



Envision Oak Park

A Comprehensive Plan for the Oak Park Community

Adopted September 15, 2014





A Comprehensive Plan for the Oak Park Community

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 – INTRODUCTION TO ENVISION OAK PARK	1	9 – COMMUNITY HEALTH & SAFETY	127
Guiding Principles.....	2	Statement of Importance.....	128
Policy Context for Envision Oak Park.....	3	Vision Statement.....	128
Structure of the Comprehensive Plan.....	4	Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	129
Planning Process.....	6	Community Health & Safety Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	138
Community History and Context.....	7		
2 – PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY	9	10 – TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES	141
Summary of Public Input.....	13	Statement of Importance.....	142
		Vision Statement.....	142
3 – COMMUNITY PROFILE	27	Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	143
Demographics and Housing Characteristics.....	28	Transportation, Infrastructure & Communication Technologies Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	154
Relevant Plans and Policies.....	31		
Community Characteristics.....	37	11 – COMMUNITY LIFE & ENGAGEMENT	157
4 – LAND USE & BUILT ENVIRONMENT	45	Statement of Importance.....	158
Statement of Importance.....	46	Vision Statement.....	158
Vision Statement.....	46	Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	159
Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	47	Community Life & Engagement Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	168
Future Land Use Plan.....	55		
Housing Development Focus Area Plans.....	58	12 – ECONOMIC HEALTH & VITALITY	171
Land Use & Built Environment Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	64	Statement of Importance.....	172
		Vision Statement.....	172
5 – ARTS & CULTURE	67	Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	173
Statement of Importance.....	68	Community Life & Engagement Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	182
Vision Statement.....	68		
Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	69	13 – ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	185
Arts & Culture Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	79	Statement of Importance.....	186
		Vision Statement.....	186
6 – PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES	81	Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	187
Statement of Importance.....	82	Environmental Sustainability Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	198
Vision Statement.....	82		
Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	83	14 – GOVERNMENTAL EXCELLENCE	201
Parks, Open Space, & Environmental Features Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	93	Statement of Importance.....	202
		Vision Statement.....	202
7 – NEIGHBORHOODS, HOUSING & DIVERSITY	97	Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	203
Statement of Importance.....	98	Environmental Sustainability Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	216
Vision Statement.....	98		
Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	99	15 – PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	217
Neighborhoods, Housing, & Diversity Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	109	Village Administration.....	218
		Policies & Regulations.....	219
8 – EDUCATION	113	Capital Improvement Program.....	221
Statement of Importance.....	114	Governmental Collaboration.....	222
Vision Statement.....	114	Funding & Incentives.....	223
Goals, Objectives, & Metrics.....	115		
Education Goals & Objectives Summary Matrix.....	125		



INTRODUCTION, PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY, & COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section includes the first three chapters of the Comprehensive Plan and establishes the context for plan recommendations. It includes the following:

Chapter 1. Introduction to Envision Oak Park

Chapter 2. Public Outreach Summary

Chapter 3. Community Profile



Introduction to Envision Oak Park

Envision Oak Park: A Comprehensive Plan for the Oak Park Community represents the collective effort of the Oak Park community to define a vision for the future and identify the actions to be taken to realize that vision. It is both a process and a product. The initial process included an extensive public outreach program that allowed residents, businesses, agencies, not-for-profits, local governments, and other stakeholders to help draft the Plan's recommendations. The resulting product, this Envision Oak Park document, is an overarching policy guide that aims to provide context for future decision-making by Village government and other implementation partners. The adoption of this document is not the end of the planning process, but the beginning of an on-going implementation effort by the Village and community stakeholders.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Envision Oak Park is guided by five core values that establish the context for all objectives and recommendations included in the Plan. These values are paramount to achieving the vision of Oak Park as defined by its citizens, and should be applied to all actions undertaken in the community. These community values guide a series of goals and specific objectives, which aim to guide municipal policies, programs, regulations, development, and partnerships for the next 15-20 years. The successful implementation of these objectives will depend on the efforts of elected and appointed bodies, Village departments and staff, partnering agencies and units of local government, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and residents.

With so many individuals and organizations being involved and the likelihood of turnover in municipal leadership and staff over the life of the Plan, it is critical that individual decisions be put in the context of broader core values. The following values should be used as measuring sticks to ensure that proposed actions individually and collectively advance the vision for Oak Park as defined by its citizens.

DIVERSITY

All actions should result in a community that is welcoming and accessible to all people, supportive of integrated social and physical interaction, and respectful of different lifestyles and opinions.

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

All actions should advance Oak Park's mission to be a community that minimizes the impact of urban development on the environment, enhances active and healthy lifestyles for all residents, ensures social justice for every citizen, and maintains locally-based fiscal stability over time.

RESPECT FOR OAK PARK'S HISTORY AND LEGACY

All actions should recognize and celebrate what was granted to us by previous generations, and consider the lasting impacts of today's actions and decisions on the future citizens of Oak Park.

COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

All actions should support strong relationships between all governments, residents, institutions, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, neighboring communities, and local, regional and state agencies to ensure that resources, policies and programs respond in an efficient and transparent manner to issues within the Village and those that extend beyond its borders.

THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

All actions should support the maintenance and enhancement of Oak Park's neighborhoods. All portions of the community – neighborhoods, open spaces, institutions, and commercial areas – help define quality of life in Oak Park. However, the village's neighborhoods play a primary role in defining community character, supporting diversity and accessibility, and fostering an engaged and integrated citizenry.

POLICY CONTEXT FOR ENVISION OAK PARK

Envision Oak Park is intended to be referenced by a broad audience – elected officials, board and commission members, Village staff, other forms of local government, residents, business owners, developers, etc. It is important that all readers understand the intent of this document. As a Comprehensive Plan, this document serves a specific and important role in providing context for a number of aspects of local quality of life.

ROLE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

According to Illinois statute, communities are entitled to draft and adopt a Comprehensive Plan that can be used to guide decisions related to development regulations, capital improvement expenditures, and other local policies and actions. Envision Oak Park inventories and addresses issues and opportunities throughout the village, providing context for how Village government may use its resources and collaborate with other partners to accomplish objectives beyond the scope of any one proposed improvement or investment.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

Oak Park has a rich heritage of community planning. This document inventories several plans and policies that have been adopted that provide a specific vision for different portions of the community. The intent of this Comprehensive Plan is not to replace these adopted plans or policies. Rather, it is designed to identify ways that broader Village policies can advance localized goals and objectives. Since the adoption of the last comprehensive plan, several significant local planning and regulatory initiatives have been undertaken, including:

- In 2002: the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance;
- In 2005: The Greater Downtown Master Plan, the Roosevelt Road Corridor Study, and Planning Together (a plan for South Oak Park Avenue and Harrison Street Arts District);
- In 2006: the Chicago Avenue Neighborhood Plan and the Madison Street Corridor Plan;
- In 2007: the Lake Street Neighborhood Plan; and
- In 2008: the Oak Park Bicycle Plan, 4Insights Market Analysis and Retail Strategy, and the Chicago-Harlem Neighborhood Plan.

Envision Oak Park addresses these changes and others that have occurred in the Village in the last two decades. This Plan sets a course to guide land use decision-making for the next 15 to 20 years, ensuring Oak Park continues to improve upon its legacy with an eye toward the future.

ROLE OF OTHER PARTNERS

Envision Oak Park includes a series of recommendations whose implementation will require collaboration among the Village and other entities. For example, the Oak Park Township, two school districts, a park district, and a library district provide many of the critical community services enjoyed by Oak Park citizens. Similarly, the Illinois Department of Transportation, Metra Commuter Rail, Pace Suburban Bus, and Chicago Transit Authority are responsible for much of the major transportation infrastructure in the community. However, these districts and agencies have their own boards, revenue sources, planning initiatives, and standards that are beyond the control of Village government. This Comprehensive Plan does not aim to impose policies on these entities. Rather, it highlights opportunities for collaborative planning between Village government and its implementation partners with the primary goal of achieving the vision expressed by Oak Park citizens.

PLAN TERMINOLOGY

As described above, this Comprehensive Plan is sensitive to the limited role of the Village of Oak Park in implementing many of the recommendations included in the document. To the extent possible, the Plan uses specific terminology to differentiate between various entities or concepts.

Village government describes the Village of Oak Park as a legally incorporated government entity. Village government includes all staff, departments, facilities and services under the purview of the Village of Oak Park and its elected Board of Trustees. Example: The *Village government* is responsible for administering and enforcing regulations related to zoning and development.)

Village, typically used with a lowercase v, describes the concept of the community. (Example: There are several attractive homes and neighborhoods found throughout the *village*.)

FUNDING SOURCE

On behalf of five communities, including Oak Park, the West Cook County Housing Collaborative applied for and received a Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Grant is intended to support local planning aimed at integrating affordable housing, quality jobs, and public transportation. The grant program requires communities to address these challenges through updates to local master plans, zoning codes, and building codes to support private sector investment in mixed-use development, affordable housing and the re-use of older buildings.

STRUCTURE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This document includes a series of chapters designed to answer three critical questions regarding the Oak Park community; 1) Where are we now?; 2) Where do we want to go?; and 3) How will we get there? The Plan includes the following chapters:

1. **Introduction:** This chapter sets the stage for the Comprehensive Plan recommendations by providing an explanation of its guiding principles, the purpose of the Plan and its relationship to other policies, the public planning process that was undertaken, and the history and context that may influence the local vision.
2. **Public Outreach Summary:** This chapter provides a complete inventory of the tools and techniques that were used to engage the Oak Park community, as well as the key findings that helped guide the development of Plan recommendations.
3. **Community Profile:** This chapter includes a summary of existing conditions or influences that provide the foundation for future improvements and set the stage for Plan recommendations.

4. **Land Use and Built Environment Plan:** This chapter identifies a series of recommendations related to the community's overall development pattern and physical character.
5. **Arts and Culture:** This chapter includes recommendations related to the celebration and expression of the community's history, legacy, and creativity.
6. **Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Features:** This chapter describes ways that the Oak Park community can work with local partners to utilize and preserve its open spaces in order to accomplish multiple goals and objectives.
7. **Neighborhoods, Housing, and Diversity:** This chapter provides recommendations related to the community's housing, acceptance of all citizens, and integration of the local population in the physical and social environment of the village.
8. **Education:** This chapter describes ways that the community can work with local partners to create a comprehensive and life-long system of education that enhances local pride and the level of innovation in Oak Park.
9. **Community Health and Safety:** This chapter identifies recommendations aimed at ensuring the long-term health of Oak Park citizens through public safety and access to healthy lifestyle choices.
10. **Transportation, Infrastructure, and Communication Systems:** This chapter provides guidance related to multi-modal mobility, connections to other parts of the Chicago region, and telecommunications and technologies critical to quality of life and commercial growth.
11. **Community Life and Engagement:** This chapter describes ways to ensure that citizens are involved in local decision making, aware of current issues impacting the community, and acting to advance the vision of the village.

12. **Economic Health and Vitality:** This chapter includes recommendations related to the development of strong local commerce that serves the needs of Oak Park residents and attracts investment from beyond the community's boundaries.
13. **Environmental Sustainability:** This chapter identifies recommendations intended to ensure that local investment minimizes its impact on critical natural systems and advances the community's reputation as a leader in progressive urban development.
14. **Governmental Excellence:** This chapter includes actions that support transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, collaboration, and accountability among the community's various forms of local government.
15. **Plan Implementation:** This chapter includes a summary of the Plan goals and objectives, as well as a description of potential funding sources that can be used to implement the Plan.

Chapters 4-14 include the primary recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. Each of these chapters is structured to include:

- A Statement of Importance that articulates that chapter's relevance to the guiding principles and overall vision for Oak Park,
- A Vision Statement that describes that aspect of the community retrospectively as if written in the year 2030,
- Goals that establish the broader direction for actions that can be taken to achieve the vision,
- Objectives that describe specific outcomes and supporting policies to achieve each goal, and
- Metrics that will be used to measure general progress towards achieving each goal.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Envision Oak Park process lasted approximately 24 months beginning in August 2012. The process was specifically designed to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan is directly reflective of the community's vision for Oak Park. In fact, many of the core recommendations were drafted by residents through a series of working groups. The following points describe some of the unique aspects of the Envision Oak Park planning process.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At the beginning of the planning process, the Village of Oak Park convened a Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC). The CPAC included a cross-section of representatives, including staff from the Village of Oak Park, elected and appointed officials, residents, and business owners. The CPAC had several responsibilities, including:

- Review and approval of the Envision Oak Park brand name, logo, and tag line,
- Identification of key local stakeholders to be engaged through various outreach techniques,
- Creating awareness of opportunities for citizens to participate in traditional and web-based outreach,
- Assistance in crafting a comprehensive and thorough public engagement program designed to allow opportunities for all citizens to participate,
- Review of preliminary plan recommendations and draft documents,
- Education of residents, elected officials, and appointed officials regarding the planning process and resulting recommendations, and
- Approval of the draft Comprehensive Plan for formal review and adoption by the Village Board.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Envision Oak Park public outreach process was comprehensive and thorough in its scope. From the outset, the goal of the Village government, CPAC and planning team was to engage citizens in order to draft a vision and series of recommendations that are specifically reflective of local goals and objectives. Chapter 2 of this document includes a detailed summary of the tools and events that were implemented to allow for participation. In summary, well over 1,000 individual citizens participated in the process, volunteering thousands of hours throughout the creation of the Comprehensive Plan.

1-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION CHECK-IN

The Village of Oak Park hired a planning consultant to assist with the development of Envision Oak Park. As a requirement of the contract, the consultant will be conducting a follow-up review one year after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. The intent of this follow-up is to review progress towards Plan implementation and provide the Village government with guidance regarding ways to advance the community's vision. This will serve as a model for annual reviews to be conducted by staff and departments of the Village of Oak Park in the future.

COMMUNITY HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The Oak Park community benefits from a rich history that sets the stage for long-term prosperity. The five core principles introduced at the beginning of this chapter represent the continuation and formal articulation of ideals already being practiced in the village. This section describes how the community's past sets the stage for attainment of its long-term vision.

HISTORICAL FOUNDING OF OAK PARK

The Village of Oak Park, located immediately west of the City of Chicago, is a community well known for its architectural heritage, diverse population, and strong sense of community pride. Oak Park was originally a settlement of the Pottawatomie, Sac, and Fox Indians, and has developed into a thriving community of approximately 52,000.

In the 1830's, the Kettlestring family purchased about 170 acres of land just west of Chicago. This quarter section of land was known as the Kettlestrings Grove, Oak Ridge, and/or Harlem. In the 1850's, the family began to sell off parcels of the large land holdings to those who followed the first train to run west of Chicago. The railway station was eventually named Oak Park. While Oak Park became the official name of the area, it was still unincorporated and officially part of Cicero Township until 1902.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Oak Park experienced significant development as residents left Chicago to build in the suburbs after the Chicago Fire in 1871. The Village of Oak Park had a population of about 500 the year of the fire, and grew to about 4,500 in 1890. The next 60 years saw the construction of almost all of the housing stock in the village, and most of Oak Park's current buildings.

During the 1920's, major department stores such as Marshall Fields and The Fair opened stores on Lake Street in Oak Park, and the Lake Theatre opened in 1936. By the 1930's the village had a population of approximately 64,000, even larger than its current population. The Village of Oak Park continued to grow as vacant land was filled with homes, churches, businesses, and schools. As an established community, Oak Park enjoyed its rich heritage and prominent legacy bestowed upon the community by Frank Lloyd Wright and Ernest Hemingway, among many others.

CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

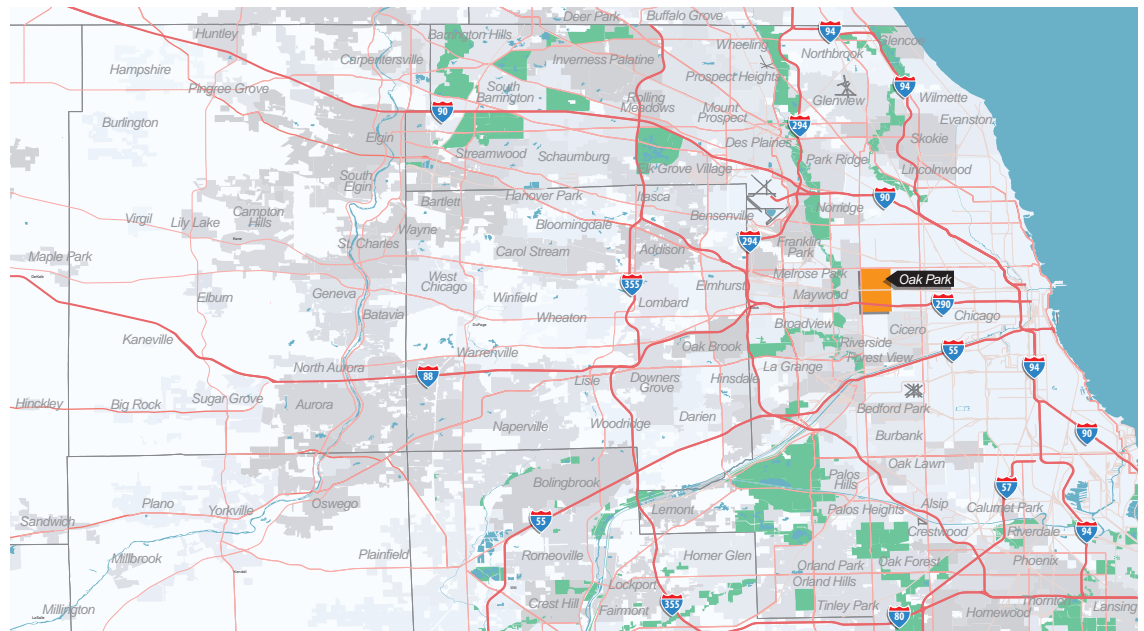
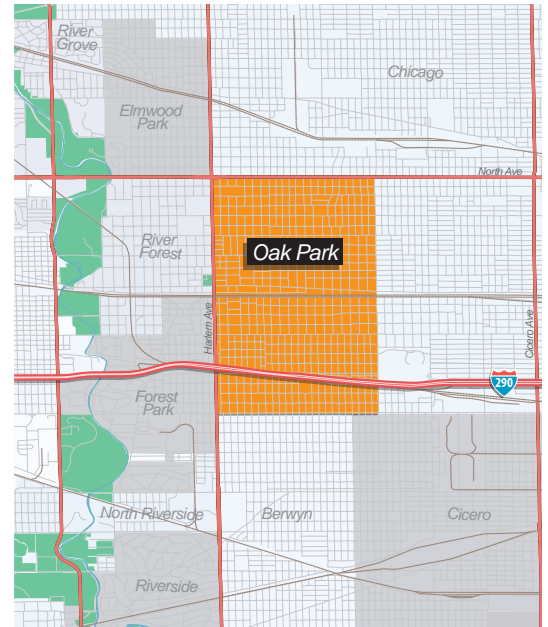
The Village of Oak Park began a concerted effort to discourage racially discriminatory housing practices in the 1960's. Oak Park passed a fair housing ordinance in 1968 to ensure that all people would have equal access to housing within the community. By promoting the acceptance of all cultures and backgrounds, the village has maintained a diverse and vibrant community.

LINKING THE PAST TO THE FUTURE

Few communities have been as successful as Oak Park at preserving its history and translating it into an asset for long-term quality of life. The community is sought after for its housing, diversity, culture, vibrant commercial areas, multi-modal transportation, open spaces, and other unique amenities. Envision Oak Park strives to balance the preservation of these assets with new development practices that respond to contemporary lifestyle choices and enhance the long-term sustainability of the community.

PLANNING AREA

Oak Park is located immediately west of the City of Chicago. Bound by Austin Boulevard, North Avenue, Harlem Avenue, and Roosevelt Road, the village includes 4.5 square miles of neighborhoods, commercial districts, parks, community facilities, and industry. Oak Park shares boundaries with the City of Chicago, Village of River Forest, Village of Forest Park, City of Berwyn, and Town of Cicero. Citizens are well connected to Chicago's Loop and the western suburbs by the I-290 Eisenhower Expressway, Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) Blue and Green lines, and Metra's Union Pacific-West commuter rail line. Other connections are provided by CTA and Pace bus routes. Its location in the region, historic character, and high quality public services make Oak Park an attractive location for residents and businesses that want to enjoy a walkable community with a unique identity.





2

Public Outreach Summary

Oak Park is a place that is committed to engaging the community throughout planning and policy making processes. Envision Oak Park included several means of outreach that allowed citizens to identify existing issues and opportunities and provide direct input into plan recommendations. This section includes a summary of the outreach conducted, as well as a description of the outreach efforts undertaken, the attendance at various events, and a summary of the results.

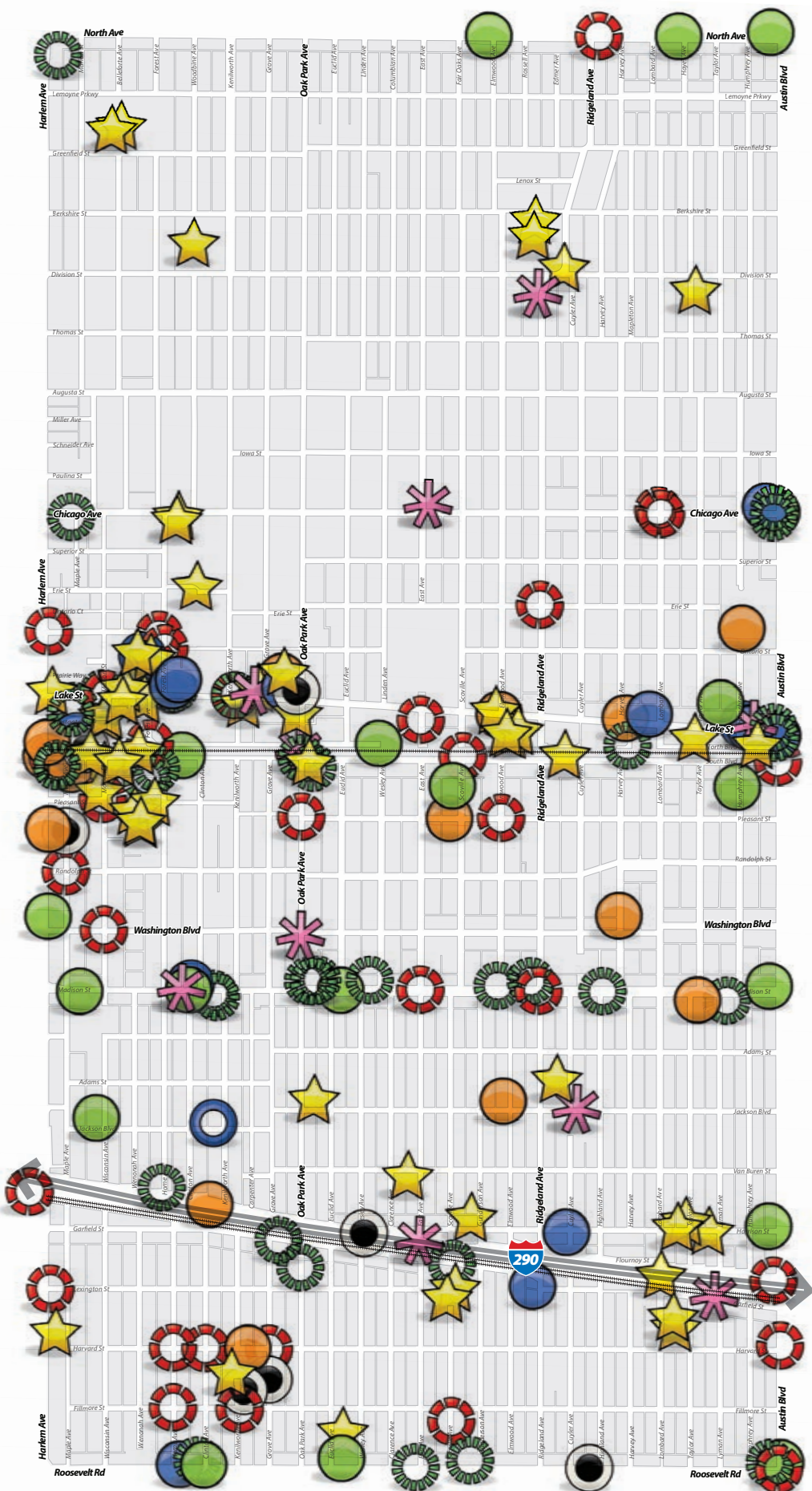


Village of Oak Park sMap Points Summary Map

The Village used sMap, a web-based mapping tool, to allow citizens to provide specific input regarding issues and desires for improvements in Oak Park. Much of the input provided by users centered around the community's commercial districts and the future of the Eisenhower transportation corridor.

sMap Categories

- Community Assets
- Development Priority Sites
- Problematic Intersections
- Public Safety Concerns
- Undesirable Uses
- Key Transit Destinations
- Desired Uses/Developments
- Poor Appearance
- Other



CREATING AWARENESS FOR ENVISION OAK PARK

Village staff and the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) worked closely to get word out about the Envision Oak Park process. The following techniques were used to advertise the purpose of the initiative, opportunities to attend outreach events, and other tools available to actively participate in the process.

- Press Releases & Newsletter Articles at key junctures in the process, including project kick-off and prior to various workshops (i.e. Village-wide workshops, neighborhood workshops, and visioning and priority workshop).
- Posters and postcards distributed throughout the Village prior to major public events.
- Attendance at special meetings or events, such as the League of Women Voters November 2012 meeting, the January IGov meeting, etc.
- E-blasts and project website RSS feeds related to outreach opportunities.
- Word-of-mouth invitations beginning with Village staff and the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee.

CITIZEN WORK GROUPS

After the preliminary series of outreach events were conducted, the planning team produced a Community Reference Book that summarized relevant technical analyses and public input, including the ranking of key issues for 11 topic areas. This document was used as the basis for a series of citizen working groups aimed at drafting the vision, goals and objectives for the Comprehensive Plan's primary chapters. In total, over 125 individuals participated in the working group series, investing well over 1,200 combined hours of volunteer time.



BE PART OF
PLANNING
OAK PARK'S
FUTURE.

NEIGHBORHOOD
WORKSHOP SERIES

Envision Oak Park is a community-based process and plan for the future of Oak Park. Get together with your neighbors. Let your voice be heard as we talk about issues important to you...neighborhoods, economy, environment, diversity, education, and so much more.

www.envisionoakpark.com

Envision Oak Park

Oak Park

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT

This section summarizes the general themes identified through workshops, interviews and web-based outreach over the first several months of the Envision Oak Park process. Though it does not account for every comment received, it includes the prevalent themes that were consistent among several groups or meetings. A more detailed inventory of comments and outreach results is on file at the Oak Park Village Hall. The outreach has been categorized into the eleven plan elements.

LAND USE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Transit-oriented Development

The community cited the need for targeted transit-oriented development (TOD) as a key issue in Oak Park. Citizens feel it is an important way to address related issues of availability and affordability of housing, a lack of local commercial services, and the image of several of the Village's entry points.

Overall Land Use

Participants feel as if the overall land use character of the community is established and unlikely to change, with its well-defined residential areas and commercial districts. To that end, they feel that one issue in the Village is the lack of development sites due to the built-out nature of the community and small parcels along many of its key corridors. A few sites were highlighted as land use conflicts, while the large parking lot in Downtown Oak Park was cited as needing a more specific land use vision in terms of activity, intensity, and design.

Downtown Oak Park

Downtown Oak Park was mentioned in terms of the kinds of land uses it currently provides. Storefront vacancy was cited as a key issue, as were a few key vacant sites or buildings (i.e. Lake Street between Harlem and Marion, the vacant lot at the northeast corner of Lake and Forest, and the former Marshal Field's Building at Lake and Harlem.) Many residents feel the Village should require "downtown" type uses (i.e. restaurants, specialty retail, etc.), while others feel secondary uses should be permitted in order to fill up storefronts.

Madison Street Corridor

Madison Street was a focus of discussion regarding land use and character. Residents are concerned about the number of nail shops, wig shops, and other secondary retail and service activities on Madison Street, since they feel it doesn't reflect the character of the Village on one of its most visible corridors. Residents are also concerned about the visual character of the corridor, including private development and the design of the public street.

Commercial Districts

Local commercial districts were discussed as an important issue related to neighborhood vitality and quality of life. Residents would like to see stronger local commercial districts with uses that support daily shopping and dining needs. They stressed the desire for these activities within walking distance of their homes, and that the thriving business districts are often too far away in other portions of the Village.

Key Land Use & Development Issues

- Architectural and historic neighborhood character
- Character and quality of buildings in commercial areas
- Character and quality of businesses in commercial areas
- Character and quality of streets and public spaces in commercial areas
- Intensity, mix of uses, and walkability around transit hubs
- Relationship between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods

Key Arts and Culture Issues

- Entertainment options for people of all ages
- More community events and festivals
- More public art throughout the Village
- Promoting and celebrating the history of Oak Park (historical sites, museums, etc.)
- Strengthening of local creative arts (music, theater, etc.)

Village Facilities

Participants identified land use issues specifically related to Village facilities. Support is mixed for a potential intergovernmental center that would occupy the same block as the existing Village Hall. Some support the concept, while others feel it is unnecessary.

Historic Preservation

Participants identified historic preservation as an important issue and a value that makes Oak Park unique. Many residents mentioned the need to ensure that historic structures are maintained and rehabilitated in order to preserve the character of neighborhoods and commercial districts.

Development Character

The history and character of Oak Park was cited by participants as one of the community's most important assets. Many feel it is a critical issue to address, as many of the Village's important corridors (i.e. Madison Street, Austin Boulevard and Harlem Avenue) convey a less-than-ideal character for visitors from other communities.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Community History

Residents stated the need to use Oak Park's history to instill pride in the current population and attract new residents who will invest in the community. This includes both the physical history (i.e. architecture, neighborhood character, etc.) and cultural history (Ernest Hemingway, local artists, etc.).

Arts

Participants identified Oak Park's creative population as one of its key assets that shows itself in both local arts and business development. The community feels it is important to provide and/or support arts and humanities programs outside of schools so the general public has access to this aspect of cultural development.

Regional Events and Activities

Residents cited the existing events, such as Barrie Fest, Oaktobertfest, and other activities as critical in drawing people from other parts of the region and enhancing the image of Oak Park.

Community Branding

Residents and business owners noted the value of recent marketing efforts for specific portions of the community. However, participants mentioned the need for a stronger effort to market all portions of the Village to Oak Park residents, those in neighboring communities, and the Chicago region as a whole.

Historic Character

Residents mentioned Oak Park's historic buildings and important residents as a strong foundation for instilling local pride and spreading a positive regional image. However, many cited specific barriers to sharing these assets with regional and national audiences, including the need for greater marketing, hotel and lodging options, and enhanced local signage and wayfinding.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Environmental Features

Preservation of the Village's tree canopy was mentioned by residents of all ages, and is seen as an important character-defining aspect of the community. Residents feel that any loss of the tree canopy will have impacts that are felt for the next several decades.

Recreational Facilities and Programs

The renovation of Ridgeland Park was discussed as an issue related to recreational facilities and programs. Residents also mentioned the need for more local parks scattered throughout the Village. Generally, residents are satisfied with recreational programs for children, but feel there are inadequate programs for adults and seniors.

Noise

Residents cited noise as an issue, especially adjacent to the I-290 corridor and the CTA Green Line/Metra UP-W Line corridor. They stated that it can be a barrier to residential and commercial development, as it impacts overall quality of life in areas that could otherwise offer good housing with excellent access to transit.

Park Development

There are several park facilities that have recently undergone or are in the process of improvement or development (i.e. Ridgeland Commons, Scoville Park, and the new Gymnastics Center.) Residents feel the Park District is providing a high level of services and facilities, but are concerned about the high level of taxes needed to pay for those amenities.

NEIGHBORHOODS, HOUSING, AND DIVERSITY

Housing and Transit

Residents cited the opportunity for transit-oriented development to provide a broader choice in housing stock in areas with higher access to jobs and commercial services. They stated this could address both affordable housing needs and senior housing needs.

Housing Choice

Residents stated that the diversity in housing choice is a valued asset to the Oak Park community. However, the Village needs to be proactive in ensuring that a broad range of housing choices remain available. They specifically cited the need for quality senior housing in the middle-income range.

Housing Quality

Generally, citizens feel the housing stock in Oak Park is of a high quality. However, they expressed concerns about maintenance of some areas. Specifically, they are concerned about the impacts of residential areas abutting highly intensive commercial or quasi-industrial uses. They feel it is critical that regulations address buffers, times of operation, and traffic and noise.

Key Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Issues

- *Enhanced park facilities*
- *Expanded park programs for people of all ages*
- *Mature trees and tree canopy*
- *More local parks within existing neighborhoods*
- *More and better civic gathering spaces*
- *Noise and air pollution*

Key Neighborhoods, Housing, and Diversity Issues

- Accessible housing for people with disabilities
- Diverse range of housing prices and types (rent or own)
- Financial and/or social support for low-income residents
- Increased social interaction among Oak Park's diverse population
- Maintain and reoccupy vacant or foreclosed properties
- Maintenance of neighborhood infrastructure (streets, alleys, etc.)
- Property code enforcement
- Senior housing for all income levels

Neighborhood Perception and Image

Residents discussed the varying perception of neighborhoods throughout the Village. They feel residential areas east of Ridgeland and south of I-290 are often viewed differently than other portions of the community. The area east of Ridgeland is perceived to be unsafe due to its close relationship with Chicago's Austin neighborhood, while I-290 creates a significant physical and perceptual barrier to portions south of the expressway.

Neighborhood Services

Generally, residents feel Oak Park neighborhoods are well maintained. However, they cited a few instances where the maintenance of housing is not adequate, or where municipal services are perceived as inadequate.

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing was a common topic among workshops and meetings. Residents feel that providing local affordable housing is an important element in maintaining the overall diversity of the community. Residents cited the need for both affordable rental units and affordable owner-occupied housing.

Senior Housing

Participants cited the need for greater senior housing options in the Village. They stated that there are currently high-end and low-income senior housing units, but nothing that will meet the growing demand for middle-income senior housing that will allow long-time residents to stay in their neighborhood or community.

Demographics

Residents pointed out that Oak Park's current population is lower than its peak population by about 12,000 people. Generally, participants feel the Village's residential density is a key asset, and are concerned that any further loss in population or de-densifying of neighborhoods would harm local commercial districts.

Diversity

Diversity was an often mentioned issue and asset in Oak Park. Residents stated the importance of diversity and its role in creating vibrant neighborhoods, active commercial districts, and a greater sense of community pride. Participants stated that the Village needs to be proactive about maintaining and growing its diversity. In fact, some stated that while the Village is diverse, it needs to be more integrated. This would imply creating more equal opportunities among different socioeconomic groups in areas related to education, programs and services, and leadership. They feel that this is essential to closing the achievement gap currently seen in primary and secondary schools.

EDUCATION

Achievement Gap

Concern about the achievement gap among different socio-economic groups was the most cited issue in education. Residents feel that there needs to be an equal playing field to ensure that all families have access to a high-quality education and adequate support.

Elementary to High School Continuum

Participants feel there needs to be better coordination between elementary, middle, and high school curricula. They feel this is especially important since Oak Park and River Forest have separate elementary and middle school districts, but both feed students into the OPRF high school district.

Early Childhood Education

Residents feel early childhood education is critical to closing the achievement gap and ensuring access to higher quality education. They stated that early childhood education providers should implement programs that are closely coordinated with K-12 education providers.

Linking to Colleges and Universities

In order to enhance the likelihood of an employable local population, participants feel that high school programs should be specifically crafted to provide the foundation for high-quality job opportunities in the Oak Park and regional marketplace. This could include mentoring programs with local colleges and universities and internships with local employers.

Continuing Education for Adults

Residents feel there needs to be better opportunities for adult continuing education as unemployment persists. They stated that this could be the role of local colleges and universities, and that the Village or other local taxing districts could be partners in providing facilities and technologies, while local employers could offer opportunities for practical experience.

Educational Facilities

Participants expressed frustration over the high tax rates for local school districts, especially in light of significant budget excesses. They feel that, while educational facilities are generally good, the available money should be invested in rehabilitation or development that enhances school facilities and provides amenities accessible to the community at-large.

Key Education Issues

- Achievement gap among racial/cultural groups
- Continuing education for people of all ages
- Cost effectiveness of public education
- Early childhood education (ages 0-5)
- Local vocational training
- Quality of public and private education (grades K-12)
- Quality/condition of public and private educational facilities (grades K-12)
- Role of family in educational success
- Role of libraries and other community facilities in education and curricula

Key Community Health and Safety Issues

- Affordable, quality early childcare
- Affordable, quality health care
- Crime monitoring and prevention
- Education/awareness related to walking, bicycling, and mass transit
- Funding and performance of police and fire services
- Financial support for older adult care services
- Financial support for organizations that provide social services
- Healthy and active living (diet, exercise, physical activity, etc.)
- Mental Health services
- Programs and facilities to support the homeless population

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY

Transportation as Exercise

Participants expressed an interest in enhancing community-wide mobility for non-motorized vehicles. They stated that removing barriers to bicycling and walking for recreation or everyday needs could reduce obesity and enhance individual health.

Local Food Production

Residents discussed the need for local healthy food options. Many stated that vacant lots throughout the Village could be used for urban agriculture, and that the local farmers markets could serve as the marketplace for locally-produced food sales.

Public Safety

Residents feel that, in general, Oak Park is a safe community. However, participants discussed the impacts of Chicago's Austin neighborhood on the eastern portion of the Village. They stated that the perceived levels of crime and drug use are becoming more prominent in Oak Park as a result of such activities in Chicago. They also stated that some specific areas of the Village, such as alleys, train stations or parking garages, feel unsafe. Residents feel that the perception of a public safety issue puts Oak Park's image and reputation at risk.

Emergency Responsiveness

Generally, residents feel that the Oak Park Police department provides a high level of services. However, participants cited the need for more local police presence in order to decrease response time or prevent crime from happening in the first place. No specific comments were provided pertaining to fire or ambulance response or services.

Health Care Services and Facilities

Hospitals and clinics in and around Oak Park were cited as important assets as they provide a high level of accessibility to critical services. Participants discussed the need to take advantage of these local health care providers in order to ensure that their services are available for all who need them.

Early Childhood Care

Residents cited early childhood care as an important component in closing the achievement gap once children enter the school system. Residents also discussed the importance of local affordable early childhood care as a key component in fostering socioeconomic diversity by enabling moderate to low-income households to stay in the Oak Park community.

Homeless Population

Issues related to the homeless population were discussed by residents. Generally, citizens are interested in establishing programs and services to assist homeless residents in meeting their immediate needs, and provide counseling and guidance in long-term lifestyle management.

Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Residents discussed aspects of healthy lifestyle choice that they feel are important to local health and sustainability. They discussed healthy transportation choices (i.e. bike trails and pedestrian networks), access to local healthy foods, recreation programs for all age groups, and education and awareness.

Local Awareness and Education

Residents feel that, even if proper infrastructure is in place for bicycling and pedestrian mobility, many people are either unaware that they are an option or not informed as to how to behave. They feel motorists should be educated as to bicycle and pedestrian right-of-way issues, and bicyclists and pedestrians should be educated regarding proper behavior around other modes of transportation.

TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

Sustainable Infrastructure

Residents mentioned the desire to retrofit the Village's infrastructure over time to be more sustainable. Examples they cited include better stormwater runoff management and treatment techniques, better water management, and more energy-efficient systems.

Green Mobility

Providing multiple transportation options was discussed by residents and stakeholders. People specifically mentioned the needs for a more comprehensive bike path network. People also cited the walkability of the community as an important asset.

Eisenhower Expressway Corridor

Residents stated that the Eisenhower Expressway corridor creates a separation between the northern and southern portions of the Village. Its proposed expansion would enhance this separation, and create additional impacts on surrounding neighborhoods due to noise, vibration and traffic. They are concerned that it would also have community-wide impacts related to property values and air quality. However, people recognize it as a critical link to Chicago and the western suburban communities.

Regional Transit Mobility

Regional transit services were cited by people as a key asset, with the Metra UP-W line and CTA Blue and Green Lines providing efficient connections to Chicago and other communities. Residents also mentioned Pace bus service as important in providing local linkages. Generally, participants are satisfied with regional transit services, but feel it is critical to maintain the level of service currently in place.

Local Transit Mobility

Residents expressed the need for enhanced local transit in order to better connect neighborhoods to Downtown Oak Park, hospitals, nearby colleges, and other destinations. Many described a local circulator that used to be in service, and that a similar type of service would be beneficial.

Bicycle Mobility

Bicycle mobility is an important issue to Oak Park residents. Participants mentioned the need for more designated bike paths or bike lanes, and the need for better education and awareness so that cyclists understand safe riding techniques and drivers understand bicycle signage and behaviors.

Parking Capacity and Policy

Parking was one of the most frequently discussed issues. Residents mentioned the lack of parking, or lack of properly located parking, in and around Downtown Oak Park. Participants also described the need for residential parking policies to be more specifically tailored to local densities and behaviors. Participants cited the unclear or confusing policies related to permitted parking times, snow removal, etc.

Pedestrian Mobility and Safety

Oak Park was described by participants as a highly walkable community. Residents feel it is important to maintain the pedestrian network in order to support the Village's neighborhoods and business districts. Residents cited specific pedestrian crossing issues where intersections have to be improved with either more visible surfaces or signage to inform motorists.

Key Transportation, Infrastructure, and Communications Systems Issues

- ADA accessibility
- Advanced telecommunications and digital infrastructure
- I-290 and proposed reconstruction project
- Parking capacity, signage and/or enforcement
- Public transit access and utilization
- Stormwater management and flood control
- Traffic congestion
- Utility reliability
- Walkable and bikeable community

Key Community Life and Engagement Issues

- Collaboration among not-for-profit organizations and service providers
- Community involvement and volunteerism
- Community pride and awareness
- Enhanced communication among local entities, agencies, residents, and businesses
- Neighborhood and community-based activities and events

COMMUNITY LIFE AND ENGAGEMENT

Neighborhood Events

Residents feel neighborhood block parties and events are a defining aspect of local life. They feel these are important opportunities for civic involvement and instilling a sense of community for residents.

Neighborhood Organization

Residents discussed the importance of block-level neighborhood organization. Residents feel it is important to maintain and build upon the existing neighborhood organizations in order to maintain quality services and hold events and activities.

Community Engagement

Participants feel that one of the Village's greatest strengths is its engaged citizenry. However, they feel that they are frequently not informed of Village decisions or regulations. This was especially true among the business community, where several feel their opinions are not sought before regulations that affect them are put in place.

