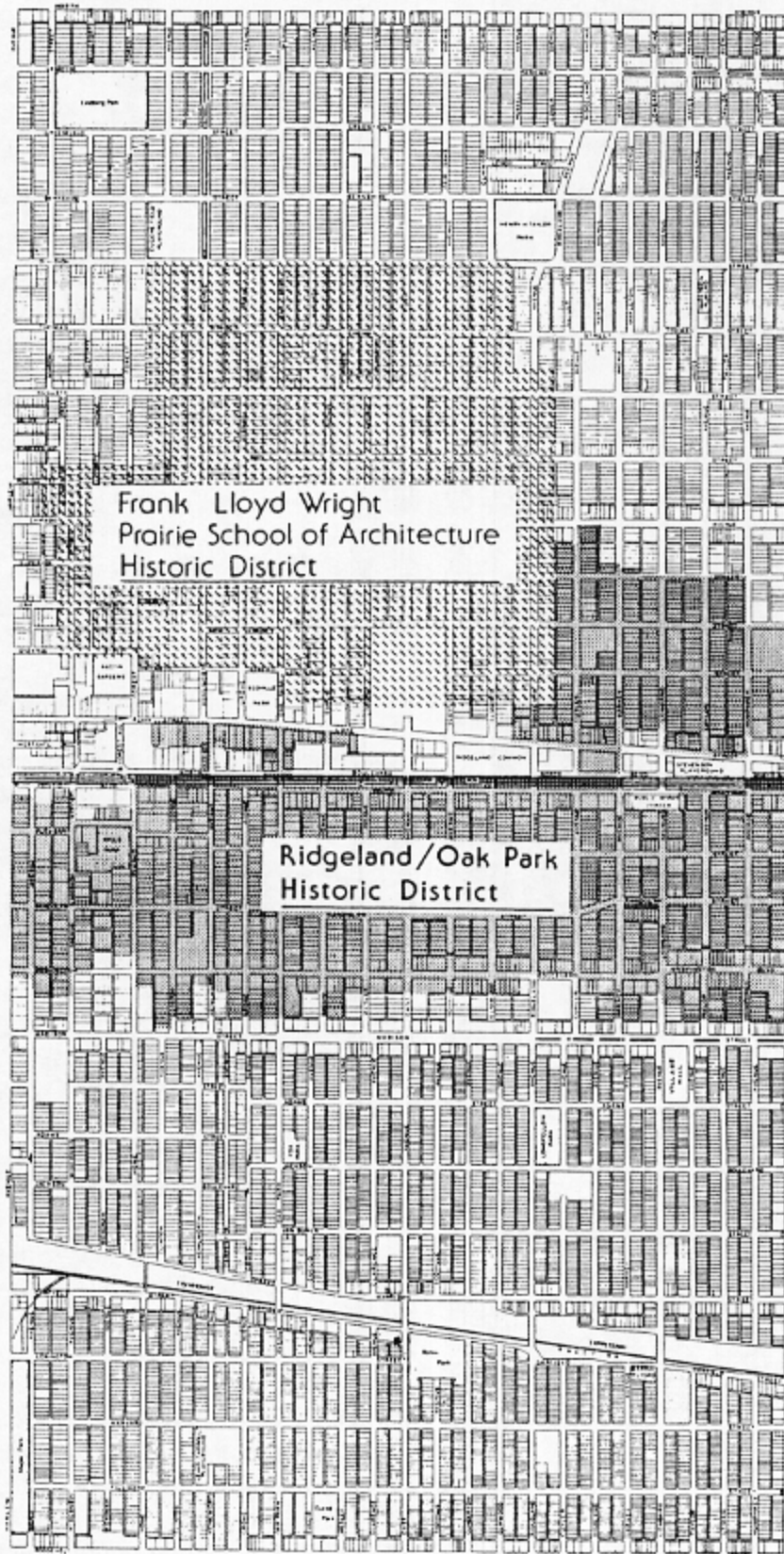
15 Provide the highest affordable level of village services to all residential areas.

Means of implementing these last two policies are discussed in detail in Chapter IV: Public Facilities and Services.

Historic and architectural preservation

Oak Park is internationally renowned for its outstanding architecture. The village contains more than 300 buildings of historical or architectural significance, designed by many famous and original architects: Frank Lloyd Wright, George W. Maher, William Drum-

Figure II-2: Oak Park's historic districts



mond, John VanBergen, Patton and Fisher, E. E. Roberts and others. Side by side with these masterpieces are smaller-scale modest homes, landmark apartment buildings, and commercial structures—all framed by a network of parks and tree-lined streets that establish a special character of the community.

Oak Parkers recognize the importance of their priceless heritage, and they appreciate that the preservation of these structures greatly maintains the quality of life.

Objective E

To preserve and maintain structures of significant historical or architectural value and their immediate environment.

Local recognition of Oak Park's valuable architectural and historical resources began in the late 1960's. The 1972 Hasbrouck/Sprague historic structures survey was instrumental in creating public awareness of the community resources. It identified hundreds of structures of architectural or historical significance. In that same year, the village established a landmarks commission and designated by ordinance the Frank Lloyd Wright/Prairie School of Architecture Historic District. That district was also placed on the National Register of Historic Places, thereby gaining national recognition as well.

In 1983, Oak Park designated the Ridge-land/Oak Park Historic District, which was also nominated for and included on the National Register. This district's significance lies in its exemplification of the development of a small midwestern town by planned zoning of commercial and apartment corridors.

In addition to the two historic districts, many individual landmarks are also included in the National Register, which creates eligibility for certain grant programs, tax advan-

tages and limited protection from federal programs.

To help preserve its heritage, three broad policies are established:

16

The village will foster respect, pride and appreciation for its historical and architectural heritage.

Objectives and policies recognizing the value and desirability of historic preservation were included in the village's comprehensive plans of 1973 and 1979. The landmarks commission was replaced in 1986 by the historic preservation commission, which is charged with, among other things, the long-range preservation of historic sites and districts.

The historic preservation commission is active in fostering appreciation of Oak Park's rich heritage through educational programs, publications and advice to the village board and other governmental bodies. The commission provides classes for the public, writes articles for local newspapers, and provides other information related to historic restoration. The commission provides informational pamphlets, such as "Researching Your Oak Park Home,"

and offers individual advice and references to property owners in restoring their properties. In addition, the commission maintains historical and architectural archives at the main library. The Frank Lloyd Wright home and studio foundation operates a research center, and the Oak Park historical society maintains an archive of old documents and photographs, all of which are available to assist property owners in their restoration efforts.

The village actively promotes tourism, both as an economic development tool and as a means of educating citizens and visitors. The historic preservation commission continues to publish a "Guide to Frank Lloyd Wright and



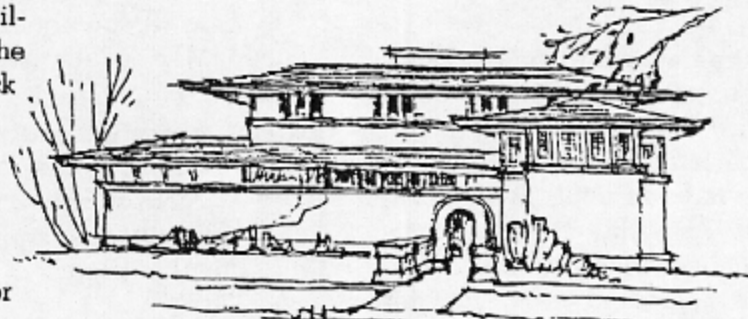
Prairie School Architecture in Oak Park," and is working on a guidebook for the Oak Park/Ridgeland Historic District.

The village continues to support the Oak Park Tour Center, which is operated by the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation, a non-profit corporation founded in 1974. The village also supports various related cultural institutions and programs. The Park District of Oak Park in 1989 began investigating the development of the Farson/Mills House, a prairie-style building, as an added tourist attraction.

In addition to efforts at education,

- 17** The village should promote private initiative and public stewardship in maintaining and improving its landmarks and historic districts.

The village can do this through publicity, cooperation and direct involvement. It should publicize financial-assistance programs as they become available, such as the State's annual "brick and mortar" grants for restoration of a National Register property that is owned by a governmental or non-profit agency. The village should cooperate by continuing its participation in the State program whereby owner-occupants of certified residences can enjoy a temporary freeze in assessed valuation as an incentive for substantial rehabilitation. The village should continue to provide technical assistance and information about such programs as federal tax credits for qualifying rehabilitation of income-producing historic structures. And the village, through the historic preservation commission and staff, should continue offering technical assistance to individual owners regarding property alterations.



In addition to education and promotion,

- 18** The village should maintain a public commitment to preservation of its historical and architectural heritage through appropriate legislation, the encouragement of sensitive developments and adaptive re-uses of properties, and the careful design of public improvements and projects.

The historic preservation commission, after many months of research and study, presented in late 1989 a proposed preservation ordinance designed to protect significant individual structures and historic districts. The proposed ordinance sought to give the commission and the village board increased authority in the realm of historic preservation. The proposed ordinance was reviewed through the village's clearinghouse process, carefully considered by the village board, and referred back to the commission for major modification.

Currently, the historic preservation commission's role is limited to an advisory one, except for projects which involve federal funds. Commission review is required for any federally-funded activity that affects National Register or

potential National Register properties. In some cases, further review is required by the State historic preservation office.

The village can further protect its architectural heritage by encouraging projects that are compatible with, and sensitive to, historic preservation considerations. This applies both to public works improvements and to private developments where the village controls some or all of property involved. Examples include potential development at Holley Court, behind Avenue Bank and at the Garfield/Harlem site. The village can encourage sensitive fa-

cade-improvement programs in commercial areas, and can also exercise controls through its zoning ordinance and other local codes. These controls are especially important for properties located in or near historic structures or areas.

Finally, the village can help promote historic preservation through interagency cooperation: through joint site-plan reviews, shared planning and consultation.

New Housing

As a virtually built-up and land-locked community, Oak Park has little vacant land available for new development of any kind. However, the land that is available or will become available through redevelopment should be developed in accord with the goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan. New housing, though, can be used to help

Objective F

To stabilize the size of Oak Park's population.

Like similarly situated suburbs, Oak Park's population has been gradually shrinking. Since 1970, trends toward lower birth rates, longer life spans, and the formation of more single parent households have resulted in a declining household size. In addition, as residents grow older, their children leave home, resulting in a smaller household size. Younger couples have often delayed child-bearing until they are older. Consequently, a given housing unit will frequently be found to house fewer persons today than it did in 1970.

A serious consequence of this decline in population is the directly proportionate decline in the size of Oak Park's shopping market. As discussed in detail in Chapter V: Economic Development, a strong market population is essential to support the village's stores and shops. A shrinking population results in a reduction in sales tax revenues needed to finance village services, and also affects some federal and state funding, including Community Development Block Grant funds, motor fuel taxes and others. To prevent

further erosion of the village's tax base, it will need to stabilize the size of its population.

19

Encourage the selective construction of multi-family residential buildings. The size of units — in terms of the number of bedrooms — should meet the needs of households not served by existing housing.

Given the demographic trends discussed above, multi-family housing offers the best opportunity to help stabilize the size of Oak Park's population. Recently constructed developments at Lake/Euclid and Lake/Forest indicate a strong demand for rental housing, and townhomes have been popular among purchasers. One potential development site is the village's Holley Court parking lot.

As noted previously, there is a lack of housing for both the physically and mentally disabled, which presents both a problem and a challenge for the 1990's. The village should cooperate with appropriate agencies for programs in this area.

To help encourage new residential construction, the village could

20

Permit the development of higher density residential buildings at reasonable intervals in accord with development principles in this plan.

"Higher density" refers to the maximum-density limits established by the Oak Park zoning ordinance. In allowing such development, however, the village must balance the need for new housing with the desire to conform such development to the character of the community.

The zoning ordinance requires periodic review to ensure that standards for open space, bulk requirements, and perhaps even spacing, are adequate to preserve the community's atmosphere. Parking requirements also need to be assessed periodically, as they were in 1989 when they were increased for larger dwelling units.

Oak Park does not wish to develop large

concentrations of higher-density buildings in any one part of the village, although some areas, such as the Lake Street corridor, are more appropriate than others. The village does wish to allow construction of scattered higher-density buildings to help stabilize the population and to create opportunities for

residents of all income levels, ages, races and abilities.

To attract new development, the village may need to offer reasonable incentives, such as street vacations, use of air rights, revenue bonds and site preparation.

Chapter III:

Transportation and Parking

Chapter III: Transportation and Parking

Goal

To preserve the residential character of neighborhoods and improve the health of business districts while achieving the safe, fuel-efficient and cost-effective movement of people and goods within and through Oak Park.

Objective A

To maintain the residential nature of neighborhoods while allowing for the safe flow of traffic within Oak Park.

Policies:

- 1 Encourage through-traffic to use primary arterial streets and encourage internally-originated traffic to use arterial and collector streets whenever possible.
- 2 Culs-de-sac will continue to be used—judiciously—as a means of traffic control and to maintain residential environments.
- 3 Maintain village streets in good condition. Highest priority for repair should go to those streets which traffic is encouraged to use and to those which present safety hazards.

Objective B

To provide adequate parking for residents, shoppers, employees, commuters and visitors, including persons with disabilities.

Policies:

- 4 The parking needs of different types of parkers should be given priority depending upon the nature of the area.
- 5 Require the provision of adequate off-street parking in all new construction, and seek to replace off-street parking that is lost due to new construction.
- 6 The village should continue its programs to provide additional off-street parking facilities in neighborhoods with extensive multi-family housing

built prior to the imposition of zoning requirements for parking, and in commercial areas in need of additional parking.

Objective C

Enhance public transportation opportunities for all residents, including those with limited mobility; and encourage more use of public transportation and less dependence on automobiles.

Policies:

- 7 Improve accessibility to rapid transit and other forms of public transportation for the elderly and those with limited mobility.
- 8 Continue the local taxi- and bus-fare subsidy programs which serve the elderly and persons with disabilities.
- 9 Cooperate with transit agencies to maintain and improve the quality of local public transportation service.
- 10 Improve intra-village transportation services within Oak Park, both to reduce the need for commuters to drive to train stations and to increase the use of public transportation for local travel.
- 11 Accommodate the use of more fuel-efficient or manually-powered transportation modes.

Objective D

To use Oak Park's excellent mass transportation facilities as an economic development tool.

Policy:

- 12 Seek to establish a multi-modal transportation center at the Lake Street "L" line and the Oak Park/Metra CNW station at the Harlem Avenue/Marion Street station.

Roads
Priority level #1
1930

Oak Park lies at the crossroads of the Chicago region's transportation system. Two rapid transit lines, a commuter railroad and the Eisenhower Expressway link the village with downtown Chicago. The Chicago and Northwestern (part of the Metra system) commuter railroad, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) trains and buses, the Pace bus system, and the region's extensive highway network link Oak Park with western, southern and northern suburbs as well. The village lies within a half-hour drive of both O'Hare Field and Midway Airport as well as Chicago's rail and bus depots.

But this excellent location brings with it the problems generated by heavy traffic demands. Moving large volumes of vehicular traffic while protecting residential neighborhoods from encroachment by through traffic is a major challenge facing this community.

Much of this heavy traffic is caused by American society's dependence on the automobile. Despite Oak Park's excellent public transportation to Chicago's "Loop," many residents still drive there, as do many non-residents who often travel through Oak Park. The vast majority of Oak Parkers choose to drive to destinations within the village rather than use such alternates as public transportation, bicycles or walking. A reduction in the number of automobile trips within the village is desirable not only to alleviate congestion on its streets, but also to help reduce energy demands on the finite supply of fossil fuels—a national problem—and to reduce exhaust emissions that erode air quality.

Those Oak Parkers who cannot drive or afford to own an automobile are dependent on public transportation for their mobility. An accessible public transportation system within Oak Park is essential for these individuals to be able to function without undue hardship. Such a system is one of the advantages a close-in suburb like Oak Park can offer.

* Most of Oak Park's 110 miles of streets

were constructed nearly 60 years ago. They were built for a society less dependent on the automobile and for vehicles much lighter than those in use today. When constructed, these streets had a "life expectancy" of 25 years, which could be extended to 50 years by adequate maintenance.

Today many streets need repair or improvement to handle modern traffic demands. The costs of street improvements, though, are high. For example, in 1978 the reconstruction of Division Street cost \$800,000 per mile and resignalization of a single intersection cost between \$35,000 and \$75,000. In 1989, those costs were \$1.6 million and \$100,000, respectively. When one considers that there are 110 miles of streets and 66 signalized intersections in Oak Park, the scope of the challenge seems large, indeed.

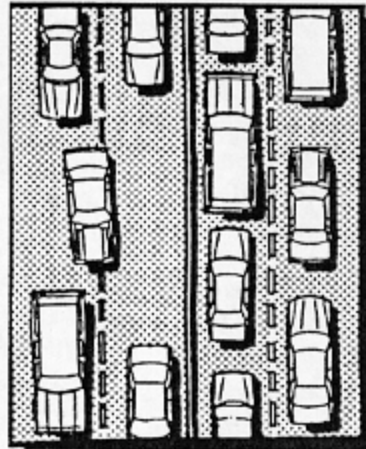
Related to the issues of traffic, public transportation and road maintenance is the problem of parking. The presence of commuter stations, business nodes and strips, and many older apartment buildings which lack off-street parking create a heavy—and often conflicting—demand for parking, both on-street and off-street.

The village has chosen one overall goal to guide its efforts to meet its transportation and parking challenges:

GOAL

To preserve the residential character of neighborhoods and improve the health of business districts while achieving the safe, fuel- and cost-effective movement of people and goods within and through Oak Park.

To attain this goal, the village will seek to achieve four basic objectives, the first of which is:



Objective A

To maintain the residential nature of neighborhoods while allowing for the safe flow of traffic within Oak Park.

Today, new developments and communities are designed to separate through-traffic from residential neighborhoods and minimize traffic within residential areas. But because Oak Park's land use patterns were established by the 1930's, before the effects of the automobile were known, the village must be content with street patterns designed for an earlier age.

To protect residential neighborhoods from excessive or high speed traffic, Oak Park will pursue three policies, the first of which is:

- 1 Encourage through-traffic to use primary arterial streets and encourage internally-originated traffic to use arterial and collector streets whenever possible.**

The corollary to this policy is, of course, to discourage through traffic and minimize traffic volumes on residential streets. This policy helps both residential neighborhoods, by providing a safer and more pleasant environment, and business districts by channelling more traffic past our local businesses.

Through-traffic cannot be encouraged to remain on arterial streets unless it is relatively convenient to do so. Bottlenecks at arterial intersections, for example, encourage the negative practice of using residential streets to bypass such bottlenecks.

Certain physical improvements that encourage the use of arterial streets include:

- Provision of left-turn bays and signals, or limitation of left-turns at certain intersections.
- Proper timing of traffic signals;
- Restrictions on curb parking, especially near intersections;
- Street widening and throat widening (but only where there is sufficient parkway left

for safety and aesthetics);

- Restrictions on driveway openings;
- Realignment of offset intersections; and
- Channelization of traffic.

Certain techniques can be used also for the purpose of discouraging through-traffic on residential streets:

- The use of diverters, culs-de-sac, one-way streets, stop signs and other control devices;
- Curb parking; and
- The lack of improvements such as throat widening, signals and left-turn lanes.

Similar emphasis is needed on preventing the use of alleys as by-pass or through-way routes, especially where residential streets are closed. One method is the installation of appropriate signage accompanied by adequate enforcement.

The Parking and Traffic Commission should develop a program for measuring, by appropriate standards, the progress toward meeting policy number one, and issue periodic reports.






The use of physical barriers to control traffic, enhance residential environments or unite separated parcels is fairly common in Oak Park. As of January, 1989, there were 19 culs-de-sac, 27 street closures or dead ends, and 12 traffic diverters in place.