ECONOMIC HEALTH AND VITALITY

Downtown Oak Park

Downtown Oak Park was mentioned both in terms of a character-defining asset and a barrier to neighborhood-based economic development. Residents feel it needs to balance the regional draw it provides without infringing on neighborhood goods and services.

Marketing and Recruitment

Participants discussed the need for a consistent marketing message to potential developers and investors. Specifically, they mentioned the lack of clarity in terms of who should be responsible for owning and conveying the message to these parties.

Balancing Growth and Character

While historic preservation and community character are high priorities in Oak Park, many stated that approval processes related to these issues can deter new development or redevelopment from occurring in the Village. They feel there must be a balance in order to foster growth in a responsible way, and make the process predictable for developers.

Municipal Budgets

Residents stated frustration at several local taxing bodies related to high tax rates and excessive spending. They feel there must be sound fiscal decision-making and prioritizing in order to ensure that critical services are provided in a financially sustainable manner.

Tourism

Residents mentioned Oak Park's historic buildings and important residents as a strong foundation for building a vibrant local tourism industry. However, they also cited specific elements that need to be improved in order to do so, including greater hotel and lodging options, enhanced local signage and wayfinding, and regional and national marketing.

Small Business Development

Residents stated a desire for more locally-owned small businesses, as they would prefer to shop in Oak Park and support local investment. However, members of the business community stated that it is difficult to establish a business in Oak Park based on permitting procedures and high property taxes. It was also stated that, while several existing groups aim to support small business development, it is unclear who can provide what services, programs and incentives, and that a central point of contact should be provided to facilitate these conversations.

Local Goods and Services

In every neighborhood workshop, the need for more local goods and services was discussed. Residents feel that local commercial districts need to be revitalized in order to provide these services within easy access of housing throughout the Village.

Municipal Incentives and Programs

Residents feel the Village should be proactive in incentivizing local economic development. This was especially true among the local business community, who cited lengthy approval processes, high tax rates, and expensive property as barriers to business development. Participants cited frustration with the fact that surrounding communities have been able to capture development on shared corridors (such as Berwyn on Roosevelt Road) while Oak Park continues to experience vacancies.

Key Economic Health and Vitality Issues

- Coordinated economic development
- Diversification/stabilization of local tax base
- Marketing Oak Park outside of the Village
- Mix of business types
- Revitalization/improvement of business areas
- Supporting small/independent business development
- Tourism
- Village role in supporting existing businesses

Key Environmental Sustainability Issues

- Access to local, sustainable, and healthy food
- Climate adaptation and resilience
- Energy efficiency and conservation
- Green infrastructure (permeable surfaces, native gardens, etc.)
- Local air quality
- Renewable energy sources (wind/solar generation, geothermal, etc.)
- Sustainable development incentives and regulations
- Water quality and conservation

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainable Policy

Sustainability was a theme consistent among workshops. Participants discussed the importance of advancing the initiatives contained in PlanIt Green, and ensuring that sustainable development practices are implemented through municipal policies and regulations.

Green Infrastructure

Participants cited green infrastructure as a key component to reducing the impacts of development on environmental systems. They suggested that municipal infrastructure be systematically upgraded and replaced with green systems that minimize stormwater runoff, flooding, and the overall impacts of development.

Sustainable Transportation

Participants cited sustainable transportation options as a primary way of reducing green house gas emissions and improving air quality throughout the community and region. To accomplish this, they discussed additional bike lanes, educational and awareness programs, local car and bike sharing programs, and vehicle charging stations.

Green Building and Design

Residents feel green building techniques should be implemented throughout the Village. They cited several recent successes, such as the Public Works Building and the Walgreen's at Oak Park Avenue and Madison Street. However, they feel the Village can take a more prominent leadership role in demonstrating the value and feasibility of green buildings.

Energy

The community as a whole expressed an interest in reducing energy use. Residents gave specific examples of how to address this, including municipal sponsorship of a house-by-house energy audit, passive heating and cooling through building design, and better use of geothermal heating such as the system implemented at the new Walgreen's at Oak Park Avenue and Madison Street.

Environmental Features

Given Oak Park's lack of major environmental features, residents discussed environmental preservation from the perspective of reducing the impacts of urban development and lifestyle choices. However, preservation of the Village's tree canopy was mentioned in workshops by residents of all ages, and is seen as an important character-defining aspect of the community.

GOVERNMENTAL EXCELLENCE

Maintenance and Code Enforcement

Maintenance and code enforcement was discussed as an important issue in sustaining the high level of character in Oak Park. Participants feel the consistent and effective enforcement of some property codes is lacking. They believe this is especially true for vacant properties and structures, resulting in a decreased level of character in many of the most visible commercial districts and neighborhoods.

Maintaining Attractive Neighborhoods

Residents feel that it is critical that the Village continue to provide top-notch neighborhood service (i.e. trash collection, alley maintenance, street repair, etc.). They also feel it is important that property maintenance standards be enforced in order to preserve the quality of local housing and the overall character of neighborhoods.

Interagency Cooperation and Efficiency

Participants discussed the on-going collaboration between several different service providers throughout the Village as an important and valued practice. However, residents feel collaboration could be improved to enhance customer service and create efficiencies. Residents would like the Village to explore its internal structure and relationships with other taxing districts to see where overlap is occurring or where procedures are too arduous.

Communication and Engagement

Oak Park has a strong legacy of public engagement in governmental affairs. Residents feel it is imperative that future efforts aim to strengthen opportunities for input in order to keep an open dialogue with the population and craft policies that are responsive to their needs.

Government “Customer Service”

Many stated that individual Village staff members are nice, but there is an overall culture of saying “no” and not being helpful. Residents feel that government service can be improved by creating more clarity among the Village’s many departments, and better integrating technology as a resource for administering services (i.e. permit application and review).

Municipal Finances

Workshop participants discussed the high property tax rates in the Village. While some stated that high taxes are fine if the services provided are top-notch, others feel there is a disconnect between the needs of residents and the priorities of governmental leadership with regards to how money gets spent. Residents also feel the existing government structure is too complex and creates inefficiencies and redundancies.

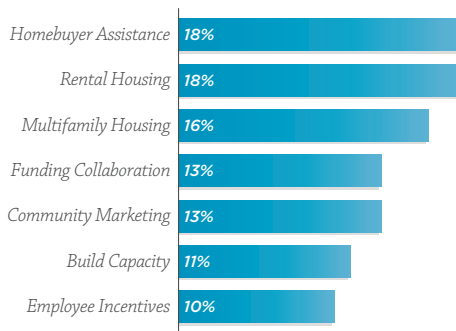
Key Governmental Excellence Issues

- Total tax burden
- Collaboration among local government entities
- Merger of government bodies and/or consolidation of services
- Value and prioritization of all local governmental expenditures
- Clarity of local regulations
- Maintaining a high level of neighborhood services
- Enhanced customer service by Village staff/departments
- Communication between government, residents, and businesses
- Role, responsibility, and effectiveness of advisory boards and commissions

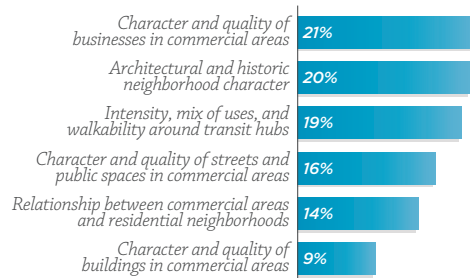
VISIONING KICK-OFF WORKSHOP

In February 2013, a Visioning Kick-Off Workshop was held to provide residents with an opportunity to learn what had been discussed during initial outreach efforts and prioritize the key issues. The results of this workshop served as a foundation for the development of core values, goals and objectives, and benchmarks. The following charts summarize the priorities of the group in attendance during the workshop. These results, in addition to other technical analysis and data, were used by resident-led working groups to draft the vision, goals and objectives for each plan element.

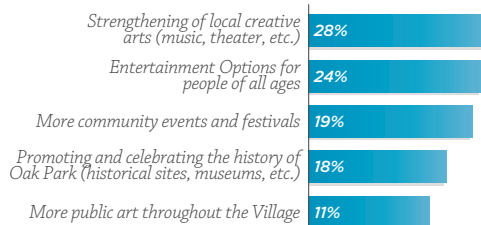
West Cook County Housing Collaborative Priorities for Oak Park



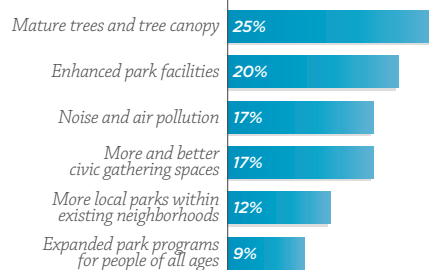
Land Use and Built Environment



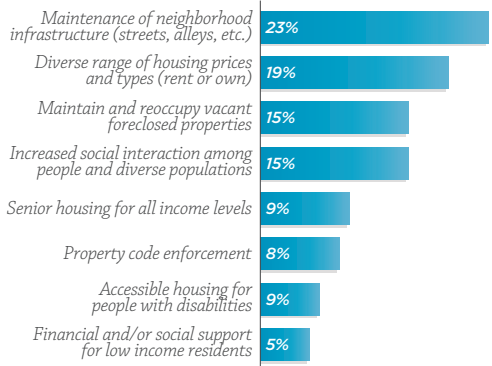
Arts and Culture



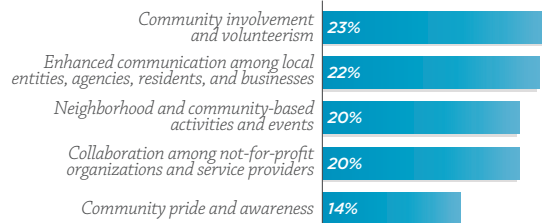
Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Features



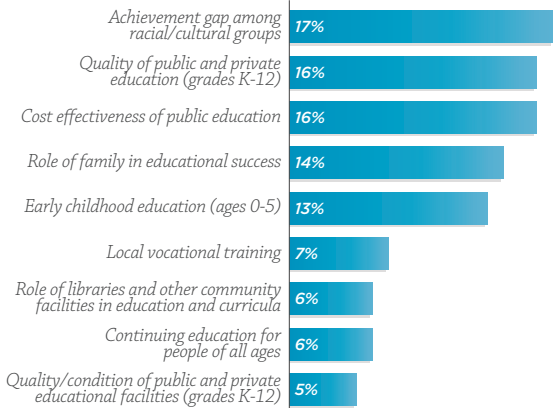
Neighborhoods, Housing, and Diversity



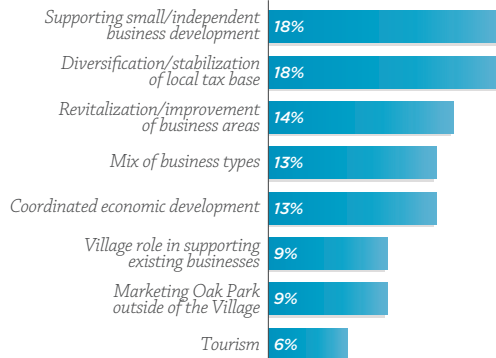
Community Life and Engagement



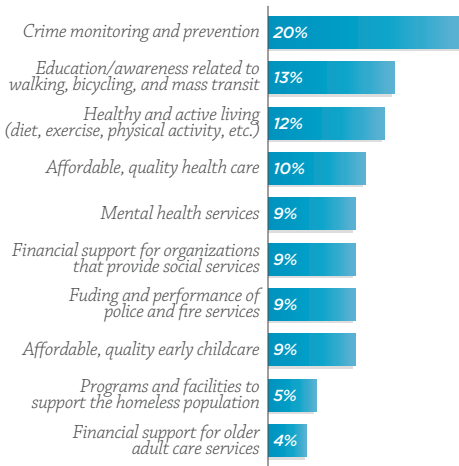
Education



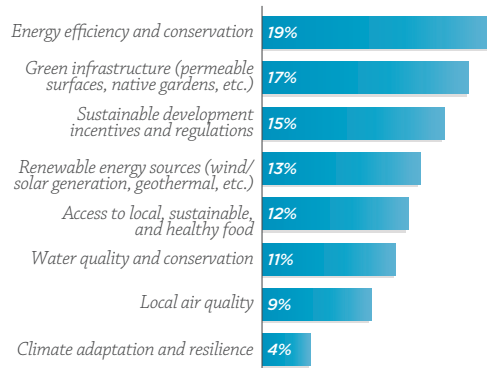
Economic Health and Vitality



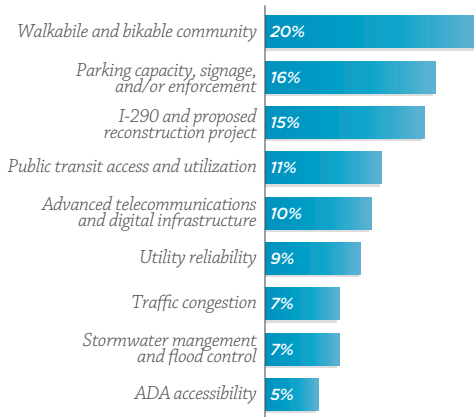
Community Health and Safety



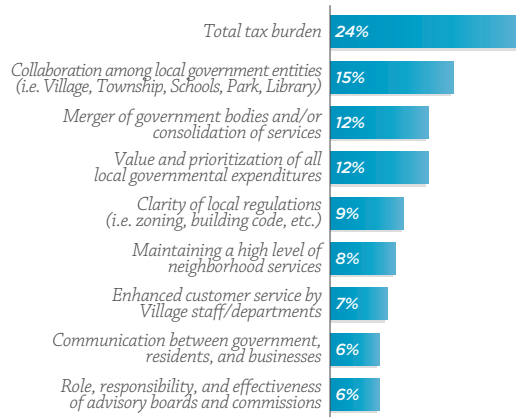
Environmental Sustainability



Transportation, Infrastructure, and Communication Systems



Governmental Excellence





3

Community Profile

The vision for Oak Park must be based upon a clear understanding of where the community is today. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan highlights relevant information and analysis, as well as adopted plans and policies, that will collectively influence how the village develops over time and how local forms of government provide services to Oak Park citizens. The chapter includes a summary of the following:

- Demographic and housing characteristics
- Relevant plans and policies
- Land use and development
- Community facilities
- Parks and open space
- Transportation and mobility

DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

POPULATION

Percent Population by Race/Ethnicity	Oak Park	Cook County
White	67.70%	55.39%
Black	21.65%	24.79%
Asian	4.84%	6.21%
Hispanic	6.79%	23.96%

Source: U.S. Census; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Percent Population by Age	Oak Park	Cook County
0-17 years	24.15%	23.72%
18-29 years	12.95%	18.28%
30 – 39 years	14.66%	14.60%
40 – 49 years	16.04%	13.57%
50 – 64 years	21.54%	17.88%
65+	10.67%	11.94%
Median Age	38.8	35.3

Source: U.S. Census; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Changes in Population 2000 to 2010	Oak Park	Cook County
2000 Population	52,524	5,376,741
2010 Population	51,878	5,194,675
Change in Population	-1.23%	-3.39%

Source: U.S. Census

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Housing	Oak Park	Cook County
Housing Units	24,519	2,175,941
Vacant	7.54%	9.82%
Owner Occupied	55.73%	52.46%
Renter Occupied	36.73%	37.72%
Homeownership rate	63.1%	59.8%
Median Value (owner occupied housing units 2007-2011)	\$381,100	\$256,900

Source: U.S. Census; American Community Survey; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Changes in Housing 2000 to 2010	Oak Park	Cook County
2000 Housing Units	23,723	2,096,121
2010 Housing Units	24,519	2,180,359
Change in Housing Units	3.36%	4.02%

Source: U.S. Census; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Percentage of Housing by Year Built	Oak Park	Cook County
2005 or later	1.7%	2.8%
2000 to 2004	1.7%	4.4%
1990 to 1999	1.9%	5.7%
1980 to 1989	3.1%	6.7%
1970 to 1979	6.1%	11.9%
1960 to 1969	6.8%	13.1%
1950 to 1959	6.8%	16.0%
1940 to 1949	6.4%	8.2%
Prior to 1940	65.5%	31.2%

Source U.S. Census

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Owner-Occupied Housing Stock Affordable at 30% of Income (2009)	Owner Units							
	<i><15k</i>	<i>15k to 35k</i>	<i>35k to 50k</i>	<i>50k to 75k</i>	<i>75k to 100k</i>	<i>100k to 150k</i>	<i>150k+</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of units	166	1,834	1,560	2,638	5,687	1,463	731	14,078
Households at Income Level (2009)	357	842	1,192	2,138	1,943	3,467	4,139	14,078
Projected Households at Income Level (2030)	473	1,145	1,414	2,462	2,061	3,521	3,917	14,993

*30% is generally recognized as an acceptable percentage of income dedicated to housing cost

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

Rental Housing Stock Affordable at 30% of Income (2009)	Rental Units							
	<i><15k</i>	<i>15k to 35k</i>	<i>35k to 50k</i>	<i>50k to 75k</i>	<i>75k to 100k</i>	<i>100k to 150k</i>	<i>150k+</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number of units	700	3,133	2,540	1,560	290	42	25	8,290
Households at Income Level (2009)	1,279	2,298	1,688	1,575	686	594	170	8,290
Projected Households at Income Level (2030)	1,467	2,612	1,739	1,520	559	526	125	8,548

*30% is generally recognized as an acceptable percentage of income dedicated to housing cost

Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

Total Rent as a percentage of household Income	Oak Park	Cook County
Less than 20%	23.3%	23.7%
20% to 24.9%	12.5%	12.4%
25% to 29.9%	13.9%	11.0%
30% to 34.9%	12.3%	8.9%
35% to 42.4%	37.9%	44.0%

Source: U.S. Census

Home ownership cost as a percentage of Household Income	Oak Park	Cook County
Less than 20%	30.8%	26.0%
20% to 24.9%	16.9%	14.3%
25% to 29.9%	14.0%	12.7%
30% to 34.9%	9.9%	9.7%
35% or more	28.3%	37.3%

Source: U.S. Census

EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS

Where Oak Park Residents Work

Chicago	51.5%
Oak Park	10.0%
Maywood	1.3%
River Forest	1.3%
Berwyn	0.9%
Other Cook Co. Communities	17.2%
Du Page Co.	9.8%
Other	7.6%

Source U.S. Census

Where Oak Park Workers Live

Chicago	24.2%
Oak Park	15.5%
Berwyn	2.7%
River Forest	2.5%
Forest Park	2.1%
Other Cook Co. Communities	29.5%
Du Page Co.	8.9%
Other	14.6%

Source U.S. Census

Unemployment Rate	2012	2011	2010
Oak Park	6.20%	6.60%	6.20%
Cook County	8.90%	9.70%	9.50%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - *End of year percentages

Disadvantaged Business Enterprises	Oak Park	Cook County
African American Owned	12.1%	16.4%
Hispanic Owned	2.6%	7.2%
Women Owned	32.8%	32.3%

Source: U.S. Census - *Factored as % of total businesses

RELEVANT PLANS AND POLICIES

This section includes a summary of adopted plans and policies that may influence the growth of Oak Park as well as the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. They include:

- Previous planning documents
- Development regulations and overlay districts
- Other districts that may influence development (i.e. TIF, SSA, and historic districts)



ADOPTED PLANS AND POLICIES

<i>Plan or Policy</i>	<i>Date Drafted/ Adopted</i>	<i>Relevant Themes</i>
Village of Oak Park 1990 Comprehensive Plan	1990	Makes recommendations on housing, transportation and parking, public facilities and services, economic development, and citizen participation.
North Avenue Study	1996	Includes recommendations on zoning, parking, parcel assembly, partnerships, and tax increment financing.
Historic Preservation Architectural Review Guideline	1999	Promotes the historic preservation in order to maintain the village's character, and are required to be followed for all Oak Park landmarks and recommended to be followed for other buildings in historic districts.
UIC Planning Together Character Study	2003	Created character plans for the Harrison Street and Oak Park Avenue Commercial Districts.
Oak Park Greater Downtown Tax Increment Financing Redevelopment Project and Plan	2005	Presents goals and objectives of the downtown TIF district, including economic development, increase in business success, improved streets and public infrastructure, and potential new development sites and parking areas.
Greater Downtown Master Plan	2005	Includes recommendations for revitalizing retail businesses, reducing traffic congestion, improving transit use, providing additional open space, and enhancing the pedestrian environment.
Greater Downtown Development Guidelines	2005	Directs the design of a future development in the downtown area based on character, pedestrian emphasis, architecture, lighting, signs, and sustainability.
A Plan for the Redevelopment of Roosevelt Road	2005	Seeks to improve multi-modal transportation accessibility, create an identity that will attract visitors and businesses, and encourage appropriate development.
Chicago Avenue Neighborhood Plan	2006	Seeks to enhance the livability, appeal, and economic health of the area through redevelopment, a mix of uses, creating design guidelines, and identifying market opportunities for new retail developments.
UIC Sustainable Planning Standards	2006	Recommends environmental sustainability strategies and standards for site planning, water use, energy efficiency, air quality improvement, and materials.
Madison Street Corridor Plan	2006	Sets forth the guiding vision for the corridor as a more accessible and regional place to live, work, and play.
Lake Street Neighborhood Plan	2007	Makes recommendations related to land use, transportation and parking, and specific block-by-block issues.
Oak Park Arts District Urban Design Plan	2007	Recommends physical improvements along the Harrison Street corridor including decorative pedestrian lighting, art pockets, murals, gateways, and planters.
Chicago/Harlem Neighborhood Plan	2008	Establishes a vision for the district that will highlight its image and further its marketability; focused on enhancing the district's image while improving existing businesses and strategically attracting high quality retail to supplement the existing ones.
Madison Street and Oak Park Avenue Development Study	2008	Evaluates multiple design concepts for redeveloping the intersection of Madison Street and Oak Park Avenue.
Park District of Oak Park Capital Improvement Plan 2011-2015	2010	Five-year projection of the physical improvements needed for the district.
Village-wide Strategic Historic Preservation Final Plan	2010	Sets forth historic preservation strategies, including education, incentives, regulatory review process, and continuing to assist national preservation issues.
Oak Park River Forest Sustainability Plan	2011	Establishes principles to improve urban ecology, including education, energy efficiency, reduction and conservation, transportation, development, and open space and ecosystems.
Oak Park-River Forest Area Chamber of Commerce 2011 Strategic Plan	2011	Guides the organization's vision as a business development resource for the community.



Village of Oak Park Past Plans & Studies

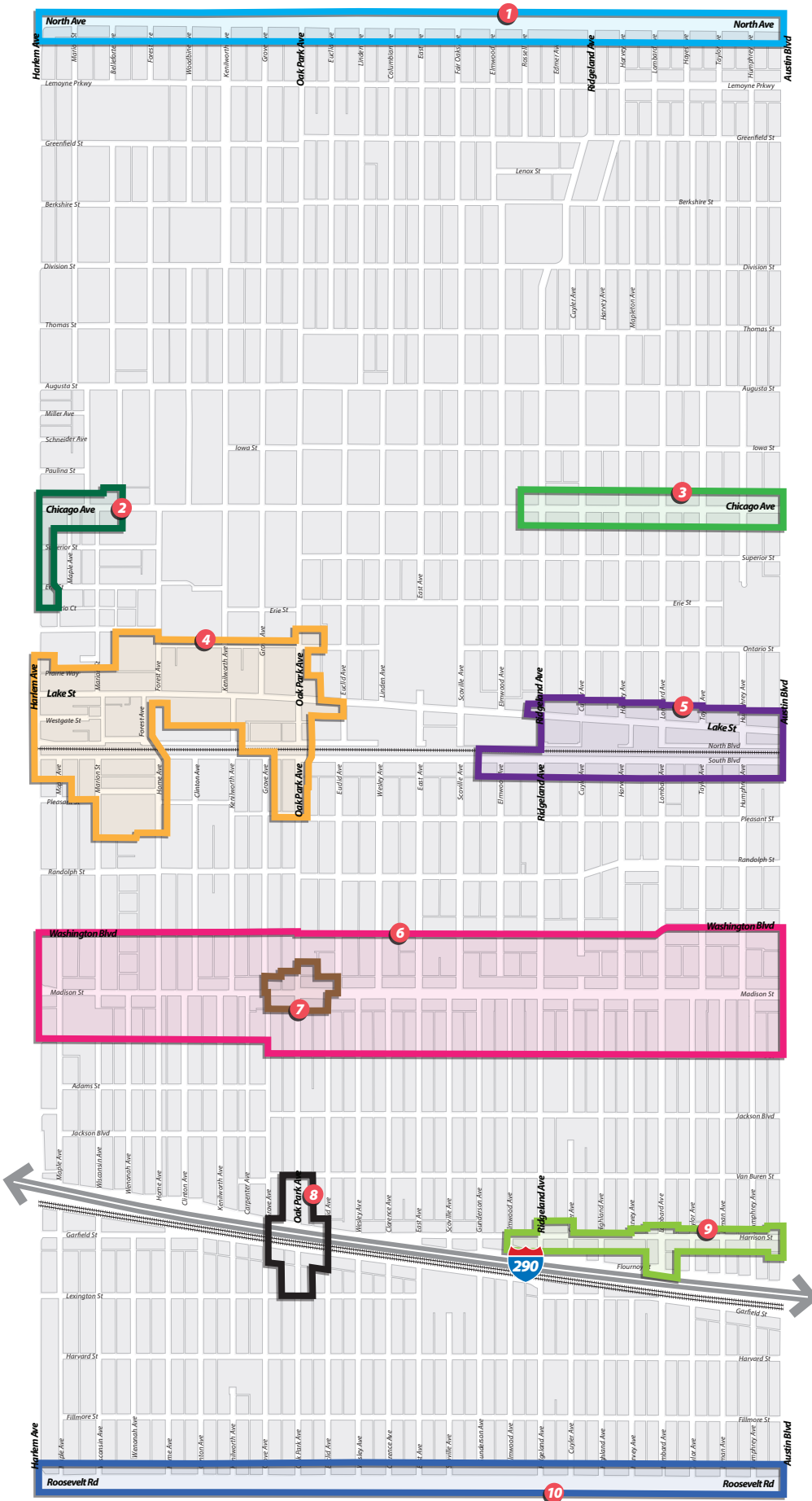
The Comprehensive Plan serves as a broad policy guide for Village government and should be complemented by plans and policies already adopted by Village government. These plans and policies often provide more detail related to land use and development, transportation, economic development, and other important technical areas.

Past Plan Study Areas

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 North Avenue Study (1996) | 7 Madison Street and Oak Park Avenue Development Study (2005) |
| 2 Chicago/Harlem Avenue District Neighborhood Plan (2008) | 8 Oak Park Avenue/Ike Retail Business District Character Plan |
| 3 Chicago Avenue Neighborhood Study (2006) | 9 UIC Planning Together Plan (2003) & Oak Park Arts District Urban Design Plan (2007) |
| 4 Downtown Master Plan (2005) | 10 A Plan for the Redevelopment of Roosevelt Road (2005) |
| 5 Lake Street Neighborhood Plan (2007) | |
| 6 Madison Street Corridor Plan (2006) | |

Several past plans apply to the entire Village and are not depicted on this map. They include:

- Village of Oak Park Comprehensive Plan (1990)
- Sustainable Planning Standards for Oak Park (2006)
- Village-wide Strategic Historic Preservation Plan
- Historic Preservation Architectural Review Guidelines (1999)
- Oak Park River Forest Sustainability Plan
- Oak Park-River Forest Area Chamber of Commerce 2011 Strategic Plan (2011)
- Park District of Oak Park Capital Improvement Plan 2011-2015 (2010)



DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS AND OVERLAY DISTRICTS

District	Nature of Permitted Uses	Min. Lot Area (sf)	Max. Height (ft)
Residential Districts			
R-1 Single Family District	Estate-type single family dwellings	10,000	30
R-2 Single Family District	Single family dwellings on large lots	6,200	30
R-3 Single Family District	Single family dwellings on moderate-sized lots	5,000	30
R-4 Single Family District	Single family dwellings on small, urban-sized lots	3,500	30
R-5 Two-Family District	Same as R-4, plus two-family dwellings	3,500	35
R-6 Multiple-Family District	Small apartment buildings or townhomes of low density	3,500	35
R-7 Multiple-Family District	Multiple attached dwelling units with moderate density	3,500	45

Commercial Districts			
B-1/B-2 General Business District	Office, service, and retail in certain areas	3,000+ depending on number of units and combination of uses	45'
B-3 Central Business District	A concentrated mix of retail, office, and service uses	3,000+ depending on number of units and combination of uses	60
B-4 Downtown Business District	Highest intensity of retail, office, and service uses	3,000+ depending on number of units and combination of uses	125
C Commercial District	Commercial uses that produce a high volume of vehicular traffic	3,000+ depending on number of units and combination of uses	50

Hospital District			
H Hospital District	Major health care facilities	400 /bed; 7,000	125

District	Purpose
Overlay Districts	
Transit Retail Related Overlay District	Protect existing retail uses and encourage new retail development on the ground floor of buildings in areas adjacent to or close to mass transit stations
Perimeter Overlay District	Improve the visual quality of the Village's development along boundary corridor, and protect residential areas from commercial development on visible streets
Downtown Lake Street Building Height and Massing Overlay District	Protect the unique character of the existing village streetscape and prevent disruptive/incompatible buildings
Historic Preservation Districts and Landmarks	Protect historic buildings and maintain the character of historic areas in the Village
Madison Street Overlay District	Ensure that development is consistent with the Madison Street Corridor Plan
Marion Street Overlay District	Maintain the unique and representative character of the existing streetscape and prevent disruptive/incompatible buildings
Roosevelt Road Form-Based Zoning Overlay District	Intended to promote a pedestrian-oriented development pattern along Roosevelt Road while also accommodating high volumes of vehicular traffic and associated parking



Village of Oak Park Current Zoning

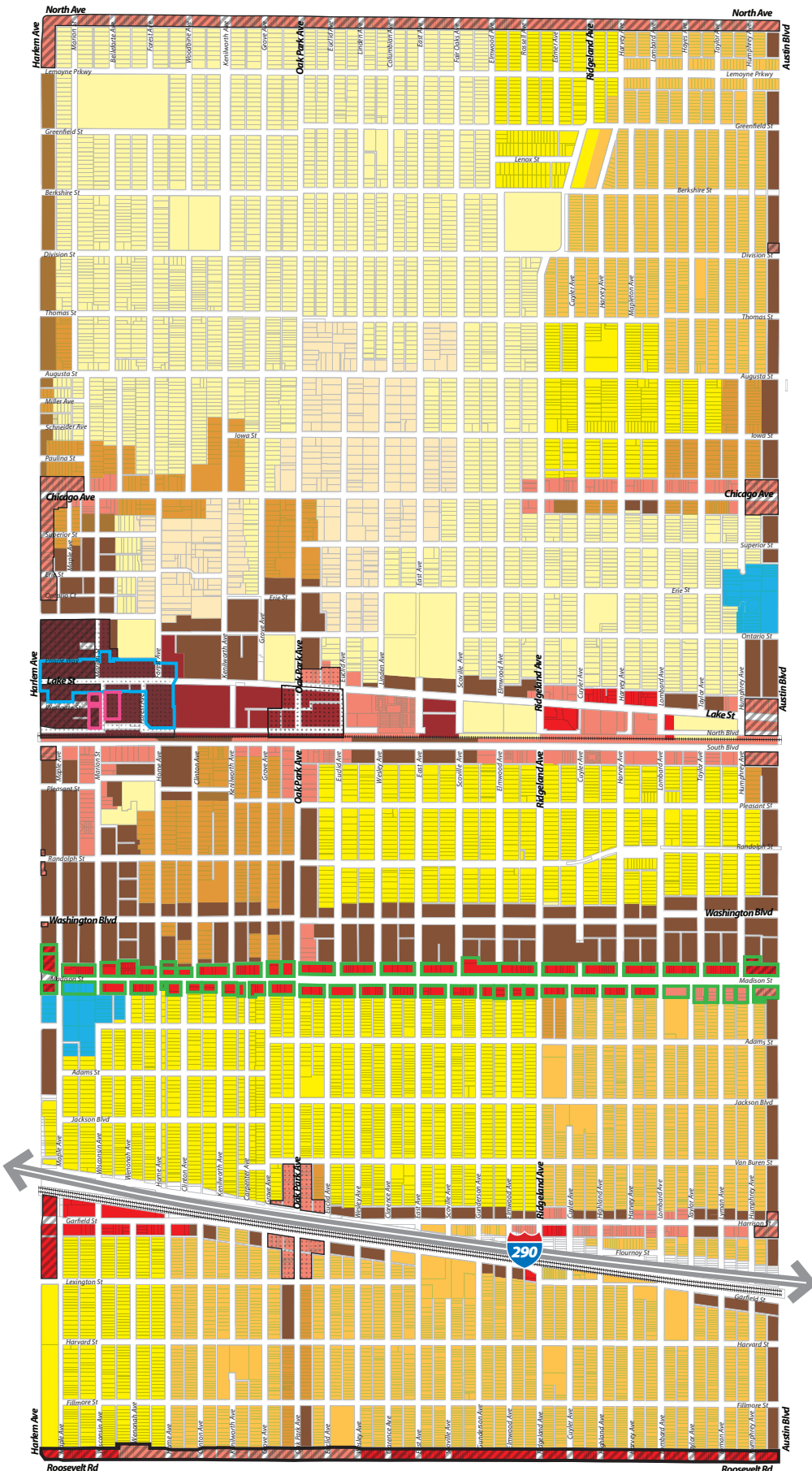
The Village's zoning ordinance is the official rules and regulations that dictate development. The standards for each district, as well as the boundaries, should be reviewed to ensure they are aligned with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted policies.

Zoning Districts

- R-1 Single-Family District
- R-2 Single Family District
- R-3 Single Family District
- R-4 Single Family District
- R-5 Two-Family District
- R-6 Multiple Family District
- R-7 Multiple Family District
- B-1/B-2 General Business District
- B-3 Central Business District
- B-4 Downtown Business District
- C Commercial District
- H Hospital District

Overlay Districts

- Perimeter Overlay District
- Transit Retail Related Overlay District
- Downtown Lake Street Building Height and Massing Overlay District
- Marion Street Overlay District
- Madison Street Overlay District
- Roosevelt Road Form Based Overlay District





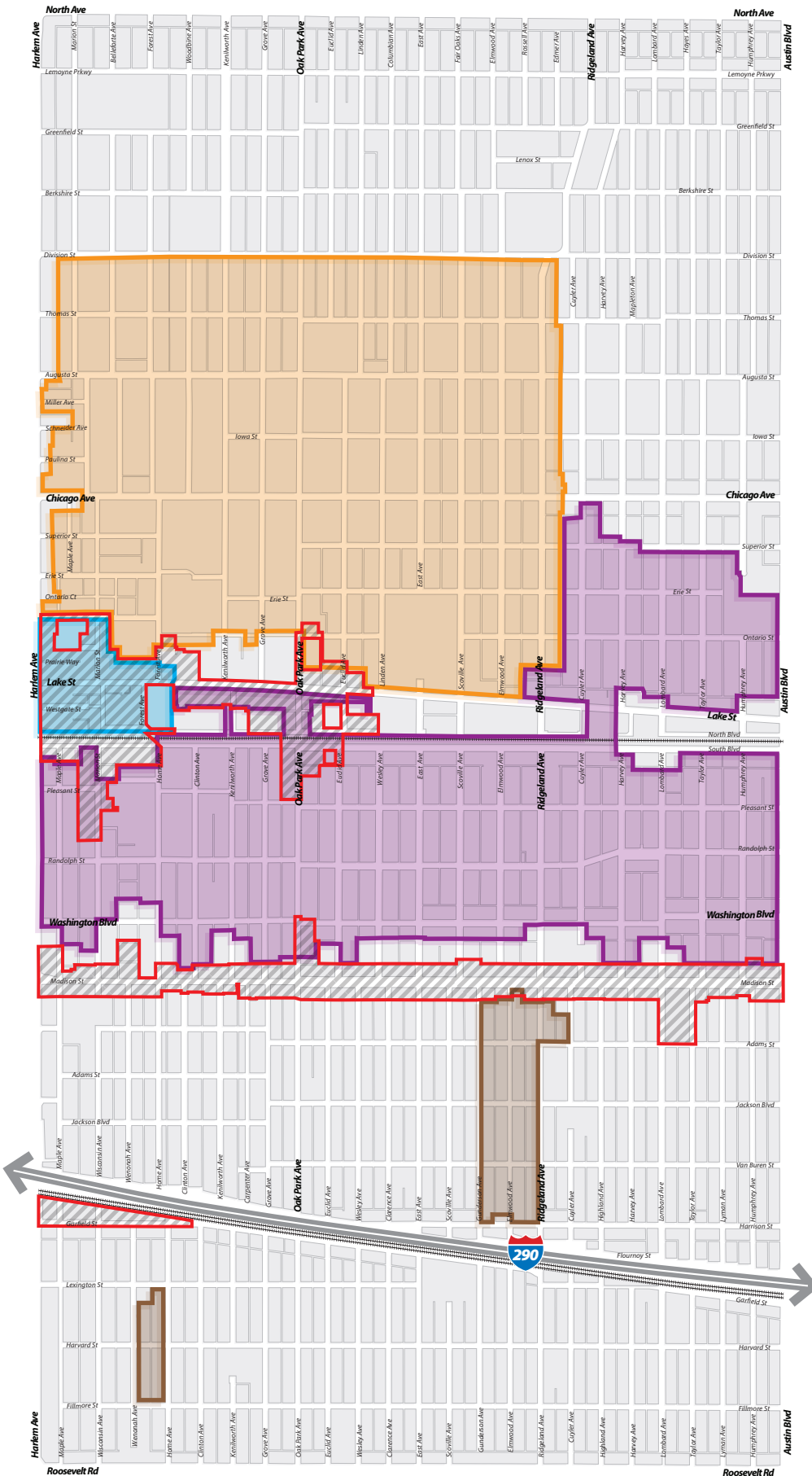


Village of Oak Park Historic Districts, TIF's, & SSA's

The Village of Oak Park uses a variety of special districts to help implement important policies. Three historic districts aim to preserve the built character of certain portions of the community, while Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts and Special Service Areas (SSA's) are used to support the economic vitality, character, and attractiveness of several commercial districts.

Legend

-  Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District
-  Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District
-  Gunderson Historic District
-  Special Service Area #1
-  Tax Increment Finance Districts



COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

This section includes information about various functional aspects of the Oak Park community, including:

- Land Use and Development
- Community Facilities
- Parks and Open Space
- Transportation and Mobility



LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Oak Park's land use pattern is well-defined and reflective of its traditional development character. The majority of the community is made up of neighborhoods that are predominantly single-family. These neighborhoods surround local schools, churches, and parks. The community's denser housing surrounds the downtown and occupies the area between Washington Street and Madison Street.

Downtown is located along the western edge of the village, while local commercial districts are located throughout the community. North Avenue, Madison Street, and Roosevelt Road are the primary auto-oriented commercial corridors. Oak Park's limited industrial activity is located at Harlem Avenue and Garfield Street.

Land Use Category	# of Parcels	% of Total Parcels	Area (acres)	% of Total Area
Residential				
Single-Family (Detached)	10646	79.0%	1455.7	68.9%
Single-Family (Attached)	702	5.2%	36.6	1.7%
Multi-Family	733	5.4%	181.6	8.6%
<i>Residential Total</i>	12081	89.7%	1673.9	79.2%
Commercial/Mixed-Use				
Commercial	572	4.2%	96.1	4.5%
Mixed-Use	234	1.7%	37.9	1.8%
<i>Commercial/Mixed-Use Total</i>	806	6.0%	134.1	6.3%
Industrial				
Light Industrial	9	0.1%	0.9	0.0%
Heavy Industrial	3	0.0%	3.1	0.1%
<i>Industrial Total</i>	12	0.1%	3.9	0.2%
Community Facilities				
Community Uses	50	0.4%	19.4	0.9%
Schools	61	0.5%	68.4	3.2%
Parks	36	0.3%	78.4	3.7%
Religious Uses	97	0.7%	27.8	1.3%
Medical Uses	82	0.6%	20.1	1.0%
Public Parking	66	0.5%	13.2	0.6%
<i>Community Facilities Total</i>	392	2.9%	227.3	10.8%
Other				
Right-of-Way	133	1.0%	68.6	3.2%
Utility	20	0.1%	2.1	0.1%
Vacant	28	0.2%	3.6	0.2%
<i>Other Total</i>	181	1.3%	74.3	3.5%
Overall Total	13472	100.0%	2113.5	100.0%

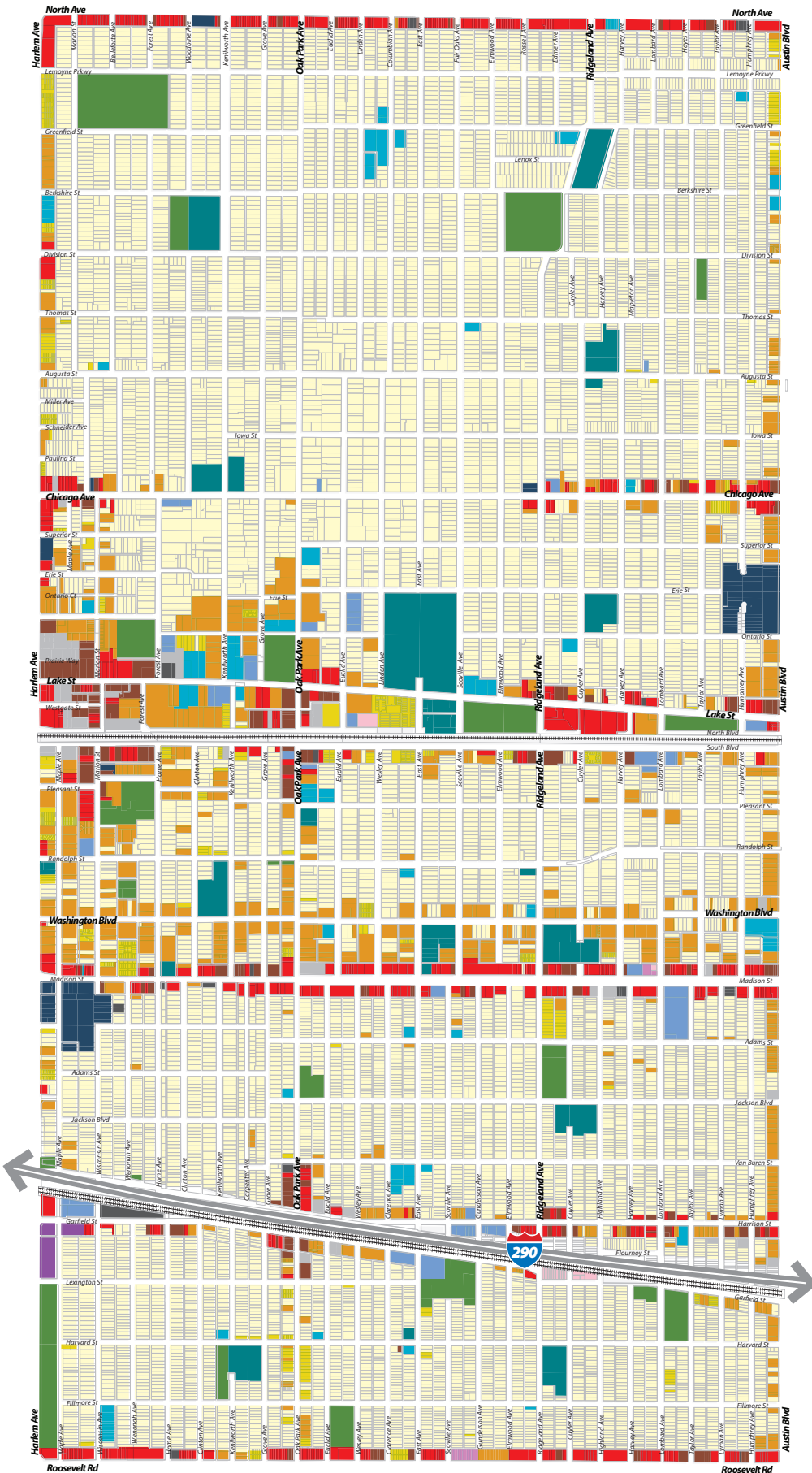


Village of Oak Park Existing Land Use Inventory

Oak Park is a built-out community with a well-established land use pattern. Generally, the community is a mosaic of diverse neighborhoods centered around traditional commercial districts. However, several corridors have evolved to reflect a more auto-oriented environment. Throughout Oak Park, parks, schools, religious institutions, and other public uses provide access to local community services.