This leads into the next policy, which concerns an often-controversial issue:

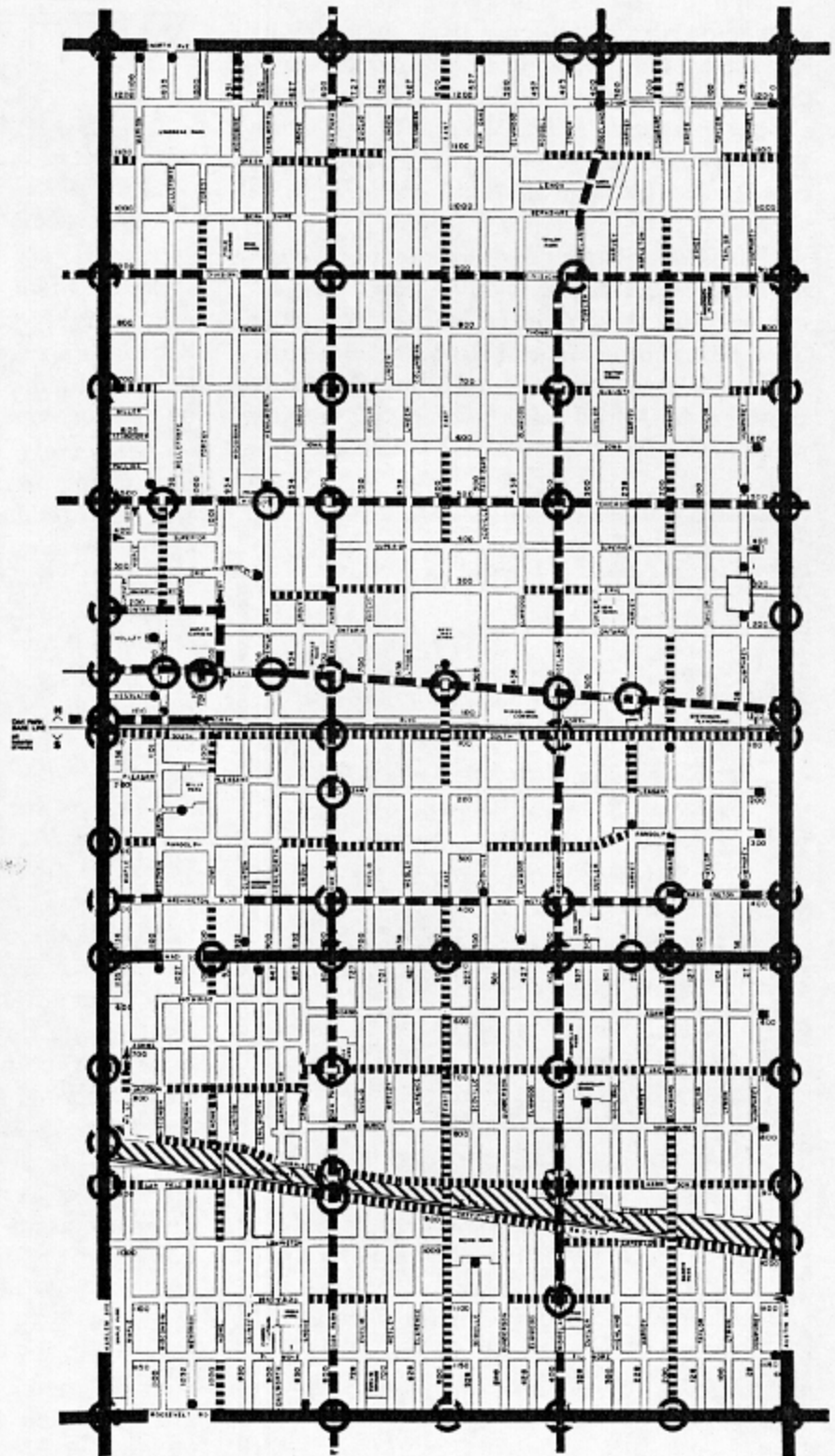
- 2 Culs-de-sac will continue to be used—judiciously—as a means of traffic control and to maintain residential environments.**

Cul-de-sac construction may be initiated either by a village agency or through established procedures for local initiative. It must be recognized, however, that culs-de-sac are the most restrictive form of traffic control. The Cul-de-sac Committee, when reviewing a proposal for a cul-de-sac, should routinely consider less restrictive measures which might serve the same or similar purpose. Such alternative measures include stop signs, diverters,

Street Network Map

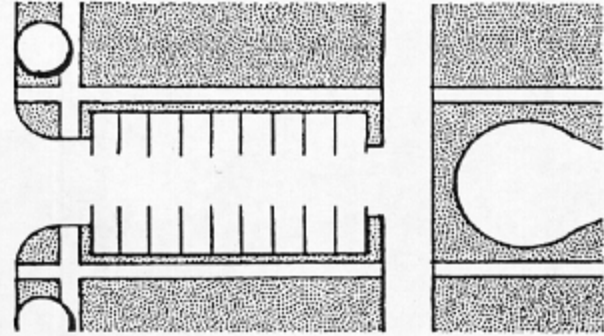
-  Limited access expressway
-  Primary arterial street
-  Secondary arterial street
-  Collector street
-  Residential street

-  Existing traffic signal
-  Existing cul-de-sacs and diverters



channelizers, one-way traffic or turn restrictions.

Each cul-de-sac proposal must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, whereby its impact on neighboring streets and commercial uses is analyzed. A temporary barrier should be erected to test the results. Although there is often a predisposition to approve a cul-de-sac (on a residential street *only*, it should not be permitted where it creates problems or adverse conditions that outweigh its benefits. Examples of such conditions include an unacceptable increase in traffic on a neighboring residential street (normal daily traffic volume on a residential street is usually between 800 and 1200 vehicles), without proper remedy, or a very real hindrance to a



business area whose access or parking is unreasonably reduced. Decisions should be based on a consideration of all relevant factors, including effects on residences, economic development, traffic and parking.

There are, of course, other valid reasons for the installation of culs-de-sac: the closing will unite compatible land uses, such as a school and a playground; the closing will enable the unified development of land on either side of the street or will help to separate residential and commercial uses.

Any discussion of arterial, collector and residential streets assumes that they are properly classified and that their classifications are reasonably consistent with their design. Each street has a specific function, and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) guidelines serve as a starting reference point. Due to the widths of many of Oak Park's arterial streets, it is improbable that many will ever meet ideal traffic-flow standards, although some are not yet at maximum capacity. There appears to be a greater problem with north-south arterials than with east-west arterials. For example, Madison Street, which has two lanes in each direction, has a maximum one-way capacity of 1250 vehicles per hour, but peak usage is 770 vehicles per hour (61 percent of capacity). Oak Park Avenue, which has one lane in each direction, has a maximum one-way capacity of 800 vehicles per hour, while peak usage is 675 vehicles per hour (84 percent of capacity). Other routes are not doing as well. Harlem Avenue, for example, is slow moving between the Eisenhower Expressway and Chicago Avenue, caused in part by the narrowed pavement at the Lake Street "L" viaduct, the proliferation

Definitions of street classifications

The street network map identifies these different street classifications.

- Primary and secondary *arterial* streets are generally located a half-mile apart and connect with the major expressways. They are designed to carry the majority of through-traffic trips. Arterial streets should be direct and continuous through the village.
- Collector* streets serve as feeders from the less-frequently used residential streets to the more heavily-trafficked arterials. Ideally, they intersect arterial streets at quarter-mile intervals. A collector should remain open to traffic for at least one-eighth mile from its intersection with an arterial street. However, it may be closed to traffic at greater distances from the intersections, but only if traffic can be safely reassigned to other streets.
- Residential* streets provide access to residences. They intersect with a collector or arterial street.

of uncoordinated traffic signals at irregular intervals and a lack of left-turn lanes.

Street classifications need periodic review and monitoring, including time-travel surveys, to determine at what level they are functioning. At the request of the Plan Commission, village engineering staff recommended nearly two dozen changes to the Street Network Map, which had not been modified since 1979. Those changes were concurred in by the Parking and Traffic Commission and are included in the current Street Network Map in this chapter.

A related policy toward achieving Objective A is to

3

Maintain village streets in good condition. Highest priority for repair should go to those streets which traffic is encouraged to use and to those which present safety hazards.

Traffic flows more safely and smoothly on streets that are in good repair. In addition, given the choice between two otherwise equal streets, a driver will generally choose the one in better condition.

The first policy under this objective recommends that drivers be encouraged to use arterial and, to a lesser extent, collector streets. These are the streets which should be kept in top condition. In addition, streets which present safety hazards should also be repaired. Together these two types of streets should receive highest priority in assigning street repairs. As noted in Chapter IV: Public Services and Facilities, every attempt should be made to coordinate major street repairs with sewer and other improvements that require major street work.

The Public Works Department surveyed the condition of 85 percent of the village's streets in 1989, with the remainder to be completed in 1990. The survey assigned each street a pavement condition index number (PCIN) from 0 (decrepit) to 100 (perfect), and a typical street's PCIN will decrease three points a year under normal usage. Two percent of the streets were ranked as being in very poor condition (10-25), three percent as

poor (26-40), and 15 percent as fair (41-55). Streets ranked as poor require resurfacing before they deteriorate to a point where reconstruction, which is twice as costly, is needed. This survey should be kept up to date and serve as a basis for measuring progress. It also should be used as the basis for a coordinated, long-range improvement plan which includes methods of financing necessary repairs.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, nearly all of Oak Park was built before the automobile attained its dominance. Most construction here was completed before the village established off-street parking requirements. Consequently, the village faces parking-shortage problems, particularly in higher-density residential neighborhoods, near commuter train stations, and in some business districts. Oak Park recognizes the need:

Objective B

To provide adequate parking for residents, shoppers, employees, commuters and visitors, including persons with disabilities.

To help provide this parking, several policies have been formulated:

4

The parking needs of different types of parkers should be given priority depending upon the nature of the area.

Flexibility is needed to meet specific conditions. Where land uses that produce different parking needs—such as a business district adjacent to a commuter rail station—interface, and there is insufficient parking available to meet competing demands, priorities must be established in accord with the goals and objectives of this comprehensive plan.

For example, as discussed in Chapter V: Economic Development, healthy local business districts are essential to maintaining the village's tax base and creating a desirable environment for adjacent residential neighborhoods. And adequate parking is, in turn, essential for the health of the local business

districts. Therefore, in business areas the parking needs of shoppers have the first priority, with a lesser priority assigned to employees. Where spillover from the shopping district becomes so great as to interfere unreasonably with residents' parking, however, parking restrictions on residential streets may be appropriate.

The village should regularly monitor the parking needs of various business districts, particularly those where parking usage appears to be at or near maximum capacity, such as Avenue/Lake Plaza (ALP), Oak Park/Eisenhower and North Avenue, and seek ways to create or free up customer parking.

Given the above priorities, the parking needs of commuters are often unable to be met when their needs and those of business areas and residents are in conflict. While every practical opportunity to provide commuter parking should be taken, commuter parking needs to be discouraged on residential streets and in spaces needed for shoppers. Commuter parking will be discussed further at Objective D.

Finally, the village should make every effort to provide parking spaces, even in excess of minimum State requirements, wherever needed for persons with disabilities.

The provision of off-street parking is a key tool for alleviating Oak Park's parking problems. More off-street parking is particularly needed in higher-density residential areas and in many business districts. The following policy relates to new construction and is intended to help alleviate parking shortages.

5

Require the provision of adequate off-street parking in all new construction, and seek to replace off-street parking that is lost due to new construction.

The Oak Park Zoning Ordinance requires off-street parking for almost all new construction. In 1989, the requirement for residential development was increased from one space

per dwelling unit to two spaces for single-family homes, two spaces per unit in two-family dwellings, 1.25 spaces for one-bedroom apartments, 1.5 spaces for two-bedroom apartments, and two spaces for three-bedroom or larger apartments. Periodic review of these requirements will be necessary, and the current minimum requirements for non-residential parking also warrant periodic review, weighing the need for more parking against the danger of discouraging economic development. Oak Park's current minimum parking requirements are considerably below nationally recommended guidelines, especially for non-residential uses.

Besides increasing minimum parking requirements, the village can look into positive incentives to encourage developers to provide additional spaces beyond minimum requirements by relaxing other zoning requirements in exchange for extra off-street spaces. Also, the village should work with the private sector to replace any existing off-street parking spaces that are lost because of new development.

Because so many Oak Park apartment buildings were constructed prior to the establishment of off-street parking requirements, they lack adequate off-street parking for their occupants. Consequently,

6

The village should continue its programs to provide additional off-street parking facilities in neighborhoods with extensive multi-family housing built prior to the imposition of zoning requirements for parking, and in commercial areas in need of additional parking.

In recent years, the village has added substantially to its supply of off-street parking for residents of multi-family buildings. From 1986 through 1988, 500 additional off-street spaces were made available to overnight parkers, most being rented from the private



sector, some being created as "enclave" spaces in parkways.

As of June, 1988, the village owned or leased 83 parking lots and/or garages containing 3,427 spaces. Some of those lots are in shopping and commuter areas, many are in residential areas, and 2,500 spaces are rented in whole or in part to residents for overnight parking. Of the remaining 947 spaces, 63 percent are in Downtown Oak Park. And, of the 83 lots used for overnight parking, 50 are considered sold out. But, as long Oak Park retains its policy of prohibiting most on-street overnight parking, parking-space demand by renters will continue to be high.

In its July, 1988 report, the Board of Trustees' ad hoc subcommittee (established as a permanent parking committee in 1989) on overnight parking identified four parking problem areas in the village: the Washington Boulevard corridor, the Oak Park Avenue/Ontario Street area, the Pleasant Street/Marion Street/Maple Avenue area, and the Harrison Street/Humphrey Avenue area. Those four areas, not surprisingly, have the largest numbers of cars parked on the street overnight. In surveys conducted in 1984, 1986, 1987 and 1988, the average number of cars parked on the street overnight was nearly 1000—more than half illegally (without passes). Approximately 40 percent were parked in the four identified problem areas.

A major result of the subcommittee's report was the adoption of an overnight on-street permit-parking enabling ordinance. The ordinance allows the Board of Trustees to establish residential alternate-side-of-the-street, and alternate block overnight permit parking on an area-by-area basis. Ten areas, ranging in size from three to eight blocks, are identified as eligible for designation by the Board of Trustees. Areas may be nominated by the Village Manager or by citizen petition, and specific criteria are spelled out in the ordinance, including a public hearing by the Parking and Traffic Commission. Currently, permit areas are designated for defined periods of time. Three of the 10 eligible areas were approved through 1989.

Other efforts have also been made to

increase available parking for multi-family building occupants. The village operates a parking clearinghouse, a program designed to match the demands of citizens who need parking spaces with the supply of privately-owned spaces that other citizens might be able to make available. The Parking Division of the Community Development Department also works closely with the Diversity Assurance Office and others in identifying problems and working on possible solutions.

As noted in the discussion of policy number four, the parking needs of commercial areas should be monitored as well. The importance of adequate parking to the health of business districts is discussed further in Chapter V: Economic Development.

The issues discussed above constitute an example of a subject which is appropriate for periodic Plan Commission review, according to the policy statement in Chapter I: Introduction.

For many Oak Parkers parking is not a problem, simply because they do not own or drive an automobile. For example, many of Oak Park's older residents prefer to use some mode of transportation other than the automobile. These individuals make up a large group of people who are dependent on public transportation for much of their mobility. Without it, many of them would be unable to get to work or even shop. For many of them current transportation facilities are inadequate.

Objective C

Enhance public transportation opportunities for all residents, including those with limited mobility; and encourage more use of public transportation and less dependence on automobiles.

7

Improve accessibility to rapid transit and other forms of public transportation for the elderly and those with limited mobility.

The village has maintained a commitment to improve accessibilities throughout the community for persons with limited mobility. Through

the efforts of the Committee on the Disabled and the use of Community Development Block Grant funds, dozens of street curbs have been reconstructed for use by persons in wheel chairs, including many in key business areas and in the Frank Lloyd Wright/Prairie School of Architecture Historic District. Hundreds of other curbs have been made wheelchair accessible as routine curb replacement work is performed along with street resurfacing. However, nothing has been accomplished at rapid transit stations where steep stairways and narrow turnstiles act as barriers to many elderly as well as persons with disabilities.

It is speculative to assume that the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) or the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) will be able to raise capital to make a significant number of rapid transit stations accessible by means of elevators, lifts and ramps. If so, the logical place to begin in Oak Park is at the Harlem station of the Lake Street "L" line, which serves a principal destination and is well serviced by bus routes. The village should take every opportunity to urge the RTA and Pace to place Oak Park buses high on the list for replacement with vehicles equipped to serve persons with disabilities and limited-mobility elderly persons. Unfortunately, the Pace bus system has no buses with wheelchair lifts serving Oak Park.

- 8** Continue the local taxi- and bus-fare subsidy programs which serve the elderly and persons with disabilities.

In 1977, the village and the township governments established taxi-fare subsidy programs for the elderly. The village's program originally sold \$10.00 coupon books for \$7.00, which effectively reduced participants' fares by 30 percent. In 1989, following a taxi-fare rate increase, the village increased the subsidy to 40 percent and also doubled the number of coupon books available to the elderly and persons with disabilities. The program serves some 200 to 300 persons each year. The township program pays the first \$1.50 on the taxi's meter, with a limit of two one-way trips per person per day. Both taxi

programs can be used together to effect greater savings. Subsidy programs aside, Oak Park's local taxi companies provide a valuable, convenient and individualized service to residents. The village and township should continue to support them.

In addition to these taxi programs, Oak Park Township operates a bus service for senior citizens and persons with disabilities. By calling one day in advance, the user can arrange for door-to-door service within Oak Park. It also provides regular trip routes, to and from such places as grocery stores, shopping areas and the Suburban Adult Day Center. This program has four buses in use, two with wheelchair lifts. It operates weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., serving about 185 persons a day. The suggested donation is 50 cents per ride, and coupon books are available at 12 rides for five dollars. Most of the bus drivers are off-duty firefighters, many of whom are trained in emergency procedures.

Of course, public transportation is needed by more than the elderly and persons with disabilities. To meet their needs, additional policies are established:

- 9** Cooperate with transit agencies to maintain and improve the quality of local public transportation service.
- 10** Improve intra-village transportation services within Oak Park, both to reduce the need for commuters to drive to train stations and to increase the use of public transportation for local travel.

Several approaches can be taken toward furthering implementation of these policies. At the lower-cost end are such steps as providing more bus shelters and encouraging the RTA to review regularly its service schedule to better coordinate feeder buses and "L" service. Although responsibility for improved service rests with the RTA, Oak Park and neighboring communities may have to exert pressure to obtain better-coordinated services. In fact, Oak Park will need to be vigilant to prevent a decline in services. An

extreme example is the suggestion that is made at irregular intervals to eliminate the Lake Street rapid transit line—a suggestion that, fortunately, has not mustered much support.

Increased public transportation ridership can be encouraged also by joining with neighboring communities to work with the CTA and RTA to increase security on both the Lake Street and Congress rapid transit lines. Even when those lines are safe to ride, the perception of danger will decrease ridership. Efforts to maintain safety are particularly important during non-rush hours.

Other implementation alternatives would require substantial capital outlays. One approach, if current service cannot be improved, would be to introduce a jitney service along bus routes. Such a system would allow taxicabs or mini-vans to pick up passengers who pay a standard fare along established bus routes. A more costly scheme would be to initiate a demand-activated-rapid-transit system, i.e., a dial-a-bus. Such a system would pick up riders near their homes and deliver them to their destinations. However, as successful systems in dozens of cities have shown, this approach, whether it serves only Oak Park or neighboring communities as well, is expensive and would probably require subsidies to develop and operate. The village should periodically examine the technology and costs of such systems to see if they have changed sufficiently to make them practical here.

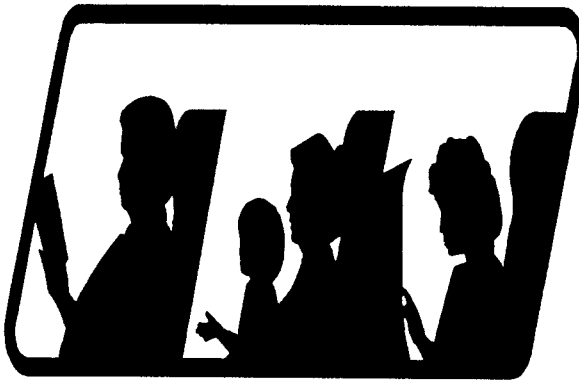
The village should also move towards establishment of a shuttle bus system serving Downtown Oak Park, the Avenue-Lake Plaza business district and the historic districts, as called for in the Greater Downtown Oak Park Redevelopment Plan and Project (tax increment district plan).

To help reduce traffic congestion and improve the quality of life, the village can also:

11 Accommodate the use of more fuel-efficient or manually-powered transportation modes.

The major alternatives to motor vehicle transportation are walking and bicycle riding. The village will continue to control vehicular traffic to assure the safety of pedestrians. The village will continue to time traffic signals so even the slowest walkers can safely cross all signalized intersections. When replacing obsolete traffic signals at school crosswalks and other intersections with heavy pedestrian traffic, the village should continue to install "walk/don't walk" signals.

The village should also facilitate bicycle riding as an alternative to the automobile.



Many communities are able to provide extensive systems of bicycle paths. However, because nearly all of Oak Park's streets are too narrow (typically, 30 feet) to safely accommodate a bicycle path as well as automobiles, very expensive street widenings requiring the removal of many irreplaceable ma-

ture trees would be necessary.

Nevertheless, there are still many actions the village should undertake to accommodate bicycle riders. Secure storage facilities should be provided at locations where large numbers of bicycle riders congregate: schools, libraries, recreation centers, parks, transit stations, shopping districts. Curb cuts should be made through culs-de-sac to permit through-bicycle travel, since streets with culs-de-sac form natural bicycle routes. The village might also re-examine the idea of designating certain streets as preferred bike routes, identifying them as such and posting signs to alert motorists. Other ways to encourage and promote bicycling should be explored. For example, the village might sponsor a bike race or promote special bicycle days. A survey of other communities may reveal other innovative ideas.

Bicycle riders should be discouraged from

riding on sidewalks in shopping areas where cyclists could endanger pedestrians. More publicity is needed to encourage bicycle owners to register their vehicles with the police department.

Because bicycles and automobiles frequently do not mix safely, local bodies should vigorously promote bicycle safety programs. With the growing popularity of the moped and small scooters, these same groups ought to prepare similar safety programs to educate riders and motorists.

Although the energy crisis of the late 1970's has ebbed, the village should continue to encourage the use of more energy-efficient automobiles. Oak Park currently allows up to 10 percent of the spaces in a parking lot or garage used by the public to be designated for compact cars only. That ratio needs to be periodically reviewed for its effectiveness. The village might also consider a lower permit-parking fee for compact autos.

Objective D

To use Oak Park's excellent mass transportation facilities as an economic development tool.

Although there often exists a conflict between the parking needs of commuters and those of shoppers, employees and residents, Oak Park has not taken full economic advantage of its transportation facilities and excel-

lent location within the metropolitan area.

12

Seek to establish a multi-modal transportation center at the Lake Street "L" line and the Oak Park/Metra CNW station at the Harlem Avenue/Marion Street station.

This location could become an economic plus for Downtown Oak Park and South Marion Street. A unified transportation center, combining rapid transit, the Chicago and Northwestern (CNW) Railroad (part of the Metra system), Pace bus routes, and taxis should be examined more closely. The possibility exists for the use of air rights for development which spans the railroad right-of-way and provides a common depot facility with parking, shops and other amenities.

If such a center can be established, it would serve several purposes: provide commuter parking; establish a transportation center to serve all of Oak Park; attract retail, service and restaurant uses; and encourage the provision of accessibility for those with limited mobility at the rapid transit line, the CNW station and the connecting Pace bus system. Further economic development could be fostered by connecting this hub to the Avenue/Lake Plaza (ALP) business district and the Oak Park Tour Center by means of a shuttle bus system. The Village should consider establishing a committee to examine the feasibility of such a project.

Chapter IV:

Public Facilities and Services

Chapter IV: Public Facilities and Services

Goal

To provide in the most efficient manner those public services and facilities that maintain Oak Park as a desirable community.

Objective A

To maintain public safety throughout the community.

Policy:

- 1 The police and fire departments will continue to adjust programs and policies to meet changing conditions.

Objective B

To maintain and improve public works and services consistent with high standards and fiscal constraints.

Policies:

- 2 Refuse collection and disposal alternatives must be developed and regularly evaluated.
- 3 Capital improvements should be implemented and coordinated through a regular planning process.
- 4 The village should continue to manage, plant and maintain its parkways.

Objective C

To maintain and improve the high quality of other government services and facilities within fiscal constraints.

Policy:

- 5 Maintain and, where necessary, enhance other essential village functions, especially health and code enforcement, within fiscal constraints.

Objective D

To provide needed government facilities and services in the most cost-effective and coordinated manner possible.

Policies:

- 6 Use intergovernmental agreements, and agreements with non-governmental agencies, to the maximum feasible extent to increase the village's capacity to provide services and facilities at the least cost.
- 7 Governmental decisions and activities should take into account their effects upon other governmental functions and non-governmental agencies.
- 8 The village needs to establish regular mechanisms for evaluating its programs.

Objective E

To promote an improved and healthy environment within all of Oak Park.

Policies:

- 9 The village, with the assistance of its Environmental and Energy Advisory Commission, should develop and adopt a comprehensive environmental protection plan.
- 10 The village should review all major governmental actions to identify their impacts on the environment.

People choose to live in Oak Park because of its quality of life—a quality that is sustained by a high level of public services and facilities. Essential services are provided by the Village, School Districts, Park District, Township and Library. Among the village services are those relating to public safety, public works, code enforcement, health, recreation, community relations and community development. Over the years, these services and facilities have expanded and improved as conditions warranted.

The cost of providing these services and facilities has been rising steadily. As discussed in Chapter V: Economic Development, the village has limited financial resources to pay for these services and those which may emerge in the future to enhance the quality of life in Oak Park. Consequently, Oak Park must undertake efforts

Goal

To provide in the most efficient manner those public services and facilities that maintain Oak Park as a desirable community.

This goal is addressed by three objectives which describe three general areas of services — public safety, public works, and others — plus a fourth objective regarding cost-effectiveness and coordination.

Public safety

One of the important and basic services that a municipality can provide its citizens is protection from crime and fire. Residents require not only actual security, but also its perception; they must not only be safe, but feel safe as well.

Objective A

To maintain public safety throughout the community.

One policy is stated to help achieve this objective.

1

The police and fire departments will continue to adjust programs and policies to meet changing conditions.

Police department

The police department is charged with the overall responsibility of protection of life and property, maintaining order, and enforcement of local and State laws. The department's progress is often evaluated and measured by crime statistics; e.g., crimes perpetrated, number of arrests, cases cleared, and conviction ratios. Arrests usually correlate with incidents of crime, but the objective is as much to decrease crime as it is to arrest offenders. The police department provides a wide range of community services; e.g., crime-prevention programs, a police speaker's bureau, and community relations programs. Accordingly, the department plays an integral role in enhancing the quality of life within Oak Park. Crime and the perception of crime in Oak Park are very important; therefore, it is vital that community residents and police personnel work in concert to attain mutual goals and objectives.

Since most crimes are ones of opportunity, and since the incidence of various types of crimes will fluctuate, the key to police effectiveness is planning and flexibility.

Through the years, Oak Park's police department has striven for flexibility. In the mid-1970's, the "team policing" concept was introduced, to concentrate efforts in certain areas. Since then, the department has adopted an integrated criminal-apprehension concept, coupled with a problem-oriented policing approach. This concept targets crime, and also invites citizen input. For example: 1) R.E.A.C.T. (Radio Emergency Associated Communications Teams), a citizens group, patrols the community and alerts the department to ongoing or potential criminal and/or suspicious activity. 2) the Collaborative Process, which is a contract between the police department and specifically defined neighborhood groups, engages department personnel to meet with each group at regular, scheduled intervals to identify spe-

cific problems and formulate strategy to resolve them. Accordingly, police officers and community residents work together more closely towards resolving community problems.

Oak Park is a culturally-diverse community; accordingly, the department continues to provide its officers with multi-cultural awareness training in order to facilitate mutual understanding and sensitivity.

To ensure community involvement, the department has fostered the Neighborhood Watch Program and the Collaborative Process.

In addition, the department was restructured in 1989 to provide an organization that would deliver more effective, efficient and economical police service. That restructuring included the creation of four new commander-level positions reporting directly to the chief. The department has embraced the concept of utilizing civilian personnel to perform non-emergency tasks, freeing up sworn personnel to address crime-prevention measures. It has established a computer-aided dispatch system and an automated crime analysis unit to examine crime patterns, assisting in more effective deployment of personnel. A new criminal case-management system has been developed to ensure a higher quality of police investigations. A new police patrol deployment plan which places police resources where needed and enhances police visibility within the community, has been developed. The department has adopted a proactive community relations program and works closely with the village's community relations division. In recent years, the department has made significant inroads in the recruitment and promotion of minorities on the force, and this effort will continue.

In March of 1990, the Citizens' Police Review Committee, appointed by the village board in the Spring of 1989, issued its report and recommendations regarding race relations within the police department and between the police and community. Its report concluded with a series of recommendations, including establishment of a citizens' police board. By mid-year, the village board began

reviewing and acting upon the recommendations made in that report.

The department will continue in its efforts to reduce criminality and enhance the quality of life in Oak Park. However, special emphasis is required in the areas of human resource development, police community relations, minority recruitment, management-information systems, officer career development, physical fitness for police officers, performance evaluation, sensitivity training, and education regarding other ancillary support functions

of local government. The department must develop a long-range plan, as well, for law enforcement technology and equipment upgrades, as financial resources become available.



Fire department

The fire department has made significant strides in recent years. In 1982, construction was completed on the new central fire station and training tower. In 1987, the department upgraded its ambulance service to full paramedic status, and by 1989 there were some 30 firefighters who were certified paramedics, which requires 300 hours of training.

In 1988, Oak Park's fire rating was raised from Class III to Class II by the Insurance Service Office. That office rates communities on a scale of one to 10, according to the level of protection they provide. Oak Park is now one of nine municipalities in Illinois, and one of about 60 in the country, that enjoys a Class II rating, which not only is a source of pride and confidence, but also often results in lower insurance costs for businesses.

Many factors contribute to a favorable fire rating. Response time is one, and Oak Park's three fire stations can respond to any location in the village within four minutes. The village also belongs to Division 11, a mutual-aid pact with six neighboring communities that provides for automatic response among its members for prescribed situations. It is also a member of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, comprised of more than 200 municipalities,

including Chicago, which provide backup support.

Other contributing factors to the Class II rating include water-main replacement and supply, personnel levels, equipment, prevention programs, training and testing. The village has an emergency generator and a second source of water from the City of Chicago. The fire department also operates an emergency shelter disaster agency according to a State-approved plan.

The Fire Prevention Bureau, which had three to four inspectors in the late 1970's, was eliminated for a period in the early 1980's, with inspection responsibilities being given to regular shift personnel. The bureau was re-established and now is staffed by two full-time persons. It gives inspection priority to high-hazard uses. It reviews new-construction and major rehabilitation plans in conjunction with the code administration department. The fire department has taken over from the code administration department the responsibility of inspecting commercial properties on an annual basis. All firefighters participate in those routine inspections, whereby fire-code violations are cited, and layouts of each establishment are recorded for fire-fighting purposes. Follow-up inspections are usually handled by the prevention bureau.

In the late 1980's, the fire department was instrumental in adoption of an ordinance requiring sprinklers in nearly all new commercial buildings of 3500 square feet or larger, in new residential buildings of six or more units, and in some rehabilitation projects. The village code requires smoke detectors in all multi-family buildings of four or more units—one in each bedroom, plus one in the common area of each unit. State law requires detectors in single-family homes, a difficult statute to enforce. The code administration department enforces the multi-family detector ordinance.

Another example of the fire department's flexibility has been the establishment of a hazardous-material response team, consisting of 18 firefighters, six from each shift. Fifty firefighters have received phase-1 hazardous materials training, including the 18 team members who will also receive phase-2 training. Federal law mandates counties in Illinois

to prepare hazardous-material plans, and Cook County is in the process of developing a resource plan to help municipalities. Meanwhile, the fire department continues its ongoing process of inventorying hazardous material, such as hospital laboratories and chemical storage. By itself, or in conjunction with Division 11, Oak Park can handle small spills of chemicals or other hazardous materials. The fire department has a hazardous-material response vehicle, as does Division 11 (housed in Cicero). A major spill would have to be handled by contracting with private firms.

Although the fire department personnel level is less than it was in 1979, the department has been functioning at an improved level, adding paramedic, inspectional and hazardous-materials responsibilities, and protecting a greater number of dwelling units. Recent evaluations indicate that no major restructuring is necessary or desirable in the immediate future: switching to eight-hours shifts would cost about one-third more; and contracting for private fire services is unrealistic, as are the concepts of a multi-community fire department and a combined police and fire department. Some internal structuring, however, is being considered, whereby three divisional chiefs, below the level of deputy chiefs, would be responsible for the specific areas of emergency medical services, training, and fire prevention.

There is a need for frequent evaluation of existing programs and resources, including personnel levels, minority representation at all levels, inspection programs and coordination with the code administration department, water main replacement, mutual-aid agreements, the effect of the paramedic program on the department's fire-fighting readiness, the adequacy of preparedness in the hazardous-material area, and the adequacy of the village's capital reserve fund and planning for same.

Public works

Another basic municipal function is that of public works, which includes refuse pickup and disposal, street maintenance, street light-

ing, traffic signals, snow plowing, water and sewer lines and forestry. Therefore, Oak Park's second objective, related to public facilities and services, is

Objective B

To maintain and improve public works and services consistent with high standards and fiscal constraints.

The most pressing need in the area of public works in the 1990's is that of refuse disposal. The prediction is that all landfills in the area will probably be full by some time in 1992. Oak Park must find a place for its 22,000 tons of residential refuse that is now being taken each year to the Sexton landfill in Hillside. Therefore,

2

Refuse collection and disposal alternatives must be developed and regularly evaluated.

The village collects refuse weekly, but only from residential buildings of five or fewer units, plus public litter boxes. Bulk pickups are made on a fee basis. Collection costs are slightly less than they would be if they were contracted out to private collectors. Collection costs have been reduced in recent years by a cut in the number of personnel from 27 to 12, accompanied by a new, more sanitary mobile-cart system utilizing more efficient equipment. Self-collection of refuse offers the village some important secondary advantages



as well: refuse trucks and crews are available for snow plowing and clearing streets after storms. Periodic evaluation of collection methods should continue.

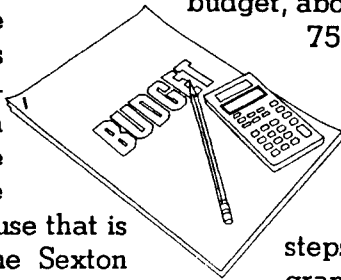
As noted above, the major refuse problem lies in disposal, not collection. Tipping fees (the amount paid to the landfill operator) more than doubled between 1983 and 1987, from six to 12 dollars per ton, then increased to 20 dollars by 1989. Of the total refuse-disposal budget, about 25 percent is spent on disposal, 75 percent on collection. That ratio is expected to be 50/50 in a few years.

To help address the problem of disappearing land-fill sites, the village has taken several steps. In 1988, a pilot recycling program was begun, serving some 2,500 homes. Newsprint, glass and cans are placed in a separate container for pickup along with the other refuse. In 1989, the program was expanded to serve some 7,500 homes, nearly one-third of all dwelling units but none in multi-family buildings of six or more units.

In 1989, the president and board of trustees appointed a solid waste commission to study Oak Park's waste-disposal problems and make recommendations. Its first recommendation was to expand the recycling program to the entire village in 1990, which was accomplished early in that year.

Recognizing that Oak Park can't solve the refuse-disposal problem by itself, the village has joined the West Central Municipal Conference, a regional planning association. The conference has the potential for finding and implementing regional solutions to the waste-disposal problem, particularly if Oak Park takes an active role. The conference has completed an inventory and has estimated area-wide needs. It is now in the planning process. A report, including recommendations, is expected in 1990. Other regional activities include a regional policy plan, prepared by the Northeast Illinois Planning Commission, a regional planning advisory organization of which Oak Park is a member.

The State of Illinois has been active in recent years in the area of solid-waste disposal. Statutes have been adopted that will



affect Oak Park and other municipalities. Among the new State requirements are the following: Counties of 100,000 or more population must develop comprehensive solid waste plans by March, 1991. Those plans must include recycling programs designed to achieve a 15 percent recycling rate of each county's waste within three years, 25 percent within five years. Those goals include composting as a recycling strategy. By July, 1990, landfills may no longer accept yard waste unless it is separated from other refuse at its source, in which case it may be accepted by a landfill for composting only.

In the Fall of 1989, the village began bringing leaves to a transfer station to be composted on farms. Other yard waste, e.g., grass clippings and shrubbery, followed suit in Spring of 1990; also in 1990, multiple-family buildings were able to participate in the yard-waste collection program.

In the short term, Oak Park will need to encourage a reduction in the amount of refuse, separate its yard waste, and increase recycling efforts. In the long run, those efforts will have to be supplemented with increasing reliance on transfer stations, where refuse is taken for shipping to more remote landfills. Costs can be expected to increase to 50 or 60 dollars per ton in the 1990's, including transfer fees. When costs rise high enough (some east coast cities were paying 75 dollars per ton in 1989), costly incineration plants might become a viable alternative, especially if customers can be found for the energy that is generated and pollution emission problems can be resolved.

The village can also support and encourage certain actions at the State level, including a bottle and can deposit law, the prohibition of certain packaging materials, and the required use of recycled products.

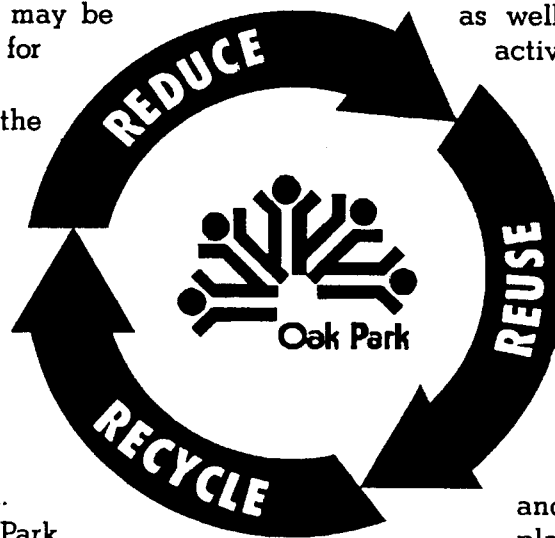
Of course, public works includes more than refuse collection and disposal. It includes an array of capital improvements to maintain the

village's infrastructure. Sound management practice requires that

3

Capital improvements should be implemented and coordinated through a regular planning process.

The village will continue to coordinate its capital improvements to minimize costs and inconveniences to residents and businesses. These include utility-company improvements as well as the following village activities:



Water System. The village's water-main replacement program is aimed at the gradual and eventually total replacement of older four-inch mains with eight-inch piping. Of the community's 111.5 miles of water mains, about 10 miles still need replacement, including some three miles of trunk

and feeder mains. These replacements are needed be-

cause many of the older mains are deteriorated and inadequate in size; and replacements will increase water pressure for property owners and fire fighting. Replacement is coordinated with sewer-line replacement and street resurfacing projects.