Land Use Designations

- Single Family
- Single Family Attached
- Multi-family
- Commercial
- Mixed-use
- Community Facility
- School
- Medical
- Place of Worship
- Public Park / Open Space
- Light Industrial
- Industrial
- Utility
- Parking
- Vacant



COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Oak Park citizens are served by a variety of community facility providers. Village government includes administrative services, parking, public works, and police and fire services. District 97 and District 200 are the primary education providers, and are complemented by several local private schools. The Library District operates three facilities, including its flagship library in Downtown Oak Park. Oak Park Township provides a variety of services for youth, seniors, and those in need of mental health or disability-related assistance.

Schools

- Facilities: 11 public schools, 12 private schools
- Planned improvements: four playground updates; potential Administration Building renovation
- Enrollment: 5,900 public students in District 97; 3,287 students in OP/RF High

Public Library

- Collection: 323,170 items
- Total visits: 768,638
- Planned improvements: renovation of Main Library lobby; renovation of the Dole branch w/ park district
- Three branches:
 - Main Library
 - Maze Branch
 - Dole Branch

Village Government

- Facilities: 10
- Fleet of over 300 vehicles

Police/Fire

- Facilities: 3 fires stations
- Personnel: 65 sworn OPFD personnel; 111 OPPD officers in 2010
- Calls: 5,902 FD calls in 2009 (including EMS); 1,910 PD calls in 2010 (1,725 property & 192 violent)

Hospitals

- Facilities: West Suburban Medical Center; Rush Oak Park Hospital
- Beds: 222 in WSMC; 177 in ROPH

Oak Park Township

- Committees: Community Mental Health Board, Senior Services Committee, and Youth Services Committee
- Assistance services: general assistance, mental health, persons with disabilities, health and food referrals
- Senior services: transportation, meal programs, case management, support programs
- Youth services: intervention, FACE-IT, scholarships, job readiness, gang and drug task force, T.I.M.E. program, volunteering
- Walk-in services: RTA transit permits, taxi cab coupons, medical equipment lending, voter registration, notary public, disables person's parking placard

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND ENVIRONMENT

Parks and open spaces are provided primarily by the Park District of Oak Park, though the Village and local school districts maintain facilities that are utilized for local parks and recreation programming.

Oak Park's water is purchased from the City of Chicago and serves almost 12,500 customers.

Parks

- 13 parks, totaling 80 acres
- Plans: renovations, new gymnastic/recreation center
- Needs: multipurpose fields
- 3,000 recreation programs and special events annually, including Oaktoberfest, Wright Plus, Halloween Parade, Holiday Lights, Winterfest, Art on Harrison/What's Blooming on Harrison

Energy

- Oak Park residents import about 161M kWh (2008) per year of electricity from ComEd at a cost of \$21.9M. Residents also import over 26.4M (2008) therms per year from Nicor at a cost of \$30.3M. In 2008, this resulted in over 77,000 lbs. of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Water & Sewer

- Purchased directly from the City of Chicago (\$2.80/1,000 gallons, for a total cost of \$3M/year)
- Water is received via three water mains and stored in four underground reservoirs with a combined capacity of 12.5M gallons, each linked to a pumping station
- Water is pumped through 105 miles of 6"-16" diameter water mains
- Serves about 12,500 water billing customers
- 1,235 fire hydrants
- The village currently has 116 miles of sewer mains

TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY

Transit

Oak Park is served by all three metropolitan Chicago transit agencies; Metra, Pace, and the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). The Metra Union Pacific-West line and CTA Green and Blue Lines provide direct connections to Chicago's Loop. Pace and CTA bus routes enhance regional and local transit mobility.

Roadways

Oak Park has a traditional grid of roadways that includes arterials, collectors, and local streets. The community is bisected by the I-290 Eisenhower Corridor, which provides regional mobility to the western suburbs and Downtown Chicago. There are some instances of cul-de-sacs and one-way streets intended to manage access and mobility in some neighborhoods.

Route	Frequency	Days of Operation
Pace Suburban Bus Service		
305 Cicero-River Forest	30 min. Weekdays, 60 min. Saturdays & Sundays	Daily Service
307 Harlem Avenue	15-30 min. Weekdays, Saturdays, 30-60 min. Sundays	Daily Service
309 Lake Street	15-30 min. Weekdays, 60 min. Saturdays and Sundays	Daily Service
311 Oak Park Avenue	10-40 min. Weekdays, 30-45min. Saturdays, 60 min. Sundays	Daily Service
313 St. Charles Road	15-30 min. Weekdays, 60 min. Saturdays and Sundays	Daily Service
315 Austin-Ridgeland	30-45 min. Weekdays and Saturdays	Monday-Saturday
318 West North Avenue	30 min. Weekdays, 60 min. Saturdays, 60 min. Sundays (limited service)	Daily Service
320 Madison Street	30 min. Weekdays	Weekdays
391 Near West Suburbs/UPS		
393 Melrose Park/Addison UPS		Night Time Only
757 Northwest Connection	30 min. Weekdays	Weekday Service Only

CTA Bus Service		
Route 72 North	10-20 minutes	Daily Service
Route 86 Narragansett/Ridgeland	10-20 minutes, Every 30 min. after 7:30	Weekday Service Only
Route 91 Austin	10-20 minutes	Daily Service
Route N20/20 Madison	10-20 minutes	Daily Service
Route 12 Roosevelt	10-20 minutes	Daily Service
Route 66 Chicago	10-20 minutes	Daily Service
Route 70 Division	10-20 minutes	Daily Service
Route Jackson	10-20 minutes	Daily Service

Metra Commuter Rail		
Metra Union Pacific-West	15-60 min. Weekdays, 60-120 min. Weekends	Daily Service

CTA Rail Service		
CTA Blue Line	Every 15 minutes	Daily Service
CTA Green Line	Every 15 minutes	Daily Service



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the Comprehensive Plan includes eleven chapters with recommendations that were developed through direct input from residents, Village staff, and key community stakeholders. The eleven chapters include:

Chapter 4. Land Use and Built Environment Plan

Chapter 5. Arts and Culture

Chapter 6. Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Features

Chapter 7. Neighborhoods, Housing, and Diversity

Chapter 8. Education

Chapter 9. Community Health and Safety

Chapter 10. Transportation, Infrastructure, and Communication Systems

Chapter 11. Community Life and Engagement

Chapter 12. Economic Health and Vitality

Chapter 13. Environmental Sustainability

Chapter 14. Governmental Excellence

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations included in the following eleven chapters were developed through direct engagement of Oak Park residents, Village staff, and input from key stakeholders and implementation partners. Each chapter is designed to address a specific topic, though many, if not all, of the topics relate to and impact one another. As a result, the Comprehensive Plan should be referenced as a whole when making decisions related to policies, capital improvements, or strategic partnerships. This will minimize the likelihood that a proposed action aimed at addressing a specific issue or concern will not unknowingly and adversely impact another aspect of the community.

CHAPTER CONTENTS

Each of the chapters in this section includes a series of items that were drafted by resident working groups and aim to articulate a desired outcome and how the community can attain it. These items include:

- **Statement of Importance.** The Statement of Importance provides the rationale or basis for how each topic relates to the values of the Oak Park community. It is a narrative that provides the context for subsequent goals and objectives.
- **Vision Statement.** The Vision Statement establishes a desired end to be attained through the implementation of subsequent goals and objectives. Each Vision Statement is written as a retrospective narrative, describing what each aspect of Oak Park is like in the year 2030.
- **Goals and Objectives.** The Goals and Objectives in each chapter establish a series of recommendations to be implemented by Village Government in collaboration with other local partners. The narrative paragraphs provide context for each objective, describe specific actions to be taken, and identify potential implementation partners.
- **Metrics and Trends.** The metrics and trends proposed for each goal aim to provide Village government with a way of measuring success in implementing the Comprehensive Plan over time. The metrics are designed to utilize easily available data to measure general trends that may guide future Comprehensive Plan updates. (It should be noted that some metrics may be redundant among several chapters if they are appropriate for multiple goals.)
- **Summary Matrix.** The end of each chapter includes a Summary Matrix that includes each goal, objective, and metrics. The matrix also identifies the type of action and key implementation partners for each goal. This provides a direct link to Chapter 15: Plan Implementation and specific recommendations on how the Oak Park community can achieve its collective vision.



4

Land Use & Built Environment

Oak Park's land use pattern and built form provide the structure in which residents, businesses, and visitors function. The historical development of the community has granted today's citizens with a mosaic of strong neighborhoods and thriving commercial districts. Over time, emerging factors, such as the construction of the Eisenhower Expressway, increased reliance on the automobile, and the nature of development in surrounding communities, have resulted in changes in local land use and development. However, Village government has proactively tried to address local development through the adoption of neighborhood and commercial area plans that balance the overall development pattern in Oak Park, recognize and build upon the unique local character of a given area, and work in conjunction with other values related to fair housing, urban sustainability, historic preservation, etc.

This chapter presents a series of goals, objectives, and policies aimed at strengthening the built fabric of the community and ensuring it can balance the village's history with contemporary trends. Land use and the built environment are inherently linked to many other aspects of the Comprehensive Plan, including quality housing that supports diversity, economic vitality, transportation and mobility, open space, and sustainability.

How we direct land use and the built form will guide the development and use of infill opportunity sites within established areas and help to reshape and improve the village's edges along the shared borders of our neighboring communities.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Land is a limited resource and how we use it reflects our community values and priorities. Oak Park's heritage and its historically and architecturally significant neighborhoods and buildings are core components of the community that help define who we are and how we should use our land in the future. To expand Oak Park as a destination for people of all walks of life, we must provide a desirable and accessible mix of uses that provides a range of housing, employment, shopping, recreation, entertainment, open space, and cultural amenities. How we direct land use and the built form will guide the development and use of infill opportunity sites within established areas and help to reshape and improve the village's edges along the shared borders of our neighboring communities.

It is also important that land use and development be appropriately used to strengthen our local economy –providing a diverse range of jobs, goods, services, and the tax revenue necessary to maintain high quality community facilities and services. In addition, land use and the built environment must be addressed in a manner that strengthens the sense of place for the village as a whole, as well as all of its unique geographic areas. This must include strengthening the neighborhoods, maintaining the vibrancy of the commercial areas, improving our parks and open spaces, and enhancing a community that is safe, attractive, accessible, and sustainable.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement describes Land Use and Built Environment as it exists in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park's land use pattern and built environment contribute significantly to the vibrancy and attractiveness of the community. The close proximity between housing, shopping, and jobs fosters a walkable environment with convenient access to everyday needs. New infill development exhibits quality architecture and has been context sensitive. This has served to transform vacant and underutilized properties, creating more intact and sustainable neighborhoods, corridors, and commercial districts.

Residential areas continue to be the foundation of a healthy and vibrant Oak Park. Local architecture, tree-lined streets, and strong bicycle and pedestrian networks accommodate new and life-long residents at all stages of life. Throughout the village, local parks and integrated open spaces provide easy access to recreation and the natural environment.

Oak Park's commercial areas are thriving and walkable, providing a range of businesses offering a vibrant mix of desired goods and services for residents of Oak Park and beyond. New development is both innovative and forward thinking, respectful of the existing character, and older buildings of importance have been rehabilitated and adaptively reused wherever possible. The commercial areas contribute to a strong local tax base and economic engine, providing the revenue necessary to fund public services and facilities. Areas near transit stations have been rejuvenated through increased density and a more intense mix of commercial uses.

Oak Park has worked closely with neighboring communities to ensure that the village's edges remain strong and attractive. Over time the village has strengthened the urban fabric and edges of the community creating a more cohesive Oak Park. Better maintenance, concentrated commercial nodes, and enhanced multi-jurisdictional collaboration have stabilized the corridors, which now reflect the character of Oak Park and our neighboring communities.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 4.1. STRENGTHEN AND PROTECT THE CHARACTER, INTEGRITY, AND COHESION OF THE VILLAGE AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS.

Quality neighborhoods are the foundation of Oak Park. They provide attractive housing, foster social interaction, and establish the unique local character in each portion of the village. The following recommendations aim to strengthen and preserve Oak Park's neighborhoods as the primary building block of the community.

Establishing and Strengthening Focal Points

Objective 4.1.1. Establish and strengthen focal points, such as schools, parks, commercial districts, and other community gathering spaces, within the village's neighborhoods.

Strong focal points are a common characteristic of healthy neighborhoods and communities, providing gathering places and fostering interaction among neighbors and visitors. Oak Park's neighborhoods are rich with community facilities, including schools and parks, in addition to shopping areas and religious institutions, all of which have the potential to anchor Oak Park's neighborhoods. In many neighborhoods, such amenities already function as focal points, while they may be lacking in other neighborhoods. Working with its community partners and neighborhood groups, Village government could identify and strengthen focal points to reinforce the social fabric of the community. This can be achieved by enhancing these areas with plazas and pavilions, pocket parks, and other flexible spaces, promoting community gatherings and hosting special events throughout the year.

Strengthening the Urban Fabric

Objective 4.1.2. Strengthen the community's urban fabric through context-sensitive infill development that is complementary to the scale and character of surrounding residential neighborhoods.

While Oak Park is a mature community that is nearly built out, there are opportunities for infill development in residential and commercial areas. In addition to vacant parcels, there are buildings and sites in some areas suffering from disinvestment and functional obsolescence, providing excellent opportunities for redevelopment. If properly managed, designed, and constructed, new investment and reinvestment can help strengthen the fabric and vitality of the neighborhoods. Infill development should be sensitive to the established character, scale, architecture, rhythm, and overall context of each site. Village government can work with local architects and Commissions to inventory typical development types and develop a pattern book that illustrates the defining characteristics of blocks, neighborhoods, and commercial districts. This will provide a resource to guide developers and builders undertaking infill development projects, providing assurance to residents that the existing character of their neighborhood is not compromised.



Working with our Neighbors

Objective 4.1.3. Work cooperatively with neighboring communities to ensure that the village's edges remain strong and attractive.

Oak Park is an inner-ring suburb of the City of Chicago, with fully developed communities on each of its borders. Busy arterial streets that accommodate both local and regional traffic separate Oak Park from its neighbors on all sides. North Avenue and Austin Boulevard separate Oak Park from the City of Chicago; Roosevelt Road separates Oak Park from the City of Berwyn and Town of Cicero; and Harlem Avenue separates Oak Park from River Forest and Forest Park. As heavily trafficked corridors, they play an important role in shaping perceptions of Oak Park. However, Village government can only control one side of each corridor. Working with its neighboring communities, Village government may establish common goals and objectives for each of these corridors, and use development regulations, design guidelines, incentives, and other tools to ensure that these important community edges remain strong and vibrant.

Creating Transitions Between Uses

Objective 4.1.4. Ensure that residential areas have adequate buffering and/or screening from incompatible adjacent land uses.

The Land Use Plan identifies a land use arrangement that seeks to minimize land use conflicts, promoting appropriate buffers between residential areas and incompatible uses. In some instances; however, these land use arrangements are already well established. Village government should review and amend zoning regulations as necessary to ensure that appropriate buffers and screening are provided that both preserve residential areas and allow for on-going non-residential activities to thrive.

Preserving the Built Environment

Objective 4.1.5. Preserve a sound built environment through appropriate code enforcement efforts and preventative maintenance programs.

Despite the on-going efforts of municipal staff and enforcement officers, there are properties in the village that are not up to minimum standards. As a result, the appearance and image of the community and its neighborhoods are impacted, and quality of life and property values threatened. Village government could be proactive about issuing citations and following up with property owners whose lots and structures are compromising the quality of the surrounding neighborhood. Village government should continue to budget for and support staff in undertaking consistent and effective code enforcement throughout the community with the ultimate goal of improvements that address maintenance issues. This can be supported through programs and grants that aim to prevent or mitigate poor performance, such as CDBG funding, homeowner education, reverse mortgages, education regarding energy efficiency programs, and assistance in lawn maintenance for senior citizens.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the community's success in maintaining the character and integrity of its neighborhoods.

Metric: Resident perception related to community character

Desired Trend: Increase in positive perception.

Potential Data Resource: Regular community survey

Metric: Percentage of code compliance cases rectified in a timely manner

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in the percentage of cases.

Potential Data Resource: Records maintained by the Building and Property Standards Department



GOAL 4.2. ENHANCE THE ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY OF THE VILLAGE THROUGH BOTH PRESERVATION AND INNOVATION.

Oak Park enjoys a far-reaching reputation for architecture and design. Village government should ensure that historic development is properly preserved, and new development appropriately complements the existing character of the community.

Supporting Preservation

Objective 4.2.1. Support the preservation of the historical and architectural heritage through public policy, sensitive development practices, and design of private and public improvements and projects.

Oak Park is nationally renowned for its architecture and history, including three nationally recognized historic districts. By supporting the preservation of the historical and architectural heritage in the community, Village government can help ensure one of Oak Park's defining characteristics, and source of community pride, is not compromised. Context-sensitive development regulations will help ensure private development is compatible with historic character. However, leading by example is one of the most important things Village government can do. Village government can reinforce its commitment to preserving Oak Park's character by designing public projects that embody the principles it hopes others will follow.

Enlisting Support

Objective 4.2.2. Promote private initiative and public stewardship in maintaining and improving the village's landmarks and historic districts.

A database maintained by Village government lists more than 1,700 historic resources in the community, including designated Historic Landmarks and Historic Districts, as well as other properties identified as historic but not currently "designated". Protecting, maintaining, and enhancing this amount of historical resources is a significant task that requires public support and stewardship. Village government may work with private property owners to create awareness and appreciation for important properties and structures and encourage proactive preservation through private investment in rehabilitation.

Funding Historic Preservation

Objective 4.2.3. Seek funding that supports local historic preservation policies and projects.

Historic preservation is viewed as an important tool for achieving several of the guiding principles of this Plan. Village government can work with local and regional partners to pursue funding for projects that support the preservation of historic resources in Oak Park. These may include state and federal grants, funding from local foundations and not-for-profits, and/or in-kind services from designers and craftsmen.



Supporting Innovative & Environmental Design

Objective 4.2.4. Support innovative building design and construction practices within the village and establish an award program to recognize innovative design and the application of “green” building techniques.

Oak Park’s rich architectural history and commitment to quality architecture is a strong source of civic pride. This commitment, alongside advancements in design and construction, creates a climate uniquely suited for architectural innovation. Given its rich tradition in architecture, Oak Park is uniquely poised to be a model of preservation and innovation in design. Village government can continue to support the application of energy-efficient and resilient green building techniques by reviewing and amending ordinances as needed to remove barriers to innovation and seeking LEED certification for all municipal structures.

Preserving Local Character

Objective 4.2.5. Improve the community’s image through enhanced design-specific standards.

New development and poorly designed renovations and additions can place the village’s established character at risk. Village government should consider using a broad spectrum of policies and regulations, from design-oriented development controls to educational resources, to require, encourage, and create awareness for context-sensitive development. These may include form-based regulations, development guidelines or pattern books, “how to” guides, a pre-approved list of knowledgeable architects, and other resources that can provide property owners, developers, and designers with the information necessary to articulate and implement the community’s vision.

Enhancing Transit Stations

Objective 4.2.6. Enhance the appearance of the community’s El stops and Metra Stations to foster positive perceptions of the village and to assist in creating a stronger sense of place at transit nodes.

For many, the first impression of Oak Park is its transit stations. Whether traveling through the community on Metra, or taking a train to the village to walk and explore Oak Park’s neighborhoods and commercial districts, the community’s El stops and Metra Station serve as a “front door”. Working with the CTA and Metra, Village government can work with transit providers to improve these stations to better reflect the community’s commitment to high-quality architecture and construction. The Village of Kenilworth Metra station, for example, is an attractive stone station building designed by Franklin Burnham and serving as one of Kenilworth’s iconic images. In a similar fashion, the stations in Oak Park could provide positive first impressions for visitors to Oak Park.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the community’s success in enhancing the architectural integrity of the community.

Metric: Number of development or improvement projects exceeding minimum energy code requirements for efficiency

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of developments.

Potential Data Resource: Village-issued permits

Metric: Number of development projects that integrate “green” building techniques

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of projects.

Potential Data Resource: Development applications received and reviewed by Village government

Metric: Number of buildings with local historic designation

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of buildings.

Potential Data Resource: Village roster of locally designated buildings



GOAL 4.3. DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY AND STRENGTHEN THE TAX BASE THROUGH LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT.

Supporting Local Access to Commerce

Objective 4.3.1. Promote a mix of local commercial land uses throughout the community that support and respond to the needs of nearby residents.

Downtown Oak Park is a regional destination that attracts shoppers and visitors from all over. Regional patronage and tourism help bolster the local economy, but it is important that the village be self-sufficient. Providing goods and services to the residents of Oak Park is, and will likely continue to be, a community priority. Village government could use land use policies and zoning regulations to encourage and allow local commercial development in concentrated areas surrounded by neighborhoods. With proper consideration given to parking management, site design, pedestrian and bicycle mobility, and buffering, residents will benefit from local access to commercial goods and services with minimal impacts to the character of the area.

Mixing Businesses

Objective 4.3.2. Encourage a diversified mix of business to maintain a healthy and stable local economy.

The Land Use Plan and municipal policies should support and encourage a mix of uses and businesses to assist in diversifying the community's tax-base and providing a variety of choices to consumers in the community. Diversifying Oak Park's tax base can make Oak Park more resilient to fluctuations in the local, regional, and national economies. The detrimental effects of a homogeneous economy can be seen as recent as last decade, when American auto manufacturers were forced to restructure and reorganize, and under-performing car dealerships throughout the country were forced to close. Communities with heavy concentrations of auto dealerships saw significant decreases in local sales taxes and their landscapes were riddled with empty properties.



Attracting Clean Industry

Objective 4.3.3. Provide opportunities for clean industry within the village as a means of diversifying the tax base and fostering employment opportunities.

Not long ago, the term industry suggested a vision of a factory with thick plumes of smoke billowing from its chimneys, noxious odors, and heavy truck traffic. Contemporary industry is much cleaner, and can exist in a built-out community without negatively impacting the environment or quality of life. Village government could consider areas in the community where existing industry can be made more environmentally and neighborhood-friendly, and where new low-impact industry might be developed in order to foster innovation and local employment.

Leveraging Regional Transit

Objective 4.3.4. Encourage the growth of transit-oriented development (TOD) in order to provide greater access to local goods and services, expand the variety of housing options, and maximize transit, bicycle, and pedestrian access throughout the village.

Transit oriented development (TOD) refers to development that capitalizes on proximity to mass transit, providing higher residential densities and mixed-use development within walking distance to the transit stop. Oak Park is fortunate to be served by both CTA and Metra, which provide the foundation for TOD opportunities around seven transit station areas. Although some areas in the community can already be described as “transit-oriented”, opportunities exist to significantly improve the areas around most stations. By encouraging growth and expansion of TOD, Oak Park can benefit from expanded housing choices, decreased dependency on the automobile, and greater access to goods and services.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the community’s success in diversifying local commercial land uses.

Metric: Mix of uses in areas within 1/4-mile of rail transit stations

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in the mix of uses.

Potential Data Resource: Records maintained by the Cook County Assessors Office



GOAL 4.4. SEEK INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROVIDE REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND TO RECAPTURE OPEN SPACE AT A VARIETY OF SCALES.

Promoting Mixed-Use Development

Objective 4.4.1. Promote mixed-use development within the village to maximize the use of land and to foster more compact, walkable, and vibrant neighborhoods.

Oak Park is a mature community with limited opportunities for new development. Land in the community is a valuable resource, and Village government must make wise development decisions and seek to maximize development and redevelopment opportunities. Village government can review and amend its development regulations as necessary to support mixed-use development that integrates different land uses and can foster a more compact and resilient built form that is walkable, vibrant, and self-supporting.

Supporting Shared Use Spaces

Objective 4.4.2. Support opportunities for shared use of spaces within the community.

The Oak Park community benefits from a wealth of public facilities and community amenities provided by the government's partners and institutions, including the library, school districts, Park District, and local churches. Each of these entities has unique missions and mandates. However, many facilities have common elements, such as meeting spaces, classrooms, gymnasiums, parking lots, and outdoor play areas. Village government is in a unique position to support opportunities for shared spaces within the community. Establishing a central database would help promote the availability of shared use spaces, and help facilitate their scheduling. Sharing facilities could reduce redundant amenities, result in more open space, and be a fiscally responsible policy for each participating agency.

Maximizing Full Potential

Objective 4.4.3. Encourage redevelopment and revitalization of underused and underdeveloped property while promoting the preservation of historical resources and character.

Even within communities that are essentially 100% built-out, there exist opportunities for new desirable in-fill development. Redevelopment of these "opportunity sites" can serve as catalysts for neighborhoods, corridors, downtowns, TOD areas, and more. They present the opportunity to provide needed and desirable land uses in strategic locations, such as affordable housing, senior housing, mixed-use development, institutional uses, and more, and can help a community realize the full potential of underutilized properties. In Oak Park, it is also critical to understand, and be respectful of, the well-established pattern of development. This includes the architectural and historically significant neighborhoods, established commercial areas, traditional street grid and block pattern, and beautiful parks and open space.



Centralizing Commercial Development

Objective 4.4.4. Create focused nodes of commercial activity in areas with high levels of accessibility along the Village's commercial corridors, allowing other areas of the corridors to become more residential in nature.

With the proliferation of the automobile, Oak Park's commercial areas slowly transformed from compact mixed-use corridors to auto-centric corridors. Today, many of Oak Park's corridors, such as North Avenue, Madison Street, and Roosevelt Road, are characterized by underperforming commercial sites in buildings set back from the street, and surface parking lots dominating the streetscape. In these areas, vehicular access is often prioritized over pedestrian mobility. The Village can use land use policy, streetscape design, and zoning regulations to focus commercial development in a nodal pattern along its major corridors. This will provide a more focused area for managing access, providing strong pedestrian and bicycle amenities, meeting market potential, and creating an appropriate character. Remaining portions of the corridors could transition to residential development that increases the diversity of housing in the Village and takes advantage of proximity to nearby commercial and transit nodes.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the community's success in maximizing opportunities for specific kinds of development.

Metric: Total amount of mixed-use development in commercial districts and near transit stations

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in the amount of development.

Potential Data Resource: Records maintained by the Cook County Assessors Office or Village government resulting from development review and approval



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan identifies the appropriate location of different types of development in Oak Park. Oak Park is a built-out community with a well-established land use pattern. The Future Land Use Plan aims to build upon existing investment and strengthen it in order to meet a broader set of community objectives.

The Future Land Use Plan included in this section includes 11 distinct use categories. These categories describe the nature of uses throughout the village, while subsequent chapters of this Comprehensive Plan provide supporting policies related to housing, commercial areas, local industry, parks and open spaces, community facilities, and transportation.

When assessing the appropriateness of a development proposal, policy, or action, the following items should be considered with regards to this Land Use Plan:

- The Land Use Plan is intended to be a general policy guide. Readers of this Plan may also refer to more specific sub-area plans that have been adopted for various portions of the community for additional information on appropriate land uses and development characteristics.
- The Land Use Plan is intended to be a general policy guide and is not regulatory. More detailed analysis of proposed uses may be required during the zoning approval or Planned Unit development processes that are designed to provide flexibility where appropriate.
- The definitions for various land uses in this Plan provide the flexibility for a number of specific uses that collectively create an intended environment. For example, “Neighborhood Commercial/Mixed Use” allows for commercial and residential uses, but also allow for appropriate uses of plazas, open spaces, parking, and other functions that support a mixed use environment.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The identification of potential sites for affordable and accessible housing is one of the primary goals of this Comprehensive Plan. Following the Future Land Use Plan map, this section includes a series of Housing Development Opportunity Plans for areas around Oak Park’s rail transit stations. The Future Land Use Plan map identifies the boundaries of these areas and establishes the overall land use pattern that may guide housing development in these areas.

RESIDENTIAL LAND USES

Single Family

Single Family areas are blocks with mostly detached housing, though they may include some instances of flats, single-family structures converted into multi-family buildings, or small multi-family buildings at the end of blocks. This is the predominant land use in Oak Park.

Mixed Residential

Mixed residential areas include a balanced mix of single-family detached housing, townhouses, and multi-family structures. These areas often provide a transition between commercial areas and single-family areas. Housing redevelopment in mixed residential areas can include a range of housing types. Providing a balanced choice of housing near many of Oak Park’s commercial districts.

Multi-family

Multi-family residential areas include primarily multi-family structures with limited townhouses or single-family housing. These areas are typically located near the Downtown core or adjacent to other commercial districts.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USES

Corridor Commercial/Mixed Use

Corridor Commercial/Mixed Use areas include development along Oak Park's auto-oriented streets, including North Avenue, Madison Street, and Roosevelt Road. Development in these corridors includes commercial uses or a mix of commercial and residential uses. In many cases, development is characterized by substantial areas dedicated to parking, setback commercial structures, single-story commercial structures placed along the street, or limited multi-story mixed use structures. Multi-family structures with no ground-floor commercial use may be considered on a case-by-case basis based on more detailed sub-area planning.

Neighborhood Commercial/Mixed Use

Neighborhood Commercial/Mixed Use areas include single-story commercial structures located along the street and multi-story mixed-use structures. These areas tend to be pedestrian-oriented, though some development includes small off-street parking areas. Uses in these areas are often oriented towards day-to-day needs for residents.

Downtown Mixed Use

Downtown Mixed Use areas include multi-story development with a variety of uses, including retail, office, and residential. These areas include Oak Park's largest scale development, and are pedestrian-oriented. Uses in these areas cater to residents, but also attract visitors from other communities.

Industrial

Industrial areas include sites used for the production, processing, and/or distribution of goods and materials. These areas are concentrated near the intersection of Harlem Avenue and Garfield Street on Oak Park's western border.

PUBLIC LAND USES

Public/Semi-public

Public/Semi-public areas include a variety of uses, including schools, government buildings, cultural and community centers, religious institutions, hospitals, and others that serve the community's citizens. These uses are scattered throughout Oak Park, and may be located among residential areas (i.e. some schools and churches) or near commercial areas (i.e. hospitals and community centers).

Park/Plaza

Park/Plaza areas include open spaces that serve a variety of community-based functions, including passive recreation, athletics, events, festivals, and outdoor spaces that support local commerce.

Utility

Utility areas include infrastructure that supports local transportation or utilities, including rail corridors, electrical substations, transit power supply systems, etc.



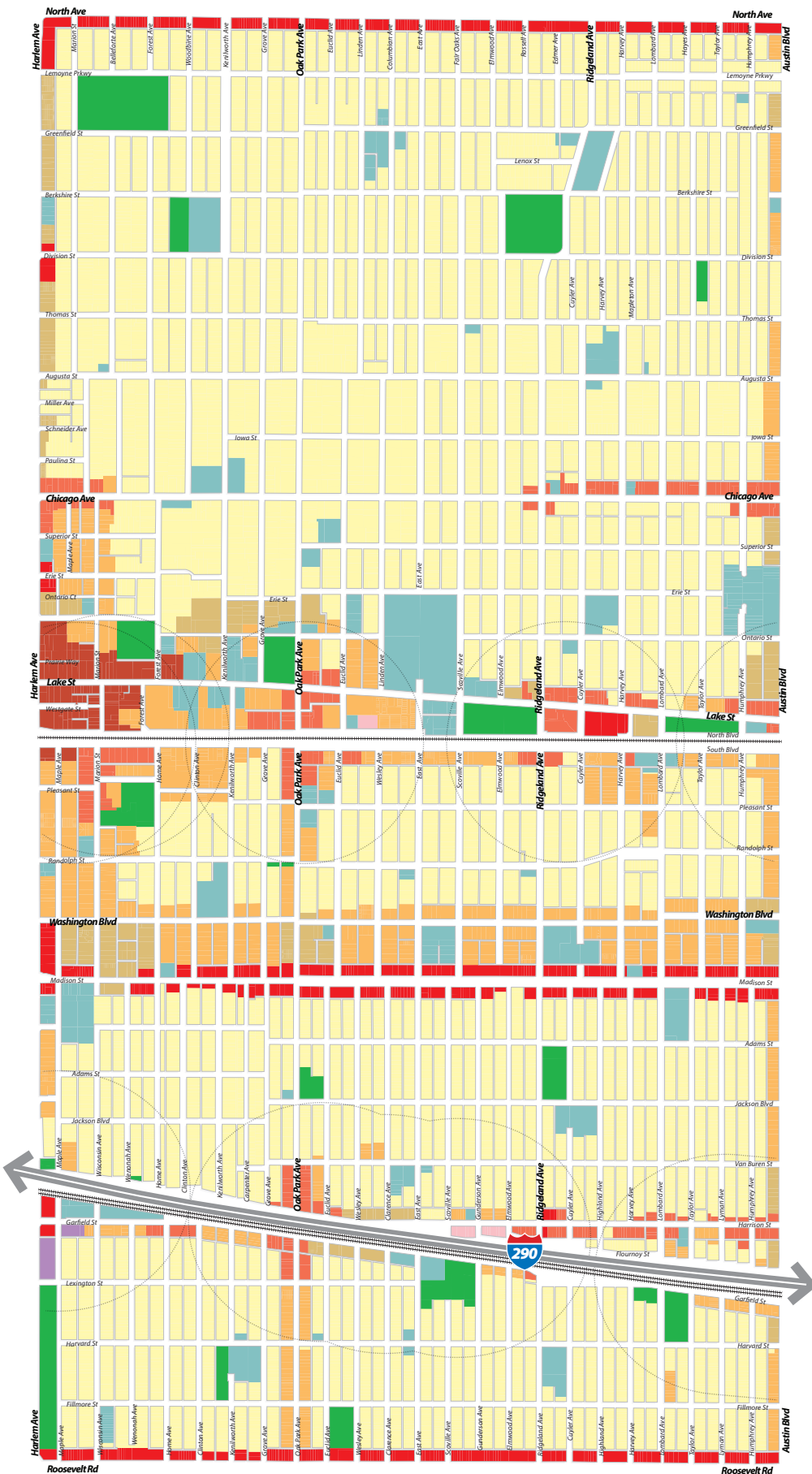
Village of Oak Park Future Land Use Plan

This Future Land Use Plan represents the vision for the Oak Park community. It is not a zoning map and does not imply the application of development regulations based on future land use designations.

The Future Land Use Plan is intended to describe the function of various portions of the community at a village-wide level. However, many portions of the community have been the subject of previously adopted and more specific sub-area plans. In addition to this Comprehensive Plan, these sub-area plans should be referenced when assessing the appropriateness of development proposals, policies, or strategic actions.

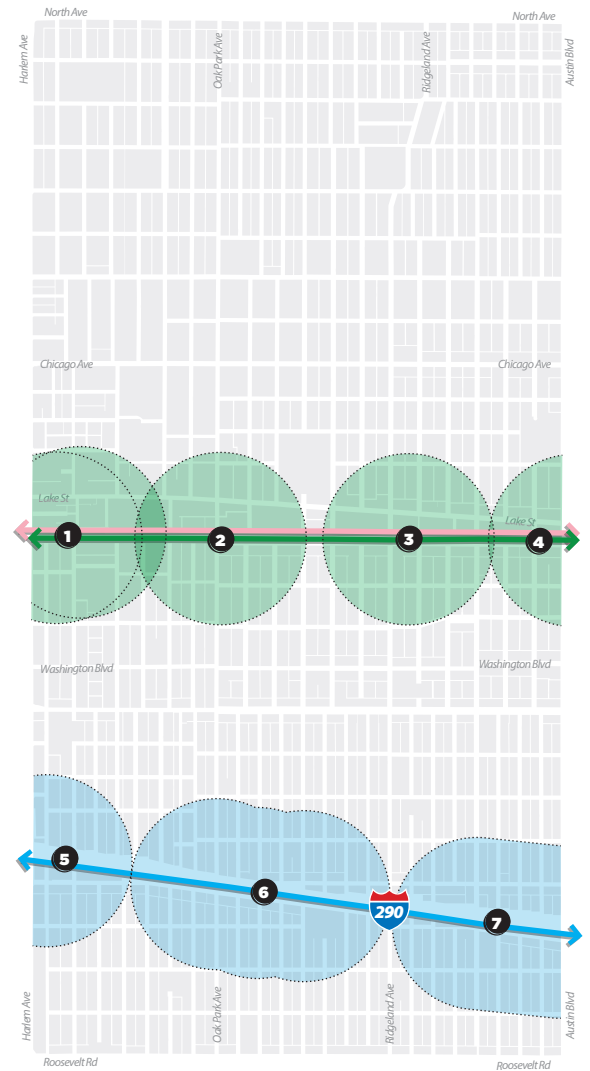
Legend

- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed Residential
- Corridor Commercial/Mixed Use
- Neighborhood Commercial/ Mixed Use
- Public/Semi-Public
- Downtown Mixed Use
- Park/Plaza
- Utility
- Industrial
- TOD Housing Development Focus Areas



HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA PLANS

This section includes an examination of housing development opportunities near Oak Park's rail transit stations. One of the primary goals of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which funded the development of this Comprehensive Plan, is to establish local policies that support the development of accessible and affordable housing with safe and easy access to transit. Potential housing development sites identified in this section support this goal while also considering the overarching values, goals, and objectives of this Plan.



Housing Development Focus Areas

- 1 Harlem/Lake Transit Area
- 2 Oak Park Green Line Area
- 3 Ridgeland Green Line Area
- 4 Austin Green Line Area
- 5 Harlem Blue Line Area
- 6 Oak Park Blue Line Area
- 7 Austin/Lombard Blue Line Area

POLICY ASSUMPTIONS FOR NEW HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

The housing sites identified on subsequent pages vary in terms of size, access, surrounding land use, property ownership, and other factors. The development of new housing on these sites will likely require collaboration among property owners, Village government, and other agencies or not-for-profits. As these opportunities are explored over time, these policy assumptions should be considered.

Village-wide Applicability

The sites identified in this section are located within a reasonable walking distance to rail transit stations. However, other portions of the village may also be considered for new housing development. Village government should support the development of new housing throughout the community that is in line with the Future Land Use Plan, especially when the proposed housing accomplishes local objectives related to housing diversity and accessibility.

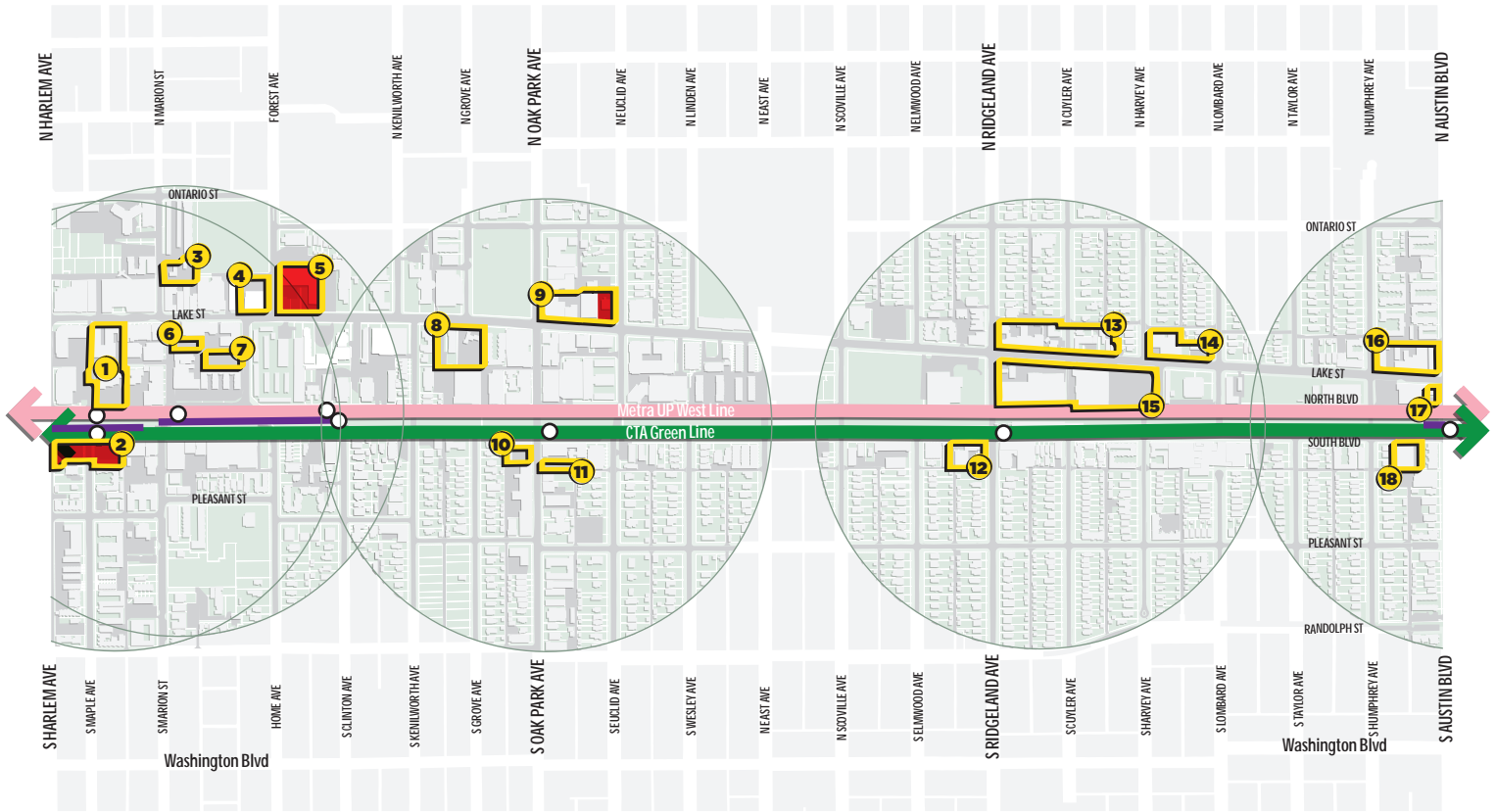
Identifying Priority Sites

Several sites identified in the Housing Development Focus Areas are owned by the Village of Oak Park. These may be considered priority sites, as private property rights are not a factor in terms of rezoning or development approval. The identification of privately-held properties as housing opportunity sites does not reflect a proactive intent on behalf of Village government to acquire properties, revoke development rights, or supersede development agreements that are already in place.