Sewer System. The village has 113 miles of sewer lines. Approximately six miles of deteriorating nine-inch sewers need to be replaced by 15-inch lines, and some eight miles of relief sewers need to be installed. Most water and sewer replacement work is financed through fees for water usage, and sewer-line replacement is coordinated with street-improvement projects.

Street Maintenance and Improvements. Several methods are used to maintain the village's 110 miles of streets, from short-term slurry-seal treatment through total replacement. As noted in Chapter III: Transportation and Parking, a 1989 survey of street conditions found five percent of the village's streets in poor or very poor condition, requiring

resurfacing before their condition deteriorates to where reconstruction or replacement would be required; 15 percent more rated as being in only fair condition.

Street improvements are financed primarily by three funding sources: federal grants, motor-fuel taxes (MFT) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. MFT has provided about one million dollars per year, but after expenses for paying off street-lighting bonds, snow removal, street cleaning and the like, only about \$500,000 is left for capital improvements. In recent years, those half million dollars have been used as the village's 30 percent matching share to secure federal grants for major resurfacing projects: Division Street, Austin Boulevard, Chicago Avenue, Oak Park Avenue and Madison Street.

Residential street improvements have been limited in recent years to those which can be funded through the CDBG program, usually in the range of \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually, depending upon other demands for those funds. CDBG-funded street improvements are limited to areas of the village where higher percentages of low- or moderate-income persons live. Thus, improvements in many neighborhoods have been deferred.

Upon completion of the street-conditions inventory in 1990, a long-range improvement plan will have to be developed, including financing methods. Clearly, it will cost much less to repair streets while they are in fair condition than when they are allowed to deteriorate to very poor condition.

Finally, with regard to planning for capital

Table IV-1: Cost of public improvements, 1979 and 1989

Type of improvement	Cost per mile	
	1979	1989
Slurry seal, streets	\$ 20,000	\$ 25,000
Street resurfacing	70,000	90,000
Street renovation	280,000	390,000
Street reconstruction	400,000	550,000
Street replacement	700,000	800,000
Water main replacement	380,000	490,000
Sewer line replacement	370,000	460,000
	Cost per Unit	
Alley resurfacing ¹	13,000/block	15,000/block
Alley reconstruction ²	60,000/block	80,000/block
Cul-de-sac construction ³	25,000 each	30,000 each
Sidewalk replacement	2.25 per sq. ft.	3 per sq. ft.

¹ The village usually pays 50 percent, property owners pay 50 percent.

² The village usually pays 15 percent, property owners pay 85 percent.

³ Village and property owners' shares vary depending on need and public benefit.

Source: Estimates by the Oak Park Public Works Department

expenditures, the village needs to fund regularly its equipment-replacement reserve fund, and use that fund in a systematic and uniform manner, to assure that monies will be available when anticipated needs occur.

Other public-works services include the following.

- Engineering: preparation of plans for capital improvements, traffic evaluation, permit application review;
- Street lighting: maintenance of all street lights (some 4,000), traffic signals (some 660 at 66 intersections), conduits and cables;
- Street services: cleaning, snow and ice control, pot-hole repair;

- Signs: installation and maintenance of more than 8,000 traffic signs, curb and pavement marking, other repairs;
- Landscaping: grounds maintenance for village properties;
- Forestry: design, planning, maintenance and management of all parkway and parkland trees.



In connection with the Forestry Division, a fourth public facilities policy is adopted:

- 4** The village should continue to manage, plant and maintain its parkways.

Healthy trees and attractive landscaping are important to the overall aesthetic quality and character of Oak Park. Thus, in 1984 the forestry division completed a computerized inventory of the village's 20,000 parkway trees as well as its other public green spaces such as those in parking lots, culs-de-sac, traffic diverters and business districts. Information from that inventory has indicated the overall age, composition and vigor of the community's public trees—data that will facilitate budgetary planning, maintenance, reforestation and equipment purchases. The computerized inventory should be kept up to date as changes are made.

In 1981, the village also appointed a forestry commission to advise the president and board of trustees regarding forestry needs, priorities and techniques. The village now strives for variety in its re-plantings, seeking to avoid a serious disease that can wipe out vast numbers of the same species, as the Dutch Elm disease did in the 1970's. That disease has been slowed and contained (1600 parkway trees removed in 1977, fewer than 100 in recent years) through an integrated pest-management approach, which needs to be continued.

The village should better publicize its forestry activities, and better educate the

public about caring for parkway (and private-property) trees. Residents and business people need to be encouraged, for example, to water parkway trees during dry periods such as the summer of 1988.

Finally, the village needs to limit, as much as feasible, street signage, which detracts from parkway aesthetics.

Other Village Functions

In addition to public works and public safety, Oak Park provides a wide range of facilities and services to its residents. As with public works and public safety, these facilities and services are maintained within the constraints of limited fiscal resources.

Objective C

To maintain and improve the high quality of other government services and facilities within fiscal constraints.

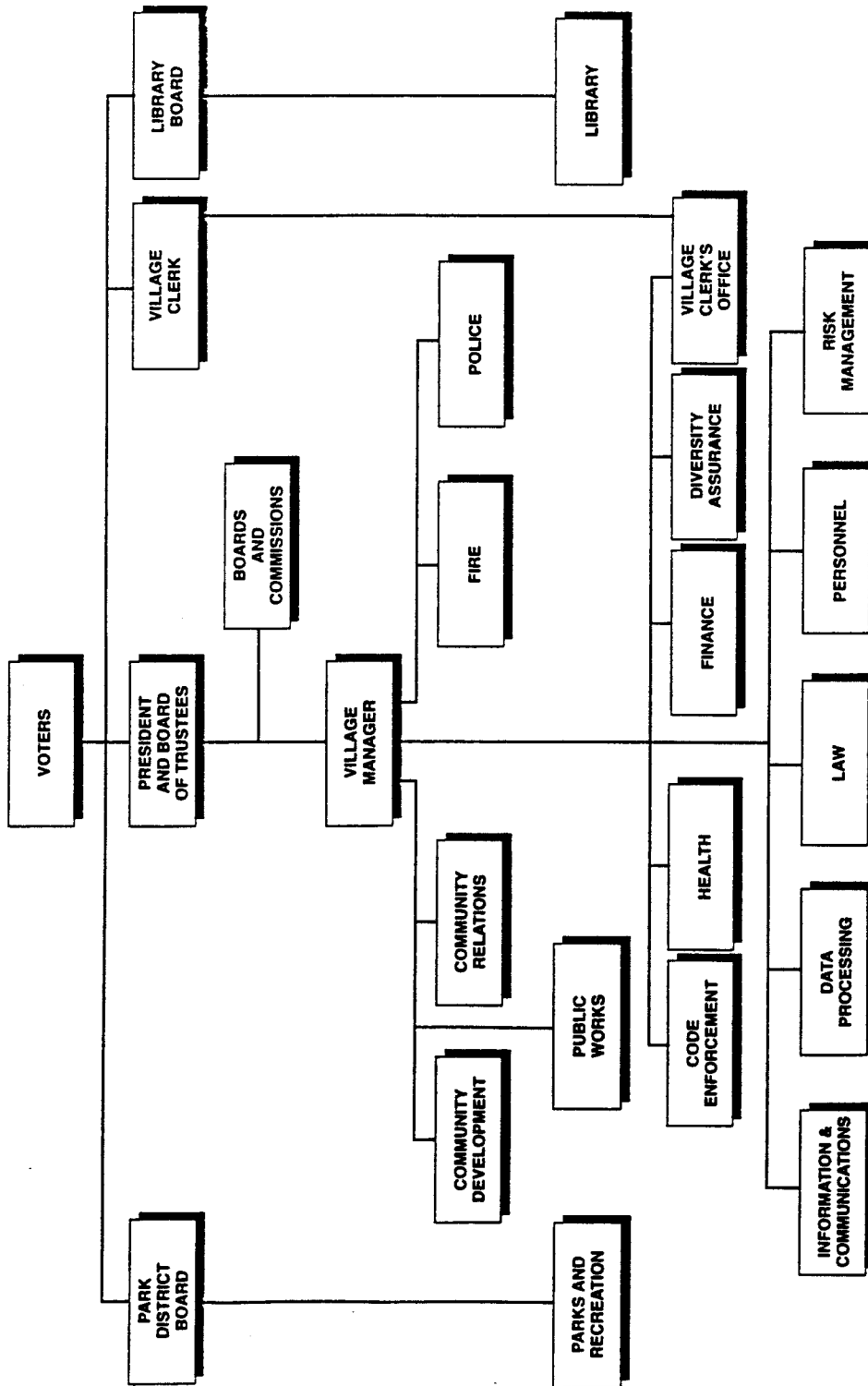
As indicated on Figure IV-1, there are many other village departments (and agencies) other than police, fire and public works. The following describes the activities of those departments which are in the forefront of helping to implement the objectives and policies of this comprehensive plan through direct services to the public. Other departments are described in Appendix B.

All of the following departments and divisions are directly responsible to the village manager (as are the police, fire and public works departments).

Community Relations. This division has four basic areas of responsibility:

- Diversity counselling, which expands housing options and encourages non-traditional moves;
- Investigation and enforcement of the fair housing ordinance, and promotion of the village's policy on racial diversity, through

Figure IV-1: Village of Oak Park Organization Chart



monitoring of real-estate practices, educational seminars and complaint investigations;

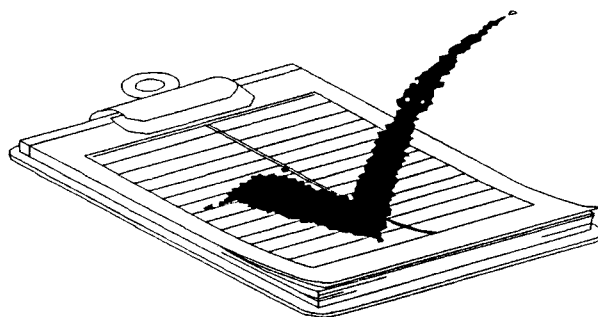
- Education for the benefit of realtors, school personnel, landlords, tenants and village staff;
- Consultation with individuals and organizations; and
- Mediation of neighborhood conflicts.

It works closely with the community relations commission, code enforcement department, diversity assurance division, Oak Park Housing Center, school districts, realtors, building managers, the Illinois Human Relations Commission, regional fair-housing agencies, and many groups and individuals both within and outside Oak Park. Its activities are discussed further in Chapter One: Housing.

Diversity Assurance. This office administers the housing-bond loan program and other incentive programs to foster racial diversity and physical improvement in multi-family housing. It works closely with community relations and the Housing Center. Its function is also discussed in Chapter One: Housing.

Community Development Department. Staff promotes development through five divisions: administrative, commercial development, parking, planning, and housing rehabilitation. It administers three single-family loan programs; oversees all parking facilities and services; promotes economic development, including administration of the Oak Park Development Corporation loan program; provides research, reports, zoning and planning services, graphics and design review; administers the Community Development Block Grant program, and serves the historic preservation commission, plan commission, community design commission and community development citizens' advisory committee.

Code Administration Department. By enforcing zoning, building, electrical, plumbing, housing, sign, elevator, and fence ordinances, this department is central in assuring preservation of the housing stock. It also maintains individual property records and plans, and staffs the zoning board of appeals and design review commission, among others. During



each annual inspection, housing inspectors examine all of the building's exterior and common areas plus 10 percent of the building's dwelling units. Before apartment buildings are sold, the village code requires an inspection of the interiors of all dwelling units. Buildings of three or fewer units receive periodic exterior inspections through the Neighborhood Walk Program.

Parks and Recreation. In 1980, the village's recreation department and the Oak Park Park District, an independent governmental body, consolidated their staffs into what is currently known as Parks and Recreation, under one director. The merged staffs provided a more coordinated delivery of services at a reduced overall cost. The parks and recreation board is a separate entity, but its membership is the same as the elected park district board. It sets policy and oversees operations. The park district has retained its autonomy; it and the village jointly fund operations. In 1988, parks and recreation, having outgrown its village hall space, moved its combined staff to a separate Madison Street facility. The new facility houses staff, board room, garage and a gymnastic center.

Oak Park Public Library. The Library provides books and other materials, plus a wide range of professional services to meet the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs of Oak Park residents. The



Library is governed by an independent elected board of seven members. According to Illinois law, its taxes, which constitute approximately 84 percent of its annual budget, are levied by the village government.

Services are provided at the Main Library and at the Maze and Dole branches. Although the main library was renovated in 1989, including accessibility for persons who are disabled, it is beginning to outgrow its space, and the lack of adequate parking facilities remains a problem. The system continues its efforts to remain current with modern educational methods, including audio and video tools.

Village and library planners need to consider library requirements for the future. Space will be needed to accommodate not only readers of books but also an array of new technology which will dramatically change the delivery of information services. The branch libraries, as part of the overall library system, should be taken into account in any review of library needs and facilities.

Health Department. This department is responsible for disease prevention, control of environmental hazards, health education, food-establishment and child-care facility inspections, and the retention of vital statistics. The department provides services by qualified health nurses and registered sanitarians. It is accredited by the Illinois Department of Public Health. Major areas of concern to the department include:

- Disease control;
- Health code enforcement, which accounts for more than 60 percent of the department's work load;
- Environmental nuisances, including mosquitos, rodents, pigeons and starlings, noise pollution, radon, smoking in public places, and pesticide monitoring.

5

Maintain and, where necessary, enhance other essential village functions, especially health and code enforcement, within fiscal constraints.

The health department is highlighted because Oak Park is one of very few municipalities in the Chicago area that has its own health department. It is important that the department be maintained and, if necessary, be enhanced to combat disease and environmental hazards. Being a larger, urban community, Oak Park is not immune to the AIDS problem: by mid-1989, the health department had confirmed 25 cases among Oak Park residents, and several times that number may be experiencing other immunodeficiency virus-related symptoms that do not yet meet the definition of AIDS *per se*. In response, an intergovernmental AIDS task force was appointed in mid-1989 to recommend what the respective local governments' roles should be in responding to the AIDS problem.

The health department has many other important functions, each with an increasing workload. For example, Oak Park has more child-care agencies than any other suburb in Cook County, and they are all inspected by the health department to assure sanitary practices and prevent outbreaks of disease. Also, as is noted in Chapter V: Economic Development, the number of restaurants has increased dramatically in recent years, each of which is regularly inspected by the health department.

With regard to pesticides, the health department assisted a special committee of the board of health in developing an integrated pest management (IPM) plan which calls for the eventual elimination of pesticide use on public properties. The committee included representatives of the park and school districts. The village board adopted the IPM plan in early 1990.

Other areas of concern to the health department are the threats posed by pigeons and starlings, and the proliferation of rodents in catch basins and sewers. A relatively recent phenomenon that merits attention is indoor pollution: as homeowners seal their houses better to conserve energy, more carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide is trapped, and some formaldehyde from insulation is released into the air. The village needs to be aware of standards for acceptable levels of those substances and communicate that information to the public. Finally, the department will need

to remain alert to possible problems caused by mosquitos, as there has been no spraying in Oak Park since the early 1980's.

The code administration department's activities are also highlighted because of their importance in maintaining the quality of Oak Park's housing stock, an objective in Chapter II: Housing. Staff levels will have to be maintained to assure adequate inspections and follow-ups.

The following objective applies to all village departments.

Objective D

To provide needed government facilities and services in the most cost-effective and coordinated manner possible.

As costs continue to rise—the Consumer Price Index rose nearly 206 percent from 1970 to 1988, as noted in Chapter V: Economic Development—the village must find more cost-effective methods to provide necessary services and facilities. One way to do this is to

6

Use intergovernmental agreements, and agreements with non-governmental agencies, to the maximum feasible extent to increase the village's capacity to provide services and facilities at the least cost.

There are many examples in place, formal and informal, for sharing among governmental units. As noted earlier, the fire department belongs to Division 11, a six-suburb mutual aid pact, and the 200-member Mutual Aid Box Alarm System. This kind of mutual-aid arrangement obviates the need for individual communities to duplicate the purchase of some expensive equipment.

The police department uses the Cook County Sheriff's Academy for training of recruits, the State of Illinois crime lab, and the Cook County crime lab mobile unit. Information is regularly exchanged with other law enforcement agencies, including neighboring com-

munities.

The village takes advantage of purchasing opportunities through the State of Illinois, whereby local governments can utilize State contracts for a variety of purchases. The two areas of greatest savings are in the purchase of rock salt and police vehicles.

The village is actively involved in the West Central Municipal Conference (WCMC), which includes 37 municipalities serving 600,000 residents. The Conference engages in regional planning, joint purchasing, mutual support activities and legislative advocacy.

Parks and recreation probably makes greater use of intergovernmental sharing than any other local government function. Along with 10 other park districts, Oak Park belongs to the West Suburban Special Recreation Association, which provides programs for children with developmental disabilities. Parks and recreation shares facilities with the elementary and high school districts, the township, Columbus Park in Chicago, Triton College and River Forest. Parks and recreation also provides excellent examples of cooperative agreements with non-governmental entities through its arrangements with the YMCA, private tennis and handball clubs, Fenwick High School, the Priory grounds in River Forest, and Oak Park Hospital (where a new leisure center was opened in 1989). Parks and recreation uses the States' joint-purchasing program as well as that of the 90-member association of park districts.

Because new facilities are expensive and there is little room (or money) for expansion, a major emphasis for parks and recreation is to make the best use of existing community facilities. That includes continued use of inter-agency cooperative agreements and continued emphasis on coordination of programs and services. A formal relationship needs to be established with River Forest, where the traditional use of Oak Park facilities has often been taken for granted.

Other areas where joint programs with other governments may be useful include waste disposal and recycling. The village must be alert, however, to assure that mutual-aid and other intergovernmental programs are equitable. For example, the health depart-

ment provides some code enforcement services to River Forest on a contractual basis; this type of arrangement can be very beneficial to both parties, provided that the remuneration to the village at least equals the village's cost of providing those services.

Because agreements with governments and other entities can be a very cost-effective way of maintaining or improving services, it may be fruitful for all village departments to submit regular affirmative reports on how such agreements might be further used, and on how in-place agreements are working.

Directly related to the use of intergovernmental agreements are two further policies aimed at improving efficiency and effectiveness.

7

Governmental decisions and activities should take into account their effects upon other governmental functions and non-governmental agencies. This policy addresses the need for continuous and improved coordination.

On an intragovernmental level, continuous coordination is needed, for example, between the fire prevention bureau and the code administration department, between police and community relations, and between development proposals and historic preservation objectives. The police and fire departments must be consulted before culs-de-sac are installed or a mid-rise housing development is approved. The community relations division should be consulted on all matters that may affect racial diversity in Oak Park.

On the intergovernmental level, the village must always be aware of what the effects of its actions might be on other governments. Regular meetings between elected and administrative personnel should be continued, and governments need to consult with one another before making major decisions.

There are several methods of coordinating governmental activities. One method which should be utilized more frequently is the village's existing clearinghouse program. Another is to use the checklist in Appendix A,

to assess proposals against the goals and objectives in this plan.

In addition to improved coordination,

8

The village needs to establish regular mechanisms for evaluating its programs.

All village functions are reviewed annually at budget time, usually in September by the village manager and in October and November by the president and board of trustees, and priorities are inferred by budget decisions. Nevertheless, the process can be improved by establishing a separate procedure for regular and systematic review and evaluation of village programs, by department, in terms of cost and need. Wherever practical, progress and effectiveness should be quantified.

The village's effectiveness in publicizing its programs and educating the public also needs to be reviewed. A heightened citizens' awareness can help make the village's programs more effective, especially in such areas as crime prevention, recycling and reduction of refuse, patronizing local retailers, parkway and tree maintenance, and citizen involvement in general.