The Role of Village Government

As described above, this section is not intended to imply that Village government will use aggressive means to acquire or redevelop privately-owned properties. Instead, Village government should work with property owners to explore the feasibility of new housing development, and discuss municipal policies, incentives, or programs that can support the development of housing that meets the objectives of this Plan.

CTA Green Line & Metra UP West Transit Corridor Transit Area Housing Development Opportunities



Legend

- Housing Focus Areas
- Housing Opportunity Sites
- Village-Owned Property
- Transit Station Platform
- Station Access Point






Housing Development Opportunity Sites

- 1 Station Street Development.**
 Current Zoning: B-4
 Current Use: Surface parking
 Potential Development: Mixed-use planned development incorporating ground floor retail along Lake Street, upper floor multi-family residential throughout the site, structured parking to serve residential and commercial uses, and an internal pedestrian/circulation network
- 2 South Boulevard/Harlem.**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
 Current Use: Surface parking
 Potential Development: Retail or service ground floor with upper floor multi-family residential, possible structured parking to serve on-site uses and maximize development density
- 3 Marion Street (north of Lake).**
 Current Zoning: B-4
 Current Use: Parking
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development with ground floor retail and upper floor multi-family residential that creates an appropriate transition between Downtown and townhouses to the north
- 4 Lake/Forest (northwest corner).**
 Current Zoning: B-4
 Current Use: Retail
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development with ground floor retail and upper floor multi-family residential that is consistent in character to other development in Downtown Oak Park
- 5 Lake/Forest (northeast corner).**
 Current Zoning: B-3, B-4
 Current Use: Parking garage, vacant
 Potential Development: Mixed-use building with ground floor retail and upper floor residential that takes advantage of existing parking structure
- 6 Marion Street (south of Lake).**
 Current Zoning: B-4
 Current Use: Parking
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development with ground floor retail and upper floor multi-family residential that fills in street wall on Marion Street
- 7 Forest Avenue.**
 Current Zoning: B-4
 Current Use: Parking
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development with ground floor retail and upper floor multi-family residential that is compatible with surrounding development on Forest Avenue
- 8 Lake between Oak Park Avenue and Kenilworth Avenue.**
 Current Zoning: B-3
 Current Use: Drive-thru bank, multi-family residential
 Potential Development: Coordinated mixed-use redevelopment that transforms the bank site into multi-family residential and improves the existing multi-family tower for better site access and pedestrian connectivity
- 9 Lake between Oak Park Avenue and Euclid Avenue.**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
 Current Use: Office
 Potential Development: Mixed-use with ground floor retail and upper floor multi-family residential that integrates existing historic facades and extends vertically in a sensitive manner
- 10 Oak Park Avenue between South Boulevard and Pleasant.**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
 Current Use: Surface parking
 Potential Development: Mixed-use infill with ground floor service or retail and upper floor multi-family residential
- 11 Oak Park Avenue/South Boulevard.**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
 Current Use: Office
 Potential Development: 2-3 story mixed-use with ground floor office or retail and upper floor multi-family residential
- 12 South Boulevard and Ridgeland (southwest corner).**
 Site area:
 Current Zoning: C
 Current Use: Mixed-use
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development with ground floor retail or service use with upper floor residential
- 13 Lake/Ridgeland (North).**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2/C
 Current Use: Dry cleaner, gas station, retail, residential, auto repair
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development with ground floor retail or service use with upper floor residential that appropriately integrates historic facades and structures
- 14 Lake Street between Lombard and Harvey.**
 Current Zoning: C
 Current Use: Auto repair, retail
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development near Harvey Avenue with multi-family residential that is consistent with surrounding neighborhood
- 15 Lake/Ridgeland (South).**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2/C
 Current Use: Grocery store, gas station, fitness/recreation
 Potential Development: Mixed-use planned development with "urban" grocery store, mixed-use development along Lake Street, multi-family throughout the remainder of the site, and structured parking to accommodate access to all uses.
- 16 Lake between Austin and Humphrey.**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
 Current Use: Auto repair, retail, mixed-use.
 Potential Development: Planned mixed-use development that includes ground floor retail uses and upper floor multi-family residential that creates an attractive gateway to Oak Park
- 17 North Boulevard/Austin.**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
 Current Use: Office
 Potential Development: Mixed-use development that reuses and preserves the traditional facade of the existing building
- 18 South Boulevard.**
 Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
 Current Use: Office
 Potential Development: 2-3 story mixed-use development that reuses and preserves the traditional facade of the existing building and includes ground floor retail or office with upper floor residential

CTA Blue Line Transit Corridor Transit Area Housing Development Opportunities



Legend

-  Housing Focus Areas
-  Housing Opportunity Sites
-  Village-Owned Property
-  Transit Station Platform
-  Station Access Point

Housing Development Opportunity Sites

- 19** **Garfield and Harlem.**
Current Zoning: C
Current Use: Heavy industrial
Potential Development: Mixed-use and multi-family planned development with commercial ground floor uses near Harlem and Garfield, and multi-family residential near Wisconsin Avenue (depending on the ability to implement a large-scale site clean-up redevelopment effort)
- 20** **Garfield/Home.**
Current Zoning: C
Current Use: Commercial office
Potential Development: Mixed-use with ground floor office or retail near Home Avenue, and multi-family residential throughout the site (depending on the ability to redevelop opportunity site #1 or provide substantial buffering from industrial uses)
- 21** **Oak Park Commercial District (North)**
Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
Current Use: Mixed-use, vacant
Potential Development: Mixed-use development with ground floor retail and upper floor residential that serves as an attractive entry to the commercial district
- 22** **Harrison between Euclid and Wesley**
Current Zoning: R-7
Current Use: Bank drive-thru, surface parking
Potential Development: Multi-family residential that is consistent with surrounding residential development.
- 23** **"Mini cap" over I-290.**
Current Zoning: N/A
Current Use: Transportation corridor
Potential Development: Mixed-use development on either side of Oak Park Avenue built over the I-290 transportation corridor
- 24** **Oak Park Commercial District (South)**
Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
Current Use: Mixed-use, surface parking
Potential Development: Mixed-use with ground floor retail and upper floor multi-family residential, or only multi-family along Garfield.
- 25** **Garfield and Euclid.**
Site area: 16,556 square feet
Current Zoning: R-7
Current Use: Surface parking
Potential Development: Multi-family residential development that is consistent with surrounding 3-4 story housing.
- 26** **Harrison and East.**
Current Zoning: R-7
Current Use: Office
Potential Development: Multi-family residential development that is consistent with surrounding 3-4 story housing.
- 27** **Lombard/Harrison.**
Current Zoning: B-1/B-2, R-7
Current Use: Mixed-use, retail, restaurant
Potential Development: Mixed-use or multi-family development that reflects the character of the Harrison Street Arts District and adds additional housing density in a way that supports local businesses and is compatible with surrounding development
- 28** **Austin/Harrison (North).**
Current Zoning: B-1/B-2
Current Use: Gas station
Potential Development: Mixed-use development that serves as an appropriate gateway to Oak Park and Harrison Street Arts District
- 29** **Austin/Harrison (South).**
Current Zoning: B-1/B-2, R-7
Current Use: Gas station, parking lot
Potential Development: Mixed-use development that occupies the gas station site, but could be expanded to include the municipal parking lot if parking capacity could be replaced for residential uses

GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

LAND USE & BUILT FORM

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

	Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 4.1 – Strengthen and protect the character, integrity, and cohesion of the village and its neighborhoods.				
4.1.1	Establish and strengthen focal points, such as schools, parks, commercial districts, and other community gathering spaces, within the village’s neighborhoods.	Governmental Collaboration	Schools, Park District	Resident perception related to community character Percentage of code compliance cases rectified in a timely manner
4.1.2	Strengthen the community’s urban fabric through context-sensitive infill development that is complementary to the scale and character of surrounding residential neighborhoods.	Governmental Collaboration, Policies and Regulations		
4.1.3	Work cooperatively with neighboring communities to ensure that the village’s edges remain strong and attractive.	Governmental Collaboration, Policies and Regulations	Neighboring communities	
4.1.4	Ensure that residential areas have adequate buffering and/or screening from incompatible adjacent land uses.	Policies and Regulations		
4.1.5	Preserve a sound built environment through appropriate code enforcement efforts and preventative maintenance programs.	Policies and Regulations		
Goal 4.2 – Enhance the architectural integrity of the village through both preservation and innovation.				
4.2.1	Support the preservation of the historical and architectural heritage through public policy, sensitive development practices, and design of private and public improvements and projects.	Policies and Regulations		Number of development or improvement projects exceeding minimum energy code requirements for efficiency Number of development projects that integrate “green” building techniques Number of buildings with local historic designation
4.2.2	Promote private initiative and public stewardship in maintaining and improving the village’s landmarks and historic districts.	Governmental Collaboration		
4.2.3	Seek funding that supports local historic preservation policies and projects.	Funding and Incentives		
4.2.4	Support innovative building design and construction practices within the village and continue an award program to recognize innovative design and the application of “green” building techniques.	Policies and Regulations, Funding and Incentives		
4.2.5	Improve the community’s image through enhanced design-specific standards.	Policies and Regulations		
4.2.6	Enhance the appearance of the community’s El stops and Metra Stations to foster positive perceptions of the village and to assist in creating a stronger sense of place at transit nodes.	Governmental Collaboration	Transit Providers	

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 4.3 – Diversify the economy and strengthen the tax base through land use and development.			
4.3.1	Promote a mix of local commercial land uses throughout the community that support and respond to the needs of nearby residents.	Policies and Regulations	Mix of uses in areas within 1/4-mile of rail transit stations
4.3.2	Encourage a diversified mix of business to maintain a healthy and stable local economy.	Policies and Regulations	
4.3.3	Provide opportunities for clean industry within the village as a means of diversifying the tax base and fostering employment opportunities.	Policies and Regulations, Governmental Collaboration	
4.3.4	Encourage the growth of transit-oriented development (TOD) in order to provide greater access to local goods and services, expand the variety of housing options, and maximize transit, bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the village.	Policies and Regulations, Capital Improvements	

Goal 4.4 – Seek innovative and creative solutions to provide redevelopment opportunities and to recapture open space at a variety of scales.

4.4.1	Promote mixed-use development within the village to maximize the use of land and to foster more compact, walkable, and vibrant neighborhoods.	Policies and Regulations	Total amount of mixed-use development in commercial districts and near transit stations	
4.4.2	Support opportunities for shared use of spaces within the community.	Policies and Regulations, Governmental Collaboration		Units of Local Government
4.4.3	Encourage redevelopment and revitalization of underused and underdeveloped property while promoting the preservation of historical resources and character.	Policies and Regulations		
4.4.4	Create focused nodes of commercial activity in areas with high levels of accessibility along the Village’s commercial corridors, allowing other areas of the corridors to become more residential in nature.	Policies and Regulations		



5

Arts & Culture

Oak Park has a history of embracing and celebrating the arts. Notable names such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Ernest Hemingway, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Betty White all called Oak Park home at some point. With more than 40 arts-based businesses within the Oak Park Arts District alone, the village is one of inspiration and encouragement. In turn, arts and culture bring life to the village. This Comprehensive Plan is guided by four core values. One of these, respect for Oak Park’s history and legacy, speaks specifically to the importance of arts and culture in the community:

“All actions should recognize and celebrate what was granted to us by previous generations, and consider the lasting impacts of today’s actions and decisions on the future citizens of Oak Park.”

This chapter presents recommendations that seek to preserve and enhance the arts and culture community within Oak Park. This includes the physical history (i.e. architecture, neighborhood character, etc.), cultural history (authors, local artists, etc.), and contemporary art and culture.

The arts contribute not only to the vibrancy of the community, but are an engine of economic activity and development throughout the Village.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Appreciation of the arts is an intrinsic community value of Oak Park. The village has a tradition of embracing creativity and a long history of celebrated artists across multiple disciplines who have called Oak Park home. Many talented, diverse artists continue to live in Oak Park today, and the community supports a number of diverse theaters, museums, galleries, festivals, and organizations with an arts and culture mission, as well as a thriving Arts District. The quality of Oak Park's arts and culture is second to none and makes the village truly unique.

The arts serve the entire Oak Park community, from young families to senior citizens, and can be used as a tool to reach traditionally under-served and under-represented resident groups. The arts contribute not only to the vibrancy of the community, but are an engine of economic activity and development throughout the village. As Oak Park's identity and brand, arts and culture are major drivers of tourism, bringing visitors from around the globe to appreciate local architecture, public art, restaurants, music, dance, seasonal and special events, and more. Many of the visitors who come to the village for a particular cultural experience choose to stay.

Oak Park's local arts and culture are a gift granted from previous generations and must be supported if they are to remain a gift to generations to come. Over time, these have built an international reputation for the community that distinguishes Oak Park from other communities in the region, state, and country.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement Describes Arts & Culture as they exist in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park is a major tourist destination in Illinois outside of Chicago, thanks to the emphasis placed on arts, culture, and diversity. The village has respected Oak Park's artistic history and has implemented programs and policies that create a culture of nurturing creativity. Oak Park is a hub of regional arts activity and a center for creative enterprises and arts-based businesses. Cultural resources are available village-wide, are connected to each other and the greater transportation network, and are accessible to all residents, businesses, and visitors. The Arts District continues to thrive, and new districts with their own character have been established, supported by the village's public art acquisition programs.

Oak Park supports world-class performing arts, including plays, concerts, and dance companies, in state-of-the-art facilities throughout the community. The community is also a leader in providing educational resources to all residents in order to deepen their appreciation and understanding of the performing arts. Spaces and technology for artistic production are available to the public like any other community service. More live-work spaces and affordable artist housing have grown Oak Park as a destination for artists looking for a place with a rich artistic and cultural history that is also open to innovation and new ideas. This mix of past, present, and future has led to a system of healthy, stable arts and culture museums and facilities.

The arts are a pillar of Oak Park's overall economic development strategy, boosting both sales and property taxes. For example, the village has recognized the value of its unique, well-attended festivals and seasonal events and has expanded its special programming. There are new, regular events and art initiatives for all ages and demographics, including festivals that take advantage of the village's particular character and ones that embrace current popular culture.



Brian, Flickr

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & METRICS

GOAL 5.1. SUPPORT THE ARTS THROUGH VILLAGE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS.

Oak Park policies and programs should foster the continued operation and growth of art programs throughout the village. In order to ensure Oak Park cultivates and endorses the arts, Village government could implement the following actions:

Inventorying Performance Art Spaces

Objective 5.1.1. Conduct and maintain complete survey of performing arts spaces within the village, including such characteristics as location, size and capacity, economic impact, etc.

While Oak Park is home to several local theaters, the village does not have a comprehensive inventory of its performing arts spaces. In order to capitalize on its existing facilities, it is necessary to understand the location, size, capacity, economic impact, annual usage, and amenities of current performing arts spaces. These include live theaters, movie theaters, spaces within schools, and other venues in which artists may showcase performance arts. This inventory could be performed annually, which will provide valuable information on current trends, ensuring that all existing performing arts venues are supported and/or expanded based on demand.

Reviewing Arts Funding

Objective 5.1.2. Regularly complete a comprehensive review of all current and planned arts funding.

Public funding is vital to the operation and maintenance of many of the art programs within Oak Park. Some organizations receive funding from Village government, which they in turn give as grants to dozens of arts organizations, theatrical groups, music organizations, choral societies, school programs, architectural foundations, and more. Village government may complete a comprehensive review of all current and planned arts funding, and anticipate the ability to continue existing funding and act as a partner in procuring additional outside funding.



What others are doing...

Public/Private Partnerships

CicLAvia, Los Angeles, CA

CicLAvia is based out of Bogotá, Columbia, where the streets were cleared of cars for a day as a relief from the congestion and pollution. Since its start in Los Angeles in 2010, the open street event now draws approximately 150,000 cyclists, walkers, and those just there to play, to what has become a cultural institution. CicLAvia is the result of a partnership between a local non-profit and the City of Los Angeles. Through this partnership, the City benefits from the increased revenue of the participants and visitors, local business owners along the car-free route experience a rise in sales, and constituents enjoy car-free streets through miles of Los Angeles.

Supporting Public Art through Partnerships

Objective 5.1.3. Identify opportunities to support public art through public/private partnerships.

The procurement, installation, and maintenance of public art often requires support from private partners. Support can include financial donations, land for the display of public art, the sponsoring of art and design competitions, and other actions or programs. Village government could foster the relationship between local artists, municipal boards and commissions, local galleries, and private or not-for-profit entities that support public art. This may include creation of a central database of local artists maintained by the Public Art Advisory Commission, support for networking events that provide opportunities for potential donors to meet local artists, or other programs that foster important relationships.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the village in supporting arts programs and policies in Oak Park.

Metric: Amount of public funding for arts and culture

Desired Trend: Increase funding to arts organizations.

Potential Data Resource: Municipal budget and budgets from not-for-profits, other forms of local government, and grants received

Metric: Adoption of an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan

Desired Trend: Adoption of a Plan.

Potential Data Resource: Municipal agendas and meeting minutes for relevant boards and commissions related to drafting and adopting an Arts and Culture Strategic Plan



GOAL 5.2. PRESERVE AND ENHANCE EXISTING ARTS AND CULTURE RESOURCES.

Oak Park is home to significant architecture, visual art pieces, and performance art venues. The village encourages an active arts and culture environment. The following are actions Village government can take to preserve and enhance the community's existing arts and culture resources.

Maintaining Culturally Significant Structures and Spaces

Objective 5.2.1. Assist with the preservation and maintenance of culturally significant properties and monuments, including purchasing when appropriate, to preserve Oak Park's history.

Oak Park's identity is the result of the collective character of private development, public and civic properties, and areas that, while they may be owned by non-governmental entities, provide public benefit. These monuments, plazas, sculptures, and other amenities should be preserved in order to maintain the full integrity of Oak Park's historic character. Village government can work with property owners and preservation advocates to identify valued assets and financial resources to maintain and preserve them.

Promoting Art Community-Wide

Objective 5.2.2. Promote and support public art throughout the community.

Residents throughout Oak Park should benefit from public art and its ability to reinforce neighborhood and community character. Village government could work with community organizations and block groups to identify potential locations for local public art, and work with partners to fund the development and installation of pieces.

Spreading Art Awareness

Objective 5.2.3. Establish an "Arts and Culture Hall of Fame" program through projects like permanent exhibits in all public facilities, themed public art, targeted funding, and others to spread awareness of Oak Park's artistic legacy.

Oak Park is a community with a rich cultural and artistic legacy. This legacy should be displayed in a way that makes it easy for residents and visitors to understand and appreciate. Village government can support the creation of an "Arts and Culture Hall of Fame" program that highlights influential residents who have helped build Oak Park's current reputation. Depending on the size of the exhibit, this attraction could be housed in Village Hall, or could be located in another portion of the community that benefits from a greater level of visibility and connection to other important cultural resources. Either way, Village government can support the development of the Hall of Fame by permitting the use of publicly-owned pieces, relics, imagery, and other information.



Celebrating History

Objective 5.2.4. Promote the complete history of Oak Park, including its buildings, cultural “icons”, and other aspects, as a way of both celebrating accomplishments and learning from missteps of previous generations.

History is a defining aspect of any community. Today’s environment is a result of actions, projects, and policies that may have been established years or even decades ago. It is important that Oak Park residents, staff, elected officials, and others understand as fully as possible the history of the community. This will provide the foundation for understanding the valued characteristics of the village, but will also demonstrate some of the missteps that may have been made along the way. Village government can partner with boards and commissions, residents, and other local entities to develop information that is available for citizens to understand the evolution of Oak Park and the potential impacts of today’s actions on future generations.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in preserving and enhancing art and culture in Oak Park.

Metric: Attendance at performing arts events

Desired Trend: Increase the number of people attending performing arts shows at venues throughout the village.

Potential Data Resource: Ticket sales from event and facility managers

Metric: Total amount of funding for preservation projects in the form of grants or incentives

Desired Trend: Increase in the total amount of annual funding

Potential Data Resource: Municipal budget, development agreements recorded by the Village Clerk, information provided by local grant applicants



GOAL 5.3. PROMOTE CONTEMPORARY ARTS AND CULTURE AS A MAJOR REASON TO VISIT OAK PARK.

Oak Park has many historic attractions that draw people to the area, but it also boasts more contemporary arts and culture. The following are actions Village government can take to help ensure that Oak Park promotes contemporary art and culture:

Developing a Marketing Strategy

Objective 5.3.1. Develop a unified marketing strategy for arts and culture in Oak Park.

Marketing is a powerful tool, especially when done in a strategic and coordinated way among several entities. For example, rather than individual theaters conducting their own marketing, a coordinated effort among local theaters can help create a brand for Oak Park that earns the attention of residents from throughout Chicagoland and ultimately benefits all stakeholders with less individual cost. Village government could encourage local arts entities to develop a marketing strategy that highlights the entire Oak Park arts community. The marketing strategy should be targeted to reach a variety of audiences, and could be tied into other marketing efforts related to business districts, tourism, events and festivals, and other aspects of the community.

Coordinating Programming

Objective 5.3.2. Coordinate program planning among different arts groups throughout the year to create a balanced calendar of events.

A coordinated calendar of all arts events throughout the village would serve to benefit residents, businesses, and visitors alike. This has the potential to sustain activities throughout the year, maximize the utilization of local spaces, and allow for the reuse of materials and infrastructure. Village government could encourage the development of a community-wide arts and culture calendar that allows patrons to easily understand what offerings are available and facilitates coordination among individual entities to work with one another in planning events.

Expanding Festivals and Events

Objective 5.3.3. Continue to support popular seasonal festivals and special events, and increase the number and variety of events offered throughout the year.

Barrie Fest, Oaktoberfest, and the Harrison Street Festival are some of the seasonal festivals that occur in Oak Park every year. Festivals and special events establish and reinforce the cultural identity of a community and provide a canvas to showcase local art and artists. Village government could continue to work with neighborhood organizations to plan and organize annual events that have a regional draw and an arts component. Arts components include merchandise tents for local art vendors, performance opportunities, and marketing for regular nearby arts and culture events.



Cycling to Art

Objective 5.3.4. Create a self-guided bicycle tour for all existing public art located in the village.

Bicycling is one of the best ways to see the sites of the village. Oak Park has a network of bike-friendly streets that can be used to create a route that traverses through the village, connecting public art and architecturally significant sites. A self-guided bicycle tour would allow visitors and residents the opportunity to experience public art at an individualized pace. Village government could work with local bicycle advocates to create a self-guided tour route and wayfinding signage that explores the public art of Oak Park and safely accommodates riders of all abilities. Such a route should be coordinated with the Bicycle Plan to ensure that investment in infrastructure and signage helps achieve this objective.

Building A Local Collection

Objective 5.3.5. Build a local collection of both permanent and rotating public art pieces.

Village government includes appointed leaders and resources aimed at building the community's collection of local art. These permanent and rotating pieces provide the opportunity to balance and celebrate the community's long-standing history and contemporary trends. As part of an overall public art vision, Village government can continue to build its collection of permanent art pieces that represent the character and heritage of the community. Village government could also partner with local entities, private collectors, and other communities in the Chicago region to share art that can be temporarily displayed and enjoyed, including the installation of plaques that provide a sense of history and context for each piece.

Potential Metrics

Metric: Attendance at museums and cultural institutions

Desired Trend: Increase the number of people visiting museums and cultural institutions.

Potential Data Resource: Ticket sales from various events and venues.

Metric: Number of annual festivals and events

Desired Trend: Increase the number of events that occur on an annual basis.

Potential Data Resource: Record of special events permits issued by Village government

Metric: Attendance at local festivals and events

Desired Trend: Increase the number of attendees to annual festivals and events

Potential Data Resource: Reported ticket sales and/or estimated attendance from event organizers



GOAL 5.4. STRENGTHEN THE EXISTING ARTS ENVIRONMENT AND INTEGRATE ARTISTIC USES OF SPACE THROUGHOUT THE VILLAGE.

The Harrison Street Arts District is built upon the unique character of a specific portion of the village. The recognition of this district and its associated brand define for others what the area aspires to be. The following objectives describe how the district can be strengthened over time, and how other portions of the village can build on their unique local assets and benefit from a similar approach to local identity.

Enacting an Art Ordinance

Objective 5.4.1. Support the installation of public art as a part of public development and some private development.

New development or redevelopment presents an opportunity to thoughtfully incorporate public art. Village government could consider various regulations or incentives aimed at increasing the amount of public art throughout the community. These may include a percent-for-art ordinance for public development projects, space allocations for art installations as a part of planned development agreements, or development incentives or bonuses for projects that incorporate art as a component of development.

Prioritizing Local Artists

Objective 5.4.2. Promote and support local Oak Park artists when commissioning public projects, including design, construction, maintenance, etc.

Part of Oak Park's long-term legacy will be the contributions of today's artist community. Village government can seek opportunities to work with local partners to commission public art with the intention of purchasing pieces created by local artists. This may be especially effective in developing neighborhood-based installations or temporary exhibits throughout the village.

Increasing Artist Live-work Spaces

Objective 5.4.3. Increase the number of live-work spaces in targeted locations through incentives, marketing, and other methods.

Artists often prefer to live and work in the same building or space. This notion is in-line with Oak Park's objective to create a variety of housing options in different parts of the community. Village government could work with local developers and advocates to increase the amount of affordable live-work spaces in Oak Park through units integrated into larger developments or subsidized by outside funding sources.

What others are doing...

Affordable Artist Spaces

Northern Warehouse Artists' Cooperative, Artspace, St. Paul, MN,

The City of St. Paul assisted in financing Artspace's first affordable live/work project dedicated to artists. Completed in 1990, this sustainable rehabilitation of 1908 warehouse includes 52 live/work units on the four upper floors, and 2 floors below for office and studio space, galleries, and coffee shops. The Northern Warehouse Artists' Cooperative project was the first in the nation to use Low Income Housing Tax Credits for artist housing. Refinancing in 2011 ensured that the building will be affordable to artists for the next 30 years.

For more information on this project, visit: <http://www.artspace.org/our-places/northern-warehouse-artists-cooperative>



Reusing Underutilized Properties

Objective 5.4.4. Partner with developers and property owners to adaptively reuse underutilized properties for arts and culture purposes.

The reuse of existing buildings can serve to both meet a specific market demand and revitalize underutilized properties. Village government can pursue funding to provide technical assistance that will support the adaptive reuse of spaces or vacant buildings for arts and cultural uses. This includes working with property owners to use underutilized space as temporary gallery or event space, hosting local artists and shows. This approach could be used in conjunction with efforts to maintain and rehabilitate designated historic buildings and sites.

Accessing Cultural Destinations

Objective 5.4.5. Make access to and between existing and emerging cultural destinations a consideration of future transportation improvements.

In order to experience the art and culture Oak Park has to offer, residents and visitors require safe and efficient transportation to these sites. Village government can work with Public Works Department, IDOT, Pace, CTA, Metra, and other partners to prioritize transportation and transit improvements along routes between and through cultural and art destinations. Areas around CTA and Metra train stations should include easy-to-follow wayfinding and locational signage to direct visitors to culturally significant sites.

Potential Metrics

Metric: Investment in cultural space and public art
Desired Trend: Increase the amount of investment
Potential Data Resource: Village-issued permits and public budgets for arts and cultural facilities



GOAL 5.5. INTEGRATE THE ARTS INTO CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING, ENSURE ACCESS TO ARTS AND CULTURE, AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EVERYDAY LIFE FOR ALL OAK PARK RESIDENTS.

Early childhood exposure to the arts creates a base for lifelong learning, critical thinking, and art and culture appreciation. Village government should implement the following actions in order to ensure all children and residents have access to the arts and an improved quality of life.

Complying with Arts Learning Standards

Objective 5.5.1. Endorse compliance with the State of Illinois' arts learning standards.

The State of Illinois Board of Education defines the fine arts to include dance, drama, music, and visual arts. The curriculum, which begins in early elementary school and continues through high school, requires recognizing the role of arts in current and past civilizations, and understanding how to produce and express ideas through active creation and performance. Village government can support the efforts of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 and Oak Park-River Forest High School to identify resources and facilities that ensure that all schools are in compliance with the arts curriculum.

Practicing Arts Integration

Objective 5.5.2. Support local schools in practicing focused arts integration with the curriculum for other concepts like sustainability, local history, architecture, etc.

Oak Park is a complex community whose characteristics cannot be isolated or understood without the context of one another. Village government could partner with school districts and the library to adapt curricula and provide additional programming that links together an understanding of Oak Park's cultural heritage within the context of sustainability, innovation, future growth and development, and other important concepts.

Partnering With Schools

Objective 5.5.3. Partner with schools, the Oak Park Public Library, and other organizations to improve the availability and effectiveness of extra-curricular arts programs by coordinating on issues including space, transportation, scheduling, resource sharing, etc.

Education and appreciation for arts and culture is a task shared by many partners. Village government can support coordination among local stakeholder, service providers, and advocates to ensure that residents enjoy a coordinated set of programs. Partners should seek to identify gaps in services, opportunities to share facilities, potential improvements to outreach, and enhanced mobility and access to local resources.



Establishing a Cultural Collection

Objective 5.5.4. Establish a cultural collection offering arts and culture resources and facilities for residents and visitors of Oak Park and the surrounding region.

A local cultural collection would have the potential to celebrate and educate the public about Oak Park's heritage and diversity. The creation of such a facility will require collaboration among Village government, local advocates, philanthropists, and others. Village government could work with these partners to assess the viability of developing a collection, and support the effort through development policy and access to materials and information that can help create exhibits.

Supporting Cultural Literacy

Objective 5.5.5. Support "new media" cultural literacy for residents of all ages.

Multi-media and social media resources can be an effective way of demonstrating and marketing Oak Park's arts and cultural resources through modern communications. However, many residents may not be comfortable using technology to stay informed or receive information. Village government, early education providers, local school districts, the library district, senior service providers, and others could collaborate in providing training and support for residents of all ages seeking to engage arts and cultural resources through modern technologies.

Potential Metrics

Metric: Number of arts and culture-related courses offered

Desired Trend: Strengthen the art-based school curriculum by offering an increased number of fine art classes.

Potential Data Resource: Oak Park Elementary School District 97 and Oak Park and River Forest High School

Metric: Number of youth enrolled in arts curriculum and programming

Desired Trend: Increase in the number of students enrolled in fine art classes.

Potential Data Resource: Oak Park Elementary School District 97 , Oak Park-River Forest High School, Park District, and Library District

GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

ARTS & CULTURE

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 5.1 – Support the arts through Village policies and programs.				
5.1.1	Conduct and maintain complete survey of performing arts spaces within the village, including such characteristics as location, size and capacity, economic impact, etc.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	School and Park Districts	Amount of public funding for arts and culture
5.1.2	Regularly complete a comprehensive review of all current and planned arts funding.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	School and Park Districts	
5.1.3	Identify opportunities to support public art through public/private partnerships.	Governmental Collaboration	School, Library and Park Districts	
Goal 5.2 – Preserve and enhance existing arts and culture resources.				
5.2.1	Assist with the preservation and maintenance of culturally significant properties and monuments, including purchasing when appropriate, to preserve Oak Park's history.	Governmental Collaboration	School, Library and Park Districts	Attendance at performing arts events
5.2.2	Promote and support public art throughout the community.	Governmental Collaboration	School, Library and Park Districts	
5.2.3	Establish an "Arts and Culture Hall of Fame" program through projects like permanent exhibits in all public facilities, themed public art, targeted funding, and others to spread awareness of Oak Park's artistic legacy.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	School and Park Districts	
5.2.4	Promote the complete history of Oak Park, including its buildings, cultural "icons", and other aspects, as a way of both celebrating accomplishments and learning from missteps of previous generations.	Village Administration		
Goal 5.3 – Promote contemporary arts and culture as a major reason to visit Oak Park.				
5.3.1	Develop a unified marketing strategy for arts and culture in Oak Park.	Funding/Incentives		Attendance at museums and cultural institutions
5.3.2	Coordinate program planning among different arts groups throughout the year to create a balanced calendar of events.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	School and Park Districts	
5.3.3	Continue to support popular seasonal festivals and special events, and increase the number and variety of events offered throughout the year.	Governmental Collaboration	School and Park Districts	
5.3.4	Create a self-guided bicycle tour for all existing public art located in the village.	Governmental Collaboration	School and Park Districts	
5.3.5	Build a local collection of both permanent and rotating public art pieces.	Governmental Collaboration	School and Park Districts	

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, "bricks and mortar," vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 5.4 – Strengthen the existing arts environment and integrate artistic uses of space throughout the village.				
5.4.1	Support the installation of public art as a part of public development and some private development.	Regulations & Policies, Funding/Incentives	Units of local government	
5.4.2	Promote and support local Oak Park artists when commissioning public projects, including design, construction, maintenance, etc.	Regulations & Policies, Funding/Incentives	Units of local government	
5.4.3	Increase the number of live-work spaces in targeted locations through incentives, marketing, and other methods.	Regulations & Policies, Funding/Incentives	Investment in cultural space and public art	
5.4.4	Partner with developers and property owners to adaptively reuse underutilized properties for arts and culture purposes.	Funding/Incentives		
5.4.5	Make access to and between existing and emerging cultural destinations a consideration of future transportation improvements.	Governmental Collaboration, Capital Improvements		IDOT, Pace, CTA, Metra

Goal 5.5 – Integrate the arts into childhood education and lifelong learning, ensure access to arts and culture, and improve the quality of everyday life for all Oak Park residents.			
5.5.1	Endorse compliance with the State of Illinois’ arts learning standards.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
5.5.2	Support local schools in practicing focused arts integration with the curriculum for other concepts like sustainability, local history, architecture, etc.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
5.5.3	Partner with schools, the Oak Park Public Library, and other organizations to improve the availability and effectiveness of extra-curricular arts programs by coordinating on issues including space, transportation, scheduling, resource sharing, etc.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
5.5.4	Establish a cultural collection offering arts and culture resources and facilities for residents and visitors of Oak Park and the surrounding region.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
5.5.5	Support “new media” cultural literacy for residents of all ages.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government



6

Parks, Open Space, & Environmental Features

Oak Park's reputation as a "green" community is a result of a holistic approach to land use and development, active transportation, environmental sustainability, and parks and open space. Of these elements, parks, open space, and environmental features are perhaps the most visible manifestation of the community commitment to sustainability and community health. These elements are especially important in a built-out community like Oak Park, where available land is at a premium and access to recreation and nature is an important component in local quality of life.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan addresses parks, open space, and environmental features from a broad perspective. It considers them not as stand-alone pieces of the community, but rather integrated elements that complement and support urban development, multi-modal mobility, infrastructure, local services, community health, and other aspects of day-to-day life in the village. Recommendations aim to address the physical components of parks, open space, and the environment, but also consider the role of education, awareness, and capital improvements that maximize their benefit to Oak Park residents. This approach will require cooperation among Village government, Park District of Oak Park, and others to ensure local land resources and networks are properly utilized to keep Oak Park at the forefront of green communities.

Parks, open spaces, and environmental features are critical in defining the character of Oak Park, and they are also the most costly assets to lose since they can take so long to replace.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Parks, open spaces, and environmental features offer critical links to Oak Park residents; links to nature in an otherwise urban context; links to the community's history and those who shaped it; links to an active and healthy lifestyle; and links to its identity as a place of harmony between the natural and built environments. Parks, open spaces, and environmental features are critical in defining the character of Oak Park, and they are also the most costly assets to lose since they can take so long to replace.

Parks and open spaces are fundamental building blocks of healthy neighborhoods. They provide places for social interaction among Oak Park's diverse community, quiet passive places for reflection, reading and conversation, as well as opportunities for active lifestyles that promote community health. They create a common element between neighborhoods of different character, and stitch together the village through a shared experience in different neighborhoods. This is in line with the vision of Olmsted, Jensen, Burnham and other designers who viewed parks and open spaces as the social and physical glue to a community's fabric.

Trees are an iconic symbol of Oak Park's history and perhaps the most important natural resource in Oak Park. They help define neighborhood character, enhance the vibrancy of commercial districts, and soften the impacts of major transportation corridors. They also provide habitats for local species, clean air, mulch, shade, and assist in flood prevention. Oak Park's remnant heritage oak trees are a link to the oak-hickory savannah of pre-European settlement and provide a connection to Oak Park's history.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement describes Parks, Open Space, and Environmental Features as they exist in Oak Park in 2030.

Parks, open spaces, and environmental features are a distinctive element of Oak Park's neighborhoods, commercial districts, and public spaces. Parks and open spaces host a broad range of recreational and educational opportunities. They are used by residents of all ages and abilities for sports, activities, reading, quiet walks in nature, instruction, and general recreation. They are also a testing ground for innovative planning and design techniques aimed at making Oak Park a more sustainable community.

Partnerships among Oak Park, other local governments, and surrounding communities have maximized the benefits of community open spaces. Sustainable materials minimize the impacts of maintenance on the natural environment, and open spaces are used to manage stormwater runoff and minimize stress on the municipal combined sewer system. The village uses public streets, complete with landscaping, trails, benches, sidewalks, and signage, to connect open spaces throughout Oak Park. This system of open spaces has become more robust as new local parks have been built in order to provide greater local access to recreational and environmental benefits.

Oak Park's trees have flourished as a result of a comprehensive forestry management plan involving Village government, local school and park districts, the library, and other taxing bodies. As a result, mature trees occupy local streets, commercial districts, parks, campuses, and private lots. Each residential street is its own picturesque setting reflective of the character enjoyed by many previous generations, and commercial areas are visited by shoppers who enjoy the attractive environment.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & METRICS

GOAL 6.1. FIND NEW AND INNOVATIVE WAYS TO ACCOMMODATE DEMANDS FOR BOTH NATURAL AND PROGRAMMED GREEN SPACE THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY.

Oak Park is a built-out community with little available land for new or expanded open space. The following recommendations describe ways that Village government can work with its partners to meet the demand for additional open spaces and programming in order to more closely align with local and national standards and meet the communities objectives related to sustainability and community health.

Inventorying All Open Space Assets

Objective 6.1.1. Conduct an inventory of all the parks, open space, and natural resources and identify undeveloped or underutilized land that provides opportunities for green connections, links, and community gardens.

Understanding where the community is today is the first step in assessing the needs and opportunities for future parks, open space, and environmental features. Village government could work with the Park District, Public Works Department, local school districts, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and others to create a comprehensive inventory of all public or quasi-public open spaces and environmental features. This inventory should also identify underutilized properties and rights-of-way that could serve as future parks or open space, highlighting those that are publicly-owned as the most immediate opportunities. This inventory could be used as the basis for coordinated planning among Village government and other parks and open space providers.

Developing a Village-Wide Master Plan

Objective 6.1.2. Develop a village-wide Open Space Master Plan for all public properties through coordination with residents, Park District, local agencies, not-for-profits, business associations, School Districts, stakeholders, and property owners.

Parks and open spaces are not provided by a single entity throughout the community. Rather, residents enjoy facilities and spaces owned and managed by the Park District of Oak Park, Village government, local school districts, and others. In that way, parks and open space planning should be done in a collaborative manner. Village government can work with its local partners to establish a community-wide Open Space Master Plan that considers Oak Park's comprehensive set of assets, including active recreation areas, passive parks, natural assets, Village-owned rights-of-way, and others. The Master Plan should also consider opportunities to improve access to open spaces and facilities through shared use agreements and coordinated programming.

Maintaining Funding for Open Space

Objective 6.1.3. Continue existing funding and explore new funding sources to preserve/enhance parks, open space, and natural resources.

The Park District is a separate taxing district from Village government and maintains its own budget and capital improvement program. However, Village government could continue to work with the Park District and local school districts to identify potential savings in the delivery of recreation facilities and services. Additionally, Village government can partner with the Park District to be more competitive in pursuing grant funds that meet multiple community goals and objectives.



Providing Natural Open Space

Objective 6.1.4. Provide passive and natural open spaces that support sustained ecosystems and provide an opportunity for residents to interact with nature.

Natural and passive open spaces provide important benefits to Oak Park citizens. They allow natural flora and fauna to thrive uninterrupted by activities or maintenance that is often required in active or programmed parks. They also provide the opportunity for residents to experience nature in a more intimate way. Village government could work with local property owners and regional agencies to identify, sustain, and restore potential natural open spaces, and provide education and awareness that increases local appreciation for their role within the village.

Utilizing Public Right-of-Way

Objective 6.1.5. Conduct studies to determine where streets, alleys, and rights-of-way can incorporate green connections or links and provide guidelines for implementation.

The Village of Oak Park includes approximately 4.5 square miles (2,800 acres) of land. Of that area approximately 25% is under the direct control of Village government in the form of public right-of-way that includes streets and alleys. These areas serve a series of purposes, including traffic operations, parking, access to local land uses, deliveries, trash removal, etc. However, there may be opportunities to use some of this real estate for functions that specifically support connections between open spaces throughout the village. Bike lanes, expanded parkways, wide medians, linear parks, green belts, and other techniques can enhance mobility and increase the amount of open space within neighborhoods. Village government can identify streets and alleys that have excess space and develop design concepts that integrate these and other green connection elements within the context of other important functions provided by the public right-of-way.

Exploring New Funding Sources

Objective 6.1.6. Research the benefits of, and implementation if appropriate, various potential funding sources related to enhancing existing parks, open space, and environmental features.

Maintaining existing open spaces, or creating new ones, may require funding beyond what Village government or the Park District is able to allot. Village government could work with the Park District to identify and pursue potential funding sources that support this objective. Such sources may include federal, state, and regional grants, not-for-profit grants and donations, user fees, impact fees, and others.

POTENTIAL METRICS

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of Village government in supporting open space objectives.

Metric: Amount of open space used for public programming

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in amount of open space

Potential Data Resource: Inventories provided by Village government, Park District, school districts, and other partners that own or manage shared facilities

Metric: Total amount of passive or natural open space

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in amount of passive or natural open space

Potential Data Resource: Public Works Department and Park District data related to the programming of various open spaces

Metric: Amount of public right-of-way used for open space or open space connections

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in amount of public right-of-way used for open space or connections

Potential Data Resource: Public Works Department data related to the use of public right-of-way for medians, bike lanes, active recreation area, etc.



GOAL 6.2. SUPPORT AN ACTIVE AND INVOLVED COMMUNITY BY ENGAGING OAK PARK'S CITIZENS AND PROVIDING EASY ACCESS TO PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES.

Engaging Oak Park residents and businesses will be the most effective way to ensure that parks, open spaces, and environmental features are frequently used and meet the needs of the community. The following recommendations describe ways Village government can support access to parks, open space, and environmental features for the benefit of all citizens.

Building Relationships

Objective 6.2.1. Build strategic relationships with both public and private entities.

Much of Oak Park's vibrancy is due to the presence of public agencies, not-for-profits, and private service providers. Village government should seek to strengthen relationships with these local partners. This offers two potential benefits. First, the relationships may uncover opportunities to provide coordinated services or programs. Secondly, they may result in greater communication to residents who seek such services and programming.

Accommodating Flexibility

Objective 6.2.2. Support the design and program parks and open spaces to provide opportunities for festivals and special events.

With limited land available for open space and recreation, the Oak Park community should continue to be creative about how it uses flexible open spaces to host a variety of activities and events. Since open space in Oak Park falls under the purview of several units of local government, Village government could collaborate with the Park District and local school districts to ensure that publicly-owned facilities can support a broad range of potential functions. These may include structured recreation or athletics, concerts, festivals, passive open space, and others.

Supporting Access for All Residents

Objective 6.2.3. Accommodate easy access and provide amenities to parks and open spaces for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Inclusive design is an important part of supporting a diverse population. All residents should be able to enjoy open spaces throughout the village. Village government could work with the Park District and local school districts to ensure that parks and environmental features accommodate all users, including those with physical or emotional disabilities. This may include the creation of consistent design standards that address on-site pedestrian networks, secure bike racks or lockers, and design that fosters interaction among users and create a safe and comfortable place.



Fostering Multi-Modal Access to Open Space

Objective 6.2.4. Ensure that the local street network supports multi-modal access to parks, open space, and environmental features.

Open space users may arrive at a facility in a number of ways. Village government should consider local traffic circulation – including critical links, one-way streets, and traffic control devices – and its impact on adjacent neighborhoods and commercial districts. Village government could also identify opportunities for bike paths and pedestrian improvements to ensure that non-motorized users enjoy safe and convenient access to all facilities. Village government can also work with CTA and Pace to determine opportunities for direct bus transit service to open spaces, and identify land needs for bus stops that can accommodate passenger shelters and other amenities.

Integrating Open Space and Education

Objective 6.2.5. Collaborate with schools and libraries to incorporate parks and environmental features into educational curricula.

Building an appreciation for parks and environmental features can enhance appreciation for them among Oak Park residents. Village government could collaborate with the Park District, local school districts, the Public Library, private education providers, childcare providers, and others, to provide information about and access to parks and environmental features for Oak Park's youth. Topics could address local ecology, active lifestyle choices, obesity and activity, flood management, and other issues relevant to local curricula and educational programming.

POTENTIAL METRICS

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in expanding education and awareness of parks, open space, and environmental features.

Metric: Number of days or events for which community spaces are used

Desired Trend: Maintain or increase amount of usage of community spaces

Potential Data Resource: Information provided by Village government and other units of local government

Metric: Amount and utilization of bicycle storage capacity available in open spaces

Desired Trend: Maintain or increase amount of bicycle storage capacity

Potential Data Resource: Inventories provided by Village government, Park District, school districts, and other partners that own or manage open space facilities

Metric: Number of children participating in open space-related education programs

Desired Trend: Annual increase in the number of children participating

Potential Data Resource: Enrollment statistics provided by local school districts for programs or classes specifically oriented towards local open space and environment



GOAL 6.3. PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES.

Providing open space is only part of the equation. Village government should also serve as a model in the design and maintenance of open spaces to ensure that benefits are maximized and potential negative impacts are minimized. The following objectives describe how Village government can use the design and maintenance of open spaces to ensure the health of plant life, minimize impacts of local infrastructure, and reduce the resources used for maintenance.

Promoting Plant Health Care

Objective 6.3.1. Promote Plant Health Care best practices to maintain or improve the appearance, vitality, and safety of the parks and open space by using the most cost-effective and environmentally sensitive practices and treatments available.

Plant Health Care best practices aim to maintain or improve the appearance, health, and lifespan of plant life through environmentally sensitive and cost-effective techniques. Plant Health Care programs typically include plant analysis and diagnostics, insect and disease management strategies, and fertilization and soil management. Village government can work with its staff and the Park District to develop a community-wide Plant Health Care program intended to maximize the benefits of investment in plant life and achieve other goals related to sustainability and environmental conservation.

Managing Stormwater in Open Spaces

Objective 6.3.2. Minimize the impacts on the current stormwater management system by increasing green space and decreasing the impervious surface area in all parks and open spaces.

Open spaces provide an excellent opportunity to manage and cleanse stormwater. Village government could work with the Park District and local school districts to identify opportunities to maximize the permeability of open spaces by installing native plantings in inactive portions of parks, and surfaces with a relatively high rate of permeability in active portions.

Creating “Green” Parking Lots & Alleys

Objective 6.3.3. Use village-owned properties as a sustainable model by implementing green design techniques and maintenance practices.

Parking lots and alleys are major generators of stormwater run-off. Village government can adopt and implement design standards for publicly-owned parking lots and alleys that include permeable pavers, porous asphalt, additional landscaping, high tolerance and low-water plan materials, greywater reuse, and other best management practices. Standards should also address surface and landscape maintenance, including the prohibited use of dangerous pesticides, gas powered equipment, and other harmful techniques. Prior to and after the implementation of these standards, Village government could assess the performance of existing parking lot designs so that clear before and after data can demonstrate resource savings, reduced impacts on municipal infrastructure, and the long-term maintenance considerations of innovative materials. This will provide the basis for encouraging private parking lot owners to adopt similar improvements.



Reducing Resources Used for Maintenance

Objective 6.3.4. Take steps to conserve water and reduce the waste of natural resources by emphasizing the use of native plant species, recycled materials, permeable pavers, and porous asphalts for all new installations.

The development, maintenance, and operation of open spaces should be done in concert with the natural environment. Village government can work with the Park District, schools, and other partners to modify design and building standards to include low-maintenance and xeriscaping materials that reduce the amount of water and fertilizer. Village government should also encourage the use of recycled materials from local demolition projects in the construction of open spaces.

POTENTIAL METRICS

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in promoting sustainable development and maintenance practices for open spaces.

Metric: Total amount of permeable surfaces in public properties

Desired Trend: Increase in the total amount of permeable surface

Potential Data Resource: Development statistics and design plans recorded by forms of local government

GOAL 6.4. THE VILLAGE, AND ITS OPEN SPACES, SHOULD SERVE AS AN EDUCATIONAL MODEL AND STRIVE TO HIGHLIGHT ITS HISTORICAL HERITAGE.

Long-term sustainability is dependent upon an understanding and appreciation of the past and how it shaped the Oak Park community. The village’s open spaces are an important part of that past. The following recommendations describe ways Village government can enhance an appreciation of the community’s history by celebrating its natural heritage and demonstrating how it can be preserved in the future.

CELEBRATING OAK PARK’S NATURAL HISTORY

Objective 6.4.1. Celebrate the legacy of Oak Park’s natural environment through education and awareness about important events, spaces, and people.

Jens Jensen is one of the most renowned landscaped architects and is widely considered one of the founding fathers of his profession. Oak Park is fortunate to have several parks, gardens and structures designed by Jensen. Village government could work with the Historic Preservation Commission and other local advocates to develop a program or exhibit that celebrates his work and the work of others in the community. Programs and materials should be designed to foster local appreciation for the community legacy and on-going commitment to the natural environment.



CREATING REGIONAL AWARENESS

Objective 6.4.2. Collaborate with adjacent municipalities, Cook County Forest Preserve, and historical societies to develop educational programs designed to encourage more involvement in the local parks, open space, and environmental features.

Increasing education and awareness about parks, open space, and the environment is an important step in growing appreciation for its role in Oak Park and the region. In addition to its own collection of amenities, Oak Park is surrounded by other communities that enjoy regional open spaces, including Chicago’s Columbus Park and Garfield Park, River Forest’s Cummings Square, Frederick Law Olmsted plan for Riverside, and the Des Plaines River corridor, among others. Village government could coordinate with other municipalities, park districts, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and other partners to provide education and awareness of open space amenities and resources throughout the West Cook County region.

DEMONSTRATING THE VALUE OF LOCAL HABITATS

Objective 6.4.3. Use parks and open spaces as biodiversity models to educate citizens on the role they can play in maintaining their urban habitat.

Parks, open spaces, and environmental areas are living dioramas that illustrate the balance between ecosystems, natural resources, and the urban development. Educating residents about how they work and why they are important to the long-term sustainability of the village and planet is an important first step in fostering appreciation for the environment. Village government can encourage collaboration among local school districts, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and other partners to include site visits and mobile demonstrations as a part of childhood education and local events.

INSTALLING NATIVE PLANT GARDENS

Objective 6.4.4. Encourage installation of native plant gardens.

Native plant gardens provide environmental benefits related to stormwater management and filtration, appreciation for local history, and community aesthetics. Village government could explore opportunities for the installation of native plant gardens on municipal properties, including administrative facilities, maintenance sites, and parking lots. The creation of these gardens should be complemented by community outreach that educates residents regarding the benefits of the gardens and allows them to observe installation and maintenance.

POTENTIAL METRICS

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in promoting awareness about its natural heritage.

Metric: Attendance or participation in open space or nature-related activities and tours

Desired Trend: Annual maintenance or increase in the number of residents or visitors participating in activities or tours

Potential Data Resource: Registration or ticket sales maintained by tour or activity providers

Metric: Total square footage of native plant gardens on publicly-held property

Desired Trend: Annual maintenance or increase in the total square footage of native plant gardens

Potential Data Resource: Inventories provided by the Public Works Department, Park District, school districts, and other public land owners



GOAL 6.5. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE OAK PARK'S URBAN FOREST.

Trees are one of the defining characteristics of Oak Park. From its residential streets to the municipal logo, trees complement the built environment to create an idyllic setting that is truly unique. Policies and projects related to sustaining Oak Park's tree canopy should reflect four primary goals; longevity, health, diversity, and total tree canopy. The following objectives describe ways Village government can maintain its urban forest and ensure that it is resilient to disease, climate change and other local or global influences.

Creating an Urban Forest Management Plan

Objective 6.5.1. Develop an Urban Forest Management Plan that addresses longevity, health, diversity, and total tree canopy through municipal programs, partnerships with other forms of local government, and policies related to tree preservation as a part of private development.

The development and preservation of the urban forest should be accomplished through a holistic approach. The Forestry Division of the Village's Public Works Department could develop a comprehensive Urban Forest Management Plan that includes best practices related to tree maintenance, disease prevention, climate change preparedness, and other factors. The Plan should include research and conclusions that provide the basis for other policy and regulatory decisions, including design standards for streetscapes and parks and zoning amendments.

Support Science-Based Decision-Making

Objective 6.5.2. Seek input from the community and scientific experts in decision-making regarding the village's tree population.

Oak Park is fortunate to have an educated citizenry that is appreciative of its urban forest and the benefits it provides, as well as access to scientists that can provide technical rationale related to existing or proposed policies related to the local tree population. Village government and its various departments, boards, and commissions can regularly engage local experts when considering policies, projects, or regulations that may have an impact on the community's trees.

Developing Village Tree Policy

Objective 6.5.3. Ensure the long-term health of the local tree population through the use of a comprehensive toolbox of municipal policies, programs, and incentives.

Village government has access to several tools that can help ensure the long-term health of the community's trees. Village government should consider the use of regulatory tools (i.e. a Tree Preservation Ordinance), strategic partnerships (i.e. bulk purchase of plant materials and discounted resale to local residents and businesses), and local policies and standards to support on-going tree replacement, climate resiliency, species diversity, and tree spacing and density.



Preserving Natural Habitats

Objective 6.5.4. Construct wildlife corridors with native plants and replace trees that must be cut down with native trees to ensure habitat preservation.

Trees are an important component in local ecosystems as they provide food and protection for wildlife. In order to help preserve local ecosystems, Village government could replace unsalvageable trees with new plantings. Ideally, Village government could anticipate the future loss of trees and proactively plant trees that have time to mature and integrate themselves into the local ecosystem prior to the removal of aging trees. Village government can also identify opportunities to plant new trees on publicly-owned property or right-of-way that serve to connect other pieces of the village's urban forest, resulting in continuous green corridors that foster local migration and a greater variety of wildlife.

Ensuring Proper Care of the Urban Forest

Objective 6.5.5. Educate residents and business owners on the "proper care" of trees through outreach programs, handouts, mailings, and/or useful web resources.

Many of the village's trees are on private property and are maintained by residents or business owners. Village government can provide educational materials and outreach through its multi-media networks that provide information on the "dos and don'ts" of tree care. This could include demonstration by the Forestry Division of regular tree maintenance as it occurs throughout the village.

POTENTIAL METRICS

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in sustaining its urban forest.

Metric: Alignment with species diversity goals established in an Urban Forest Management Plan

Desired Trend: Closer alignment with goals expressed in the Urban Forest Management Plan

Potential Data Resource: Tree inventory maintained by the Forestry Division of the Public Works Department

Metric: Overall tree canopy coverage

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in the overall tree canopy coverage

Potential Data Resource: Analysis of aerial imagery or data collected by the Forestry Division of the Public Works Department



Village of Oak Park Parks, Environment, & Open Space

Open space in Oak Park is generally provided by either the Park District of Oak Park or its two local school districts. Recommendations related to parks, open space, and environmental features aim to increase access to a variety of recreation and natural areas for all citizens through investment in green areas and multi-modal systems.

Legend

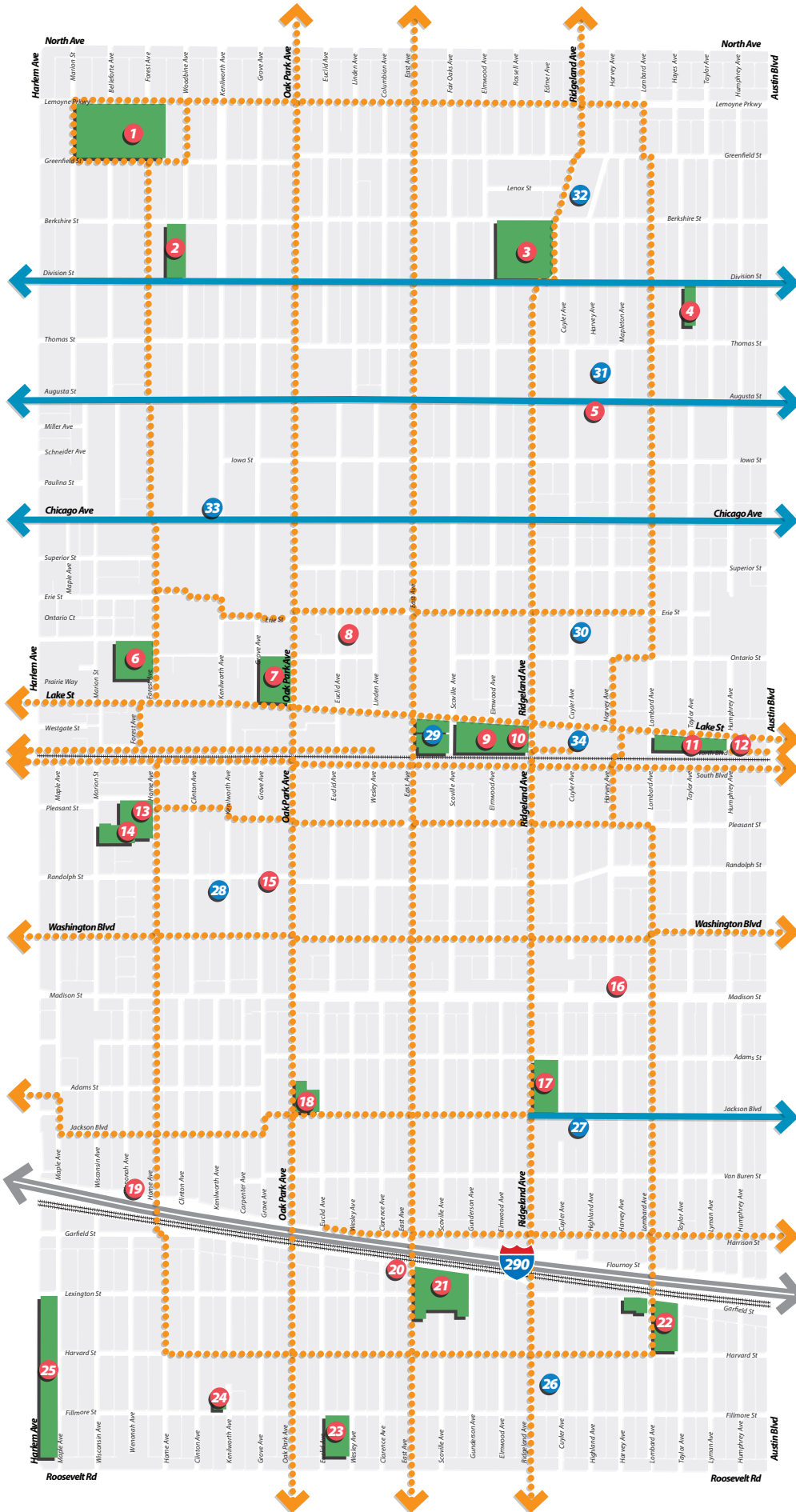
- Existing Bike Trails
- Proposed Bike Trails

Park District

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 Lindberg Park | 13 Pleasant Home |
| 2 Field Park & Center | 14 Mills Park |
| 3 Taylor Park | 15 Randolph Tot Lot |
| 4 Andersen Park & Center | 16 Hedges Admin Building |
| 5 Dole Center | 17 Longfellow Park & Center |
| 6 Austin Gardens | 18 Fox Park & Center |
| 7 Scoville Park | 19 Wenonah Tot Lot |
| 8 Cheney Mansion | 20 Oak Park Conservatory |
| 9 Ridgeland Commons Park | 21 Rehm Park & Pool |
| 10 Ridgeland Commons Pool and Hruby Ice Arena | 22 Barrie Park & Center |
| 11 Stevenson Park & Center | 23 Euclid Square Park |
| 12 Oak Park Gymnastics Center | 24 Carroll Park & Center |
| | 25 Maple Park |

School Parks

- | | |
|--|--|
| 26 Washington Irving Elementary School | 31 Whittler Elementary School |
| 27 Henry Washworth Longfellow School | 32 William Hatch School |
| 28 Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School | 33 Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary School |
| 29 Oak Park River Forest High School | 34 Percy Julian Middle School |
| 30 William Beye Elementary School | |



GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 6.1 – Find new and innovative ways to accommodate demands for both natural and programmed green space throughout the community.			
6.1.1	Conduct an inventory of all the parks, open space, and natural resources and identify undeveloped or underutilized land that provides opportunities for green connections, links, and community gardens.	Governmental Collaboration	Park District, local school districts, IDNR
6.1.2	Develop a village-wide Open Space Master Plan for all public properties through coordination with residents, Park District, local agencies, not-for-profits, business associations, School Districts, stakeholders, and property owners.	Policies and Regulations, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
6.1.3	Continue existing funding and explore new funding sources to preserve/enhance parks, open space, and natural resources.	Governmental Collaboration, Funding/Incentives	Local school and park districts
6.1.4	Provide passive and natural open spaces that support sustained ecosystems and provide an opportunity for residents to interact with nature.	Governmental Collaboration, Capital Improvements	Park District
6.1.5	Conduct studies to determine where streets, alleys, and rights-of-way can incorporate green connections or links and provide guidelines for implementation.	Policies and Regulations, Capital Improvements	Park District
6.1.6	Research the benefits of, and implement if appropriate, various potential funding sources related to enhancing existing parks, open space, and environmental features.	Governmental Collaboration, Funding/Incentives	Park District
Goal 6.2 – Support an active and involved community by engaging Oak Park’s citizens and providing easy access to parks, open space, and environmental features.			
6.2.1	Build strategic relationships with both public and private entities.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government and public agencies
6.2.2	Support the design and program parks and open spaces to provide opportunities for festivals and special events.	Policies and Regulations, Governmental Collaboration	Park District and local school districts
6.2.3	Accommodate easy access and provide amenities to parks and open spaces for pedestrians and bicyclists.	Governmental Collaboration	Park District and local school districts
6.2.4	Ensure that the local street network supports multi-modal access to parks, open space, and environmental features.	Capital Improvement Program	
6.2.5	Collaborate with schools and libraries to incorporate parks and environmental features into educational curricula.	Governmental Collaboration	Park District, Library District and local school districts

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 6.3 – Promote sustainable development and maintenance practices in parks and open spaces.			
6.3.1	Promote Plant Health Care best practices to maintain or improve the appearance, vitality and, safety of the parks and open space by using the most cost-effective and environmentally sensitive practices and treatments available.	Policies and Regulations, Governmental Collaboration	Local school and park districts
6.3.2	Minimize the impacts on the current stormwater management system by increasing green space and decreasing the impervious surface area in all parks and open spaces.	Regulation and Policies, Governmental Collaboration	Local school and park districts
6.3.3	Use village-owned properties as a sustainable model by implementing green design techniques and maintenance practices.	Village Administration, Capital Improvements	
6.3.4	Take steps to conserve water and reduce the waste of natural resources by emphasizing the use of native plant species, recycled materials, permeable pavers, and porous asphalts for all new installations.	Capital Improvements, Governmental Collaboration	Local school and park districts
			Total amount of permeable surfaces in public properties

Goal 6.4 – The Village and its open spaces should serve as an educational model and strive to highlight its historical heritage.			
6.4.1	Celebrate the legacy of Oak Park's natural environment through education and awareness about important events, spaces, and people.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts, IDNR
6.4.2	Collaborate with adjacent municipalities, Cook County Forest Preserve, and historical societies to develop educational programs designed to encourage more involvement in the local parks, opens space, and environmental features.	Governmental Collaboration	Other municipalities, park district, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County
6.4.3	Use parks and open spaces as biodiversity models to educate citizens on the role they can play in maintaining their urban habitat.	Governmental Collaboration	Local school districts, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County
6.4.4	Encourage installation of native plant gardens.	Policies and Regulations, Funding and Incentives	
			Attendance or participation Total square footage of native plant gardens on publicly-held property

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 6.5 – Maintain and enhance Oak Park’s Urban Forest.			
6.5.1	Develop an Urban Forest Management Plan with specific guidelines to inform the future design of parks and open space, maintain and increase the urban forest population, and increase species diversity.	Village Administration	Alignment with species diversity goals established in an Urban Forest Management Plan Overall tree canopy coverage
6.5.2	Seek input from the community and experts in decision-making regarding the village’s tree population.	Regulatory	
6.5.3	Ensure the long-term health of the local tree population through the use of a comprehensive toolbox of municipal policies, programs, and incentives.	Policies and Regulations, Funding/Incentives	
6.5.4	Construct wildlife corridors with native plants and replace trees that must be cut down with native trees to ensure habitat preservation.	Capital Improvement Program	
6.5.5	Educate residents and business owners on the “proper care” of trees through outreach programs, handouts, mailings, and/or useful web resources.	Governmental Collaboration	



7 Neighborhoods, Housing, & Diversity

Oak Park has been proactive in creating a community that is accepting of all people. In 1973, the Village Board formalized this commitment by adopting the Oak Park Diversity Statement. The Statement speaks to the role of the Comprehensive Plan in helping set a course that achieves a stronger community through diversity and integration.

“...Creating a mutually respectful, multicultural environment does not happen on its own; it must be intentional. Our goal is for people of widely differing backgrounds to do more than live next to one another. Through interaction, we believe we can reconcile the apparent paradox of appreciating and even celebrating our differences while at the same time developing consensus on a shared vision for the future.”

The recommendations of this chapter address the relationship between neighborhoods, housing, and diversity. The three are interlinked, as they represent the building blocks of a fully integrated community, from the village-wide perspective to the scale of each neighborhood and block. The goals of this chapter relate in some way to all other chapters in this Plan and strive to ensure that all residents of Oak Park have the opportunities and access to quality housing and supportive and welcoming neighborhoods.

Diversity and integration are fundamental values in Oak Park and must permeate all aspects of the community. They foster social acceptance that strengthen each neighborhood and the Village as a whole, and encourage long-term investment in neighborhoods and housing.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Oak Park is a village of high community character, high-quality housing, and a welcoming and diverse population. It is an intentionally diverse and integrated community that has earned a local, regional, and national reputation as a community that is welcoming and accepting of all people. The village is committed to sustaining and strengthening its diversity and integration, and to providing an environment of high quality housing in desirable neighborhoods.

A broad variety of housing types and price points makes Oak Park attractive to a diverse population with different needs and preferences. It also helps define the unique character of Oak Park's neighborhoods. These characteristics provide the initial attraction and access to the community, while an integrated mix of housing ensures that blocks and neighborhoods foster inclusion and acceptance of all residents. Oak Park's neighborhoods provide the framework for social interaction and a sense of community. Local activities and public facilities provide the physical and social support that complement high quality housing.

Diversity and integration are fundamental values in Oak Park and must permeate all aspects of the community. They foster social acceptance that strengthen each neighborhood and the village as a whole, and encourage long-term investment in neighborhoods and housing. Village government's adopted Diversity Statement clearly expresses the importance of quality housing, infrastructure and services that create an inclusive and welcoming community.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement describes Neighborhoods, Housing and Diversity as they exist in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park has strived to create a community of thriving, welcoming neighborhoods that collectively create a strong, vibrant and diverse community. Through specific and deliberate efforts, each neighborhood is highly diverse with integrated populations that benefit from a variety of housing options, are home to engaged and active residents, and provide high quality community services. Oak Park's neighborhoods foster inclusion of all residents through physical design, social outreach and involvement, and programs and events that result in the active integration of the community.

All members of the Oak Park community share the goals of high quality and accessible housing. This includes Village government, supporting agencies, developers, property owners and managers, financiers, not-for-profits, and individual residents. Through partnerships and the targeted use of local, regional, state and federal resources, Oak Park has expanded its supply of housing for people in all walks of life. Traditional housing has been modified to meet specific local market needs, and new development incorporates housing that appeals to a broad range of potential tenants. As a result, all residents feel they are an equal part of the social landscape, whether they live in predominantly residential areas or mixed-use environments, such as commercial districts or transit nodes that utilize appropriate housing densities and accessibility to maximize local and regional mobility and provide greater access to commercial, recreational, civic, and government services.

The community has not become complacent towards diversity and integration. Instead, Oak Park citizens proactively sustain and broaden these characteristics. Accessible and affordable housing, events, education and awareness, mobility, and local services ensure that the community remains inclusive of all residents throughout the village as well as in each neighborhood and block.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & METRICS

GOAL 7.1. SUSTAIN AND BROADEN DIVERSITY AND INTEGRATION THROUGHOUT OAK PARK.

Diversity and integration are overarching issues that should guide actions and policies more specifically related to neighborhoods and housing. In order to provide the context for localized efforts to strengthen neighborhoods and housing stock, Village government should implement the following actions.

Advancing Diversity through Village Leadership

Objective 7.1.1. Ensure that the composition of and actions taken by Village boards and commissions reflect the community's commitment to diversity and affordable housing and Oak Park's adopted Diversity Statement.

While municipal regulations and ordinances are formally adopted by the Board of Trustees, the creation of policy and priorities is informed by a number of boards and commissions. This structure provides the forum for constructive debate about municipal policies that directly or indirectly impact the level of diversity and integration in Oak Park. As such, it is important that those leading the debate represent the perspectives and values of the diverse population of Oak Park. This can be accomplished in two ways. First, Village government could proactively recruit candidates for service on various boards and commissions that reflect the diversity of the Oak Park community. Secondly, Village government should require that each board and commission annually reaffirm its commitment to the adopted Diversity Statement. These actions will ensure that those advising the Village Trustees will help advance diversity and integration as a core value in Oak Park.

Enhancing Education & Awareness

Objective 7.1.2. Provide education and awareness programs, distributed through all available communication tools and networks, to highlight Oak Park's diversity and increase sensitivity to and respect for various ethnic, cultural, and religious differences.

Simply being diverse is not enough. Village government should support an environment that strengthens acceptance of others by celebrating their differences. This can be done by capitalizing on relationships and resources already in place. Village government could work with other entities to develop materials that express the desire of Oak Park to be a diverse and integrated community. These materials could be distributed through the Village's website, local access television, newsletters. And other networks to ensure that all residents understand the Village's position on this issue. Village government can also work with local public and private schools to ensure that diversity and integration are an important part of recruitment, enrollment, and curriculum development. Over time, these actions are intended to remove barriers for new residents who wish to move to Oak Park and ensure that young citizens are shielded from preconceptions that create deconstructive division within the village.



What others are doing...

Strengthening Diversity

Arlington, VA 2012 Cultural Diversity Award for its Multicultural Outreach Program

Arlington's outreach program extends throughout all County departments and ensures residents of all backgrounds have access to all community services and educational programs offered. For example, Spanish-speaking residents have access to a comprehensive Spanish language website, citizenship classes and workshops through the Department of Human Services. The Arlington Education and Employment program offers English classes and the Arlington Employment Center offers job readiness training.

For more information on the Multicultural Outreach Program, visit: <http://www.arlingtonva.us/portals/topics/documents/file63539.pdf>

Aligning Governmental Policies, Projects, and Regulations

Objective 7.1.3. Assess all major proposed governmental actions, including but not limited to zoning, development, schools, and public works proposals, for their impacts on promoting integration.

Village government should set the example for creating a diverse and integrated community. Its actions – regulations, capital improvements, partnerships, etc. – should be weighed against their ability to advance this goal throughout Oak Park. Village government should conduct a review of its Code of Ordinances to determine where regulations further segregate the community's population. Village government should also ensure that capital improvements do not inhibit access to services, facilities, or other amenities that foster diversity and integration. Finally, Village government could collaborate with vendors and institutions, including contractors, lenders, service providers, and others, to support the community's values through equal employment opportunity, fair lending practices, and other policies and programs.

Advancing Regional Diversity

Objective 7.1.4. Advance regional diversity through schools, multi-jurisdictional programs, not-for-profits, and other resources to grow diversity and acceptance in and around Oak Park.

Diversity and integration are issues that transcend Oak Park's boundaries. Neighboring communities and the region as a whole can benefit from a population that is accepting of others and cognizant of the value that all citizens offer. Village government could continue to seek opportunities to work with its neighbors and throughout the region to advance diversity. This can be done through regular forums to discuss regional issues, the coordinated adoption of policies or regulations in conjunction with surrounding municipalities, collaboration in the procurement and allocation of funding sources for planning, development, and programs, and advocacy for changes to policies at the state and federal levels that impact diversity and integration locally and regionally.

Attracting a Diverse Population

Objective 7.1.5. Actively market Oak Park to a broad spectrum of potential residents throughout the Chicago region and ensure that all neighborhoods are appealing to all residents and potential residents.

Maintaining a diverse and integrated population often entails attracting residents from outside of the village. This requires two important elements; attractive housing options that meet a range of demand in terms of price and amenities, and awareness in other communities that these housing options exist. In order to increase awareness, Village government can work with local and regional realtors to provide community information that is beyond what is available through the Multiple Listings Service (MLS) and other property search resources. Village government can also partner with agencies, districts, and institutions whose boundaries extend beyond Oak Park in order to promote the community. Finally, Village government could undertake a regional marketing campaign that highlights amenities that appeal to potential residents of all kinds, including the village's walkability, safety, education, commercial services, and character.



Supporting Diversity Initiatives

Objective 7.1.6. Support all programs and projects that encourage, require, or incent the development of housing, neighborhood services, or other outcomes that foster diversity, inclusion, and integration throughout Oak Park.

In many instances, Village government may not have direct control over a project or initiative that has the potential to advance local diversity and integration. However, it may have the ability to support certain actions undertaken by agencies, institutions, developers, or others. Village government could utilize both fiscal and non-fiscal tools for projects that meet the community's goal of a more diverse and integrated community. These may include tax rebates for affordable housing and other appropriate developments, staff support for programs or marketing undertaken by community partners, advocacy for the funding of services that meet local needs, and others. In addition to encouraging practices that advance diversity, Village government should establish benchmarks or thresholds for measuring local success in attaining diversity and affordability. These measures will assist elected officials, municipal staff, and other implementation partners in determining specific areas of improvement a appropriate policies and projects.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in sustaining and broadening diversity and integration in Oak Park.

Metric: Degree of diversity in census tracts or other geographic areas

Desired Trend: Greater level of diversity

Potential Data Resource: Census data available at various levels of geography

Metric: Village-wide diversity versus regional diversity

Desired Trend: Village more closely approaching regional diversity

Potential Data Resource: Census data/analysis from the Oak Park Regional Housing Center

Metric: Level of dissimilarity/integration at various scales of geography (using dissimilarity index)

Desired Trend: Lower dissimilarity scores over time

Potential Data Resource: Dissimilarity analysis from the Oak Park Regional Housing Center



What others are doing...

Successful Public Spaces

Design Standards for Public Spaces

Communities throughout the United States are incorporating unique approaches to urban design and landscape architecture in order to foster social interaction in public spaces. There are several publications that document important characteristics of successful urban spaces. While details may be applied differently in each community and space, all publications tend to highlight the following themes:

- Activities that stimulate the space, and supporting amenities (i.e. benches facing active areas) that provide the opportunities for engagement
- Comfort and protection from poor weather, allowing people to remain in the space for significant amounts of time
- Safety for people of all ages
- Convenient proximity to surrounding activities and destinations
- Fully accessible spaces and amenities (i.e. restrooms)
- Wayfinding and information to that support access to active areas

GOAL 7.2. ENSURE ALL OAK PARK NEIGHBORHOODS FOSTER SOCIAL INTERACTION AND INCLUSIVENESS.

The ultimate objective of having a diverse community should be to foster acceptance and inclusion among all types of people. The following are actions the Village can take to support interactions among Oak Park's population and maximize the value that diverse citizens offer.

Creating Quality Public Spaces & Facilities

Objective 7.2.1. Review local codes and standards to encourage all public facilities and private gathering spaces to not only meet standards for accessibility, but to encourage shared spaces and interaction among all potential users.

Streets, parks, schools, libraries, commercial districts, and other public areas are the primary arenas for social interaction. However, they must be properly located and designed to support interaction among members of the community, and be fully accessible in order to not exclude potential users. In addition to meeting these base standards, public spaces should also strive to be unique and attractive, creating environments where citizens want to spend time and interact with one another. The Village could amend regulations and standards that guide the design of its facilities to ensure that they are universally accessible and foster social interaction. The Village could also work with entities that manage other public facilities and encourage them to follow the Village's example.

Fostering Social Inclusion

Objective 7.2.2. Utilize a multi-layered approach to encourage social interaction among all residents through existing community resources and networks, and the expanded use of neighborhood organizations, local events and activities.

Even in neighborhoods with a highly diverse and integrated population, residents may feel hesitant about participating in events that foster interaction. Since people and cultures view the role of community differently, addressing this issue requires an approach designed to engage residents at several levels. The most fundamental way to encourage residents to become an active part of their community is at the neighborhood level. Neighbors, block leaders, and neighborhood organizations can be encouraged to approach new residents with welcome packets and information about the community. At the community-wide level, the Village could continue to provide activities that support social interaction and inclusion. Finally, the Village can work with schools, places of worship, not-for-profits, and other partners to engage residents and encourage their participation in their neighborhood and community.

Accommodating Residents with Specific needs

Objective 7.2.3. Adopt policies or regulations that require housing for residents with specific needs to be integrated into all portions of the Village, and encourage social interaction among all residents.

Integrating residents that have unique needs with the larger population fosters independence and a greater sense of inclusion. Rather than isolating these residents from the rest of the community, the Village should support the development of housing that responds to specific needs and is integrated among traditional housing. This can be accomplished by providing incentives or bonuses for projects that include housing for residents with specific needs, working closely with public or quasi-public housing providers to acquire land and develop such housing, and assisting residents with the conversion of traditional housing into units that meet the specific needs of tenants.



Supporting Neighborhood Organizations

Objective 7.2.4. Expand the presence of neighborhood organizations to enhance local communication networks and allow residents to improve the broader Oak Park community through neighborhood-based involvement.

The Southeast Oak Park Community Organization, or SEOPCO, was founded out of the residents' desire to preserve Barrie Park. Today, the organization provides a variety of services for residents, including events, awareness, updates on local and community-wide initiatives, and more. In many areas of Oak Park, the block serves as the social unit. However, the Village should support the creation of new neighborhood organizations that would serve as resources for maintaining open communications with municipal staff and elected leaders, and for encouraging participation and interaction at a broader level.

Minimizing Physical Barriers

Objective 7.2.5. Assess and mitigate the impacts of existing or potential barriers that may hinder social interaction among residents.

Physical barriers can often inhibit social interaction among residents and isolate portions of the community. In Oak Park, the Eisenhower transportation corridor and Union Pacific/CTA Green Line transit corridor fragment the village into three distinct areas. Locally, disruptions to the local block pattern can create barriers to public spaces and commercial areas where interaction occurs. The Village could implement capital improvements intended to stitch back together isolated areas of the community through increased opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle crossings over the Eisenhower corridor, enhanced safety on existing connections under the Metra/CTA transit corridor and Eisenhower corridor, and the removal of cul-de-sacs where appropriate from a land use and transportation perspective.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in fostering social interaction and inclusiveness in Oak Park.

Metric: Number of active community organizations and residents participating in organizations

Desired Trend: Increase

Potential Data Resource: Community Relations and Police Department information, OPRF Community Foundation

Metric: Amount of total public space or facilities that are ADA accessible

Desired Trend: Increase

Potential Data Resource: Village inventory/building and property standards, Public Works

Metric: Overall housing mix at various geographic levels

Desired Trend: Increase in housing mix

Potential Data Resource: Housing programs and data maintained by Village government



GOAL 7.3. PROVIDE MIXED-INCOME HOUSING THAT IS ACCESSIBLE, INTEGRATED, AND RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OAK PARK'S DIVERSE POPULATION.

The cost and type of housing offered within a community or neighborhood can be one of the most significant barriers to attracting a diverse and integrated population. The following are actions the Village can take to help ensure that Oak Park is accessible for a broad range of residents and families, as well as ensure housing variety that supports sustainability and appropriate development patterns.

Encouraging Accessible Housing & Programs

Objective 7.3.1. Continue the Village's active role in encouraging the rehabilitation and development of accessible and integrated housing through the use of municipal resources, policies and support.

Housing that is truly accessible includes options that are responsive to potential residents with various levels of income, physical capability, family size, age, and other characteristics. Providing this level of housing choice throughout the village is critical in sustaining neighborhoods that are as diverse and integrated as possible. The Village can continue to be proactive in encouraging the rehabilitation and development of accessible and integrated housing. While this may include financial resources or incentives, it may also include advocacy for supportive local or regional policies, the pursuit of grant funding in partnership with developers and not-for-profits, and amendments to local zoning and building regulations.

Enhancing Awareness and Access to Funding

Objective 7.3.2. Create informational resources to increase awareness of and access to programs and funding available for housing that enhances accessibility for Oak Park's diverse population.

The Village currently offers incentives for housing rehabilitation for accessible units through its Housing and Community Development Block Grants Division. However, many residents and housing developers are unaware of these resources and their potential to help the Village strengthen its commitment to accessible housing. The Village could utilize its various networks to market the availability of this and other potential funding sources through materials that clearly describe qualifying projects, the amount of potential funding available, and the process for applying for and receiving funding.

Supporting Accessibility through Building Rehabilitation

Objective 7.3.3. Establish educational and financial resources to foster the development of accessible housing units through rehabilitation of Oak Park's historic housing stock and new housing development.

Much of Oak Park's housing was built more than seventy-five years ago. While much of this housing is not accessible, it plays an important role in defining the character of the village's neighborhoods. The Village should support the rehabilitation of its traditional housing stock to create accessible units while maintaining local character. This includes collaboration with local architects and historians to develop a "how to" manual of typical improvements that accomplish both goals and be applied to Oak Park's predominant housing types, amendments to zoning regulations as needed to accommodate appropriate renovations, and potential fiscal incentives to encourage accessible rehabilitation in different neighborhoods.



Expanding Local Housing Diversity

Objective 7.3.4. Encourage housing variety in each neighborhood that responds to the specific needs of residents of various ages, incomes, and levels of mobility, especially in areas that provide unique access to transit, local goods and services, government services, recreation, etc.

In order to support local diversity and integration, accessible housing should be provided in each portion of the community. This will increase the likelihood that all residents benefit from equal access to public services, commercial goods and services, transit, and other amenities that support a high quality of life. The Village could support this objective by providing fiscal and non-fiscal incentives, such as density bonuses, expedited development review and permitting, etc., to housing developers who include accessible housing in underserved areas, and through the continued collaboration with public or not-for-profit partners.

Objective 7.3.5. Partner with other communities or entities to advocate and create opportunities for regional, state and federal programs and policies that aim to achieve housing that supports local diversity and accessibility.

Oak Park has limited capacity to procure and allocate grant funding, advocate for accessible housing policy, and address the regional demand for accessible housing. However, by partnering with neighboring communities, the Village can increase its capacity to enact change at the regional, state and federal levels that advance the notion of diverse and integrated housing. The Village can continue to seek opportunities to partner with other communities, not-for-profits, and agencies in advocating for policy changes that will set the stage for enhanced local housing development.



Fostering Transit Oriented Development

Objective 7.3.6. Encourage Transit-Oriented Development with appropriate housing types and densities as a means of broadening housing choice, responding to local and regional markets, providing more direct access to goods and services, and strengthening the village's business districts.