Related to the area of public facilities and services, both directly and indirectly, is the issue of environmental protection. Although this subject is mentioned in other parts of this Plan related to residential neighborhoods (Chapter II: Housing, and Chapter III: Transportation and Parking) and public-works improvements (this Chapter IV: Public Facilities and Services), it is sufficiently important towards achieving a high quality of life as to warrant individual emphasis.

Objective E

To promote an improved and healthy environment within all of Oak Park.

There are many facets to environmental

protection, and the issues expand well beyond local concerns to those that affect the international community. Nevertheless, there are many actions that can be taken by local government and citizens to help assure a healthy future environment. The final two policies of this chapter suggest two steps the village can take.

- 10** The village, with the assistance of its Environmental and Energy Advisory Commission, should develop and adopt a comprehensive environmental protection plan.

The Environmental and Energy Advisory Commission (EEAC) has already adopted an environmental platform that can serve as the starting point for development of an environmental plan. Areas that are included are:

- protection of parks, gardens and natural sites;
- actions to promote cleaner air;
- water conservation and protection pro-

grams;

- promotion of energy conservation;
- reduction of solid and toxic wastes;
- analysis and review of development proposals to assure environmentally sound projects; and
- increased educational programs for residents of all ages;

- 11** The village should review all major governmental actions to identify their impacts on the environment.

This policy is very similar to Policy #4 in Chapter II: Housing, which states that all major governmental actions should be reviewed to identify their impacts on integration objectives.

These policies will be promoted by using the checklist of comprehensive plan goals and objectives in Appendix A.

Chapter V:

Economic Development

Chapter V: Economic Development

Goal 1

To expand the village's tax base in order to maintain a high level of services, programs and facilities.

Objective A

To maximize the potential for establishing tax-generating commercial and residential development and redevelopment.

Objective B

To stimulate increased private investment in Oak Park.

Policies:

- 1 Regularly review the village's land-use controls and other regulations to allow for more effective re-use of land.
- 2 Enhance Oak Park's image as a desirable place to invest and do business.
- 3 Improve efforts to facilitate and attract new business by serving as a catalyst to the private sector.

Goal 2

To encourage a broad range of convenient retail and service facilities to serve Oak Park residents and others.

Objective C

To encourage existing businesses to remain and expand, and to attract new businesses that improve the mix of retail and service establishments.

Objective D

To attract a larger proportion of retail purchases from within Oak Park's market area.

Policies:

- 4 The village will promote Oak Park's cultural, historical and architectural heritage to encourage tourism and other forms of economic development.
- 5 Retain and increase local employment opportunities.
- 6 Encourage new development and expansion in an orderly manner.

Among the characteristics that make Oak Park an attractive place to live is the high level of governmental and educational services and facilities. In order to maintain a high level of services, local governments need adequate revenues. As the cost of services continue to rise, three alternatives are available: (1) place the increased tax burden solely on current residents and businesses, (2) increase the tax base and minimize the tax impact on residents and business operators, or (3) reduce the quality and quantity of services to all parts of the village. The Village of Oak Park strongly prefers the second alternative, and thus establishes its primary economic development goal.

Goal 1

To expand the village's tax base in order to maintain a high level of services, programs and facilities.

The largest single source of revenues for village government is real-estate taxes. Table V-1 offers a 20-year summary of real-estate taxes in Oak Park, and the differences between the first decade and the second are striking. Looking at assessed valuations (AV), Oak Park experienced a moderate (seven percent) decline from 1969 to 1978. That decline wasn't reversed until the 1982 quadrennial re-assessment. But in 1986 the quadrennial re-assessment resulted in a 49 percent increase from 1984. The large increase was the result of improved assessment practices (Oak Park's real estate has historically been under-assessed), coupled with a rapidly-rising increase in the value of homes and other property. As Figure II-1 (Chapter II, Housing) indicates, the average sale price of a single-family, owner-occupied home began rising rapidly in 1978. The 1980 price was double that of 1970 and, by 1988 it had doubled again.

Real estate taxes, of course, are based on equalized assessed valuation (EAV), i.e., assessed valuation times the State equalization factor. The State factor is intended to equalize

Cook County's assessed value with that of other counties in relationship to fair market value. With few exceptions, the equalization factor has increased every year over the past 20 years. Therefore, even while assessed valuations were decreasing, equalized assessed valuations were holding fairly steady.

The actual real-estate tax levy is a product of the rate times the equalized assessed valuation. The total tax rate is a frequently publicized factor, but always must be considered in relationship to the EAV. For example, the overall rate decreased in 1980, 1982 and 1986, but the total tax levy increased for those years.

It is interesting to note from Table V-1 that, between 1969 and 1978, the total tax rate increased by 97 percent and the total tax levy rose by 80 percent. But between 1979 and 1988, the rate decreased by three percent while the tax levy increased by 95 percent.

The total real-estate tax levy in Oak Park during 1990 (for 1989 expenditures) was apportioned as follows: 64 percent for schools, 18 percent for village government, nine percent for Cook County, and nine percent for all others.

While Oak Park has one of the highest tax rates among larger Illinois municipalities, its "effective tax rate" ranked only 35th out of 58 communities ranked in 1987 by the Taxpayers Federation of Illinois. On average, Oak Parkers pay about 2.3 percent of the market value of their property in annual real-estate taxes, while other surveyed cities ranged from a low of 1.3 percent to nearly 4.4 percent. Note, however, that those calculations refer only to residential properties of six or fewer units. Although effective tax rates haven't been calculated for commercial properties (including multi-family residential), those rates would be higher.

Oak Park will be re-assessed again in 1990, and it seems likely that assessed valuations will increase again. As Figure II-1 indicates, the average sale price of homes increased 28 percent from 1986 to 1988 alone.

To a property owner who has no intention of selling in the near future, an increase in the

Table V-1: Real estate assessed valuations, tax rates, and levies, 1969-1989

Year	Assessed Valuation (\$million)	State Factor	Equalized Assessed Valuation (\$million)	Total Tax		Oak Park Village	
				Rate	Levy (\$million)	Tax Rate	Tax Levy (\$million)
1969	135.7	1.52	206.3	6.908	14.3	1.278	2.6
1970	137.6	1.59	218.8	7.230	15.8	1.230	2.7
1972	134.1	1.59	213.2	8.564	18.3	2.028	4.3
1974	134.0	1.45	194.3	9.621	18.7	2.684	5.2
1976	128.0	1.42	181.7	12.852	23.4	3.563	6.5
1978	126.5	1.50	189.7	13.610	25.8	4.005	7.6
1979	122.4	1.60	195.9	13.974	27.3	3.954	7.7
1980	120.2	1.74	209.2	13.672	28.6	3.613	7.6
1982	145.3	1.93	280.5	12.002	33.7	2.855	8.0
1984	140.7	1.85	259.6	13.458	34.9	3.631	9.4
1986	209.5	1.85	387.3	12.016	46.5	2.313	9.0
1988	204.1	1.93	393.3	13.491	53.1	2.548	10.0
1989	203.7	1.91	389.8	13.240	51.6	1.935	7.5

Sources: Village of Oak Park Annual Reports and Oak Park Township Assessor

market value of his or her property is of little importance, but a sizeable increase in his or her real-estate tax bill is a significant concern.

In short, the real-estate tax burden, which falls on homeowners, tenants, apartment building owners and business people, is a serious concern. The only way to increase real-estate tax revenues without raising the tax levy on citizens is to expand the tax base. The ideal is to raise assessed valuation by means of new investment while keeping the tax rate stable, or even reducing it, because an increasing tax rate is a disincentive for new investment. The most effective way to work towards that ideal is to establish uses and re-uses of land that produce more net revenue. To that end,

the village has two related objectives:

Objective A

To maximize the potential for establishing tax-generating commercial and residential development and redevelopment.

Objective B

To stimulate increased private investment in Oak Park.

To implement these objectives, the village adopts several policies, as well as other related policies presented later in this chapter. (To avoid unnecessary repetition, each policy

is stated only once, even though it may relate to more than one goal or objective.)

1 Regularly review the village's land-use controls and other regulations to allow for more effective re-use of land.

The ability of Oak Park to meet its fiscal responsibilities will depend largely on its ability to put its land to work at optimum levels. Future growth will have to take two forms: extensive improvements to existing structures and selective new, higher-density development that will generate additional tax revenues (utility and sales, as well as real-estate, taxes).

As discussed earlier in Chapter II: Housing, Oak Park has a strong residential demand, and some higher-density housing development is desirable. Construction of such housing not only meets the needs of various residents but also generates increased tax revenues.

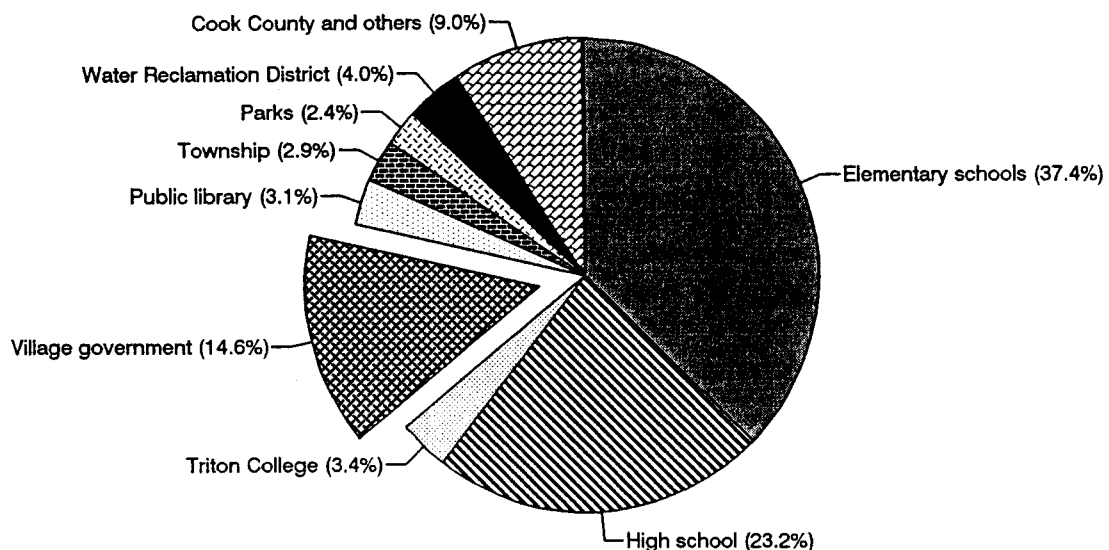
Oak Park is also well-suited and well-located for office development. The market is not as strong as Chicago's, for example, where higher rents can be obtained to offset the construction or renovation costs. Nor is the market as strong as some outlying areas where large tracts of land for construction and surface parking are available near express-

way interchanges. But Oak Park does offer many of the amenities that support office buildings: excellent transportation, a high level of municipal services, an increasingly good supply of restaurants, and an adequate supply of retail and service establishments. In recent years, in fact, Oak Park has attracted corporate headquarters, and considerable upper-floor space in Downtown Oak Park has been completely renovated for office uses.

In order to attract new development, Oak Park's zoning ordinance needs to be regularly reviewed to see that it can accommodate developments that are economically feasible and realistic in terms of their surroundings. New development, however, is physically limited by nature of the community's built-up status. There are few vacant developable parcels, so the village will need to be alert to economic conditions that may warrant the replacement of existing structures with new development.

New development, however, is only a partial solution. The Oak Park Township Assessor has estimated that the total market value of all Oak Park real estate is upwards of two billion dollars. Thus, a new \$20 million development would increase the total AV by less than one percent. In addition to efforts to attract new development, the village should make every reasonable effort to facilitate

Figure V-1: 1990 real-estate tax



re-investment in existing buildings: renovations, "gut" rehabilitation, adaptive re-use, etc. To that end, regulatory devices other than the zoning ordinance have to be regularly reviewed for their effectiveness. For example, as new cost-effective building methods and products are developed, the village must be quick to respond by making appropriate changes to the building, electrical and plumbing codes.

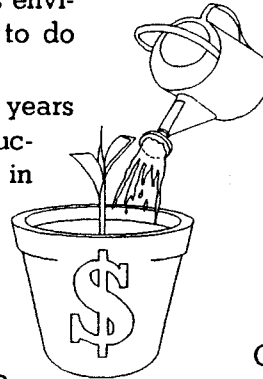
In addition to reviewing regulatory devices, the village needs to

2 Enhance Oak Park's image as a desirable place to invest and do business.

Oak Park's image as a desirable residential community—a great place to live—is enviable. Oak Park's image as a place to do business is less defined.

Efforts have been made over the years to improve that image. The most successful has been the establishment, in 1974, of the Oak Park Development Corporation (OPDC), a private, not-for-profit Illinois 501(c)4 company. The OPDC was created to encourage and facilitate economic development. Funded jointly by the private and public sectors, the OPDC serves as lender, matchmaker, marketer, advocate, informer and promoter, and has been responsible for improving the village's image and attracting many new businesses and investments to Oak Park. Another role of the OPDC is to serve as a mechanism for regular exchange of information among local economic development players. Its board, which meets monthly, includes top-level representatives of all local lending institutions, village government, business associations, both hospitals, the Board of Realtors, the Housing Center, Illinois Bell Telephone Company, and several businesspersons.

A League of Women Voters survey of businesses, conducted in 1987, asked what the village could do to help businesses. The top three answers were: improve parking, abate taxes, and improve marketing and public relations.



There is a common perception that Oak Park's economic development thrust needs a more unified, coordinated and aggressive direction. It is ironic that in a community that had 28 appointed advisory citizens' commissions, committees and boards, there was none for economic development until an ad hoc task force was appointed in late 1989. In addition to follow-up on the task force's recommendations, the following suggestions are offered as attempts to help implement the effort to stimulate increased business and investment in the community:

- Establish a coordinated action committee to concentrate efforts to go outside the village—as far as is needed—to sell Oak Park, its demographics, buying power, lifestyle, commitments and people. Marketing pieces, including testimonials by successful developers, need to be prepared; but the most important element would be personal contact. Hopefully, the committee would be supplemented by the inclusion of successful entrepreneurs. The community needs a commercial sales pitch for the commercial sector similar to the Housing Center's program for the residential sector. Also useful would be the creation of a public-relations brochure geared to investors, businesses and developers.
- Develop an improved and comprehensive information booklet for potential developers and business people, to help them through the maze of regulations as well as to inform them of opportunities. There are several models for such a tool. It should include information about zoning, building, licensing, health and other regulations; taxes; government; all assistance programs, resources and available incentives; parking; business associations; key contacts; community philosophy; and other relevant factors. Preparation of such a piece would not only be useful to developers, builders and investors; it would also enhance Oak Park's image as a business-like community.
- Better coordinate and publicize economic

development services. Currently, there are many actors: the village government, including the Village Board's economic development subcommittee, the Community Development Department, the Village Manager's office, the Zoning Officer and the Village Clerk; the Oak Park Development Corporation; the Chamber of Commerce; individual business associations; and banks. One suggestion that merits consideration is the establishment or designation of an economic development ombudsman, perhaps in village hall, who would serve as the single initial-contact person for economic development.

In addition to improving its image and reviewing its regulations, the village needs also to

3

Improve efforts to facilitate and attract new business by serving as a catalyst to the private sector.

Besides joining with the public sector to form the Oak Park Development Corporation (OPDC) in 1974, the village has also worked with that agency to develop and fund direct progress to attract and retain business in Oak Park. Beginning in 1979, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds have been made available to OPDC for use as a default-reserve fund. Working with local lending institutions, the OPDC deposits CDBG funds with the lender as a partial guarantee for loans made to new or expanding businesses. Because the default-reserve deposits do not earn interest, and because potential losses are divided among all six lending institutions, the lender can make loans to businesses at below-market interest rates. As loans are repaid, the default reserves are returned to the OPDC for re-use. Through mid-1989, 52 loans totalling more than \$4 million have been made. These have not only increased the tax base and helped the business climate, but have also created or retained more than 700 jobs, a requirement for use of the federal monies.

The OPDC also began in 1989 a CDBG-funded facade-improvement grant program. Other OPDC activities include a gateway

business facilitation program and a commercial-property clearinghouse. The clearinghouse needs to be kept up to date by surveys and networking, and by tying in village records from the Fire Department and Village Clerk's office.

The Oak Park Village Board has a standing economic development subcommittee which regularly reviews activities in that area, and the Community Development Department is involved on a daily basis, through its director and its commercial development officer, whose duties include administration of the OPDC loan program.

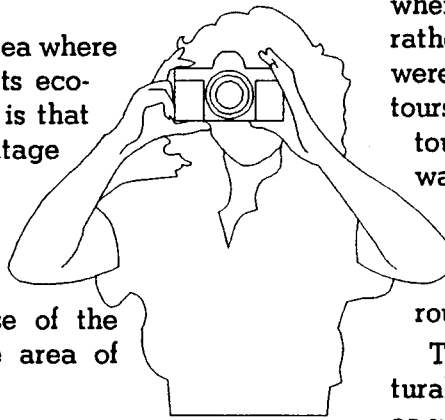
The village has also taken many direct steps to attract new business and development. It has purchased properties and marketed them, through the OPDC, for new development. Two successful projects are the Prairie Court apartments at Lake Street and Euclid Avenue (the former village hall site) and 100 Forest Place (southeast corner of Lake Street and Forest Avenue). The village has sold a portion of the Holley Court parking lot for private residential development. A new parking structure, including direct ramps to two major privately-owned buildings, was constructed as an incentive for redevelopment at the northwest corner of Lake and Marion Streets. Additional parking has been constructed in the Avenue/Lake Plaza (ALP) business district as well. And the village regularly cooperates with business associations for promotional activities such as sidewalk sales and tent sales. The village has also used municipal revenue bonds, street vacations and special-service area taxing as tools for economic development. The village will need to keep using these incentive tools and to develop new ones. In addition, the village needs to remain alert and become an active player when tax-exempt properties are put on the market; they provide additional opportunities for development that will return them to the tax roll.

A major economic-development step was taken in late 1983 with the establishment of a tax-increment finance (TIF) district encompassing ALP, Downtown Oak Park and South Marion Street. Eventually, nearly \$15 million of TIF revenues will be expended for public improvements in the district. TIF funds have

been used for re-streeting Lake Street, original construction of the Holley Court garage, additional parking at The Avenue shopping district and parking and streetscaping improvements at South Boulevard and Marion Street. Some \$5.7 million of T.I.F. funds will become available for further improvements, pursuant to the T.I.F. plan.

Oak Park has not fully taken advantage of all its assets to promote economic development. It hasn't been able yet to exploit its transportation facilities as suggested in Chapter III: Transportation and Parking. There exists some potential for a multi-model transportation center, including retail and service facilities, at the Harlem Avenue-North Boulevard-Marion Street location.

Another, more important, area where the village has not reached its economic development potential is that of promoting its cultural heritage to bolster the economy. The village has not taken full advantage of its cultural, historical and architectural resources to benefit the economic base of the community, especially in the area of tourism. Therefore,



4

The village will promote Oak Park's cultural, historical and architectural heritage to encourage tourism and other forms of economic development.

Oak Park's best-known physical asset is its architecture, which is discussed in Chapter II: Housing, at Objective E. Pre-eminent among its architectural gems is the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio, the hub of tourism in Oak Park.

The Home and Studio was suffering from lack of maintenance when, with the encouragement of the village, it was purchased in 1974 by the Oak Park Development Corporation. Shortly thereafter, title was transferred to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, an agency of the U. S. Department of the Interior, and stewardship was placed in the hands of the non-profit Frank Lloyd Wright

Home and Studio Foundation, which has overseen its restoration. The village provided zoning relief to enable the property to be operated as a museum, and CDBG funds were provided in the early years of that program to help fund restoration of the Home and Studio (and Wright's Unity Temple, as well).