Residents who occupy affordable or accessible housing are often reliant upon easy and direct access to local goods and services and public transit. Accessible housing that is located near and connected to transit centers by comprehensive pedestrian systems enjoy reduced transportation costs, increased local and regional mobility, and greater access to a variety of commercial land uses. The Village could identify potential sites for accessible housing within ¼-mile radius of its rail transit stations, and utilize a variety of incentives, including tax rebates, expedited development review, density bonuses, parking reductions, and others, in order to encourage development in these areas. *Chapter 4: Land Use and Built Form* of this Comprehensive Plan includes Housing Opportunity Focus Area Plans that identify potential sites that could be considered for accessible housing.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in developing accessible, integrated, and responsive housing in Oak Park.

Metric: Number of accessible housing units in TOD areas

Desired Trend: Increase

Potential Data Resource: Permitting, licensing information for multi-family rental

Metric: Density in TOD areas

Desired Trend: Higher level of consistency with planned densities for TOD areas

Potential Data Resource: Census data, permitting



GOAL 7.4. MAINTAIN THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY, QUALITY, AND CHARACTER OF OAK PARK'S HOUSING.

Quality housing is the foundation of a strong and vibrant neighborhood. The condition and character of houses and public spaces contribute to local identity, pride in community, and the long-term viability of the village as a whole. The Village should implement the following actions in order to ensure the attractiveness of its neighborhoods.

Building Neighborhood Resiliency

Objective 7.4.1. Establish a toolbox of policies, resources, protocols and programs that enhances the flexibility of the village to maintain multi-family and single-family housing in the face of naturally-occurring events (i.e. storms, flooding, etc.) or longer-term challenges (i.e. foreclosures, vacancy, etc.).

The last few decades alone have exposed the community's housing stock to forces that jeopardize the long-term viability of neighborhoods. Storms, subsequent flooding, and other natural events threaten the immediate condition of individual homes and blocks, while the housing crisis of the late 2000's demonstrated the sensitivity of neighborhoods to vacancy and foreclosure, as well as the long-term recovery that follows. In order to prepare for these occurrences, the Village should monitor the availability of grant funds that can be used to address certain types of challenges, as well as establishing thresholds that will trigger the use of funds in designated portions of the village. It is important to note that funding programs are constantly evolving, and this objective requires the on-going monitoring of potential funding sources and project qualifications.

Enforcing Property Maintenance

Objective 7.4.2. Encourage property maintenance by clarifying rules and regulations, ensuring consistent inspections, and minimizing the time required for obtaining work permits and occupancy permits.

About two-thirds of Oak Park's housing is over seventy-five years old. This helps define the community's character, but also presents challenges related to housing maintenance and quality. The Village could undertake a two-pronged approach to maintenance codes and enforcement in order to ensure the long-term maintenance of its neighborhoods. The first aspect includes removing unnecessary barriers for those who wish to invest in home maintenance. This includes a review of and amendments to housing maintenance codes to ensure that regulations are clear and predictable, standards are in line with other objectives related to historic preservation and accessible housing, and procedures are streamlined to reduce the burden to homeowners. The second aspect includes active enforcement of maintenance codes for properties that are not properly maintained. This includes the regular and consistent inspection of properties, fair and predictable issuance of fines and citations, and guidance in providing homeowners with appropriate solutions that comply with local standards.

Generating Neighborhood Pride

Objective 7.4.3. Sponsor activities that foster neighborhood pride and encourage a high level of maintenance for housing and landscaping.

In many cases, the level of home maintenance is influenced by neighborhood pride and the example set by surrounding properties. The Village could work with neighborhood organizations and block groups to sponsor programs that encourage neighborhood beautification and investment. These can include landscaping competitions, garden walks, neighborhood clean-up days, and similar events.

What others are doing...

Housing Maintenance & Neighborhood Pride

Hollywood, FL Great Neighborhoods Challenge

Instilling local pride can enhance maintenance without strict oversight from a municipality. Each year, Hollywood, FL hosts the Great Neighborhoods Challenge, which is a property improvement event in which hundreds of households participate. There are a few winners of cash prizes, as well as three neighborhoods that receive public space improvement grants. The Challenge includes a speed design workshop in which local experts including architects, master gardeners, exterior painting consultants and realtors provided free advice on upgrading the curb appeal of homes or businesses. Also during this time, the Code Enforcement Unit conducts a program called Operation Paintbrush, where City of Hollywood residents also are eligible to receive free recycled exterior house paint.

For more information on this program, visit: <http://www.hollywoodfl.org/index.aspx?NID=654>



Supporting Homeowners with Housing Maintenance

Objective 7.4.4. Partner with local organizations, contractors, craftsmen, technicians, etc. to complement on-going Village rehabilitation programs and provide low-cost or volunteer maintenance to residents with disabilities, elderly residents, or low-income tenants and property owners.

Many residents in Oak Park face physical or financial challenges to home maintenance, given the unique and historic housing stock that adds to the character of Oak Park neighborhoods. However, the Oak Park community includes many residents and businesses that specialize in high-quality design and craftsmanship. The Village could support a program that aligns the skills of its artisan population with the needs of accessible housing tenants in order to assist them with the material and labor costs of structural improvements, energy efficiency, aesthetic enhancements, and landscaping.

Objective 7.4.5. Support apartment properties and condominium associations so they can continue to provide high quality multi-family housing throughout Oak Park.

According to the US Census, in 2012 an estimated 47% of Oak Park's total housing units were in apartment or condominium buildings with three or more units. This type of housing represents the majority of the community's accessible housing and is prominent in many of the village's neighborhoods. The Village could work with apartment building owners and condominium associations to ensure that properties are well-maintained. This can be done through incentives for buildings that include accessible housing and investment in structures and sites beyond standard maintenance, the coordinated provision of contracted services, such as lawn maintenance, snow removal, etc., that creates economic savings, and on-going communication with properties to ensure emerging challenges are addressed to the extent possible through municipal codes and policies.

Maintaining Public Spaces

Objective 7.4.6. Continue the maintenance and beautification of public spaces throughout Oak Park's neighborhoods, including streets, alleys, plazas, parks, etc.

The village's public spaces play a significant role in the character and perceived quality of a neighborhood. Well-maintained roadways, mowed parkways, trimmed and mature street trees, functioning streetlights, and safe alleys should help establish a high standard for private property maintenance. As described in other sections of this Comprehensive Plan, the Village could regularly inventory the condition of various components of the public environment. This can be done through regular inspections, maintenance of a comprehensive database, and regular communication with neighborhood organizations and block groups. The Village could also strive to minimize the time required to address needed maintenance and coordinate such improvements with other capital projects where appropriate.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in maintaining the long-term viability, quality, and character of housing in Oak Park.

Metric: Number of vacant or foreclosed properties

Desired Trend: Decrease

Potential Data Resource: Housing, Census

Metric: Number of code violations and percent of resolved cases

Desired Trend: Increase in percent of resolved cases

Potential Data Resource: Village government records of citations and follow-up inspections

GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

NEIGHBORHOODS, HOUSING, & DIVERSITY

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 7.1 – Sustain and broaden diversity and integration throughout Oak Park.			
7.1.1 Ensure that the composition of and actions taken by Village boards and commissions reflect the community’s commitment to diversity and affordable housing and Oak Park’s adopted Diversity Statement.	Village Administration		Degree of diversity in census tracts or other geographic areas Village-wide diversity versus regional diversity Level of dissimilarity/integration at various scales of geography (using dissimilarity index)
7.1.2 Provide education and awareness programs, distributed through all available communication tools and networks, to highlight Oak Park’s diversity and increase sensitivity to and respect for various ethnic, cultural, and religious differences.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
7.1.3 Assess all major proposed governmental actions, including but not limited to zoning, development, schools, and public works proposals, for their impacts on promoting integration.	Village Administration, Policies and Regulations, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
7.1.4 Advance regional diversity through schools, multi-jurisdictional programs, not-for-profits, and other resources to grow diversity and acceptance in and around Oak Park.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government, neighboring communities	
7.1.5 Actively market Oak Park to a broad spectrum of potential residents throughout the Chicago region and ensure that all neighborhoods are appealing to all residents and potential residents.	Village Administration		
7.1.6 Support all programs and projects that encourage, require, or incentivize the development of housing, neighborhood services, or other outcomes that foster diversity, inclusion, and integration throughout Oak Park.	Funding/Incentives		

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 7.2 – Ensure all Oak Park neighborhoods foster social interaction and inclusiveness.			
7.2.1	Review local codes and standards to encourage all public facilities and private gathering spaces to not only meet standards for accessibility, but to encourage shared spaces and interaction among all potential users.	Policies and Regulations	Units of local government
7.2.2	Utilize a multi-layered approach to encourage social interaction among all residents through existing community resources and networks, and the expanded use of neighborhood organizations, local events and activities.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
7.2.3	Adopt policies or regulations that require housing for residents with specific needs to be integrated into all portions of the Village, and encourage social interaction among all residents.	Policies and Regulations, Incentives/ Strategies	Number of active community organizations and residents participating in organizations
7.2.4	Expand the presence of neighborhood organizations to enhance local communication networks and allow residents to improve the broader Oak Park community through neighborhood-based involvement.	Policies and Regulations	Amount of total public space or facilities that are ADA accessible
7.2.5	Assess and mitigate the impacts of existing or potential barriers that may hinder social interaction among residents.	Capital Improvements, Policies and Regulations	Overall housing mix at various geographic levels

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 7.3 – Provide mixed-income housing that is accessible, integrated, and responsive of Oak Park’s diverse population.				
7.3.1	Continue the Village’s active role in encouraging the rehabilitation and development of accessible and integrated housing through the use of municipal resources, policies and support.	Policies and Regulations, Incentives/funding	Number of accessible housing units in TOD areas and throughout the community Density in TOD areas	
7.3.2	Create informational resources to increase awareness of and access to programs and funding available for housing that enhances accessibility for Oak Park’s diverse population.	Village Administration		
7.3.3	Establish educational and financial resources to foster the development of accessible housing units through rehabilitation of Oak Park’s historic housing stock and new housing development.	Policies and Regulations, Funding/Incentives		
7.3.4	Encourage housing variety in each neighborhood that responds to the specific needs of residents of various ages, incomes, and levels of mobility, especially in areas that provide unique access to transit, local goods and services, government services, recreation, etc.	Incentives/ Strategies		
7.3.5	Partner with other communities or entities to advocate and create opportunities for regional, state and federal programs and policies that aim to achieve housing that supports local diversity and accessibility.	Governmental Collaboration, Policies and Regulations		Neighboring communities, Regional agencies
7.3.6	Encourage Transit-Oriented Development with appropriate housing types and densities as a means of broadening housing choice, responding to local and regional markets, providing more direct access to goods and services, and strengthening the village’s business districts.	Policies and Regulations		

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 7.4 – Maintain the long-term viability, quality, and character of Oak Park’s housing.			
7.4.1	Establish a toolbox of policies, resources, protocols and programs that enhances the flexibility of the village to maintain multi-family and single-family housing in the face of naturally-occurring events (i.e. storms, flooding, etc.) or longer-term challenges (i.e. foreclosures, vacancy, etc.).	Village Administration, Policies and Regulations	
7.4.2	Encourage property maintenance by clarifying rules and regulations, ensuring consistent inspections, and minimizing the time required for obtaining work permits and occupancy permits.	Policies and Regulations	
7.4.3	Sponsor activities that foster neighborhood pride and encourage a high level of maintenance for housing and landscaping.	Policies and Regulations	Number of vacant or foreclosed properties
7.4.4	Partner with local organizations, contractors, craftsmen, technicians, etc. to compliment on-going Village rehabilitation programs and provide low-cost or volunteer maintenance to residents with disabilities, elderly residents, or low-income tenants and property owners.	Governmental Collaboration	Number of code violations and percent of resolved cases
7.4.5	Support apartment properties and condominium associations so they can continue to provide high quality multi-family housing throughout Oak Park.	Funding/Incentives	
7.4.6	Continue the maintenance and beautification of public spaces throughout Oak Park’s neighborhoods, including streets, alleys, plazas, parks, etc.	Capital Improvements, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government



8

Education

Oak Park has a strong reputation for providing high-quality education and fostering volunteerism and citizen engagement among its youth. Several staff of the two local school districts have been recipients of the prestigious Golden Apple Award. Oak Park-River Forest High School (District 200) generally ranks in the top 11% of high schools in Illinois, while District 97, which includes eight elementary schools and two middle schools, generally ranks in the top 12% of all school districts in Illinois. Many Oak Park residents continue education beyond primary and secondary school with two-thirds of non-school age adult Oak Park residents having obtained at least a Bachelor's degree.

Village government has strengthened its commitment to education in recent years by, in partnership with District 97 and District 200, co-founding the Collaboration for Early Childhood Education. A primary goal of the collaboration is to implement a comprehensive early childhood care and education system in Oak Park that supports all families and promotes kindergarten readiness. The recommendations of this chapter identify opportunities for Village government to play a role in enhancing education services for Oak Park's students, whether youth or lifelong learners. Strategies focus on eliminating the achievement gap, enhancing access to education resources, stabilizing the long-term financing of education, and facilitating learning at all stages of life.

Education is capable of providing all students, regardless of background, with the tools and skills they need to succeed as an adult.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

A strong education system is the foundation of a strong community. A quality education system is imperative to attracting new families to Oak Park, retaining existing residents, and attracting quality businesses seeking a desirable community for their employees. Schools create future Oak Park citizens. Education is capable of providing all students, regardless of background, with the tools and skills they need to succeed as an adult. Oak Park's schools, whether they are public or private, should provide a welcoming environment where diversity is embraced and where all children feel included and engaged. Oak Park schools represent the heart of the community, strengthening ties to Oak Park and cultivating a sense of tradition that endures beyond graduation. Oak Park educational institutions are a hub for social interaction, serve as an anchor for community values, and play an important role in economic development. In making the community a desirable place to live, quality education also has an impact on the community's physical environment as a driver for new investment and an enhancement to local property values in Oak Park. As a whole, the education system serves to reinforce the core values of the Oak Park community. The community's schools - and the education and resources that they provide - are also a key mechanism in addressing social inequities.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement Describes Education as it Exists in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park continues to have some of the highest quality educational institutions in the region. However, this is not taken for granted, as the community strives to provide the very best educational services possible, recognizing that the education system must continue to evolve if Oak Park is to remain at the forefront. By maintaining open communication with Oak Park residents and investing in appropriate facilities and services, education providers are continuously evolving their programs to ensure that the Oak Park community continues to meet its high standards for education.

Oak Park is recognized as a model of coordination and partnerships that foster quality education from cradle to career. Village government, school districts, and other entities have worked together to create a community-wide network that fosters a culture of educational involvement beyond the classroom. This network ensures that parents and students, mentors and mentees, know what resources are available and how to translate them into life-long education. As a result, community values instilled through education now permeate all aspects of life and Oak Park students are known as creative problem solvers and civic leaders. Oak Park's comprehensive approach to education has created a skilled and creative population that is well prepared for the modern economy.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 8.1. FOSTER EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

Research indicates that children in households with a lower socioeconomic status typically enter the school system with a lower level of pre-academic skills, develop academic skills more slowly, and have an increased rate of dropout. Village government could support the following actions to reduce the achievement gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and create an environment in which all Oak Park students have the opportunity to reach their full potential for academic success.

Easing the Transition Between Education Programs

Objective 8.1.1. Facilitate coordination among the various community partners in education to establish strong transitional programs between all stages of education.

It is important that students have access to effective transition programs as they move from elementary school to middle school and on to high school. For example, Oak Park - River Forest School District 200 currently offers a Huskie Transition Tours and Parents Night to orient students to the school facilities and guide them through the enrollment process. The District complements this with meetings designed to review course selection in detail. While these events help with general orientation, comments from residents and other stakeholders highlight a need to provide additional assistance in helping students adjust to the middle school and high school social environments. Village government can continue to support the efforts of all education providers to maintain and expand upon existing transition programs. The school districts could be encouraged to consider utilizing parent-to-parent networking events, teacher and counseling staff visits, expanded student shadowing programs, and other events to increase exposure of incoming students to the new school environment.

What others are doing...

Student Transition Programs

Stonewall Jackson Middle School, Hanover County, VA
Rising 6th Grade Transition Program

The school implemented a model transition program to assist incoming 6th grade students. The program includes:

- Visits by middle school teachers to feeder elementary schools to highlight the differences and similarities between elementary and middle schools.
- Visits by counselors to 5th grade classes to describe elective options and answer additional questions.
- An introductory session for all 5th grade parents whose children will be moving to the middle school.
- A "shadow day" where 5th grade students shadow other 6th grade students through a typical school day and engage in all of the same activities including classwork.
- A "Parent-to-Parent" open house where parents network and discuss middle school student parenting.
- An open house where parents and incoming 6th grade students discuss schedules, and walk through a typical day.

For more information on the program, visit: <http://hcps2.hanover.k12.va.us/sjms/Miscellaneous/Rising%206th%20Grade%20Night%20-13.pdf>



Developing an Early Childhood Education system

Objective 8.1.2. Work with community partners to support an integrated early childhood education system that includes early identification of at risk students and supports those students with high quality programs.

The 2005-2007 American Community Survey estimated that there were 4,800 children under kindergarten age in Oak Park. This is close to the number of children enrolled in District 97. Of this population, 16% (or approximately 800 children) were considered at risk due to family income status, developmental delays, or stressed family situations. A system of early childhood services would help support parents of young children and narrow the achievement gap among students entering kindergarten. Village government could continue to work with its partners in the Collaboration for Early Childhood Education to implement the strategic plan adopted in 2009: “Investing in Oak Park’s Future: A Strategic Plan for the Partnership for Human Development”. The central component of the strategic plan is the formation of four task forces and program areas dedicated to:

- Developmental Screening and Referral System;
- Parent Information and Support;
- Professional Development; and,
- Preschool for All/Head Start Coordination.



Investing in Oak Park’s Future:

A Strategic Plan for the Partnership for Human Development

January, 2009

sponsored by



Collaboration for Early Childhood Care & Education



Engaging Parents as Partners

Objective 8.1.3. Work with community partners to identify and implement strategies to better engage parents as partners in education inside and outside of the classroom.

School age children spend 70% of their waking hours outside of school. It is in the best interest of the village, the school districts, and Oak Park's students to facilitate meaningful involvement of parents in education. Doing so will likely lead to greater student success; higher teacher morale; increased communication between parents, teachers, and school leaders; and greater community support for the school. There are numerous areas where Village government can work with education providers to encourage parent involvement including:

- Create additional volunteer opportunities within local schools;
- Providing parents with information on how to help their students at home with homework;
- Maintaining active Parent Teacher Organizations and elevating the role of such groups in school district decision-making; and,
- Providing opportunities for students and their parents to participate in community events.

Diversifying Personnel

Objective 8.1.4 . Encourage the hiring of diverse education staff and faculty in education roles that reflects the diversity within Oak Park's population.

Oak Park is a community with a diverse student population. It is important that teachers, school district staff, mentors, and others interacting with Oak Park's student population reflect the demographics of the village. Students react positively when taught by individuals that they can relate to on a sociocultural basis, providing them with a positive role model from a familiar background. Village government could lead by example by continuing to diversify its staff and ensure that the demographic makeup of its employees reflects that of the larger Oak Park community. Village government and its partners can continue to implement hiring practices that seek to broaden recruitment efforts to attract a more diverse applicant pool and reduce bias in the selection process.

What others are doing...

Parent Involvement in Education

National PTA: National Standards for Family-School Partnerships

National PTA developed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Implementation Guide to empower PTA leaders, parents, educators, community members, and students to work together for the educational success. The following are six standards of excellence for Parent/Family Involvement in Education:

Communicating - Dialogue between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.

Parenting - Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

Student Learning - Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

Volunteering - Parents are welcome in the school. Their support and assistance are sought.

School Decision Making and Advocacy - Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

Collaborating with Community- Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

To learn more visit: http://www.pta.org/files/National_Standards_Implementation_Guide_2009.pdf



Addressing the Digital Divide

Objective 8.1.5. Collaborate with community partners to begin to address the digital divide by providing meeting space, access to technology, and training opportunities for parents and families to gain technical skills and learn how to help their students achieve academic success.

The term “digital divide” refers to the inequalities that exist among different socioeconomic groups with regard to access to the internet and the ability to use information technology. The digital divide further exacerbates the achievement gap among Oak Park students. To help address this issue District 97 adopted a Five Year Technology Plan known as iLearn 97 in August 2013. A key component of the plan, known as “1:1”, will be the distribution of an iPad mini to every 5th grade student in the district. While this initiative is a significant step in providing students with access to technology, the use of the technology outside of the school may be limited based on two factors. First, several households do not have wireless internet. Secondly, parents may not have basic proficiency with widely used software or data sources needed to assist their children in learning at home. Village government could work with the library, school districts, and other partners to expand access to the internet beyond the classroom and information technology training opportunities for students and their parents. One example of an on-going effort to do this is the technology classes provided by the Oak Park Public Library and designed to orient residents with various software programs, information technology, and data sources.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in fostering opportunities for equal educational attainment.

Metric: Achievement gap among various socioeconomic characteristics

Desired Trend: Reduction in achievement gap

Potential Data Resource: School District-published performance reports

GOAL 8.2. MAINTAIN A HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION SYSTEM THAT DELIVERS SUCCESS FOR ALL.

Oak Park’s education providers, students, parents, and mentors should be held to a high standard of academic success. This includes both public and private education providers. The following actions will support Village government and its partner organizations in remaining at the forefront of education.

Raising Expectations, Discouraging Complacency

Objective 8.2.1 . Work with the school districts, other community partners, and parents and caregivers to raise achievement for all students and encourage in-school and after-school programs that discourage complacency.

After school programs provide students with an opportunity to engage in activities more in-line with their interests while enjoying more personal attention from instructors and mentors. Such programs are also influential in bridging the gaps between the in-school and home environments, providing opportunities for students and parents to engage in learning and achievement together. By raising standards for success within the school environment and providing in-school and after-school programming that maintains these standards beyond the school day, students will have a stronger desire to learn. Village government could continue to support and partner with local school districts and private schools, the Oak Park Education Foundation, and others to provide access to after school programming. While Village government may have limited facilities available to host such programs, it can be a strong partner in supporting efforts to secure outside resources to fund youth activities.



Delivering Resources to Students

Objective 8.2.2. Encourage the school districts to explore different approaches to deliver resources to students at all achievement levels.

Oak Park's diverse community fosters day-to-day interaction among youth from many backgrounds. However, it also requires a unique approach to education that recognizes and accounts for cultural, language, and social differences. Oak Park's school districts have demonstrated their commitment to innovation and creating equal access to education. Through its "1:1" program, District 97 is seeking to provide all 5th grade students with iPads and enable a more student-centered approach to education. As another example, in exploring how to deliver resources better to its minority students, District 200 participates in the Minority Student Achievement Network. Through this initiative, District 200 is working with eminent educational researchers nationwide to analyze and implement practices that serve to lessen gaps in minority student academic achievement. In the future, it is anticipated that education models and technologies will continue to evolve, requiring a forward-thinking approach from both administrators and instructors. Village government could continue to support the school districts in their efforts to tailor education to the needs of their students, recognizing the influence of factors beyond the classroom.

Fostering Partnerships with Higher Education Institutions

Objective 8.2.3. Help foster partnerships between the school districts, colleges, and universities to develop, test, and implement new education approaches that continue to keep Oak Park schools at the forefront of education.

With a central location in the Chicago Metro Area, Oak Park is located within close proximity of numerous colleges and universities, including Concordia University, Dominican University, and Triton College in nearby River Forest and River Grove. These institutions of higher education represent potential partners that can be engaged in evaluating education in Oak Park and determining what skills and knowledge are needed to position students for success in higher education and a post-graduation career. For example, the Center for School Evaluation, Intervention and Training (CSEIT) at Loyola University in Chicago provides training and technical assistance to faculty and administrators at schools throughout the region. In its continued support of District 97 and District 200 in their pursuit to maintain their schools at the forefront of education, Village government can work with the school district to establish a dialogue with nearby colleges and universities related to program evaluation.



Measuring Performance in a Transparent Way

Objective 8.2.4. Support community partners in the communication of consistent performance information to all members of the community.

Maintaining honest and transparent assessments of student performance is the best way to demonstrate to residents the value of their investment, and determine how future staffing, programs, and facilities could be used to advance education in Oak Park. Village government could work with all local education providers to establish clear measures of academic performance, and publish results in a way that all residents can access and understand the findings. This type of performance reporting could be integrated into a community report card that summarizes the performance of several aspects of local government and services.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting academic success for all residents.

Metric: Distribution of performance reports

Desired Trend: Increase in the distribution of reports

Potential Data Resource: School District-published reports

GOAL 8.3. ENCOURAGE THE CREATION OF A NEW FINANCING PARADIGM FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION.

In the wake of the Great Recession and increased scrutiny over government spending, school finances and operations have increasingly become topics of debate. The following are actions Village government and its education partners can take to foster productive dialogue related to school finance and encourage the long-term fiscal stability of high-quality education.

Educating Citizens on Education Finance

Objective 8.3.1. Partner with the school districts to create educational materials and host informational sessions to educate citizens on the underlying economics and current issues with education finance.

Residents and educators share the common goals of a high level of educational services for students. However, there are fiscal realities that must be weighed against the provision of services. Having open dialogue about the factors that influence the cost of education services can help residents, educators, and elected officials understand and prioritize the use of taxpayer resources. Village government can utilize its multi-media resources to act as a liaison between local school districts and residents in distributing information regarding the cost of providing education services. Village government can also support events that allow residents and educators to discuss current issues in Oak Park's schools and their potential impacts on budgeting. This support could include the use of municipal facilities to host meetings, outreach, and advertising of important events. One potential resource for this effort is the Illinois Association of School Boards, which has materials and services designed to answer questions related to school finance.



Enhancing Access to Financial Information

Objective 8.3.2. Make information regarding school finance more accessible and easy to understand by the general public.

While Oak Park's school districts, and others across Illinois, provide annual financial reports, budgets, and compensation reports, these reports can be difficult to interpret and understand. Consideration should be given to creating streamlined executive summaries of their financial reports for broader public consumption. To engage in meaningful discussion with residents regarding school finances it is important that financial reports be user-friendly and provide synthesized information that relates to overall district performance. Such reports may be made more meaningful if district performance can be compared to regional, state, and national averages. This initiative should also be encouraged at the state level similar to the School Report Card recently updated by the Illinois State Board of Education to be more user-friendly, streamlined, and inclusive of information to reflect a school's unique qualities.

Realigning Costs of Delivering Education

Objective 8.3.3. Support school districts in monitoring and adapting their cost structure to leverage changes in delivery systems for various levels and types of education.

The delivery of education is dependent upon three primary categories of investment for school districts; facilities, staff, and educational resources (including books, technology and software, supporting education programs, etc.) It is important that education providers continue to evolve their services to reflect the needs of Oak Park's population. Village government can provide local school districts with demographic, socioeconomic, or other information that helps educators design services that most directly reflect the needs of and opportunities presented by residents. Village government could also partner with school districts to pursue grant funding that provides the opportunity to adapt their facilities and technologies over time.

Advocating for Changes to State Policies

Objective 8.3.4 . Continue to advocate for changes to school funding policies at the state level to allow for alternatives to the use of property tax to fund education.

While there may be cost saving opportunities locally, many of the financial issues faced by school districts in Oak Park and throughout Illinois are related to policies established at the state level. In Illinois and the United States, school finances are deeply connected to property taxation, with approximately half of all property tax revenue going to fund public primary and secondary education. Village government could partner with local school districts to continue to advocate for the maintenance of state funding to support education services, including facility upgrades, staffing, technology upgrades, school-related transportation, programs for students with special needs, etc.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting sound financing for education.

Metric: Distribution of financial reports

Desired Trend: Increase in the distribution of reports
Potential Data Resource: School District-published reports



GOAL 8.4. CREATE A UNIFIED AND COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION.

New programs and initiatives are needed to facilitate the flow of information between parents, students, and education providers and empower those outside of the classroom to contribute to the education of Oak Park's students. The community should implement the following actions to better leverage the skills of Oak Park's resident and business community and foster a positive community-wide learning environment.

Establishing a Tutoring Program

Objective 8.4.1. Support the school districts and other education providers to assist with the establishment of a community-wide tutoring program, including identifying volunteers and grants to recruit and train instructors.

Oak Park is a well-educated community with 67% of all residents over the age of 25 having earned at least a bachelor's degree. This is more than double that of the State of Illinois (30%) and United States (28%). Throughout the community outreach process, residents often cited the village's volunteer spirit as a community asset. These two positive attributes could be combined to create a community-wide tutoring program that enlists the assistance of Oak Park's large population of willing and able residents. Students in need of specific tutoring services could be connected to tutoring services that can fill in gaps between school-based and home-based education.

Leveraging Resources Across All Jurisdictions

Objective 8.4.2. Support on-going dialogue among all community partners in education to identify opportunities and implement strategies to leverage resources between organizations and create collaboration across all Oak Park jurisdictions.

There is an extensive list of organizations that provide education resources and services to Oak Park's residents, including public school districts, private schools, and others. With all of these resources available, redundancies likely exist between services offered and greater efficiencies may be accomplished through increased coordination. Transition programs represent an opportunity to dovetail education initiatives targeted at different age groups to ensure that students maintain momentum as they move from pre-school, to elementary and middle school, and on to high school. In addition to coordination in programming there may also be opportunities for cost savings associated with operating education facilities and related expenses. For example, municipalities and school districts may engage in joint purchase agreements for shared capital and operating expenses, including the purchase of fleet vehicles, information technology, and non-instructional support services. Village government could assist in organizing and hosting a forum that brings representatives from Oak Park's various education providers to the table to identify shared goals and discuss potential partnerships.



Informing Citizens

Objective 8.4.3. Provide residents with information about the education resources available to them and establish a one-stop portal for information about education in Oak Park.

It can be difficult for residents to navigate the numerous education programs and resources available to Oak Park students. Village government could work with its partners in education to establish a “one-stop shop” for education in Oak Park that provides residents with access to information and the ability to interact with one another on the topic of education. Users could have access to topical message boards and forums, a calendar of community events related to education, an interactive blog feature, user-authored wiki pages, educational videos and other media, and more. The Collaboration for Early Childhood is in the process of creating a data portal referred to as the Parent Information System to monitor the progress of the children in publicly funded preschool programs and assess the long-term effects of the programs on children’s learning throughout their elementary and secondary education. The Parent Information System could serve as one component of a larger network that deals with education from Pre-Kindergarten through high school and adult education in Oak Park, covering the full education continuum.

Building Life Skills

Objective 8.4.4. Coordinate with local businesses and civic organizations to establish an apprenticeship and mentoring program that provides students with vocational training, workplace experience and life skills.

Real-world experience is a tremendous complement to classroom learning. Students can enhance their social skills, professional office behavior, and technical knowledge through internships and apprenticeships. Village government can work with school districts and local employers in aligning students with specific skill sets and interests with internships in specific industries.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting a comprehensive and unified system of education in Oak Park.

Metric: Distribution of collaboration reports

Desired Trend: Increase in the distribution of reports
Potential Data Resource: School District-published reports



Village of Oak Park Education Facilities

District 97 and District 200 are the primary education providers in Oak Park, and are complemented by several private schools, early education providers, and nearby colleges and universities. The Public Library supports local education through facilities and programs that dovetail with educational curricula and goals.

Public Schools

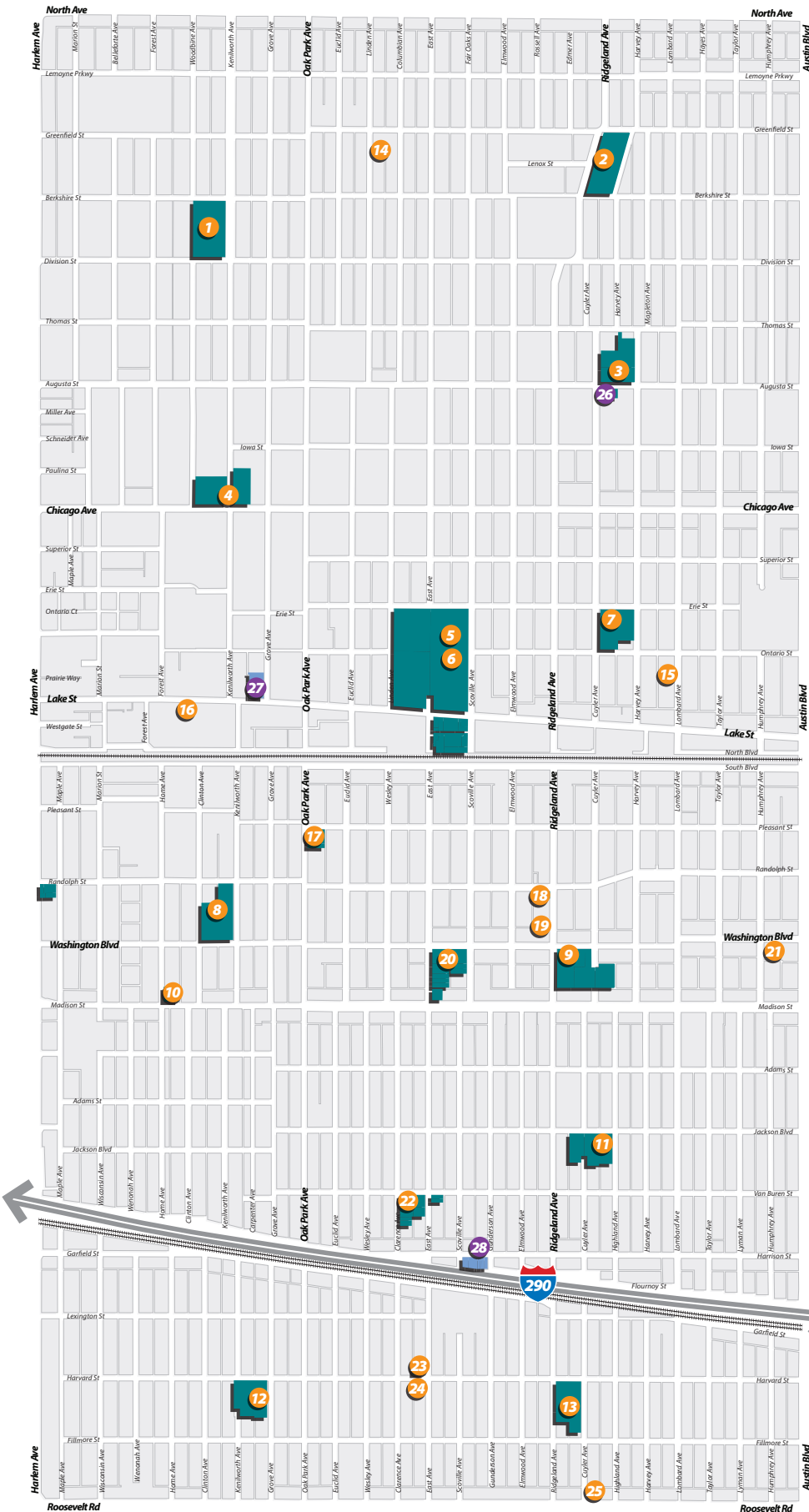
- 1 Horace Mann Elementary
- 2 William Hatch Elementary
- 3 John Greenleaf Whittier Elementary
- 4 Oliver Wendell Holmes Elementary
- 5 School District 200 Office
- 6 Oak Park & River Forest High
- 7 William Beye Elementary
- 8 Gwendolyn Brooks Middle
- 9 Percy Julian Middle
- 10 School District 97 Office
- 11 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Elementary
- 12 Abraham Lincoln Elementary
- 13 Washington Irving Elementary

Private Schools

- 14 St. Giles
- 15 Children's Garden Montessori
- 16 Oak Park Christian Academy
- 17 St. Edmund
- 18 Intercultural Montessori
- 19 Our Lady Immaculate Academy
- 20 Fenwick High
- 21 St. Catherine Siena – St. Lucy
- 22 Ascension
- 23 West Suburban Montessori
- 24 Christ Lutheran
- 25 Morningside Montessori Academy

Public Library

- 26 Dole Branch
- 27 Main Branch
- 28 Maze Branch



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

EDUCATION

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 8.1 – Foster equal opportunities for academic achievement.				
8.1.1	Facilitate coordination among the various community partners in education to establish strong transitional programs between all stages of education.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	Reduction in the measured achievement gap
8.1.2	Work with community partners to support an integrated early childhood education system that includes early identification of at risk students and supports those students with high quality programs.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	
8.1.3	Work with community partners to identify and implement strategies to better engage parents as partners in education inside and outside of the classroom.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	
8.1.4	Encourage the practice of diverse hiring among all community partners in education to reflect the diversity within Oak Park's population.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
8.1.5	Collaborate with community partners to begin to address the digital divide by providing meeting space, access to technology, and training opportunities for parents and families to gain technical skills and learn how to help their students achieve academic success.	Governmental Collaboration	Library and school districts	
Goal 8.2 – Maintain a high quality education system that delivers success for all.				
8.2.1	Work with the school districts, other community partners, and parents and caregivers to raise achievement for all students and encourage in-school and after-school programs that discourage complacency.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	Outreach and publishing of performance reports
8.2.2	Encourage the school districts to explore different approaches to deliver resources to students at all achievement levels.		School Districts	
8.2.3	Help foster partnerships between the school districts, colleges, and universities to develop, test, and implement new education approaches that continue to keep Oak Park schools at the forefront of education.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	
8.2.4	Support community partners in the communication of consistent performance information to all members of the community.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 8.3 – Encourage the creation of a new financing paradigm for public education.			
8.3.1 <i>Partner with the school districts to create educational materials and host informational sessions to educate citizens on the underlying economics and current issues with education finance.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School districts</i>	<i>Outreach and publishing of financial reports</i>
8.3.2 <i>Make information regarding school finance more accessible and easy to understand by the general public.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School districts</i>	
8.3.3 <i>Support school districts in monitoring and adapting their cost structure to leverage changes in delivery systems for various levels and types of education.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School districts</i>	
8.3.4 <i>Continue to advocate for changes to school funding policies at the state level to allow for alternatives to the use of property tax to fund education.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School districts</i>	

Goal 8.4 – Create a unified and comprehensive system of support for education.			
8.4.1 <i>Support the school districts and other education providers to assist with the establishment of a community-wide tutoring program, including identifying volunteers and grants to recruit and train instructors.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School Districts</i>	<i>Outreach and publishing of collaboration reports</i>
8.4.2 <i>Support on-going dialogue among all community partners in education to identify opportunities and implement strategies to leverage resources between organizations and create collaboration across all Oak Park jurisdictions.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School Districts and Library District</i>	
8.4.3 <i>Provide residents with information about the education resources available to them and establish a one-stop portal for information about education in Oak Park.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School Districts</i>	
8.4.4 <i>Coordinate with local businesses and civic organizations to establish an apprenticeship and mentoring program that provides students with vocational training, workplace experience and life skills.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>School Districts</i>	



9

Community Health & Safety

Community health and safety go beyond basic public safety and health care services. In Oak Park, they are a lifestyle, and that lifestyle is the collective result of dozens of daily decisions. How should I get to school today? What should I eat, and where does the food come from? How do I know when I'm making a good decision about my health? Do I feel comfortable and safe where I live and work? These, and many other questions, capture the broad realm of issues that define community health and safety.

This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations intended to provide residents of Oak Park with the resources they need to live a safer and healthier lifestyle. These resources include education, local goods and services, infrastructure, and programs to minimize potential hazards, respond quickly to new risks, and empower citizens through choice.

A truly healthy and safe community includes all places where people live, work, visit, shop, play, and raise a family. Only when these components are all in place can Oak Park strengthen its diversity, heritage, and sense of community.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Community health and safety are critical components of a diverse and vibrant Oak Park. A healthy and safe community allows residents to be productive and actively engaged in the community. Productivity and engagement provide a positive outlet for the spirit of volunteerism felt by many Oak Park residents, and can give them a sense of dignity and purpose as they invest in the future of their neighborhood and village. A truly healthy and safe community includes all places where people live, work, visit, shop, play, and raise a family. Only when these components are all in place can Oak Park strengthen its diversity, heritage, and sense of community. The physical, mental, and emotional health of Oak Park residents is impacted by how easily they can make healthy lifestyle choices. Active transportation, local fresh foods, education and awareness, and a high level of public safety will lead to less violence and a healthier Oak Park. These factors are impacted by what happens in Oak Park and what happens in neighboring communities. Transportation and transit networks, land uses, policing, and other influences must be coordinated to ensure that residents in Oak Park and adjacent communities enjoy as healthy and safe a lifestyle as possible.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement describes community health and safety as they exist in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park has emerged as a leader in promoting a healthy and safe lifestyle. Municipal entities and agencies have put the systems in place to enable healthy behaviors, and residents have become actively engaged in learning about healthy lifestyle choices. Bicycling, walking and transit use are cornerstones of the community's active transportation system. Healthy food is available at schools, restaurants, grocery stores and local markets, and residents have access to simple tools that help them identify healthy food choices.

Oak Park has become one of the safest communities in the Chicago region through the continued use of technology and collaboration. Village government works closely with Chicago, Berwyn, and other adjacent communities to track trends in crime, recognizing that criminal activity is not restrained by municipal boundaries. Fire protection has ensured that residents and properties are protected from catastrophic events, enhancing investment in neighborhoods and commercial districts. This has resulted in a community that, no matter where they are in Oak Park, residents feel safe both day and night, enabling them to take full advantage of the village's quality neighborhoods, parks, and commercial districts. Much of this success is attributed to close collaboration among residents, the police and fire departments, other village departments, and neighboring communities.

While the Oak Park environment provides easy access to healthy lifestyle choices, residents also enjoy a high level of personal health care. Major hospitals, local clinics, and other services provide comprehensive care from infancy to elder care. This is true for all of Oak Park's diverse population, regardless of personal financial status, age, race, homelessness, or any other characteristic.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 9.1. MAKE OAK PARK A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CITIZENS TO LIVE.

The level of safety in the village, real or perceived, has a significant influence on the mentality of Oak Park citizens and the likelihood of others to decide to invest in the community. The following recommendations aim to improve the level of safety in Oak Park by mitigating hazards that may put residents or businesses at risk.

Safety through Preparation

Objective 9.1.1. Regularly review, update, and exercise Village government's Emergency Preparedness & Response Plan.

Oak Park maintains an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan intended to help the village mitigate the impacts of a number of potential harmful scenarios. This "dose of prevention" is a key component to the safety of the community. Village government can regularly review and update the plan to ensure that it includes appropriate protocol based on potential partners in action (both within Village government and beyond), available means of communication, technology and mitigation tools available to Village government, and existing or emerging threats that warrant preparedness. These may include catastrophic events including fires, health threats, terrorist threats, natural disasters and other hazards or emergencies. Additionally, all municipal staff and employees of partner organizations or agencies could be trained in relevant protocol so that effective and timely action can be taken if necessary.