The Home and Studio Foundation operates the Oak Park Tour Center, which coordinates tourism from its offices in the village's parking structure at Forest Avenue and Lake Street. The Tour Center estimates that some 66,000 persons visited Oak Park in 1988 to see its architecture. The annual Wright-Plus house walk, conducted in May each year, attracts some 3,200 persons; and in 1984 and 1989,

when the event encompassed two, rather than one, days, 5,300 tickets were sold. Unity Temple also offers tours of that landmark structure; tours of the Home and Studio, plus walking tours of the Frank Lloyd Wright Prairie School of Architecture Historic District, are available on a daily basis year-round.

The village also hosts other cultural activities which attract visitors as well as Oak Parkers:

- the critically-acclaimed Festival Theatre's "Shakespeare in the Park," which offers nightly performance at Austin Gardens throughout July and most of August each year;
- the Oak Park Symphony Orchestra, which conducts five performances during its Fall-Spring season at the high school auditorium;
- the Arts Center at 200 N. Oak Park Avenue, which houses a variety of events;
- the annual Village Art Fair, held each September in either Downtown Oak Park or the Avenue business district;
- the annual "Art in the Park" exhibit at Scoville Park each May; and
- various events sponsored by the Arts League, Hemingway Foundation, Historical Society, Parks and Recreation, public library,

theatre groups and others.

The Civic Arts Council of Oak Park supports and promotes the local arts, including publication of a quarterly calendar of cultural events. It also planned a three-day, multi-disciplinary arts festival for July of 1990, with the goal of establishing it as an annual international event that draws thousands of patrons to Oak Park.

The village government supports these organizations, some with financial contributions. As a boost to tourism, the village amended its zoning ordinance in 1988 to permit bed-and-breakfast establishments on a limited basis. The village needs to determine the cost effectiveness of taking a more active role in promoting the cultural arts. Oak Park is gradually building a strong base in the arts, which enriches the community culturally. While the value of this cultural commitment cannot be doubted, the village needs to investigate whether the visual and performing arts can be an economic development tool.

One of the most important steps that can be taken to bolster tourism is the attraction of a new hotel to Oak Park, one with facilities adequate to handle large groups for housing, meetings and dining, and with convenient means of transportation to special events and attractions. Without such a facility, it is difficult to enjoy the significant economic benefits that can be derived from tourism and the arts. The village should offer whatever reasonable economic incentives are needed to attract such a hotel.

The issue of economic development through tourism and the arts is sufficiently important to warrant establishment of a representative task force to help develop and recommend a coordinated plan that would establish objectives and strategies for taking better advantage of Oak Park's unique cultural heritage.

In addition to real-estate taxes, sales, utility, and other taxes are also important sources of revenue for village government. Utility taxes provide nearly \$3 million annually, second only to real-estate taxes as a revenue source. Figures V-2 and V-3 show the village's General Fund revenue sources

and expenditures, respectively.

Sales-tax revenues (Table V-2) were \$2.91 million in 1990, up nearly 88 percent from 1970 and 29 percent from 1980. From 1970 to 1990, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by more than 238 percent, most of that increase taking place during the high-inflation years of 1974 through 1981. In terms of real growth, Oak Park's sales have significantly declined, having increased only 88 percent—less than 37 percent of the inflation rate. In only five of those 20 years did sales growth exceed the rate of inflation.

Other taxes, as indicated on Figure V-2 consist of real-estate transfer, poured-liquor, vehicle and Illinois personal property replacement taxes. These constitute 10 percent of general fund revenues, which is a significant but relatively painless source of revenue. A tax on transient hotel rooms, which is common elsewhere, is a possible additional revenue source; if it is modest, it shouldn't deter a new hotel development. The village will also need to look toward user fees as an equitable way to pay for services. Parks and Recreation has long used this method to provide a large portion of its operating revenue. More recently, the village has instituted user fees for yard-waste collection and other disposal.

Goal 2

To encourage a broad range of convenient retail and service facilities to serve Oak Park residents and others.

Besides providing tax revenues, the existence of a healthy mix of businesses helps make Oak Park a more desirable community. The presence of a mix of high-quality stores that provide convenience and comparison goods and services is a positive attribute that tends to make the village a more pleasant place in which to live. Such businesses also provide a source of jobs available to residents.

There are two further objectives that help meet both economic development goals:

Table V-2: Village sales tax revenues, 1970-1990
(in thousands of dollars)

Year	General Merchandise	Food	Drinking and eating	Apparel	Furniture	Lumber and building	Auto related	Miscellaneous	Manufacturing	Total	Percent change	Consumer price index	
												Percent change	1983 base change
1970	202	290	53	144	60	62	409	206	125	1551	---	---	+38.9
1971	193	293	55	144	68	52	496	208	103	1612	+3.9	+3.8	+40.4
1972	194	289	58	152	84	68	475	231	99	1651	+2.4	+3.0	+91.6
1973	202	292	69	150	103	81	493	241	110	1734	+5.0	+6.2	+44.2
1974	215	348	79	166	106	84	454	258	148	1857	+7.1	+10.6	+48.9
1975	222	370	94	164	113	76	447	317	148	1951	+5.1	+8.0	+52.8
1976	173	388	98	146	120	75	482	256	136	1873	-4.0	+4.7	+55.3
1977	167	404	107	152	128	79	535	323	123	2018	+7.7	+6.3	+58.8
1978	171	426	118	167	138	92	529	277	115	2032	+0.7	+8.5	+63.8
1979	181	468	181	169	131	110	588	262	157	2201	+8.3	+12.5	+71.8
1980	166	525	166	164	130	115	564	287	154	2249	+2.2	+14.5	+82.2
1981	172	625	172	165	122	114	597	305	121	2363	+5.1	+9.5	+90.0
1982	136	664	136	175	115	96	665	371	65	2435	+3.0	+6.9	+96.2
1983	97	691	97	166	141	94	721	449	40	2573	+5.7	+4.0	+100.0
1984	171	591	171	177	149	106	694	419	20	2526	-1.8	+3.8	+103.8
1985	164	586	164	191	134	112	752	411	21	2606	+3.2	+3.8	+107.7
1986	190	607	244	159	114	119	700	417	20	2571	-1.3	+2.1	+110.0
1987	113	620	259	157	111	131	672	452	20	2537	-1.3	+4.1	+114.5
1988	102	774	257	151	96	123	768	486	22	2778	+9.5	+3.9	+119.0
1989	81	872	269	167	84	139	797	560	28	2996	+7.8	+5.0	+125.0
1990	86	864	286	161	101	94	758	500	59	2908	-2.9	+5.4	+131.7
Percent change 1970-90	-57	+198	+440	+12	+68	+52	+85	+143	-53	+88	+88	+239	+239

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue

Objective C

To encourage existing businesses to remain and expand, and to attract new businesses that improve the mix of retail and service establishments.

Objective D

To attract a larger proportion of retail purchases from within Oak Park's market area.

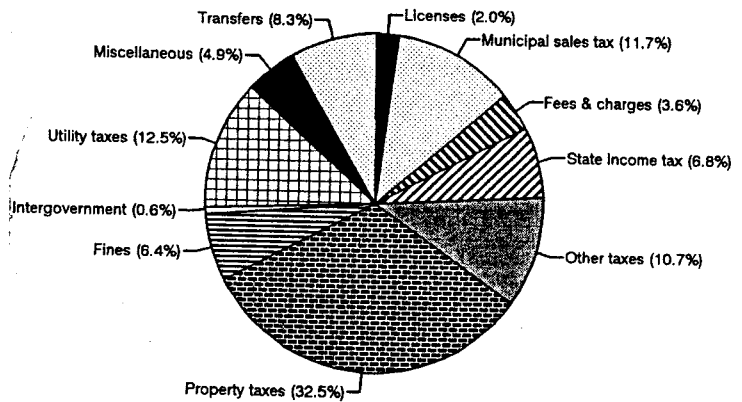
These objectives, combined with previously-stated objectives relating to the tax base, indicate that the village must assume an active leadership role in promoting economic development.

New or expanded businesses would not only increase the village's sales-tax revenues: due to increased productivity, the buildings that house them would become more valuable and would generate more real-estate taxes; and an improved mix of businesses would strengthen adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Table V-2 suggests the areas of greatest concern about Oak Park's retail mix. Only eating and drinking establishments have increased sales at a faster rate than inflation; food sales have come fairly close. All others have declined, most notably general merchandising and apparel. Auto-related sales, in relation to the Consumer Price Index, have lagged, reflecting the loss of many dealerships. It is important that the village encourage those remaining automobile dealers who have remained in Oak Park, and to seek out especially retailers in the apparel and general merchandising groups.

Oak Park has many business areas: Downtown Oak Park, The Avenue (Oak Park Avenue at Lake Street), Oak Park/Eisenhower, Chi-

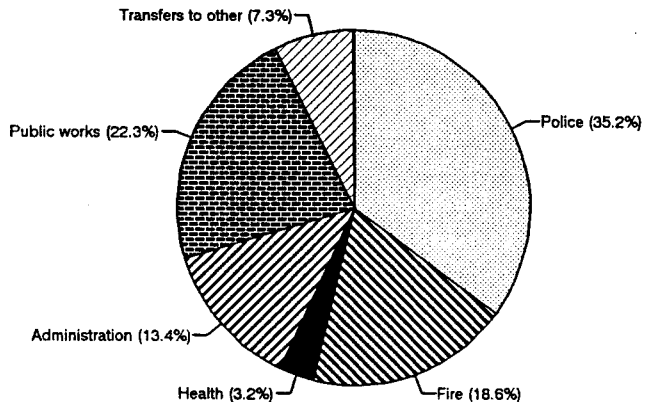
Figure V-2: Sources of 1989 general fund revenue



cago/Marion, Madison Street, North Avenue, Roosevelt Road and several smaller strip commercial areas.

Prior to the construction of nearby shopping centers at Oak Brook, Hillside, North Riverside, The Brickyard and the Forest Park Mall, Downtown Oak Park served as the regional shopping center for the western suburbs. Many efforts have been made to re-attract some of its former market, including creation of the Mall in 1974, which provided a pleasant people place but could not stem

Figure V-3: 1989 general fund expenditures



the loss of retailers.

Restreting of Downtown Oak Park in 1988 was accompanied by the formation of Downtown Oak Park, Inc., an organization of owners and merchants. That organization's objectives include centralized management to attract a complimentary mix of retail uses, common advertising and the establishment of uniform hours of operation. Former large retail spaces are being replaced with smaller, specialized retail shops, conversion of rear and upper-floor spaces to modern offices, and an increase in service establishments. Downtown Oak Park is proceeding according to its marketing plan by recruiting stores that create the right retail mix and balance, fitting the appropriate tenants into available spaces. The goal is to attract stores that fill a need, are unique, and serve as destinations. The Lake Theatre, which draws more than 400,000 patron annually, is an excellent people attraction.

The Avenue business district has recovered from the loss of two of its major anchors in the mid-1970's by effectively restoring several structures in the area, adaptively re-using those buildings at the south corners of Oak Park Avenue and Lake Street, and by attracting many high-quality restaurants. Both re-developments were assisted by village and OPDC financing, and village-funded physical improvements have also improved the public areas. The village has increased and re-arranged parking in the ALP area as well, and will need to monitor closely those needs in the future.

Madison Street is another area whose nature has changed gradually over the years as region-wide economic conditions changed, primarily in the area of automobile sales. Although still heavily automobile-oriented, the area has become more diversified, attracting office, retail and restaurant uses.

The village needs to promote the health of all business areas through continued programs to provide parking, incentives, technical assistance and services. The Oak Park Development Corporation should continue to be supported, especially in its efforts to fill vacancies, improve properties, and attract investment. In connection with efforts to improve retailing, promote tourism and tie a new

hotel development into the economic fabric of the community, the village should look closely at the establishment of a local shuttle bus system. The tax-increment district plan suggests such a system to link Downtown Oak Park with the Avenue/Lake Plaza district, and such a system might also tie in with a new hotel development and tourism effort.

There are two further things the village can do to promote shopping in Oak Park: better educate the citizenry about the benefits of shopping within the community whenever possible; and make sure that retail districts are safe for evening shopping.

Finally, in addition to providing incentives for encouraging investment, development and business growth, the village has to be alert that it does not unwittingly create disincentives to economic development. For example, does the employee head tax imposed in Downtown Oak Park, on top of the special service area tax and regular real-estate taxes, prevent marketing of office and retail spaces? Would loss of that short-term revenue be offset by revenue increases in the long run? These kinds of issues require periodic review of their cost effectiveness. Related issues include the purchase of prime commercial locations by not-for-profit agencies and the establishment of non-retail uses in first-floor locations in retail areas. The village can at least discourage such actions through withholding of financial incentives.

The previously-stated policies for Goal 1, above, are equally applicable to Goal 2.

Related to the goals of improving the tax base and the retail sector are the following policies:

5

Retain and increase local employment opportunities.

When considering proposals for redevelopment, one consideration is the impact on the job market. Oak Park offers an excellent location for many kinds of businesses and service industries due to its easy access to the Chicago Loop, airports and other facilities. The village and its surrounding areas also

provide an excellent labor market for employers.

The five largest employers in Oak Park are non-profit entities, including the village government and the two school districts. The two largest are the West Suburban Hospital Medical Center and Oak Park Hospital, which anchor the community's health-service industry. That industry serves a wide market and attracts other basic activities such as extended-care facilities, doctors' offices, nursing homes and related functions. The economic and professional vitality of health-related facilities is important to the village because it increases the tax base by providing jobs, brings potential spending power into the community, and enhances the village's image. Some expansion of the two hospital complexes may be necessary, which is discussed at policy number six.

As mentioned earlier, tourism provides potential for positive side effects by stimulating business in restaurants, hotels and retail shops, thereby opening up more employment opportunities.

Conversely, there is little manufacturing in Oak Park and little reason to expect any more, due to lack of appropriate sites and room for expansion. There are only two small areas zoned for industry, and they need to be re-examined to see if a reclassification might encourage a more productive use of the land. On the other hand, wholesaling offers some opportunities, especially in areas where retail and office demand is low.

6

Encourage new development and expansion in an orderly manner.

As a land-locked, virtually built-up community, Oak Park has little vacant land available for new development. However, as market conditions change, opportunities for redevelopment evolve. Such opportunities give the village a chance to encourage redevelopment that will help achieve the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.

Due to the vagaries of the private market place, including the availability of money for investment, interest rates, the availability of

land for sale, and the inclinations of private property owners, it is impossible to predict precisely which properties will become available for development, redevelopment or expansion. Consequently, this plan describes only those general areas in which different types of new construction or expansion would be most appropriate. The proper tool to implement this policy is the zoning ordinance, which divides the village into zoning districts and identifies the types and intensities of uses allowed in each district.

The two maps which follow depict current general land use and those areas which are most appropriate for future development, respectively.

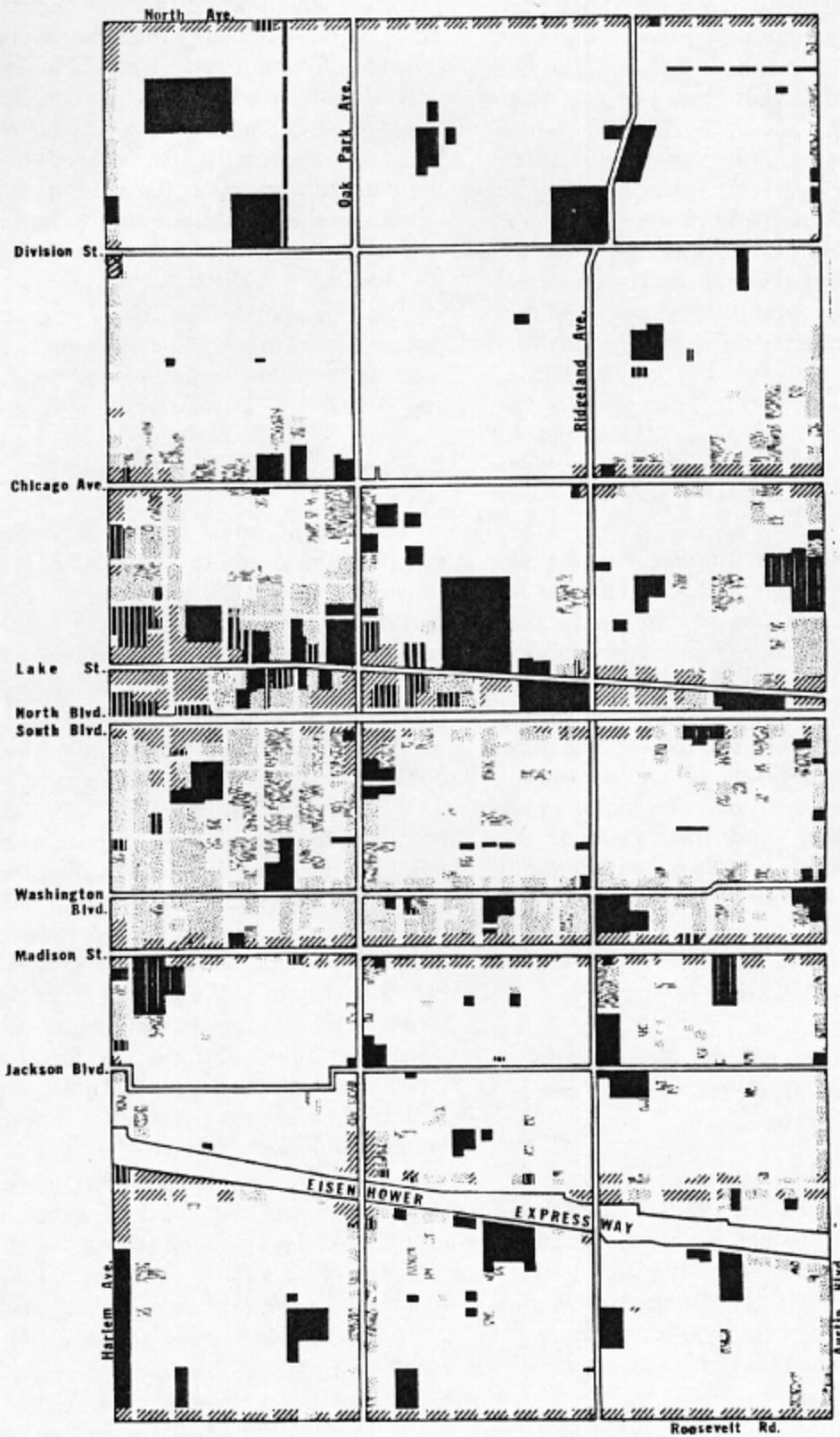
The Central Business District

The village should restrict its highest-density residential and commercial development to what is essentially the western Lake Street corridor, which is well served by public transportation, including rapid transit and the CNW commuter railroad.

The highest density residential development is possible only within a planned development, which is allowed as a privilege, not a right, under Oak Park's special-use permit procedures, which require public hearings before a development could take place. Currently the maximum density allowed in the highest density planned development is 240 dwelling units per acre. This figure was established in the early 1970's and is not representative of developments which have occurred since that time. This density limit, and all planned development regulations, should be reviewed, and more realistic, lower maximums should be established.

Existing zoning regulations for this area require a parcel of at least 1.5 acres to apply for planned development status. The difficulty of assembling such a large site clearly restricts the potential for using this device.