Supporting Fire and Police Services

Objective 9.1.2. Support the maintenance and improvement of levels of service provided by police and fire departments.

The services provided by the Oak Park Police Department and the Oak Park Fire Department are a vital part of making Oak Park a safe environment. The Oak Park Police Department protects and serves the community by investigating criminal incidents, ensuring traffic safety, managing school crossing guards and conducting security examinations of multifamily residences. The Department operates under a community policing strategy that includes resident beat officers (RBOs) who live in the village, resource officers stationed in the middle and high schools and co-sponsoring safety programs through neighborhood meetings. The Oak Park Fire Department provides emergency services including fire suppression, basic and advanced life support, hazardous materials mitigation and special rescues. Village government could continue its fiscal commitment to police and fire by maintaining appropriate levels of service.

Funding for Fire and Police Services

Objective 9.1.3. Seek outside funding, resources and collaborative efforts to support police and fire department programs and services.

Oak Park residents live in an environment where the Oak Park Police and Fire Departments work collaboratively with community groups to reduce crime and increase safety. To ensure that this continues, Village government needs to provide adequate funding of the police and fire departments. This includes seeking and obtaining outside sources of funding to support police and fire services. Village government could seek grant funding and other outside sources to complement local funding for special infrastructure or technology improvements, fleet improvements, or special programs or training.



Biking and Walking Safety

Objective 9.1.4. Create an environment that is safe, attractive, and conducive to biking and walking.

The Village of Oak Park is working to create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network where every roadway user can travel safely and comfortably and where sustainable transportation options are available to everyone by planning, designing, operating, and maintaining a network of Complete Streets. Complete Streets are facilities designed, operated, and maintained to assure safe mobility for users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and motorists, appropriate to the function and context of the facility. Village government could continue to promote a safe environment for bicyclists and pedestrians where roads are designed and constructed in a manner that promotes safety. This could include presenting cycling as an attractive option for local transport as well as recreation, educating families about biking safely, encouraging families to explore the local area and contributing to an overall message of healthy living. As the village becomes a safer place to cycle for all ages, Village government could work with local partners to eliminate physical or policy barriers that prevent local active transportation.

Collaborating with Neighboring Communities

Objective 9.1.5. Work closely with surrounding communities to identify and monitor crime patterns.

Not only do nearby communities affect Oak Park, but Oak Park affects the surrounding communities. Village government already collaborates with the City of Chicago to monitor crime trends and frequent offenders in its neighborhoods. Village government can continue to collaborate with neighboring communities to identify, monitor and address crime patterns, and create coordinated strategies to minimize and prevent illegal activities.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting a safe community.

Metric: Amount of overall crime in Oak Park, summarized by type and location

Desired Trend: Decrease in the total amount of crime

Potential Data Resource: Police and fire statistics and reports

Metric: Amount of outside funding procured to support police and fire protection activities

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of funds

Potential Data Resource: Municipal department budgets

Metric: Amount of safety incidents involving bicyclists and pedestrians

Desired Trend: Decrease in the total number of incidents

Potential Data Resource: Police and fire statistics and reports, IDOT reports and records



GOAL 9.2. PROVIDE RESIDENTS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND TOOLS NECESSARY TO ENGAGE IN SAFE LIVING.

The ultimate objective of having a safe community should be to create an environment where people feel comfortable engaging their community and interacting with one another. Oak Park has a long history of working to enhance safety in the village by enacting ordinances, forming coalitions, offering programs, making physical infrastructure investments and continually reevaluating and striving for a safer community. The following are actions Village government can take to make residents aware of the vast array of safety services and programs available for residents.

Educating Residents

Objective 9.2.1. Provide information to all residents through various outlets and resources regarding services and programs.

Community interaction and support can help control crime and reduce fear. The Oak Park Police Department and Fire Department could utilize bike and beat officers, have police and firefighters visit block parties and schools, use social media along with TV and print, invite new residents to join block lists, raise attendance and awareness of the community policing program, and continue posting information in library branches, park district buildings and other buildings. In addition to municipal services, Village government could work with local partners to provide a central clearinghouse for information related to community health and safety, including bicycle and pedestrian safety, healthy eating, activity and exercise, etc.

Collaborating to Promote Safe Living

Objective 9.2.2. Collaboration among municipal agencies, not-for-profits, local providers and funders to insure that all residents have the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in safe living.

The most fundamental way to encourage residents to feel safe in their neighborhood is for them to become an active part of their community at the neighborhood level. When neighbors are watching out for each other and supporting police efforts in their community, safety is greatly enhanced. Neighbors, block leaders, and neighborhood organizations could be encouraged to approach new residents with welcome packets and information about the community. Village government can also continue to work with schools, places of worship, not-for-profits, and other organizations to share information on safety programs and efforts.

Monitoring Community Health

Objective 9.2.3. Collaborate with local partners to develop and publish a community health report card that monitors the overall health of the Oak Park population.

Understanding the health of Oak Park's citizens can assist Village government and other partners in investing in programs and facilities to improve it. Village government can work with local health care providers to develop a community health report card that utilizes available data to determine emerging health issues and potential solutions.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in building local knowledge of health and safety.

Metric: Community perception of safety

Desired Trend: Increase in the overall perceived safety of the community

Potential Data Resource: Regular community survey



GOAL 9.3. ENSURE THAT ALL RESIDENTS OF OAK PARK HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES.

Comprehensive healthcare involves a two-pronged approach. First, the environment and systems must be in place that support a healthy lifestyle, which could include healthy eating and improved physical activity patterns in order to sustain a high level of physical and mental health. Secondly, a variety of formal health care services must be available to address the varying needs of local residents. While Village government is not directly responsible for providing healthcare services, the following are actions that can be taken to support access to affordable services for all residents.

Collaborating to Ensure Access to Health and Social Services

Objective 9.3.1. Encourage collaboration among municipal agencies, not-for-profits, local providers and funders to ensure that all residents have access to primary healthcare, oral healthcare and behavioral healthcare services.

The emotional and mental health of residents is inextricably tied to their physical well-being and sense of self. Working in collaboration with other agencies and organizations that take a holistic approach to services can make a significant, sustainable, measurable impact in the lives of residents, and will profoundly influence their ability to be healthy contributing members of their communities. Village government should encourage collaboration and communication among local agencies and providers to provide access to care for all Oak Park residents.

Increasing Funding for Health and Social Services

Objective 9.3.2. Identify funding sources to assist residents in accessing healthcare and social services.

Holistic health care goes beyond the treatment of physical, mental and emotional disease. It involves prevention through active and healthy lifestyles, education, and access to the resources that promote healthy choices. Village government could work with local health care providers and other partners, and leverage the local partnerships, in order to be more competitive for grant funding that supports broader community health goals and specific types of health care services.



Bob Simpson, Flickr

Educating Residents on Local Health Services

Objective 9.3.3. Provide educational information regarding local opportunities for accessing healthcare services.

Oak Park has a wide array of health services available to residents. Understanding and accessing these services can be confusing. Village government could work with local health care providers to provide educational materials that succinctly summarize available options. Given Oak Park's diverse population, these materials could be provided through a wide range of media and in a number of languages. Ultimately the goal would be for a resident to be able to ask any provider (public health care providers, etc.) for referral information and that provider would have the information needed to connect the resident with appropriate services.

Supporting Health Department Services

Objective 9.3.4. Support the local public health services and maintain capacity for addressing emerging health issues.

Village government plays an important role in protecting the community from preventable death, disease, illness and injury. It identifies community problems and potential epidemics, develops health policies, enforces local ordinances and links residents to or provides a wide range of direct services. Services include health assessments and screenings, education, immunizations, prevention services, case management, nursing, counseling and access to other community resources. Village government could strive to sustain its support for staff through annual budgeting and grant funding.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in building local knowledge of health and safety.

Metric: Number of articles or news releases related to local health services

Desired Trend: Increase in number of households

Potential Data Resource: Mailing lists of Village government and local partners, number of hits for on-line resources



GOAL 9.4. PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, MENTAL HEALTH, AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES.

Oak Park has long been known as a community that embraces diversity. This should include providing comprehensive support to persons with disabilities by ensuring access to needed services and programs, venues inclusive of people with disabilities, and housing options. In addition to service provisions, all residents should be educated about mental health and substance abuse to remove the stigma associated with these issues. The following are actions Village government can take to support persons with disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues.

Providing Education About Mental Health & Substance Abuse

Objective 9.4.1. Provide education and awareness of mental health and substance abuse issues in order to remove the stigma associated with these issues.

Community safety and wellness includes a reduction of stigma attached to seeking mental health or substance abuse services. Village government could undertake a community-wide education campaign that will increase awareness of mental health and substance abuse issues with the intention of reducing stigma. Such a campaign could be implemented in partnership with early childcare providers, schools, parks and recreation providers, public safety professionals, housing developers and building owners, and others.

Ensuring Places are Inclusive of People with Disabilities

Objective 9.4.2. Ensure that venues, events, activities, and programs are physically and socially inclusive of people with disabilities.

Fully accessible and inclusive places help to remove the stigma associated with disabilities and provide a stronger sense of belonging among people who live with them. Village government and other local service providers could adopt and implement standards for the design of facilities and services that foster inclusion and interaction among all residents of Oak Park.

Collaborating to get Funding for Programs

Objective 9.4.3. Support the collaboration among municipalities, agencies, and not-for-profits in advocating and procuring funding for programs that support person with disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues.

Village government cannot provide all potential services demanded by residents. However, the community is fortunate to have several agencies, not-for-profits, or private organizations that can help fill in the gaps. Village government could support strong collaboration among those providing these services, and utilize its various networks to support collaboration and identify and leverage potential funding sources for programs that support person with disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting all Oak park citizens.

Metric: Amount of unmet funding needs for health-care

Desired Trend: Decrease in unmet funding

Potential Data Resource: Government and agency report



GOAL 9.5. PROVIDE OAK PARK RESIDENTS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AND TOOLS TO MAKE HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLE CHOICES.

Oak Park is a vibrant and thriving community with engaged and active residents. The community should support its citizenry in maintaining a high level of health by providing the systems and programs that foster active lifestyles, healthy eating, and other important decisions. The following recommendations describe ways Village government, school and park districts, and other partners can work together to ensure Oak Park remains a place where residents have access to opportunities for cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-being. These objectives also support activities that advance sustainability through active transportation and mobility.

Encouraging Increased Physical Activity and Good Nutrition

Objective 9.5.1. Implement changes to local policies, systems, and the built environment to increase access to physical activity, good nutrition, and a healthy environment.

Most residents are unaware of the negative effects of poor nutrition on physical and mental health and academic achievement. Fewer still understand what constitutes good nutrition and how to achieve it. The majority of children (59%), for example, perceive themselves as eating a healthy diet. In fact, 90% of children over the age of 8 do not consume the recommended servings of vegetables and 75% consume less than the recommended amounts for fruit.

Body Mass Index data collected in Oak Park in 2013 shows that Oak Park children are right at the national average of about 30% of children being either overweight or obese. Given the magnitude of the obesity epidemic, its long-term health implications, and the multitude of factors contributing to it, approaches targeting individuals are not sufficient. Individuals are more likely to sustain healthy lifestyles when the environment in which they live supports healthy behavior. Oak Park should implement changes to local policies, systems and the built environment to encourage increased physical activity and good nutrition. These may include safer walking and bicycling infrastructure, additional recreational programming for all age groups, development regulations that support pedestrian mobility and open space, etc.



PARTNERING ON PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Objective 9.5.2. Partner with existing neighborhood agencies to promote programs that improve health and increase opportunities for physical activity.

There are several partners outside of Village government that provide important services at the neighborhood level. Village government can work with these partners, as well as others, to increase awareness programs and facilitate local enrollment. Village government could also be a partner in identifying potential new programs that address emerging issues, and work with local providers to implement them. Finally, Village government could coordinate with service providers on an on-going basis to make them aware of and assess the potential impacts of municipal policies, programs, and services on the provision of supporting health-related services offered by others.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting local healthy lifestyle choices.

Metric: Overall health of Oak Park's children

Desired Trend: Decrease in negative indicators (i.e. high Body Mass Index)

Potential Data Resource: Community health providers and researchers

Metric: Enrollment in physical activities by residents of various ages

Desired Trend: Increase in participation

Potential Data Resource: School and park district enrollment rosters



Village of Oak Park Public Health & Safety Facilities

Government facilities, police and fire services, and healthcare providers are critical partners in ensuring quality of life for Oak Park citizens. Given the built-out pattern and stable population of the community, recommendations related to improved public health and safety services focus on increased collaboration and communication among local partners.

Government

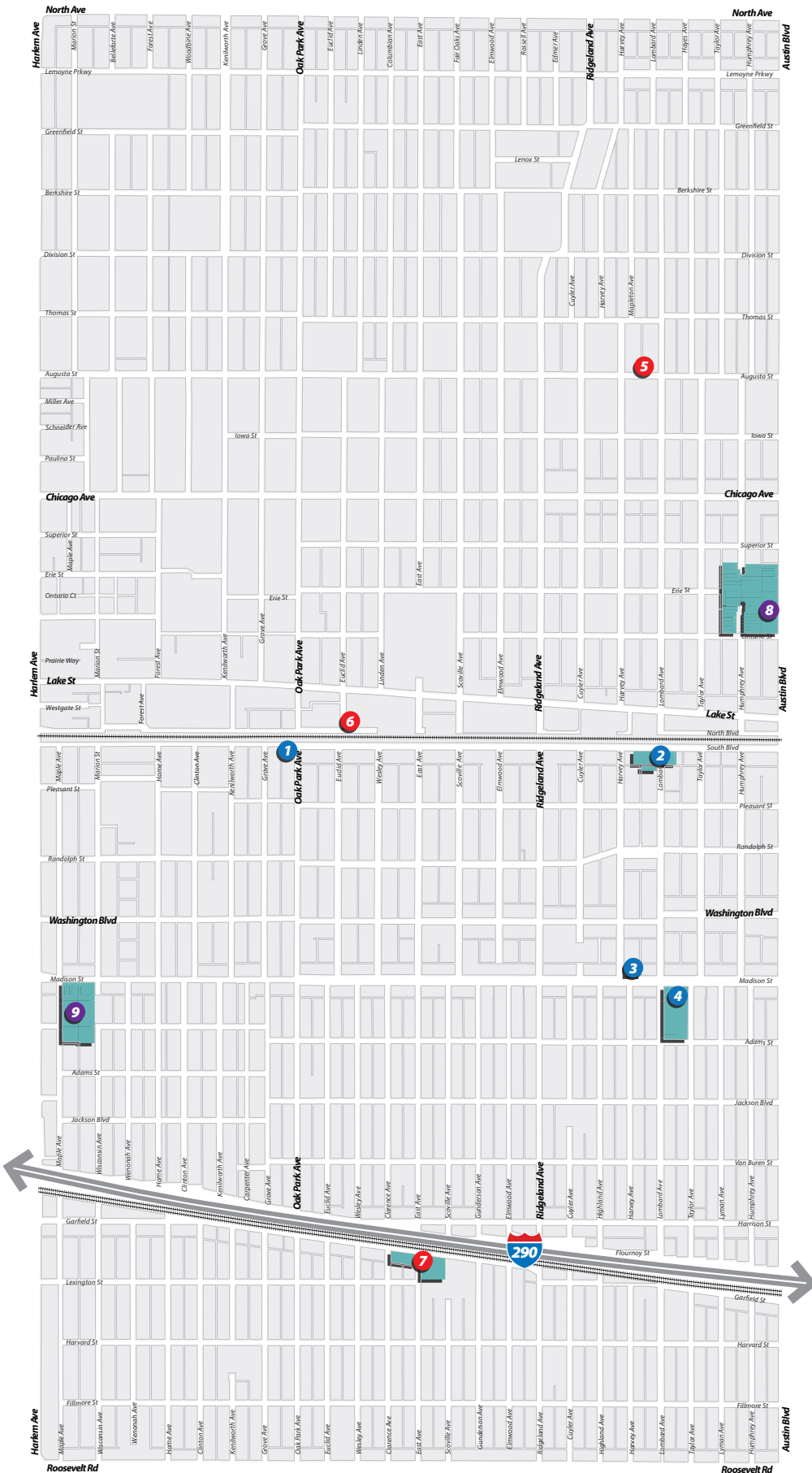
- 1 Oak Park Township
- 2 Public Works Center
- 3 Park District of Oak Park
- 4 Village Hall/Police Department

Fire Station

- 5 North Station
- 6 Main Station
- 7 South Station

Hospital

- 8 West Suburban Medical Center
- 9 Rush Oak Park Hospital



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SAFETY

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 9.1 – Make Oak Park a safe environment for citizens to live.				
9.1.1	Regularly review, update, and exercise Village government’s Emergency Preparedness & Response Plan.	Policies and Regulations	Amount of overall crime in Oak Park, summarized by type and location Amount of outside funding procured to support police and fire protection activities Amount of safety incidents involving bicyclists and pedestrians	
9.1.2	Support the maintenance and improvement of levels of service provided by police and fire departments.	Village Administration		
9.1.3	Seek outside funding, resources and collaborative efforts to support police and fire department programs and services.	Funding/Incentives		
9.1.4	Create an environment that is safe, attractive, and conducive to biking and walking.	Policies and Regulations, Capital Improvements		IDOT
9.1.5	Work closely with surrounding communities to identify and monitor crime patterns.	Governmental Collaboration		Neighboring communities
Goal 9.2 – Provide residents with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in safe living.				
9.2.1	Provide information to all residents through various outlets and resources regarding services and programs.	Village Administration & Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	Community perception of safety
9.2.2	Collaborate among municipal agencies, not-for-profits, local providers and funders to insure that all residents have the knowledge and tools necessary to engage in safe living.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
9.2.3	Collaborate with local partners to develop and publish a community health report card that monitors the overall health of the Oak Park population.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
Goal 9.3 – Ensure that all residents of Oak Park have access to healthcare services.				
9.3.1	Encourage collaboration among municipal agencies, not-for-profits, local providers and funders to ensure that all residents have access to primary healthcare, oral healthcare and behavioral healthcare services.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	Number of articles or news releases related to local health services
9.3.2	Identify funding sources to assist residents in accessing healthcare and social services.	Funding/Incentives		
9.3.3	Provide educational information regarding local opportunities for accessing healthcare services.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
9.3.4	Support the local public health services and maintain capacity for addressing emerging health issues.	Village Administration		

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 9.4 – Provide comprehensive support for persons with disabilities, mental health, and substance abuse issues.				
9.4.1	Provide education and awareness of mental health and substance abuse issues in order to remove the stigma associated with these issues.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	Amount of unmet funding needs for healthcare
9.4.2	Ensure that venues, events, activities, and programs are physically and socially inclusive of people with disabilities.	Policies and Regulations, Capital Improvements	Units of local government	
9.4.3	Support the collaboration among municipalities, agencies, and not-for-profits in advocating and procuring funding for programs that support person with disabilities, mental health and substance abuse issues.	Funding/Incentives, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government and local and regional agencies	

Goal 9.5 – Provide Oak Park residents with the environment and tools to make healthy and active lifestyle choices.				
9.5.1	Implement changes to local policies, systems, and the built environment which serve to encourage increased access to physical activity and good nutrition, and reduce exposure to second and third-hand smoke.	Regulation and Policies, Capital Improvements	Units of local government	Overall health of Oak Park's children
9.5.2	Partner with existing neighborhood agencies to promote programs that improve health and increase opportunities for physical activity.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts and Park District	Enrollment in physical activities by residents of various ages
9.5.3	Provide a central resource for information on all aspects of safe and healthy living, and utilize governmental and neighborhood networks to distribute information to all residents.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	



Transportation, Infrastructure, & Communication Technologies

Oak Park is a community that is well-connected through transportation, infrastructure, and communication. The ability to move people, goods, resources, and information is critical in supporting a high quality of life and emerging commerce. To ensure all people enjoy personal mobility, Village government adopted a Complete Streets Policy that pledges to be inclusive of all people whether they are walking, biking, taking transit or driving. The Statement speaks to the role of the Comprehensive Plan in helping set a course that achieves a stronger community through mobility and connectivity.

The Village of Oak Park seeks to create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network where every roadway user can travel safely and comfortably and where sustainable transportation options are available to everyone by planning, designing, operating, and maintaining a network of Complete Streets.

Three distinct yet interrelated elements of this chapter – transportation, infrastructure, and communication systems – represent how people in Oak Park remain connected both physically and virtually. The goals of this chapter relate in some way to all other chapters in this Plan and strive to ensure that all residents of Oak Park are served by mobility, infrastructure, and communications systems that meet the needs of the community.

From sewers to water to digital information, infrastructure sustains daily quality of life and makes Oak Park competitive for investment in cutting-edge and creative jobs.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Transportation and infrastructure systems provide the physical connections to services, activities, and people that define and strengthen the sense of community in Oak Park. Mobility is an important part of daily life, and the variety of transportation modes in Oak Park must ensure that everyone has access throughout and around the village. Whether access to local shopping or a job in Downtown Chicago, residents should have choices in how they move. Quality and accessible transit services and facilities, appropriate parking supply and clear policies, and comprehensive bikeability, walkability, and pedestrian mobility are all integral parts of mobility.

Transportation facilities, utility infrastructure, and communication systems are all important components that make Oak Park function and that must be consistent with the character and history of the village. From sewers to water to digital information, infrastructure sustains daily quality of life and makes Oak Park competitive for investment in cutting-edge and creative jobs. Bicycle and pedestrian networks, roadways, and transit systems connect residents to the critical services they need. Transportation facilities, including rights-of-way, parking lots, and rail corridors, are major users of land. It is critical that this land is recognized as a valuable resource that must effectively serve surrounding uses, particularly in areas near public transit that call for universal accessibility and increased housing diversity. The design and functionality of major transportation infrastructure, such as the Eisenhower Expressway, have major impacts on local mobility, neighborhood character and traffic, and air quality.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement describes Transportation and Infrastructure as it exists in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park's transportation and infrastructure systems create a safe, connected, and equitable community where personal choice in transportation enhances quality of life and community health. A high level of accessibility, and appropriately managed mobility, attracts people to live and invest in neighborhoods and businesses in Oak Park. Destinations throughout the community are easily accessed by all modes of travel. The design of the transportation network conveys a hierarchy of travel modes along connected routes around the village and encourages diverse travel choices. The Eisenhower transportation corridor enhances local quality of life and the negative impacts of the corridor are minimized. Each travel mode has a defined role to play and different modes serve different types of trips.

Local awareness and education ensure that people living and working in the community understand the benefits of all different transportation choices and are encouraged to choose a healthy mode of travel. Transit serves the community at all times of day and parking policies consider all modes of access (vehicular, bicycles, pedestrians, and transit). Development will support walking, bicycling, and transit use. Children are able to safely and conveniently walk or bike to school. All transportation and infrastructure networks are well maintained through proactive capital programming and coordination with other construction projects.

Oak Park will have comprehensive and reliable infrastructure. This will be in place as a result of collaboration among service providers, local taxing bodies, residents and businesses. The local business economy is robust and market competitive as the result of comprehensive and reliable technology infrastructure. Public services are exceptional because of the technology infrastructure and resulting electronic access to public information.



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GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 10.1. DEVELOP TRANSPORTATION, INFORMATION, AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORKS THAT SUPPORT MULTIMODAL AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO DESTINATIONS IN OAK PARK AND ELSEWHERE.

The people and places in Oak Park are connected through the village's transportation and information networks. These networks help connect people to places and information. The following are actions Village government can take to support pedestrian, bike, transit, auto and information access in Oak Park that not only enhance mobility but also reduce reliance on pollution-generating means of transportation.

Accessing Businesses by Foot, Bike, Transit, and Automobile

Objective 10.1.1 - Ensure that business districts benefit from multi-modal access that balances the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists.

Business districts that support a pedestrian, bicycle and transit friendly environment, in addition to automobiles, often lead to a higher level of commercial "traffic." Efficiently using the public right of way to accommodate all modes of travel ensures that all people, regardless of their mode of travel, are able to access goods and services. In order to support this objective, Village government could ensure that all modes of transportation are accommodated within the public right of way and that commercial developments are built in a manner that is welcoming to people arriving on foot, bike transit and in a car. Examples include orienting building entrances to the sidewalk, parking lots designed with pedestrian walkways and crosswalks, and prominently located bicycle parking.

Planning for Information Systems

Objective 10.1.2 - Maintain and update a strategic information plan that evaluates the feasibility of developing an open, high-speed broadband communication network and guides the development of civic information systems.

Information systems are constantly changing and evolving. To maintain Oak Park's high quality of life, it is important for Village government to plan for and accommodate new and changing information networks. To sustain and increase the village's level of connectivity, they could continue to work with information systems providers to ensure residents and businesses are well connected. To move forward, Village government could study the feasibility, cost and benefits of developing and maintaining a high-speed broadband communication network and Wi-Fi service.

Modernizing Transit Facilities

Objective 10.1.3 - Advocate for and partner with CTA, Pace, and Metra to modernize facilities to safely accommodate users of all modes and all abilities by ensuring that transit stations and stops meet or exceed ADA guidance and easily transfer from transit to walking or bicycling.

Oak Park has a rich network of transit options offered by Pace, CTA and Metra. Transit trips often end with a rider walking, bicycling, carpooling, or transferring to another bus or train. In order to ensure that all people of all ages and abilities using all modes of transportation are able to access transit, Village government could continue to work with transit service providers to ensure that every transit station and bus stop in Oak Park meets or exceeds current accessibility guidelines, and that all stops and stations are easily accessible to people on foot and bike.



Completing the Streets

Objective 10.1.4 - Plan and install “complete streets” on key corridors that accommodate bus transit, bicycle, and pedestrian trips.

Streets are considered complete when any person, regardless of their age, ability or mode of travel, can comfortably travel along and across that street. Many of Oak Park’s streets already have sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit stops and shelters that allow for multi-modal travel. Yet some streets are more comfortable to walk, bike or access transit on than others. In 2010, Village government adopted a resolution supporting the Complete Streets concept. Then, in January 2012, Village government adopted a Complete Streets Policy where they seek “to create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network where every roadway user can travel safely and comfortably and where sustainable transportation options are available to everyone by planning, designing, operating, and maintaining a network of Complete Streets.” In order to ensure that people can get from place to place within the village, Oak Park should continue with implementation of its Complete Streets Policy and design sidewalks and pedestrian crossings that ensure safe, walkable neighborhoods and business districts.

Managing Parking

Objective 10.1.5 - Ensure that the land use impacts of parking are efficiently managed and continue to regularly review the village parking strategy to incorporate best practices for travel demand management, pricing, and both on-street and off street parking supply.

Oak Park has been managing parking since the 1920’s when Village government began regulating overnight parking. To more effectively manage parking, Village government, in 2007, studied its existing parking and has been pricing public parking based on location and demand. In order to continue to effectively manage parking, Village government could regularly review its parking strategy with a focus on demand for both on-street and off street. In commercial and employment districts, convenient short term parking could be available for customers and visitors to businesses. They could also investigate parking pricing options in areas of high parking demand. In residential areas, Village government could periodically review on-street overnight parking requirements, specifically looking at requirements like snow parking.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting universal access throughout the community.

Metric: Adoption of a Strategic Information Plan

Desired Trend: Adoption of a Plan

Potential Data Resource: Municipal Board and Commission agendas and minutes

Metric: Total miles of Complete Streets upgrades in the community

Desired Trend: Increase in total miles of Complete Streets projects

Potential Data Resource: Municipal design plans and IDOT engineering plans



GOAL 10.2. DESIGN TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS THAT PROTECT, SUPPORT, AND ENHANCE THE SAFETY AND HERITAGE OF OAK PARK'S NEIGHBORHOODS AND BUSINESS DISTRICTS.

Transportation network design and safety can greatly affect a person's mode choice and neighborhood vitality. The following are actions Village government can take to enhance its existing bicycle, pedestrian, transit and automobile transportation networks, and reduce dependence on automobiles for access to local goods and services.

Coordinating Traffic Signals

Objective 10.2.1 - Continue enhancing the integrated traffic signal network to discourage cut through traffic.

Encountering too many red lights, or having a street with a reputation for being slow due to the traffic signals, can cause motorized traffic to utilize a local street to bypass a congested arterial road. For several years, Oak Park has used technology to create a connected network of traffic signals that enhances traffic flow. Village government could continue to maintain and enhance this network of interconnected traffic signals in order to concentrate car traffic on arterial roadways and discourage cut through traffic on neighborhood streets.

Creating a Walkable Community

Objective 10.2.2 - Enhance sidewalks and crossings infrastructure to ensure safe, walkable and accessible neighborhoods and business districts.

Walking is a healthy and affordable way to get around. Oak Park already has sidewalks on every street and crosswalks with curb ramps at most intersections. To maintain its existing sidewalk network, Village government could continue to sustain and grow its sidewalk maintenance and replacement programs and explore options for funding the removal of from sidewalks. In order to make Oak Park an even more walkable community, Village government could continue to use traffic calming tools, such as curb bump outs, one-way streets, traffic circles, textures and surfaces, signal timing, signs, and access management, to increase awareness of pedestrians. At intersections, Village government could phase traffic signals for pedestrian crossing times that allow people with various levels of mobility and speeds of travel to safely cross the street. Village government could also install more pedestrian signals, curb ramps, signals for the visually impaired, and crossing warning signs, especially in high pedestrian traffic areas or locations with frequent pedestrian incidents.

What others are doing...

Encouraging Active Transportation

Go Bronzeville – A New Transportation Options Marketing Program in Chicago

Go Bronzeville is a City of Chicago program that offers free resources, activities, and support to Bronzeville residents to encourage them to walk, bicycle, and take transit more often. The Go Bronzeville program invited 7,500 Bronzeville residents to order customized information packets containing their choices of maps, brochures, and helpful resources on transportation options for getting around Bronzeville, the City of Chicago and beyond. Local outreach staff, hired from within the neighborhood, assembled customized packets and delivered them throughout the fall and winter to residents' homes, along with an incentive gift.

For more information visit: <http://www.gobronzeville.org/>



What others are doing...

Active transportation education in the classroom

Safe Routes and Bicycling Ambassadors, Chicago, IL

Safe Routes Ambassadors are a group of bicycle and pedestrian safety experts that have been encouraging Chicago youth and adults to walk and bike for transportation since 2001. During the school year, ambassadors visit elementary school classrooms and teach students about bicycle and pedestrian safety. In warmer months, they also offer outdoor classes where students apply their classroom learning, and work with police officers to educate people on bike and in cars about safe driving behaviors.

More information about the program can be found at <http://chicago.com/pletestreets.org/your-safety/education-encouragement/ambassadors/>

Educating and Encouraging Safe, Active Travel

Objective 10.2.3 - Educate and encourage students on safe use of the transportation network.

As children grow up, they begin to travel longer distances independently, which may require making choices between driving, walking, biking and taking transit. In order to help Oak Park youth make safe transportation decisions, Village government should work with local schools and advocacy groups to provide educational resources related to the safe use of the transportation network. This would include awareness for both parents and children regarding the modes of choice that are available throughout the village, factors in determining the safety of a certain mode for different age groups and levels of mobility, and safe practices that would minimize the risk of injury.

Connecting the Bicycle Network

Objective 10.2.4 - Regularly update the Oak Park Bike Plan to ensure that the Village creates a safe, logical, and integrated cycling network that connects to surrounding communities.

Oak Park adopted a bicycle plan in 2008 that identifies where to install bike lanes and other types of bicycle facilities. Village government has implemented many of the recommendations in that plan. There are now many dedicated bike lanes, shared lanes, bike route signs and bike parking throughout the village. Since adoption of that plan, the City of Chicago and the City of Berwyn, both adjacent to Oak Park, have adopted and are working to implement bike plans. To continue to develop Oak Park's bicycle network, Village government could utilize incremental capital improvements to implement the remaining components of its Bike Plan, and update the plan to ensure coordination with neighboring communities and integration of the most current bicycle facility design standards.

Encouraging All Modes of Travel

Objective 10.2.5 - Encourage travel demand management to support use of the street by all modes and encourage employers to offer incentives to employees to carpool or take transit to work.

Travel demand management encourages the use of all modes of transportation as a means of commuting. Some people may not be aware of their travel options and could benefit from information and encouragement by their employer. This can lead to personal economic benefits as well as local and regional environmental benefits. In order to encourage use of the streets by all modes of travel, Village government could encourage employers to identify opportunities for and implement incentives for employees that carpool, take transit, walk or bike to work. Village government could work with employers to help them understand and take advantage of state and federal programs that provide such incentives but mitigate any direct costs to businesses. Finally, Village government could support the implementation of a bike share and car share programs that reduce the reliance on private automobile ownership and use barriers to non-motorized local transportation.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting Oak Park's heritage and character.

Metric: Walk Score

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in walk score

Potential Data Resource: walkscore.com or equivalent

Metric: Number of shared bike or car parking spaces available in Oak Park

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in amount of parking spaces

Potential Data Resource: Municipal permits, inventories of shared service providers



yooperann, Flickr

GOAL 10.3. BUILD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE THAT ENHANCES NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT, GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.

Communications networks are key to sharing information and ideas between and among the Oak Park community. The following are actions that Village government can take to enhance engagement, transparency, sustainability and support economic development through communications.

Regulating for the Information Age

Objective 10.3.1 - Review and amend regulations, as appropriate, to remove barriers and provide incentives to expanding information infrastructure.

Village government's regulations influence what types of information infrastructure are permissible within the village. As information infrastructure evolves, Village government's zoning regulations need to keep up with the changing demands. Village government could regularly review and update as necessary use regulations related to information infrastructure. As they are drafted, proposed amendments should consider the impacts on the municipality's long-term infrastructure, community character, and existing development context.

Leveraging Technology to attract business

Objective 10.3.2 - Work with local and regional business leaders to identify needs and deficiencies with respect to upcoming information technologies and identify scalable and expandable projects to attract business and industries of the future.

Technology, and industry needs for I.T., are constantly evolving. Businesses are often seeking new and innovative ways to leverage emerging technologies. In order to attract businesses and industries of the future, Village government can work with local economic development partners and existing industry to identify the demands for emerging technologies with real application in the village. Village government could also identify opportunities for the upgrading of existing infrastructure, or installation of new infrastructure, in order to meet anticipated demands and support emerging business development. As regularly programmed or special capital improvements are made to municipal infrastructure, Village government should consider and design for long-term flexibility that supports the evolution and expansion of reliable and flexible infrastructure and technology systems.



Communicating with Other Public Agencies

Objective 10.3.3 - Build civic communication infrastructure among the six governmental units in Oak Park.

Oak Park has a total of six taxing bodies; the Village, Oak Park Township, Oak Park-River Forest High School, the Elementary School District, the Oak Park Public Library District and the Park District of Oak Park. To a large extent, these districts work well together to share information with each other's constituents when warranted. Village government could continue to explore opportunities to formalize communication with these districts, including shared communication lists (with user permissions provided at the time of registration) and a central clearinghouse for posts, articles, and documents distributed by all partners.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting infrastructure development that fosters communication and growth.

Metric: Investment in modern infrastructure development

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in total annual investment

Potential Data Resource: Municipal or private infrastructure development permits

GOAL 10.4. MAKE THE EISENHOWER TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR SAFE, CONVENIENT, AND RELIABLE WITH MULTI-MODAL OPTIONS THAT SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES.

The Eisenhower corridor is a major transportation asset for residents of Oak Park and the western portion of the Chicagoland region. The following are actions Village government can take to support the local and regional benefits provided by the Eisenhower transportation corridor, and sustain the natural, physical, and economic development environment in Oak Park.

Supporting Local and Regional Travel

Objective 10.4.1 - Ensure that the Eisenhower supports both local and regional travel needs and improves public transit access to destinations to the west and east of Oak Park.

The Eisenhower corridor provides access to destinations in Oak Park and to the City of Chicago and its western suburbs. The corridor is unique because it was one of the first expressways in the country to incorporate a train line within the expressway. Today Oak Park's section of the Eisenhower includes both the expressway and three CTA Blue line train stops that allow for east-west travel into and out of the village. As improvements to the corridor are considered, Village government should work closely with IDOT, CTA, and Pace to advocate for the extension of rail transit services beyond Forest Park, enhanced local and regional bus routes that increase mobility to surrounding communities, and improved transit stations that integrate fully accessible platforms and more comfortable waiting areas.



David Wilson, Flickr

Maintaining the Expressway Footprint

Objective 10.4.2 - Maintain the existing expressway footprint, soften the visual barrier and preserve the established built form, character, and historic assets.

The Eisenhower corridor is a tremendous asset for Oak Park, but it also imposes significant impacts related to noise and community aesthetics. Village government should work with IDOT as improvements to the corridor are planned in order to minimize the impacts of the corridor on surrounding development, and integrate appropriate noise and visual buffers that mitigate the impacts of traffic along the corridor on nearby development. Two primary areas of focus should be the design of the corridor trench (i.e. footprint, landscaping, etc.), and the design of north-south overpasses that span across the trench and impact the perceived character of the community.

Connecting People on Foot and Bike

Objective 10.4.3 - Improve non-motorized mobility across the Eisenhower corridor by widening bridge sidewalks to safely accommodate bicycles and pedestrians and create small areas of open space.

There are currently six bridges that allow people on foot or on bike to cross the Eisenhower. One of these bridges is designed exclusively for pedestrians, while the other bridges accommodate all modes of traffic. Bridges are spaced approximately every half mile. These bridges provide varying levels of protection for pedestrians and cyclists. Some have fast moving traffic with minimal separation between the traffic and the sidewalk, and none of the bridges have a designated bicycle facility. Village government could work with IDOT to implement improvements to roadway overpasses that include increased sidewalk widths, enhanced pedestrian signalization, buffers from vehicular traffic, and bike lanes where space allows. Improvement plans should explore opportunities for expanded bridge decking that could accommodate wider sidewalks, bike trails, open space, or active development.

Exploring Creative Solutions

Objective 10.4.4 - Explore and test creative solutions for managing transportation patterns, integrating all modes of travel, and designing infrastructure in order to maximize mobility and minimize impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and commercial districts.

The village has always been proactive regarding the design of the Eisenhower corridor and its potential benefits and impacts on the community. Village government could continue to work with IDOT, CTA, Pace, and other partners in exploring and implementing innovative solutions to transportation mobility and safety. While specific solutions will depend upon local and regional priorities, issues and challenges to be addressed, and the availability of funding from various sources, consideration should be given to creative infrastructure and design solutions that address important issues, including increased physical connections and open space across the corridor, increasing the efficiency of travel along I-290 through managed traffic and transit lanes, innovative interchange designs, and investment in transit infrastructure, stations, and access points.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in managing the impacts of potential modifications to the Eisenhower Expressway corridor.

Metric: Amount of funding identified by IDOT or FHWA for aesthetic or impact-mitigating measures to the proposed design plan

Desired Trend: Increase in IDOT funding

Potential Data Resource: IDOT cost estimates and design proposals



GOAL 10.5. SUPPORT A STRONG INFRASTRUCTURE SYSTEM THAT LEVERAGES SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGIES.

Infrastructure provides necessary and sustaining resources to residents and businesses in the village. Water, sewer, electric, gas, cable/internet, cellular and transportation networks support local development and keep citizens connected. The following are actions Village government can take to ensure residents have access to resilient infrastructure, while minimizing environmental impact and addressing local impacts of climate change.

Integrating New Technologies

Objective 10.5.1 - Regularly review and update the capital improvement program in order to maintain existing systems and integrate new infrastructure technologies.

The Village's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a plan for near-term infrastructure improvements. It is used as a tool for planning and budgeting major capital projects within the village. As systems and technologies improve, it is important that Village government consider adoption and integration of these systems and technologies into their existing networks. Municipal staff could monitor the development of new infrastructure techniques and technologies, and consider their applicability within Oak Park. New technologies could be implemented incrementally over time, taking into account the long-term financial and social benefits they may provide to the community. In the short-term, infrastructure improvements should be designed and installed to provide for the integration of emerging infrastructure technologies as appropriate.

Utilizing Renewable Resources

Objective 10.5.2 - Use renewable energies that are easily scalable, environmentally sound, efficient, and adaptable to environmental change and community demand.

A community's energy sources can greatly impact the environment and the community. Renewable energies have a lower impact than older, "dirty" energy sources. Using solar energy, wind energy, geothermal heating, biofuels, and other renewable energy sources significantly decreases the village's environmental impact caused by energy consumption. In order to allow for renewable energies, Village government could review and amend its zoning code to ensure that it permits residents to utilize these energy sources. Village government could also continue to identify sources of and purchase renewable energy for public distribution and use through local utilities.

Focusing on Sustainable Systems

Objective 10.5.3 - Update the municipal infrastructure plan to focus more specifically on sustainable systems.

Village government regularly drafts and updates long-term plans intended to guide investment in existing and future infrastructure. These infrastructure systems represent a significant investment, and are necessary to support local development. Village government could prioritize the examination and integration of sustainable and resilient infrastructure in its long-term planning. This will ensure that the community remains up to date regarding emerging technologies, and that municipal infrastructure is resilient to local impacts of climate change.



David Wilson, Flickr

Managing Stormwater

Objective 10.5.4 - Encourage on-site stormwater detention with processing strategies, such as rain gardens, rain barrels, bioswales, and permeable paving that take stress off the combined sewer system.

Traditional stormwater infrastructure is designed to receive runoff from surrounding properties, collect it into sewers, and transmit it for cleansing and discharge. However, major storm events or snow melts place significant strain on stormwater and sanitary infrastructure, often resulting in flooded streets, sidewalks, and structures. The village is a leader in sustainable development, and is taking positive steps to manage the impacts of stormwater runoff. Village government should continue to allow and encourage the use of rain gardens, rain barrels, bioswales and permeable pavers on both public and private properties to help retain and filtrate water prior to releasing it into the ground locally. This will help reduce the demand placed on public infrastructure and sustain local groundwater reserves.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting the development of sustainable infrastructure.

Metric: Linear feet or total area of sustainable infrastructure in Oak Park

Desired Trend: Increase in linear feet or total area

Potential Data Resource: Public Works inventories and private development proposals approved by Village government

Metric: Number of permits issued for renewable energy systems

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of permits issued

Potential Data Resource: Village permitting

Metric: Amount of stormwater managed on-site and diverted away from municipal infrastructure systems

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of managed or diverted stormwater

Potential Data Resource: Development applications approved by Village government

What others are doing...