Natural market forces necessarily limit the number of parcels that could ever be submitted for planned development. Nevertheless, the village will need to assure itself that the nature and design of any such development will not unduly affect the character of sur-



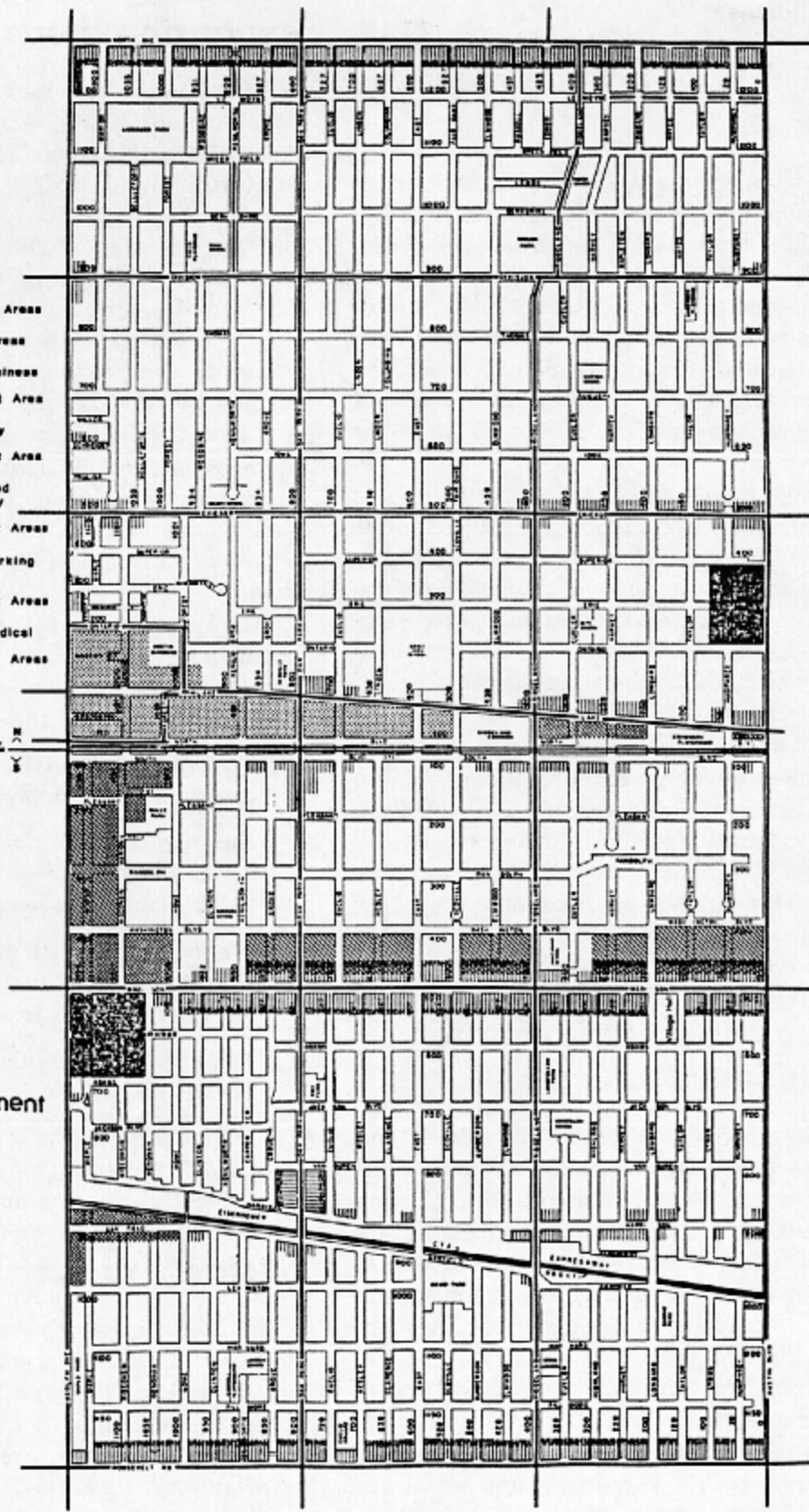
Existing Land Uses

- RESIDENTIAL**
- Single Family
 - Two Family
 - Three or more Families
- NON RESIDENTIAL**
- Business, Commercial and Industrial
 - Public and Semipublic
 - Schools, Churches, and Parks

LEGEND

-  Residential Area
-  Business Area
-  Central Business District Development Area
-  Multi-Family Residential Development Area
-  Business and Multi-Family Residential Development Areas
-  Buffered Parking or Business Extension Development Areas
-  Hospital/Medical Complex Development Areas

Development Areas Map



rounding areas, particularly historic districts and buildings.

Multi-family development areas

This area is essentially the better part of the Washington Boulevard corridor, plus the Maple/Randolph area. These areas have been zoned for multi-family residential uses since 1921 and are now largely occupied by multi-family structures, many of which were constructed at densities approaching 80 dwelling units per acre. Current zoning limits densities in these areas to not more than 57 units per acre.

Because nearly all of the existing structures in these areas are in good condition, it is highly unlikely that it would be economically feasible to replace them with new development. The areas are included on the Development Map largely to indicate their continued viability as medium-density residential areas, and to indicate their potential for redevelopment should a suitable site become available.

Planned development regulations of the zoning ordinance allow up to 120 dwelling units per acre, provided a minimum site of two acres can be assembled. That maximum density should also be re-examined, especially in light of the area's inclusion in the Oak Park/Ridgeland Historic District.

Business and multi-family development areas

These are areas where both business and medium-density residential uses have clustered and where reinvestment and expansion is encouraged. Four such areas currently are identified: the prime re-development site at Harlem Avenue and Garfield Street, the eastern portion of the Lake Street corridor, the South Marion Street/South Boulevard area, and the Washington Boulevard/Madison Street/Wisconsin Avenue area.

Densities allowed under current zoning regulations are the same as discussed above under Multi-Family Development Areas, and the same considerations apply.

Buffered parking or business expansion areas

Many businesses lack room for expansion or off-street parking, especially in strip-commercial districts where relatively shallow lots abut residential districts. The zoning ordinance currently provides a mechanism, through the special-use procedure, to allow a business to establish buffered parking on an adjacent residentially-zoned property. A public hearing is required, and certain standards are imposed. This provision has rarely been used, largely because of the cost of acquiring the adjacent residential property.

In order for a business to expand outside of a business zoning district, a re-zoning would have to be obtained, again only after a public hearing and approval by the Village Board.

The Development Map indicates those strip-commercial areas where parking or other expansion might be appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Criteria to be satisfied would include:

- The proposal will not substantially increase traffic on adjacent residential streets;
- the applicant business will bear most or all of the cost of any traffic-control devices deemed necessary;
- the proposal will be adequately landscaped and screened to preserve the atmosphere of the general neighborhood;
- the applicant can demonstrate a real need;
- the pertinent goals and objectives and policies of this comprehensive plan are carefully weighed and balanced.

Business areas

In these areas the emphasis is on the preservation and upgrading of existing business structures. Nearly all of the properties in these areas are in good condition and, if properly maintained, are unlikely to require redevelopment in the near future. In the unlikely event that a building is destroyed, for example by fire or natural disaster, the

zoning ordinance will assure that densities comparable to existing densities will be maintained when the building is replaced.

New development or replacement uses should generally be confined to the same land area presently occupied by existing uses.

Hospital/medical complex development areas

Oak Park's two hospitals are, of course, major contributors to the village, both socially and economically. The health-service industry is a constantly changing one, and some expansion of the hospitals' campuses may be necessary. The Development Map sets precise boundaries that limit the scope of expansion during the life of this plan. Those boundaries are larger than the current "H" Hospital zoning district. To expand beyond this zoning district into the larger area designated on the Development Map, the hospital would have to obtain a rezoning, which requires a public hearing and approval by the President and Board of Trustees.

Before granting such a rezoning, the following requirements should be considered:

- the proposal is in accord with a written hospital master plan on file with the village;
- a cost-benefit analysis is prepared demonstrating probable effects on the tax base, employment opportunities and the delivery of health services;

- the proposal will be compatible with the surrounding area, and will be adequately landscaped and screened to maintain the adjacent residential environment;
- the proposal is considered in terms of the goals and objectives and policies of this comprehensive plan.

Other areas

The development map also indicates, by means of a circle, the potential site for a multi-modal transportation center at Harlem Avenue and North Boulevard.

In those areas not designated on the Development Map, emphasis is on the preservation and upgrading of existing residential. Replacement or redevelopment should generally be confined to the same land areas and to densities comparable with current improvements.

Analogous requirements should apply to applications for zoning changes to allow expansion of all major land users—schools, municipal buildings, etc.—not just hospitals. Such applications should undergo careful scrutiny due to their potentially significant impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

The criteria and standards related to the development map are guidelines to assist decision makers in their evaluation of applications for zoning changes. They are presented for use by the appropriate village bodies within the legal framework for evaluating applications.

Chapter VI:

Citizen Participation

Chapter VI: Citizen Participation

Goal:

To maintain a high and representative level of citizen involvement in village affairs.

Objective:

To maximize opportunities for citizen involvement in the decision-making process.

Policies:

- 1 The village will continue to seek out and utilize the talent and expertise of its citizens on its various advisory boards.
- 2 The village will increase its efforts to recruit and appoint a more representative cross-section of citizens to its advisory bodies.
- 3 The village will continue to seek out citizen views on major issues.
- 4 The village will encourage discussion of all issues in an open and frank manner.
- 5 The comprehensive plan should be widely distributed so that both public and private parties are aware of the village's goals, objectives and policies.

One of Oak Park's most cherished characteristics is the high degree of citizen involvement in village affairs. More than 200 citizens serve on 30 different boards, commissions, task forces and committees of village government, nearly all of which receive technical assistance from village staff. Many other residents serve on other governmental boards or participate in a large number of neighborhood, cultural, social-service and ad hoc groups.

Citizen input is essential to assure openness, cooperation and diversity of opinion throughout the planning and decision-making process. Citizen participation has been, and will continue to be, a hallmark of village government and an important factor in making Oak Park a dynamic and attractive community. Meaningful citizen participation offers at least three important benefits to the community. It assists the village board in making well-informed decisions; it saves tax dollars by providing expertise that would otherwise require additional staff or consultant expenditures; and it empowers those citizens who participate, enriching their experience and knowledge.

Goal

To maintain a high and representative level of citizen involvement in village affairs.

This goal has two parts. The first is to achieve as much citizen participation as is practical. The second is to involve as representative a cross-section of the population as possible.

Optimum citizen involvement does not occur without a sustained effort by village government. To meet the citizen participation goal, the village must continue to take steps

Objective

To maximize opportunities for citizen involvement in the decision-making process.

Oak Park uses a variety of methods to

achieve this objective. A citizen involvement committee was established in 1977 to help the village board identify and recruit residents to serve on the village's many appointed advisory boards, committees, commissions and task forces. Special emphasis is put on finding residents who have not been involved in local government but who would like to become involved. The village clerk maintains names and resumes of more than 200 persons who are interested in serving, and those resumes are used in making appointments when vacancies occur. To broaden participation in these bodies, the village generally follows a practice of limiting appointments to two full terms.

The village has in place a clearinghouse program, operated through the planning division, whereby major proposals are summarized and sent to various citizen groups and agencies. Responses are summarized, tabulated and forwarded to the village board before the proposal is brought to a vote.

OP, FYI is a village newsletter, issued to all households on a bi-monthly basis. The newsletter keeps residents informed of major developments and local events, solicits feedback, and answers citizens' questions. The village board also solicits citizen input at its regular meetings, as agenda items arise and again at the end of each meeting.

In addition, according to the Illinois Open Meetings Act, every public body must publicize its regular and special meetings, and, with some exceptions, all meetings must be open to the public.

To further encourage optimum citizen participation, several policies are established:

- 1 The village will continue to seek out and utilize the talent and expertise of its citizens on its various advisory boards.**

Historically, Oak Park has been fortunate to attract qualified and dedicated volunteers for its advisory boards, enabling those bodies to provide a broad spectrum of expertise and viewpoints to assist the village board in its decision making. Through the citizen involvement committee and other promotional efforts,

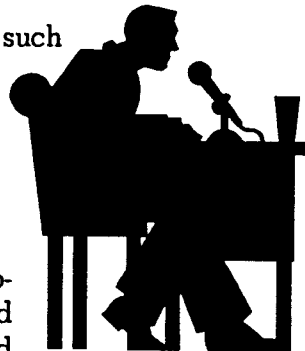
it is important that the village make every effort to continue to attract new talent, including minorities, to its appointed advisory boards, and to fill vacancies on those boards as quickly as possible. The village should continue as well to seek vehicles for citizen participation other than its permanent appointed committees. Examples include ad hoc committees such as the economic development and AIDS task forces, other volunteer committees such as Friends of the Farmers Market and Day in Our Village, and the use of additional volunteers to supplement sub-committees.

- 2** The village will increase its efforts to recruit and appoint a more representative cross-section of citizens to its advisory bodies.

To be truly representative, the village needs to involve all segments of the citizenry on its advisory boards, in numbers that more accurately reflect the composition of the community. In late 1989, for example, approximately 13 per cent of advisory board members were black, although they made up 18 per cent of the population. In keeping with its racial-diversity policy, the village seeks to encourage black citizens and other minorities to assume positions of leadership. Other groups to be recruited more actively include renters, lower-income persons and those with disabilities.

- 3** The village will continue to seek out citizen views on major issues.

In addition to the use of vehicles such as the *OPFYI* newsletter and an increased use of the clearinghouse program, the village should make use of personal contacts to elicit the views of its constituents. For example, village trustees meet on an irregular basis with various business associations, the Building Owners and Managers Association, realtors and others to exchange information and ideas. The trustees, together with staff, also met on a



monthly basis in 1989 and early 1990 in the homes of residents, establishing personal contacts and soliciting expression of concern. This kind of personal communication is useful at all levels of government.

The village will continue to seek the widest possible publicity for its meetings, then encourage citizens to express their views at those meetings. At its meetings, the village board provides opportunities for citizens to speak to specific agenda items, and it also sets aside a specific time for general public testimony. Appointed advisory boards should provide similar opportunities at their meetings.

Finally, it is important that the village seek citizens' views early in the decision-making process so that they have the opportunity to initiate, as well as react to, proposals.

- 4** The village will encourage discussion of all issues in an open and frank manner.

While this is an important, if seemingly obvious, policy, it may sometimes be overlooked because people don't always feel comfortable discussing certain issues. Nevertheless, a constant and open dialogue is necessary to build a community consensus and sense of direction. One issue that requires constant dialogue is that of race relations. Among other recent issues are special-needs housing, gay rights, substance abuse and children's rights.

- 5** The comprehensive plan should be widely distributed so that both public and private parties are aware of the village's goals, objectives and policies.

The president and board of trustees, by adopting a comprehensive plan, adopt the goals, objectives and policies in that plan. By doing so, the village makes a statement to Oak Parkers and to non-Oak Parkers alike that these are the guidelines for village government.

Therefore, the comprehensive plan requires the benefit of wide circulation—to govern-

ment officials and staff, agencies, citizens, business people and developers—so that people will know the village's policies, utilize them in making decisions and recommendations, and measure the village's progress.

Finally, the periodic update of this plan,

and the preparation of any succeeding comprehensive plan, will be consistent with all of the foregoing citizen-participation policies. Citizen initiative, review and input is encouraged so that the plan reflects as accurately as possible the intentions of the community.



Appendix A:

Proposal/Application Checklist

Proposal/application checklist for compliance with Comprehensive Plan 1990—Oak Park, Illinois

Column 1 Goal (G) or Objective (O)	Column 2 Check appropriate column to indicate if the effect of this proposal/application will: help achieve the goal or objective in column 1 (if neutral, leave blank)	Column 3 Using the list at the beginning of each chapter, this proposal/application: conforms does not conform	Column 4 Comments
Housing			
<p>G To preserve and enhance Oak Park's stable residential environment so persons of all ages, races and income can continue to live here in sound, affordable housing.</p> <p>O To support racial integration throughout Oak Park and prevent resegregation in any part of the village.</p> <p>O To support an economically diverse housing stock for all income and age groups living or working in Oak Park.</p> <p>O To enhance and maintain the quality of housing stock for all income and age groups living or working in Oak Park.</p> <p>O To maintain and enhance the residential character of existing residential areas.</p> <p>O To preserve and maintain structures of significant historical or architectural value and their immediate environment.</p> <p>O To stabilize the size of Oak Park's population.</p>			
Transportation and Parking			
<p>G To preserve the residential character of neighborhoods and improve the health of business districts while achieving the safe, fuel-efficient and cost-effective movement of people and goods within and through Oak Park.</p> <p>O To maintain the residential nature of neighborhoods while allowing for the safe flow of traffic within Oak Park.</p> <p>O To provide adequate parking for residents, shoppers, employees, commuters and visitors, including persons with disabilities.</p> <p>O Enhance public transportation opportunities for all residents, including those with limited mobility, and encourage more use of public transportation and less dependence on automobiles.</p> <p>O To use Oak Park's excellent mass transportation facilities as an economic development tool.</p>			

Column 1 Goal (G) or Objective (O)	Column 2 Check appropriate column to indicate if the effect of this proposal/application will: help achieve the goal or objective in column 1 (if neutral, leave blank)	Column 3 Using the list at the beginning of each chapter, this proposal/application: conforms does not conform to policy(ies) number(s):	Column 4 Comments
Public Facilities and Services			
G To provide in the most efficient manner those public services and facilities that maintain Oak Park as a desirable community.			
O To maintain public safety throughout the community.			
O To maintain and improve public works and services consistent with high standards and fiscal constraints.			
O To maintain and improve the high quality of other government services and facilities within fiscal constraints.			
O To provide needed government facilities and services in the most cost-effective and coordinated manner possible.			
O To promote an improved and healthy environment within all of Oak Park.			
Economic Development			
G To expand the village's tax base in order to maintain a high level of services, programs and facilities.			
O To maximize the potential for establishing tax-generating commercial and residential development and redevelopment.			
O To stimulate increased private investment in Oak Park.			
G To encourage a broad range of convenient retail and service facilities to serve Oak Park residents and others.			
O To encourage existing businesses to remain and expand, and to attract new businesses that improve the mix of retail and service establishments.			
O To attract a larger proportion of retail purchases from within Oak Park's market area.			
Citizen Participation			
G To maintain a high and representative level of citizen involvement in village affairs.			
O To maximize opportunities for citizen involvement in the decision-making process.			

Appendix B:

Glossary of Terms

Glossary of terms used in the Comprehensive Plan 1990

advisory commissions, committees, boards and task forces. Appointed by the president and board of trustees, these groups consist of unpaid, volunteer citizens who carry out on-going or specific assignments and advise the village board on various subjects.

AIDS task force. Established in late 1989, this body's charge is to examine what local government can do about AIDS. Its membership is composed of one representative each from the village, township, library board and the two local school boards, with additional representation from the Catholic elementary and high schools, the Council of Churches, both local hospitals, the mental health board, the Progress Center for Independent Living and the AIDS Network.

assessed valuation (AV). The value assigned to real property by the Cook County Assessor. In theory, the AV is a prescribed percentage of the property's fair market value: 16 per cent for properties of six or fewer dwelling units, including condominiums; 22 per cent for vacant land; 30 per cent for taxable not-for-profit properties; 36 per cent for industrial use; 33 per cent for properties containing seven or more dwelling units; 38 per cent for commercial properties.

AV. Assessed valuation.

Avenue, The. The business district concentrated primarily along Oak Park Avenue on either side of the CTA viaduct, formerly known as Avenue/Lake Plaza (ALP).

BOMA. Building Owners and Managers Association.

bonds, general obligation. These bonds normally carry the lowest interest rate of any municipal bond. Secured by the commitment of the issuing municipality to levy taxes, such bonds also provide the highest degree of security and the most acceptable marketability. General obligation bonds represent an unconditional pledge by the municipality to repay the obligation.

bonds, municipal. These obligations constitute the debt of municipalities. They are

interest-bearing certificates sold to the public to raise money, usually to pay for the physical development (capital development) of an area by spreading the cost over a period of years. This helps to spread the tax burden and insures that no single group of residents will have to pay the complete cost of the project. In general, bonds are not used to pay or meet current operating expenses.

bonds, revenue. These obligations are payable from revenues derived from tolls, charges, user fees, or rents paid by the services or facilities the bond was used to finance. Rates or charges are imposed on the user of the service or facility in order to recover the costs of financing construction.

bonds, special assessment. These bonds are issued to finance improvements which are to be paid for on the basis of special assessments against benefited properties. The bond obligations are payable only from the special assessment receipts and, unlike general obligation bonds, are not backed by the "full faith and credit" of the municipality. Consequently, special assessment bonds, like revenue bonds, usually carry a higher interest rate than do general obligation bonds. In Oak Park, a special assessment bond is usually issued to pay for the construction of a cul-de-sac requested by residents. These residents then pay off the bond obligation through a special assessment.

cable TV commission. The nine-member body appointed by the village board to review the performance of Oak Park's cable television franchise, Cablevision of Chicago, and to mediate disputes concerning its services.

cable TV community access committee. A 15-member body appointed by the president and board of trustees to encourage public access productions and usage of cable television.

CBD. Central business district.

CDBG. Community development block grant.

CDCAC. Community development citizens' advisory committee.

central business district (CBD). The principal area of a city's retail, commercial, and service functions, often called "downtown." Oak Park's CBD is Downtown Oak Park.

CIC. Citizen involvement committee.

citizen involvement committee (CIC). A 10-member body appointed by the village board, consisting of seven citizens in addition to the village clerk and two trustees, to encourage citizen participation in government and related activities.

CMHB. Community mental health board.

committee on the disabled. The nine-member body appointed by the village board to advise on efforts to facilitate full participation in community activities by disabled residents, to bring them into the mainstream of public life, and to sharpen public awareness in matters concerning the disabled.

community design commission. This 14-member body is appointed by the president and board of trustees to advise regarding matters of appearance. It annually sponsors the Cavalcade of Pride, mini-garden and permanent-planting programs, and reports to the village board on property maintenance.

community development block grant (CDBG). This grant, issued pursuant to the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and administered by the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides federal monies to address locally determined needs. This grant program consolidates a number of single-purpose grant programs into one program. As an "entitlement" community, Oak Park receives a sum predetermined according to a set formula upon approval of the village's annual submission.

The primary objective of the CDBG program is "the development of viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low- and moderate-income." All projects and activities funded with CDBG funds must (1) principally benefit low- and moderate-income persons, (2) help prevent or eliminate blight, or (3) meet urgent local needs. Federal regulations place primary em-

phasis on benefits to low- and moderate-income persons.

community development citizens' advisory committee (CDCAC). This 11-member body is appointed by the village board to review applications, hold public hearings and recommend how the village allocates its federal community development block grant funds.

community mental health board. The seven-member body appointed by the township government to carry out the duties of the Community Mental Health Act of Illinois by evaluating mental health facilities and services, and planning and implementing programs for the mentally ill, developmentally disabled and substance abusers.

community relations commission (CRC). Appointed by the president and board of trustees, this 15-member body works to assure equal service and treatment to all residents and to improve inter-group relations.

comprehensive plan. A document or series of documents prepared by a plan commission or department setting forth policies for the future of a community. It is normally the result of considerable study and analysis of existing physical, economic, and social conditions, and a projection of future conditions. When adopted by a public body such as a planning commission or governing body, it serves as a guide for many public decisions, especially land-use changes and preparation of capital improvement programs, and enactment of zoning and related growth management legislation.

consumer price index (CPI). Data provided by the U. S. Department of Labor which measure the average change in the prices paid by consumers for a constant array of goods and services. The CPI compares the costs of those goods over periods of time. For example, using 1970 as the base year, a value of 1.2 in 1972 would indicate that it cost \$1.20 to purchase goods or services that cost \$1.00 in 1970.

CPI. Consumer Price Index.

CRC. Community relations commission.

CRD. Community relations division.

cul-de-sac. A street closed at one end, generally terminated with a loop in which

traffic can turn around.

cul-de-sac committee. This seven-member committee, consisting of five citizens at large and one member each from the plan commission and parking and traffic commission, is appointed by the village board to review proposals and make recommendations for establishment and installation of culs-de-sac and other right-of-way closings.

demand-activated rapid transit. This is a customer-oriented, door-to-door transportation service. The customer may place a request for service in advance—such as the evening before a ride is desired—or at the time the ride is needed (like requesting taxi service). The customer gives the operator/dispatcher such information as origin, destination, and number of passengers in the party. The operator then locates an available vehicle nearest the caller. The dispatcher contacts the appropriate vehicle via a two-way radio, and the driver picks up the customer. The entire dispatching process may take no more than 20 to 30 seconds. The vehicle may be called off the passenger's direct route so that other customers may be picked up, but total trip times, including time for waiting, travel, and route deviations are kept to an acceptable level.

density. The number of families, persons, or housing units per unit of land. Usually density is expressed in terms of "per acre." Thus, the density of a development of 200 units occupying 5 acres of land is 40 units per acre. The control of density is one of the basic purposes of zoning.

design review commission. Appointed by the president and board of trustees, this body hears requests and makes recommendations regarding variations from the village's sign ordinance.

district #97. The local elementary school district serving Oak Park through its eight kindergarten-through-sixth-grade schools and two junior high schools.

district #200. The high-school district serving both Oak Park and River Forest through the Oak Park and River Forest High School.

DOP. Downtown Oak Park.

EAV. Equalized assessed valuation.

economic development task force. The 20-member advisory body appointed by the village board in late 1989 to study economic-development issues and report its findings and recommendations within a six-month period.

environmental/energy advisory commission. The nine-member advisory group appointed by the president and board of trustees to address environmental and energy-conservation concerns and to work towards a pollution-free local environment.

equalized assessed valuation (EAV). The figure derived when the assessed valuation of real property is multiplied by the State equalization factor. Taxes are based on the E.A.V.

FAR. Floor area ratio.

farmers market commission. Appointed by the village board, this 11-member body oversees and promotes the village's outdoor produce market which operates from June through October each year.

finance department. This department serves all other village departments, as well as the public, by providing financial accounting, budget control, payroll services, revenue collection, purchasing and mail services, and overall financial management.

fire and police commission. This three-member commission is appointed by the president and board of trustees to supervise eligibility lists for appointments and promotion and to hold hearings on certain matters relating to the two departments.

floor area ratio (FAR). The ratio of floor area permitted on a zoning lot to the size of the lot. Thus, a permitted floor area ratio of 6.0 on a 10,000 square foot lot would allow a building whose total floor area is 60,000 square feet. FAR provisions may be used in combination with other bulk regulations, open space, and building space requirements. When used alone, they give developers great flexibility in deciding whether to build a low building covering only a small part of the lot, or in some places, a combination of buildings, so long as the total allowed is not exceeded.

forestry commission. The ten-member body appointed by the village board to review and make recommendations regarding trees and plantings within the village.

HAP. Housing assistance plan.

health board. The nine-member body appointed by the president and board of trustees to review measures for disease prevention and control, and to recommend corrective interventions when necessary.

historic preservation commission. Formerly the landmarks commission, this nine-member body is appointed by the village board to advise regarding matters affecting historic and architectural properties, districts and their environment. It also provides educational and technical services to citizens.

housing assistance plan (HAP). Developed as part of a community development block grant program, a housing assistance plan serves as a measure of the condition of the housing stock in a community and of the needs of low- and moderate-income persons for housing assistance. The HAP is used to establish goals for providing assistance best suited to meeting the needs of low- and moderate-income persons, and to further the revitalization of the community.

housing bond committee. The five-member body appointed by the village board to review applications and recommend policy for the village's housing bond loan program for rehabilitation of multi-family properties.

incentive (bonus) zoning. A system under which developers are given bonuses in exchange for providing amenities the community feels are desirable. This is in contrast to zoning's traditional, more negative effect of limiting or restricting development. Bonuses granted usually are in the form of higher permitted densities or floor area ratios to improve a development's profitability. Amenities received have been plazas, more open space, certain desired site designs, and access to transit stops. The incentive device, can be used, for example, to promote the development of low- and moderate-income housing or to protect sensitive natural areas.

jitney. A public transportation service in which low-capacity vehicles, such as automobiles or vans, follow a predetermined route.

land write-down. A land write-down involves a municipality or other public agency selling land at less than its fair market value.

To stimulate redevelopment projects, this typically involves buying deteriorated or vacant property, removing the structures or renovating them, and selling the cleared land or improved structure at less than its acquisition value or at a reduced appraisal value.

law department. The department of village government that provides legal counsel to the village board, staff and certain advisory boards; represents the village in civil and criminal litigation; prosecutes municipal ordinance violations in housing, traffic and scoff-law courts; and handles collection matters.

liquor control review board. A five-member board appointed by the president and board of trustees to investigate and review all applications for liquor licenses and to advise the liquor commissioner (the village president).

mixed-use zoning. Zoning which permits a combination of usually separated uses within a single development. Many planned development ordinances specify permitted combinations of, say, various residential and business uses. More recently the term has been applied in a more limited way to major inner-city developments, often with several high-rise buildings, which may contain offices, shops, hotels, apartment, and related uses, and to smaller buildings with stores at ground level and apartments above them.

multi-modal transportation center. A combined facility for several modes of transportation, such as railroad, rapid transit, bus and taxis. Such centers include parking and/or drop-off facilities, and often include retail and service establishments as well.

NAACP. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

National Register of Historic Places. The listing of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects of national, state or local significance in American history, architecture, archeology and culture that is expanded and maintained by the Secretary of the Interior under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Oak Park housing authority (OPHA). This is a separate municipal corporation governed

by a five-member board appointed by the president and board of trustees. It oversees public-housing activities in the community, including the federal Section-8 program.

Oak Park housing center (OPHC). A non-profit private agency involved in promoting equal housing opportunities in Oak Park and the Chicago area, and in furthering racial diversity in Oak Park through counselling, advertising and outreach, previewing and escorting services.

Oak Park residence corporation (OPRC). This private, non-profit agency promotes the improvement of housing by providing rehabilitation, management and counselling services. It is also involved in the provision of housing for elderly and disabled residents.

Oak Park township. An independent government entity, with boundaries coterminous with the village, which administers general assistance (temporary), provides services to senior citizens and youths, funds the community mental health board, and maintains property tax records.

O.P.E.C. The Oak Park/Eisenhower Center business district.

OPHA. Oak Park housing authority.

OPHC. Oak Park housing center.

OPRC. Oak Park residence corporation.

overlay zone. A set of zoning requirements that is described in the ordinance text, is mapped, and is imposed in addition to those of the underlying district. Developments within the overlay zone must conform to the requirements of both zones or the more restrictive of the two. It usually is employed to deal with special physical characteristics such as flood plains or steeply sloping areas, but it has other applications as well.

parking and traffic commission. The nine-member body appointed by the village board to hear traffic and parking concerns and recommend alternative controls and other methods to improve conditions.

parks and recreation board. This five-member body is elected as the park district board and, by virtue of the 1980 intergovernmental agreement between the park district and the village, sits as the combined parks and recreation board. It is the policy-making

body for parks and recreation.

permitted use. A use by right which is specifically authorized in a particular zoning district. It is contrasted with special-permit uses which are authorized only if certain requirements are met and after a public hearing and approval by the village board.

personnel department. The village department responsible for employee-relations functions, including labor relations, personnel administration and equal employment practices.

The personnel department administers the recruitment, pre-screening and selection of employees, provides orientation to new employees, maintains the village's classification and pay plan, hears employee grievances, monitors compliance with the village's personnel manual (updated in 1989), and promotes the increased use of minority-owned businesses and vendors.

plan commission. Appointed by the president and board of trustees, this nine-member body is empowered to prepare and recommend a comprehensive plan and to evaluate proposed changes in land use. The commission also sits as a zoning commission to hold public hearings and make recommendations on requests for zoning amendments and special uses, including planned developments, as they are referred by the village board.

planned development. A form of development, also known as planned unit development (PUD), usually characterized by a unified site design for a number of housing units, clustering buildings and providing common open space, density increases, and a mix of building types and land uses. It permits the planning of a project and the calculation of densities over the entire development, rather than on an individual lot-by-lot basis. It also refers to a process, mainly revolving around site-plan review, in which public officials have considerable involvement in determining the nature of the development. It includes aspects of both subdivision and zoning regulation and is administered through a special-use permit.

While planned development has most commonly been used for housing developments, it

also is frequently applied to other forms of development such as shopping centers, industrial and office parks, and to mixed-use developments which may be any combination, depending on local ordinance. Planned development allows the unified, and hence potentially more desirable and attractive, development of an area, based on a comprehensive site plan. Planned development can have a number of advantages over conventional lot-by-lot development including: mixing building types and uses to create more heterogeneous and "alive" communities; combining often unusable yard space on individual lots into larger common open spaces; offering greater opportunities for incentives to build lower-cost housing; lower street and utility costs resulting from reduced frontage; and the possibility of increasing the density of a development while keeping desired amenities.

President and board of trustees (village board). This is the governing body of the village, consisting of the president and six trustees. They are elected at large for four-year terms, with three trustees being elected biennially. The village board enacts ordinances and establishes policies. The equivalent body in a municipality organized as a city is the mayor and city council, where the council is elected by districts.

PTC. Parking and traffic commission.

PUD. Planned unit development.

racial diversity task force. The 28-member advisory body appointed by the president and board of trustees in mid-1983 to study racial-diversity issues, examine programs, assess progress and recommend creative strategies for continued success as a racially-diverse community. The task force's report was issued in May of 1984.

residential area. Any portion of the village where the primary use of land is for residential purposes, i.e., single-family or multiple-familyhousing.

right-of-way. The right of passage over the property of another. The public may acquire it through implied dedication—accepted access over a period of time to a beach or lake shoreline, for example. More commonly, it refers to the land on which a road

or railroad is located. The pathways over which utilities and drainage ways run are usually referred to as easements.

Section-8. This refers to a section of the U. S. Housing Act on 1937, as amended, pertaining to federal housing subsidies for low- and moderate-income households. Locally, the program is administered by the Oak Park housing authority, largely for households in existing dwelling units, whereby the housing authority pays that portion of a household's rent which is the difference between 30 percent of the household's income and the fair-market rent.

Section-8 income limits. The scale of household income levels which qualifies a household for Section-8 rental assistance. Based on household size, a household can qualify as low-income (less than 50 percent of the median for the metropolitan statistical area) or moderate-income (less than 80 percent of the median for the standard metropolitan statistical area).

SMSA. Standard metropolitan statistical area.

solid waste commission. The nine-member body appointed by the president and board of trustees to develop methods to promote recycling, reduce waste and advise on matters related to solid-waste management.

special service districts. Since 1973, Illinois municipalities have been able to establish special taxing districts to provide special services or facilities to that area. Such districts allow a municipality to offer services or improvements not available in all parts of the jurisdiction, and to tax just the property owners who benefit from them. This tax is administered as a single-rate property tax on property within the special service district. Such districts can only be established following a public hearing and after allowing 60 days for voters and property owners who oppose establishment of the district to petition against it. The two Oak Park service districts encompass Downtown Oak Park and the Lake/Austin area.

special-use permit. Some land uses may be appropriate or desirable only in certain zoning districts and only with adequate safe-

guards. Car washes, helicopter landing stations, utility stations, and planned developments fall into this category. A zoning ordinance will specify the districts where each special use is permitted and provide standards to be met before a permit can be issued. Special-use permits are granted by the village board of trustees following a recommendation by the appointed hearing body, usually the plan commission or zoning board of appeal.

standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA). An area defined by the U. S. Census Bureau for statistical and administrative purposes, consisting of a city of 50,000 or more inhabitants, the county in which it is located and contiguous counties which are socially and economically integrated with the central county. The Chicago SMSA consists of six counties: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will.

state equalization factor. This is a multiplier applied each year to the assessed valuation of real property to arrive at equalized assessed valuation. The factor is imposed in Cook County to create valuations that are consistent with other counties, which establish their assessed valuations as a higher percentage of fair market value than does Cook County. The equalization factors for 1969 through 1988 are listed on Table V-1.

state historic preservation officer. Appointed by the governor and located within the Illinois department of conservation, this official is responsible for administering the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

street (alley) vacation. The removal by the municipality of a street, or portion thereof, from its status as a right-of-way. When vacated, the street is divided in half, with ownership of each half reverting to the adjacent properties. The village is usually compensated for the vacated street. Examples of vacated streets in Oak Park include the 400 block of south Cuyler (for Hawthorne School) and the south end of the 400 block of south Elmwood (for private commercial development).

strip commercial development. Developed area along a thoroughfare characterized by rows of retail stores and similar commercial buildings. Such property generally has a

depth of 125 to 150 feet.

subdivision. The process (and the result) of dividing a parcel of raw land into smaller buildable sites, blocks, streets, open space, and public areas, and the designation of the location of utilities and other improvements. Subdivision regulations usually come into play where a subdivision is above a certain number of lots, varying from two to about five, or when a new street is built.

tax base. In real estate terms, a community's tax base is the assessed valuation of all real estate located within the jurisdiction of a taxing authority. In governmental and planning terms, the tax base refers to the above as well as all other tax-producing sources within the community.

tax increment financing (TIF). A method by which municipalities can finance redevelopment by issuing obligations financed by the increased property tax revenues generated by the increased value of the property following redevelopment. Under this financing approach, a municipality can issue bonds to pay for initial redevelopment costs such as land acquisition, demolition, or construction. The bonds are then paid off with the increased property tax the redeveloped properties generate.

tax rate. This is the ratio of real-estate taxes levied to equalized assessed valuation, usually expressed in terms of hundreds of dollars of E.A.V. For example, a tax rate of 12 would mean that the tax levy is 12 dollars per 100 dollars of E.A.V.

TDR. Transfer of development rights.

TIF. Tax increment financing.

transfer of development rights (TDR). A relatively new concept, enacted in only a few locations, in which the development rights are separated from the land in an area in which a community (or state) wishes to limit development. It has been promoted as a way to retain farmland, preserve endangered natural environments, protect historic areas, stage development, promote low- and moderate-income housing, and achieve other land-use objectives.

use. The purpose or activity for which a piece of land or its buildings is designed,

arranged, or intended, or for which it is occupied or maintained. Land-use planning and control—through zoning and other devices—is a primary concern of planners. With depletion of natural resources, degrading of environmental quality, and shortages of energy, land use is increasingly being recognized as a major national issue.

village board. See president and board of trustees.

village clerk. Elected every four years, the village clerk is responsible for keeping all official village records, issuing permits and licenses, administering local elections, overseeing weights and measures inspections and animal control, staffing the citizens involvement committee and the liquor control review board, and other activities.

village manager. The chief executive officer of the village, appointed by the president and board of trustees, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the government.

WCMC. West Central Municipal Conferences.

West Central Municipal Conference. A voluntary regional association of 37 municipalities serving 600,000 residents in western Cook County, roughly covering the area between the Stevenson and Kennedy expressways, actively engaged in planning, joint purchasing, mutual support activities and legislative advocacy.

ZBA. Zoning board of appeals.

zoning. A technique to implement the comprehensive plan, zoning is a police power measure enacted by the village in which the village is divided into districts or zones within which permitted and special uses are established as are regulations governing lot size, building bulk, placement, and other development standards. Requirements vary from district to district, but they must be uniform within districts. The zoning ordinance consists of two parts: a text and a map. Some flexibility is built into the ordinance by allowing for variances, special use permits, and rezonings.

zoning board of appeals. Appointed by the president and board of trustees, the seven-member zoning board holds public hearings and renders final administrative decisions on requests for variations to the zoning ordinance and on appeals from decisions of the zoning officer. The zoning board is also frequently appointed as a zoning commission for holding public hearings and making recommendations to the village board on special-use zoning applications.

zoning commission. Any group of citizens appointed by the president and board of trustees to hold public hearings and make recommendations regarding amendments to the zoning ordinance and special uses. In nearly all cases, the plan commission or the zoning board of appeals is appointed as the zoning commission.