Integrating stormwater management into the streetscape

Uptown Normal, Illinois Roundabout

Normal, Illinois turned a busy 5-way intersection in the middle of their business district into an attractive civic space with sustainable features. The roundabout moves traffic through the intersection at predictable speeds that allow for safe and easy crossing by people in cars, walking or biking. The center of the roundabout is also large enough to serve as the central gathering space within the Uptown Normal business district. Families are often found picnicking and students from nearby Illinois State University come there to study. A water feature is integrated into the center of the roundabout. Its design captures stormwater and prevents runoff from flowing directly into a nearby creek by treating it in an underground system of aquatic plants.

For more information visit: http://www.epa.gov/dced/awards/sg_awards_publication_2011.htm#civic_places



Village of Oak Park Transportation & Roadways

Oak Park benefits from a well-established grid of arterials, collectors, and local roads, while the Eisenhower Expressway provides regional mobility to Downtown Chicago and the western suburbs. Future improvements should focus on enhancing the efficiency of the current system and eliminating safety concerns for motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and transit riders.

One specific area of concern for the Oak Park community is the Eisenhower corridor. As Village government and the community work with IDOT to define an appropriate design for the interstate, consideration should be given to a broad range of impacts that go beyond the area immediately surrounding the corridor. These include physical impacts (the actual footprint of the expressway corridor and its impact on community character), environmental impacts (air quality, noise, vibration, etc.), mobility impacts (connectivity across the corridor and access to transit services), and economic impacts (property values, business viability, etc.)



Legend

- Interstate
- State Arterial
- Principal Arterial
- Minor Arterial
- Collector
- Potential One Way Street Conversion
- Expressway Interchange
- Traffic Light
- Average Daily Traffic



Village of Oak Park Bicycle, Transit, & Pedestrians

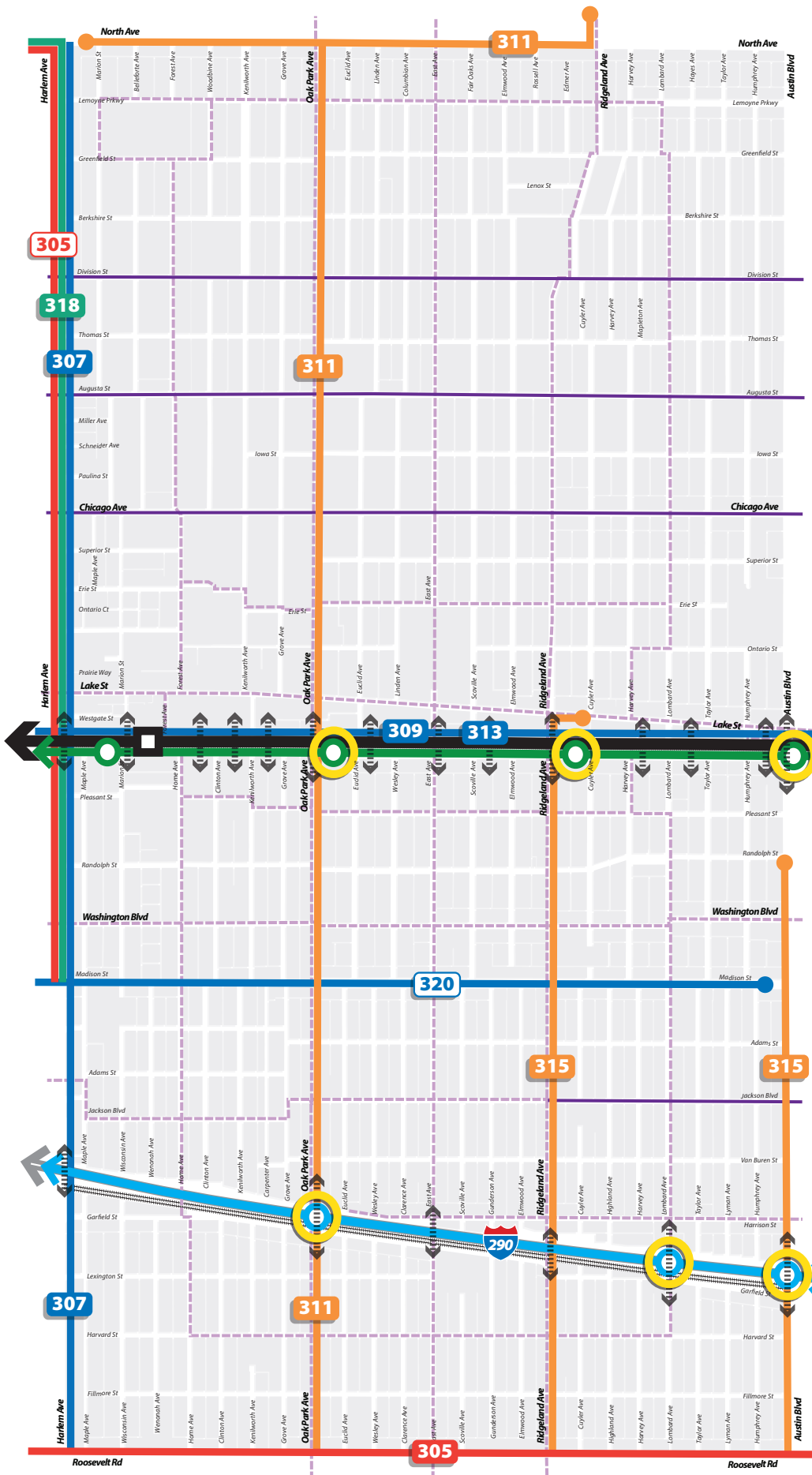
Metra commuter rail service, CTA rail and bus services, and Pace bus services create a robust local transit network that provides connections to communities throughout the region. Local bicycle and pedestrian networks lay the foundation for active transportation alternatives throughout Oak Park. Comprehensive Plan recommendations aim to ensure the mobility of all users, regardless of physical ability, through targeted improvements to existing and evolving systems.

Transit Routes

- Metra UP-W Rail Line
- Pace Bus Routes
- CTA Blue Line
- CTA Green Line

Pedestrian Circulation

- Existing Bike Trail
- Proposed Bike Trail
- I-290 & Transit Corridor Bridge Crossings
- Transit Station Upgrades/ Accessibility Improvements
- Priority Pedestrian Areas



GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE, & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective Recommendation Type Key Partners Metrics

Goal 10.1 – Develop transportation, information, and other infrastructure networks that support multimodal and universal access to destinations in Oak Park and elsewhere.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
10.1.1 Ensure that business districts benefit from multi-modal access that balances the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists.	Policies and Regulations, Capital Improvements		
10.1.2 Maintain and update a strategic information plan that evaluates the feasibility of developing an open, high-speed broadband communication network and guides the development of civic information systems.	Capital Improvement Program		
10.1.3 Advocate for and partner with CTA, Pace, and Metra to modernize facilities to safely accommodate users of all modes and all abilities by ensuring that transit stations and stops meet or exceed ADA guidance and easily transfer from transit to walking or bicycling.	Governmental Collaboration	Transit service providers and facility managers	Adoption of a Strategic Information Plan Total miles of Complete Streets upgrades in the community
10.1.4 Plan and install “complete streets” on key corridors that accommodate bus transit, bicycle, and pedestrian trips.	Policies and Regulations, Capital Improvements	IDOT	
10.1.5 Ensure that the land use impacts of parking are efficiently managed and continue to regularly review the village parking strategy to incorporate best practices for travel demand management, pricing, and both on-street and off street parking supply.	Policies and Regulations		

Goal 10.2 – Design transportation networks that protect, support and enhance the safety and heritage of Oak Park’s neighborhoods and business districts.

10.2.1 Continue enhancing the integrated traffic signal network to discourage cut through traffic.	Capital Improvement Program	IDOT	
10.2.2 Enhance sidewalks and crossings infrastructure to ensure safe, walkable and accessible neighborhoods and business districts.	Capital Improvement Program	IDOT	
10.2.3 Educate and encourage students on safe use of the transportation network.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	Walk score
10.2.4 Regularly update the Oak Park Bike Plan to ensure that the Village creates a safe, logical, and integrated cycling network that connects to surrounding communities.	Policies and Regulations, Capital Improvement Program		Number of shared bike or car parking spaces available in Oak Park
10.2.5 Encourage travel demand management to support use of the street by all modes and encourage employers to offer incentives to employees to carpool or take transit to work.	Village Administration		

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 10.3 – Build information and communication infrastructure that enhances neighborhood engagement, government transparency, economic development, and environmental sustainability.			
10.3.1	Review and amend regulations, as appropriate, to remove barriers and provide incentives to expanding information infrastructure.	Policies and Regulations, Funding/Incentives	
10.3.2	Work with local and regional business leaders to identify needs and deficiencies with respect to upcoming information technologies and identify scalable and expandable projects to attract business and industries of the future.	Capital Improvement Program	Investment in modern infrastructure development
10.3.3	Build civic communication infrastructure among the six governmental units in Oak Park.	Governmental Collaboration	
		Units of local government	

Goal 10.4 – Make the Eisenhower transportation corridor safe, convenient and reliable with multi-modal options that support environmental sustainability and livable communities.			
10.4.1	Ensure that the Eisenhower supports both local and regional travel needs and improves public transit access to destinations to the west and east of Oak Park.	Governmental Collaboration	IDOT, CTA, and Pace
10.4.2	Maintain the existing expressway footprint, soften the visual barrier and preserve the established built form, character, and historic assets.	Governmental Collaboration	IDOT
10.4.3	Improve non-motorized mobility across the Eisenhower corridor by widening bridge sidewalks to safely accommodate bicycles and pedestrians and create small areas of open space.	Governmental Collaboration	IDOT
10.4.4	Explore and test creative solutions for managing transportation patterns, integrating all modes of travel, and designing infrastructure in order to maximize mobility and minimize impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and commercial districts.	Capital Improvement Program	IDOT, CTA, and Pace

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 10.5 – Support a strong infrastructure system that leverages new sustainable technologies.			
10.5.1	Regularly review and update the capital improvement program in order to maintain existing systems and integrate new infrastructure technologies.	Capital Improvements, Policies and Regulations	Linear feet or total area of sustainable infrastructure in Oak Park
10.5.2	Use renewable energies that are easily scalable, environmentally sound, efficient, and adaptable to environmental change and community demand.	Capital Improvements, Policies and Regulations	Number of permits issued for renewable energy systems
10.5.3	Update the municipal infrastructure plan to focus more specifically on sustainable systems.	Policies and Regulations	Amount of stormwater managed on-site and diverted away from municipal infrastructure systems
10.5.2	Encourage on-site stormwater detention with processing strategies, such as rain gardens, rain barrels, bioswales, and permeable paving that take stress off the combined sewer system.	Policies and Regulations	Amount of stormwater managed on-site and diverted away from municipal infrastructure systems



Community Life & Engagement

For decades, active Oak Park citizens have been a key ingredient in creating a sense of identity and inclusion. Boards and commissions, Parent/Teacher Organizations (PTO's), block groups, business organizations, community organizations, not-for-profits, and other groups provide the structure for residents to volunteer their time and talents in an impactful and positive way. Events and festivals foster local pride while providing an outlet for local volunteerism.

Simply stated, community participation and engagement, whether it be in the form of public service, attendance at public meetings, unrecognized volunteer time, or another avenue, is the key to ensuring that Oak Park remains a community that is built on and responsive to its residents' unique and diverse set of concerns and aspirations.

This chapter identifies a series of goals, objectives, and policies intended to provide opportunities for residents to participate in preserving and shaping their community, and enhancing collaboration among the various groups responsible for service to Oak Park's citizens.

Shared ownership in community life strengthens relationships among residents, businesses, not-for-profits, governments, and other groups, thereby ensuring a coordinated and collaborative way of delivering local services.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Civic engagement is critical to promoting community, fostering communication, and empowering residents to influence governmental decisions. In this way, Oak Park residents can define the kinds of services provided in the community and establish forward-thinking priorities in areas such as sustainability, diversity, and historic preservation. Shared ownership in community life strengthens relationships among residents, businesses, not-for-profits, governments and other groups, thereby ensuring a coordinated and collaborative way of delivering local services. This enables Oak Park to sustain itself as a safe place where residents and businesses feel responsible for defining and maintaining the local quality of life.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement Describes Community Life and Engagement as it Exists in Oak Park in 2030.

The Village of Oak Park is a leader in promoting community, diversity, and active citizenship. Throughout the village neighbors know, respect and help each other. The common thread, regardless of race, status, religion, etc., is the value placed on being a resident of Oak Park. By embracing diversity, community leaders successfully find common ground on complex issues by respecting differences and seeking out shared goals.

Oak Park fosters a culture of civic engagement that empowers residents to articulate concerns while also organizing their role as part of a larger community. Through elected, appointed and volunteer positions, citizens promote community service and guide public policy. Neighborhoods serve as the catalysts for local networks and engagement. Neighborhood-based organizations allow residents to collectively define important aspects of their neighborhood's history as well as its future.

As a welcoming community, Oak Park residents actively shape the quality of life in their community and invest in a greater shared identity.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 11.1. ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AMONG RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, THE VILLAGE, AND OTHER COMMUNITY PARTNERS.

As a diverse and inclusive community, Oak Park seeks out opinions and encourages dialogue and debate in an effort to continually improve the community. Village residents, business owners and community partners envision enhanced communication in an effort to provide meaningful opportunities for participation. The following objectives describe how Village government can build on already robust foundation of communication networks and infrastructure.

Developing a Stronger Communication Network

Objective 11.1.1. Utilize existing and future communication networks, including neighborhood organizations, not-for-profits, government mailing lists, etc. as networks for creating awareness among all Oak Park citizens about Village decision-making, policies and programs.

Oak Park has a long history of fostering a diversity of opinions in the village. Village government communicates via a print newsletter, web site and social media. Village government, in partnership with community-based organizations, could continue to strengthen communication and find ways to disseminate information about the village, recognizing that residents may respond to a variety of traditional or modern means of communication. Outreach and communication should consider the diverse cultural, ethnic, physical, and socioeconomic characteristics of its citizens.

Respecting Diverse Opinions while Working Toward the Common Good

Objective 11.1.2. In all units of local government, ensure that the diversity of opinions in Oak Park is respected and that collaborative efforts focus on actions to advance an overall common good.

Acceptance of Oak Park’s diverse population is a core value of the community. Village government could seek ways to engage all residents in dialogue about current issues and the village’s long-term vision. All staff, elected and appointed officials, and representatives of Village government should understand and be sensitive to the importance of openness to different viewpoints. When opinions differ, individuals should seek to find the common objectives that advance the greater good of Oak Park, and use them to build consensus around specific actions or initiatives.



Improving Communication with Residents

Objective 11.1.3. Recognize geographically-based groups as opportunities for effective citizen communication.

Oak Park benefits from organizations that provide effective networks for communication. While some of these organizations focus on issues, others focus on a specific geographic portion of the village. Village government can identify and work with these organizations to ensure that effective communication occurs as issues or policies are debated that may impact a certain geography. These organizations may include block groups, neighborhood organizations, business districts, religious congregations, local schools, and others.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of enhancing communication with various groups.

Metric: Total enrollment or people subscribing to communication networks used by all governmental units and their partners

Desired Trend: Increase in enrollment or number of subscriptions annually

Potential Data Resource: Numbers provided by contact list owners, including municipal departments and partner organizations or agencies

Metric: Voter turnout

Desired Trend: Increase in voter turnout

Potential Data Resource: Polling results

GOAL 11.2. FACILITATE BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT AND RESPONSIVENESS TO NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS AND INTERESTS.

Businesses have unique needs and interests. The following objectives aim to ensure that the business community remains engaged in local decision making to ensure that their interests are met and that their actions help achieve the goals of the community as a whole.

Building Awareness through Outreach

Objective 11.2.1. Support and strengthen the role of existing business networks in order to enhance communication and dialogue.

There are several recognized groups or organizations that represent business interests in Oak Park. Village government could continue to work with these organizations to enhance engagement of the existing business community and potential future investors to assess the impacts of regulations, business permitting procedures, and programs or incentives that support business development. Outreach should also be used to maximize the benefits of the close relationship between commercial areas and neighborhoods.



Engaging Businesses During Policy Formation

Objective 11.2.2. Actively engage the business community during the development of local policies and regulations that may impact their ability to invest in Oak Park and provide important services to residents.

Village government uses policies and regulations to achieve and balance a number of goals. As policies and regulations are drafted, Village government could seek input from business owners to understand what the potential impacts are and to what extent they either accomplish or prevent the implementation of the community’s overall vision.

Supporting Local Business Investment

Objective 11.2.3. Encourage businesses to think locally, hire locally, and serve locally.

The strongest business relationships are built around a bond with the community. Demonstrating a cooperative relationship with Oak Park citizens can increase patronage and enhance business reputations. Village government should advocate businesses to be an active part of the Oak Park community and celebrate those that take action to achieve community-wide goals. Such actions may include the hiring of Oak Park residents, the purchasing of local resources, service on local Boards or Commissions, and others.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in facilitating business engagement.

Metric: Resident participation in various Business Districts

Desired Trend: Annual increase in enrollment

Potential Data Resource: Numbers provided by various business districts

Metric: Attendance of business representatives at municipal meetings

Desired Trend: Annual maintenance or increase in attendance

Potential Data Resource: Public meeting records

GOAL 11.3. FACILITATE REGULAR DIALOGUE BETWEEN NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND ALL SECTORS TO ENSURE THEIR MISSIONS AND SERVICES ARE RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY INTERESTS AND NEEDS.

Non-for-profits bridge a critical gap between public service providers and the private sector. Their commitment to the Oak Park community supports several programs or initiatives that increase the quality of life for many residents and businesses. The following objectives describe ways this relationship can be strengthened.

Supporting Existing Not-For-Profits

Objective 11.3.1. Support the roles of not-for-profits that help accomplish community objectives.

Existing not-for-profits have demonstrated a level of commitment to Oak Park by putting forth effort and investment to establish a presence and provide services to the community. Village government could continue to support local not-for-profits through advocacy and partnerships that result in the greater capacity to serve Oak park citizens.



Supporting Collaboration

Objective 11.3.2. Foster collaboration among not-for-profits through interactions with municipal staff and board and commission members, and facilitate access to information about public and not-for-profit organizations, their missions and key contact persons.

Not-for-profits are often created to address a specific need or issue. However, their individual missions often complement efforts by local government, other service providers, or other not-for-profits. Village government can support cooperation among Oak Park's many not-for-profits and social service agencies in order to create a robust and efficient collection of services and sense of community.

Encouraging Community Participation

Objective 11.3.3. Encourage community involvement and participation in not-for-profit organizations.

Most not-for-profits rely on local support from residents and professionals to provide services to the community. Oak Park is known for its educated citizenry that can serve as a valuable resource for local not-for-profits. Village government can work with not-for-profits to identify specific skills that are needed to support local service provisions, and utilize local boards and commissions, block groups, business association, and other networks to identify and encourage individuals to volunteer expertise.

Formulating Public Policy

Objective 11.3.4. Actively engage not-for-profit organizations when drafting, assessing the impacts of, or debating a proposed public policy.

Village government of Oak Park and other forms of government are constantly amending policies and regulations to maximize resources for the provision of local services. When doing so, these groups could engage relevant not-for-profits to assess and understand the impacts of potential policy changes. These impacts may be related to the ability to effectively operate a not-for-profit, seek funding or use funding for specific purposes, or provide services that remain compatible with those provided by Village government or other taxing districts.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in engaging not-for-profits.

Metric: Community involvement in not-for-profit activities

Desired Trend: Annual increase in donations or volunteer time

Potential Data Resource: Regular community survey



GOAL 11.4. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN POSITIONS OF SERVICE OR LEADERSHIP.

Citizen participation, whether it is active participation in an elected or appointed position or attendance at meetings to debate specific issues, is the driver of local government. It assures that actions will be responsive to local issues and concerns, and provides the opportunity to assess public policy from a number of perspectives. The following objectives describe how Village government can encourage participation from all residents.

Encouraging Active Participation

Objective 11.4.1. Actively promote and advertise opportunities for citizens to participate in community decision-making through seats on boards and commissions, focus groups, targeted stakeholder meetings, etc.

Elected and appointed positions and participation in focus groups and stakeholder meetings is an effective way for residents to help shape local policy. Village government could maintain a list of potential participants that includes candidates who express interest as well as those who may be approached based on a specific expertise, unique perspective, or reflection of the diversity of Oak Park. As positions or opportunities to participate are made available, Village government can advertise them in order to attract candidates with the capacity to positively contribute to discussion regarding municipal policy.

Building Leaders among the Youth

Objective 11.4.2. Coordinate with local schools, businesses and not-for-profits and other entities to establish programs for children and young adults that grow future leaders.

Engaging the youth is an effective way to foster investment and pride in the community, and build skills to make them future leaders. One such program is the Future Philanthropists program run by the Community Foundation of Oak Park River Forest. Future Philanthropists involves 30 area teens in a program to involve them in raising funds and determining how to invest raised funds in local not-for-profits. Village government and other public or not-for-profit service providers could coordinate with local schools to explore other opportunities to establish similar programs that complement specific aspects of education curricula.

Fostering Participation in Business Development

Objective 11.4.3. Encourage local businesses to adopt mentoring and hiring practices that foster the development of "home-grown" leaders.

The business community is an important resource for the village. Local leaders can "lead by example" through mentorship programs that build the skills of residents and strengthen the tie between businesses and the Oak Park community. Village government could coordinate with business leaders and local schools and colleges, such as Triton College, Dominican University and Concordia University, to identify opportunities for internship programs that foster the relation between the business community and resources in Oak Park.



Celebrating Volunteerism

Objective 11.4.4. Highlight the successes and positive activities of residents and businesses through local media outlets and official recognition.

Part of building community is celebrating success and achievement. Village government could consider working with a network of businesses and not-for-profits to develop a recognition program that is highlighted throughout the village of Oak Park. This program may include awards, articles of recognition, a volunteer “Wall of Fame,” or other techniques. The stories of those being recognized should be circulated throughout the village’s broad and multi-media set of networks to demonstrate to all the appreciation for honorees and encourage others to become involved.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in fostering local service and leadership.

Metric: Number of seats for citizen participation on local boards and commissions

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in the number of seats

Potential Data Resource: Reports by various boards and commissions

Metric: Student enrollment in local leadership programs

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in enrollment

Potential Data Resource: Reports from local schools

Metric: Business participation in local mentoring programs

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in participation

Potential Data Resource: Reports from local schools or other sponsoring agencies



GOAL 11.5. UTILIZE LOCAL EVENTS AS AN AVENUE FOR BOLSTERING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PRIDE.

Local events have a unique way of growing pride and involvement of the community. Whether it is through attendance or the volunteerism required to host it, an event provides the opportunity for social interaction and investment in the community. The following objectives describe ways to use local events to grow pride and community engagement.

Distributing Information Effectively

Objective 11.5.1. Create and distribute information at the block or neighborhood level through various networks and resources such as block groups, community organizations and event permitting packets.

Oak Park has many existing local networks that can facilitate the distribution of information at a more personal level. Village government could work with block groups, community organizations, and elementary schools to distribute information locally so that residents are more likely to receive and understand important news about the community. Examples of ways to do this include information in event permit application packets, materials distributed through PTO's, and regular, brief updates included in community organization or block group mailings and e-blasts.

Growing Village-wide Pride

Objective 11.5.2. Encourage events that go beyond individual blocks in order to foster shared community pride at the neighborhood or village-wide levels.

The block group is generally considered the fundamental building block of Oak Park. As a result, many events tend to have a local or neighborhood-level focus. However, pride in the overall Oak Park community is an important component to civic life and branding of the village to people in other portions of the Chicago region. Village government could work with the organizers of existing community-wide events, and consider sponsoring new events, in order to increase local awareness of village heritage and history.

Creating Larger and More Impactful Events

Objective 11.5.3. Identify opportunities for shared events that highlight several facets of the community.

Oak Park offers numerous events throughout the year that celebrate certain aspects of the community's history and heritage. However, the narrow focus of these events can be a detriment to the overall impact they have on residents and visitors. Village government could work with local organizers to identify opportunities to consolidate events. The intent should be to create larger events that increase marketing capacity, reach a broader local and regional audience, and highlight a key component of Oak Park's character.



Celebrating Involved Citizens

Objective 11.5.4. Highlight the actions of Oak Park citizens whose actions help advance local community objectives.

Celebrating the actions of involves citizens can be an effective way of encouraging continued action and making others excited to volunteer. Village government could continue to recognize local volunteers based on their contributions to achieving specific local objectives, addressing important issues, or improving a certain portion of the village.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in building local pride.

Metric: Maintenance of a citizen recognition program

Desired Trend: On-going continuation of a local program

Potential Data Resource: Municipal meeting agendas and minutes

Metric: Number of local TV or media spots highlighting positive civic engagement

Desired Trend: Increase in the number of local spots

Potential Data Resource: Inventories maintained by Village government and local media outlets

GOAL 11.6. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR COMMUNITY.

Oak Park residents understand the unique role they play in maintaining the quality of life in Oak Park. The following objectives describe ways Village government can support the efforts of residents in ensuring that Oak Park remains an attractive place to live.

Supporting Local Events

Objective 11.6.1. Support neighborhood organizations and block groups in their efforts to provide local events hosted and attended by residents.

Block parties and other neighborhood-based events are a critical component to citizen participation and activism. Village government could review its policies and ordinances to ensure that there are no undue regulations or procedures that act as barriers to safe and appropriate events that foster local events. These may include permitting procedures and fees, temporary street closing, policing, and other related municipal activities.

Encouraging Neighborhood Volunteerism

Objective 11.6.2. Provide opportunities for residents to donate time and talents to assist others in their neighborhood.

An engaged citizenry is an important characteristic in a strong community. Oak Park has long nurtured a sense of activism, and should continue to foster this through relationships with community organizations, businesses, not-for-profits, and others. For example, Village government could work with local partners to create and maintain a list of potential service recipients and tasks, and match residents willing to provide time, resources, or specific expertise related to an issue or cause.



Bridging the Generation Gap

Objective 11.6.3. Support efforts at the neighborhood or block levels that foster interaction between generations of Oak Park residents.

Oak Park's neighborhoods include a diverse population living among one another. This offers the opportunity to have residents interact with one another, including residents of different ages. Village government could work with block groups, neighborhood organizations, schools, and other partners to identify opportunities for young residents to interact with older residents. This may include small yard and home maintenance projects, workshops to discuss the history of the neighborhood, or other programs or events. Architect and leading sustainability expert William McDonough has suggested that senior citizens volunteer to take children to local events or educational programs. This type of interaction strengthens the bond among neighbors and enables children to understand and appreciate local heritage.

Understanding and Articulating Oak Park's History

Objective 11.6.4. Encourage the recording of history or stories about past or current neighborhood residents.

Modern multi-media is increasingly accessible and easy to use. It should be used as a tool for documenting the on-going history of Oak Park. Village government could work with the Oak Park Historical Society, local media outlets, residents, and other partners in establishing a program for the translation of documents and information into easily accessible electronic libraries, as well as the creation of new records through interviews with experts and residents that highlight current events that are shaping the village's future. These will become an important resource for schools, libraries, and others to assist residents of all ages in understanding and appreciating Oak Park's history and legacy.

Potential Metrics

The following metrics may be used to measure the success of the Village in supporting citizen involvement in improving the community.

Metric: Number of local history or heritage-based records

Desired Trend: Increase in the number of records

Potential Data Resource: Inventories and libraries maintained by Village government, local museums, ad media outlets

Metric: Number of block parties

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in the number of block parties

Potential Data Resource: Village permitting

GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

COMMUNITY LIFE & ENGAGEMENT

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 11.1 – Enhance communication among residents, businesses, the Village, and other community partners.			
11.1.1	Utilize existing and future communication networks, including neighborhood organizations, not-for-profits, government mailing lists, etc. as networks for creating awareness about Village decision-making, policies and programs.	Village Administration	Total enrollment or people subscribing to communication networks used by all governmental units and their partners
11.1.2	In all units of local government, ensure that the diversity of opinions in Oak Park is respected and that collaborative efforts focus on actions to advance an overall common good.	Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government Voter turnout
11.1.3	Recognize geographically-based groups as opportunities for effective citizen communication.	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts
Goal 11.2 – Facilitate business engagement and responsiveness to neighborhood needs and interests.			
11.2.1	Support and strengthen the role of existing business networks in order to enhance communication and dialogue.	Village Administration	Resident participation in various business districts
11.2.3	Actively engage the business community during the development of local policies and regulations that may impact their ability to invest in Oak Park and provide important services to residents.	Policies and Regulations	Attendance of business representatives in municipal meetings
11.2.4	Encourage businesses to think locally, hire locally, and serve locally.	Policies and Regulations, Funding/Incentives	
Goal 11.3 – Facilitate regular dialogue between non-for-profit organizations and all sectors to ensure their missions and services are responsive to community interests and needs.			
11.3.1	Support the roles of not-for-profits that help accomplish community objectives.	Policies and Regulations, Funding/Incentives	
11.3.2	Foster collaboration among not-for-profits through interactions with municipal staff and board and commission members, and facilitate access to information about public and not-for-profit organizations, their missions and key contact persons.	Village Administration	Community involvement in not-for-profit activities
11.3.3	Encourage community involvement and participation in not-for-profit organizations.	Village Administration	
11.3.4	Actively engage not-for-profit organizations when drafting, assessing the impacts of, or debating a proposed public policy.	Policies and Regulations	Not-for-profits

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 11.4 – Provide opportunities for participation in positions of service or leadership.			
11.4.1 <i>Actively promote and advertise opportunities for citizens to participate in community decision-making through seats on boards and commissions, focus groups, targeted stakeholder meetings, etc.</i>	Village Administration		Number of seats for citizen participation on local boards and commissions Student enrollment in local leadership programs
11.4.2 <i>Coordinate with local schools, businesses and not-for-profits and other entities to establish programs for children and young adults that grow future leaders.</i>	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	
11.4.3 <i>Encourage local businesses to adopt mentoring and hiring practices that foster the development of “home-grown” leaders.</i>	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	
11.4.4 <i>Highlight the successes and positive activities of residents and businesses through local media outlets and official recognition.</i>	Village Administration		

Goal 11.5 – Utilize local events as an avenue for bolstering civic engagement and pride.			
11.5.1 <i>Create and distribute information at the block or neighborhood level through various networks and resources such as block groups, community organizations and event permitting packets.</i>	Governmental Collaboration	School Districts	Maintenance of a citizen recognition program Number of local TV or news media spots highlighting positive civic engagement
11.5.2 <i>Encourage events that go beyond individual blocks in order to foster shared community pride at the neighborhood or village-wide levels.</i>	Policies and Regulations		
11.5.3 <i>Identify opportunities for shared events that highlight several facets of the community.</i>	Policies and Regulations		
11.5.4 <i>Highlight the actions of Oak Park citizens whose actions help advance local community objectives.</i>	Village Administration		

Goal 11.6 – Provide opportunities for residents to strengthen their community.			
11.6.1 <i>Support neighborhood organizations and block groups in their efforts to provide local events hosted and attended by residents.</i>	Village Administration		Number of local history or heritage-based records Number of block parties
11.6.2 <i>Provide opportunities for residents to donate time and talents to assist others in their neighborhood.</i>	Village Administration		
11.6.3 <i>Support efforts at the neighborhood or block levels that foster interaction between generations of Oak Park residents.</i>	Village Administration		
11.6.4 <i>Encourage the recording of history or stories about past or current neighborhood residents.</i>	Village Administration		



12

Economic Health & Vitality

Economic health and vitality is about more than simply thriving commerce. It is also about the relationship between local businesses and the rest of the community, and about how commercial activity plays a direct role in creating a more attractive and vibrant village.

This chapter discusses the symbiotic relationship between economic development and the overall quality of the Oak Park community. A strong commercial environment generates necessary tax revenue, creates jobs and spurs additional development opportunities. Just as importantly, it provides local activities, access to goods and services, and neighborhood identity for residents. It is important to note that several of Oak Park's business districts have developed local plans that guide specific projects and policies related to business development, design, and vitality.

A healthy economy provides a diverse tax base, which in part, relieves reliance on residential property taxes. It also ensures quality services, which attracts additional business, employment and residential investment

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Economic health and vitality affect all aspects of the overall quality of life in the village, from access to local goods and services to municipal financing. The impact of a healthy and vital local economy is felt not only by Village government, but also the schools, Park District, community organizations, and others that collectively define local quality of life. A healthy economy provides a diverse tax base, which in part, relieves reliance on residential property taxes. It also ensures quality services, which attracts additional business, employment and residential investment. In this way, the local economy is a key component to a sustainable and high quality of life.

Oak Park is located within a highly competitive area with multiple communities vying to attract shoppers, businesses, and home buyers. As long as the village continues to thrive economically, it will be an attractive destination for businesses, residents and visitors alike. This activity not only helps to maintain a vibrant, stable, attractive community, it translates to sales and property tax revenue as well as dollars kept in the village. Local economic health and vitality will allow for Village government and other taxing bodies and organizations to provide the amenities and services that maintain and enhance Oak Park's diversity and desirability.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement describes Economic Health and Vitality as it exists in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park's economic health and vitality can be seen throughout the village in every neighborhood and in all aspects of life. Residents enjoy easy access to a variety of quality businesses, goods and services, as well as cultural and recreational amenities in close proximity to their homes. Aspects of economic health and vitality can be found in every neighborhood, not just the Downtown.

Oak Park is a destination for innovators and entrepreneurs attracted by the village's location, employment base, and proactive approach to working with business owners. Visitors come from all over the region, facilitated by easy access to public transportation and attracted by diverse shops, restaurants, historic buildings, cultural events and other attractions. Oak Park's economic health and vitality has allowed municipal leaders to build and grow local environmental sustainability initiatives, putting it at the forefront in the region and serving as a model for other communities to follow.

The community's economic health and vitality has helped sustain Oak Park's diversity. Young families continue to relocate or return to the community. People that were born and raised in Oak Park continue to buy homes and raise their own families in the village. Seniors and empty-nesters, with easy access to goods, services and activities, remain in the community. All residents are able to shop locally, thanks to the presence of businesses that respond to local needs and appeal to the conscientious consumer. This diversity is fueled by the economic health and vitality of Oak Park, which is directly related to housing, business, culture, amenities, and other assets.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 12.1. ENSURE ECONOMIC VITALITY THROUGHOUT THE VILLAGE.

Oak Park has several thriving commercial areas. However, some neighborhoods lack the economic vitality that provides access to local goods and services and employment. The following objectives aim to create a community where local commercial activity serves to strengthen all neighborhoods in Oak Park, providing easy access to local goods and services for Oak Park residents and employees.

Maximizing Market Potential

Objective 12.1.1 - Determine Oak Park's appropriate and supportable market mix to maximize economic potential.

Oak Park's commercial development market is supported by residents both within the village and from surrounding communities. However, despite its good positioning with regards to transportation, the village is competing with its neighbors to capture such development. Village government should regularly reexamine its potential to address changing market and economic conditions. Special consideration should be given to local land use or market demand that can serve as a foundation for neighborhood-based economic development throughout the village.

Maintaining Village Technology and Infrastructure

Objective 12.1.2 - Maintain the condition and capacity of Village infrastructure and technology to ensure that it is suitable for all types of development.

Technical needs and requirements are continually evolving for all types of business. It is important that the village be at the forefront of technology to ensure capability of meeting the demands and needs of businesses and residents. Village government could continually seek regional, state, and federal grants for infrastructure improvements that are beyond the capacity of the Village's regular capital improvement program.

Minimizing Obstacles to Investment and Development

Objective 12.1.3 - Identify impediments to attracting investment through continuous contact with businesses, developers and other industry professionals.

Maintaining a dialogue with the business and development community not only serves to identify positive aspects of the community and municipal initiatives, it also helps to identify those things that need improvement. By identifying real and perceived impediments, Village government can limit impediments and increase investment opportunities. Regular meetings or surveys with industry and business groups could be used as a tool to assess the perception of the community by businesses within the community and those who worked with the village but located elsewhere.



LAKE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN



Keeping Plans Current

Objective 12.1.4 - Ensure that neighborhood and commercial area plans adequately reflect the needs of both residents and the business community.

Oak Park is a community known for its strong neighborhoods and attractive commercial areas. As such, local plans must balance the needs of all stakeholders to ensure residential areas and commercial districts can thrive. Village government could regularly update local plans to ensure that emerging issues are addressed in a way that appropriately balances the needs of all stakeholders.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village’s success in ensuring economic vitality throughout the village.

Metric: Total amount of commercial square footage in each district

Desired Trend: Sustained or increased amount in each commercial district

Potential Data Resource: Village business licensing

Metric: Number of business licenses per district

Desired Trend: Sustained or increased amount in each commercial district

Potential Data Resource: Village business license database

Metric: Commercial occupancy in each business district

Desired Trend: Sustained or increased percentage of occupancy in each commercial district

Potential Data Resource: Village business license database

GOAL 12.2. ENSURE THAT OAK PARK MAINTAINS A “BUSINESS FRIENDLY” ENVIRONMENT.

A reputation of being a business friendly community is a positive foundation for both business recruitment and retention. In an extremely competitive environment, the municipality with the procedures and policies that are perceived to be most accommodating to businesses will ultimately have a significant advantage.

Understanding Policy Impacts

Objective 12.2.1 - Ensure that all boards, commissions and departments understand the impacts of programs and policies on the economic health of the village.

Elected and appointed officials often are focused on their specific policy or project. It is important to understand that nothing takes place in a vacuum and that every decision influences or impacts other activities within the village. From capital improvement projects to sign regulations, every action taken has a corresponding impact on economic development, historic preservation, sustainability, diversity, etc. All board and commission members could receive periodic updates that reinforce how their actions and decisions may influence other aspects of the community, including economic development.



Streamlining Project Review

Objective 12.2.2 - Identify and implement ways to streamline standard approval procedures.

Facilitating development processes that are faster and easier for the applicant to navigate will expedite the fruition of projects, further reinforce the message that the Village of Oak Park is a business friendly community. Village government could review and amend its development approval procedures as necessary to clearly define the roles of every Board and Commission, and identify specific points in the process and criteria that trigger their respective review of a proposal.

Planning with the Business Community

Objective 12.2.3 - Ensure that all entities and individuals impacted by a process are actively engaged and involved before policies are drafted and adopted.

Factors that impact policy decisions can be complex and impact both residents and businesses. Village government should ensure that members of the business community who may be directly impacted are, at a minimum, kept informed of and invited into discussions. This will both provide the opportunity to secure valuable insights and consider impacts on businesses and residents.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village’s success in remaining a “business friendly” community.

Metric: Level of customer service satisfaction among business owners, investors, and associations

Desired Trend: Increasing satisfaction

Potential Data Resource: Regular business surveys

Metric: Percentage of permitting and business applications submitted on-line

Desired Trend: Increase in on-line applications

Potential Data Resource: Village application and permitting database

Metric: Number of citations

Desired Trend: Decrease in citations (while still maintaining integrity of enforcement)

Potential Data Resource: Village database of citations

Metric: Timeliness of Board and Commission review and issuance of permits

Desired Trend: Decrease in the amount of time required

Potential Data Resource: Village records



What others are doing...

Embracing Technology & Entrepreneurship

San Francisco, CA

Last December, the City of San Francisco's Department of Technology launched free municipal wireless internet along Market Street, the city's busiest commercial corridor. By summer 2014, free Wi-Fi will be expanded to all City parks, as well as important civic plazas and open spaces.

The City also recently initiated a new "Entrepreneurship in Residence Program," which matches teams of private sector entrepreneurs with city employees to strengthen core services through new technologies and products. The program focuses on leveraging start-ups for innovation in the fields of data, mobile and cloud services, healthcare, education, transportation, energy, and infrastructure.

For more information on San Francisco's wireless service, visit: <http://www6.sfgov.org/index.aspx?page=246>.

For information on San Francisco's Entrepreneurship in Residence Program, visit: <http://entrepreneur.sfgov.org/>

GOAL 12.3. EXPAND AND PROMOTE BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES.

For many businesses the availability of support from peers and Village government can make the difference between success and failure. By providing support services and facilitating relationships among the business community and partner agencies, Village government can further enhance the economic health and vitality of the community.

Being a Leader in Technology

Objective 12.3.1 - Provide access to enhanced data and communications technology and infrastructure.

Business development is often reliant upon supporting infrastructure and technology systems. Village government could identify ways to upgrade technology as a part of its capital improvement program, and work with utility providers to ensure Oak Park is receiving cutting-edge services that support innovation and business growth.

Partnering with the Business Community

Objective 12.3.2 - Ensure a strong relationship between the business community and local government.

Business relationships are based on trust and accountability. The same applies to the relationship between a municipality and the business community. Understanding that both parties are committed to enhancing revenue and fiscal/economic development, there must be a commitment to working together to immediately and equitably resolve issues as they arise. Village government should work directly with local businesses, organized business associations, and other local partners to strengthen communication through face-to-face meetings, on-line outreach, and other tools for engagement.

Encouraging Positive Investment

Objective 12.3.3 - Recognize businesses that invest in projects that accomplish broader goals of the Oak Park community.

While businesses are inherently driven by profit, many recognize the benefit of giving back to the community in which they are located. However, doing so is not always affordable or feasible. Village government could encourage positive actions by rewarding business with publicity, local recognition, or small monetary awards that motivate others to take a community-oriented perspective to business growth and development.



Encouraging Startup Businesses

Objective 12.3.4 - Encourage creation of a business incubator for startup businesses and entrepreneurs.

Today's small startup business may be tomorrow's international conglomerate. Providing opportunities for new startup businesses to share and offset the costs of doing business can make the difference in being able to sustain and grow. Incubator space can be located in a single building or multiple buildings depending on space requirements. Village government could collaborate with developers, the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation, and other partners to develop incubator spaces, business start-up materials, technology infrastructure, and other tools that provide the foundation for long-term viability.

Buying Local

Objective 12.3.5 - Where feasible and economically competitive, encourage local governments, institutions, not-for-profits, other businesses and residents to buy locally from Oak Park businesses.

Through the local Farmers market, Earth Fest, and other activities, the Oak Park community has demonstrated its commitment to buy-local, ethnic consumer choice. Support for local businesses should be encouraged through a collaborative effort of marketing, promotion and initiatives including resident discounts and buying consortia. Village government could work with partner agencies and organizations to identify businesses that provide goods and services locally that may be currently transacted outside of the community. Village government and other forms of local government could review their procurement policies and vendor contracts to determine if there are local competitively priced alternatives for comparable goods and services, or if there are barriers to local businesses becoming qualified vendors.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success providing services that support businesses.

Metric: Total amount of investment in new business development

Desired Trend: Sustained or increased annual investment

Potential Data Resource: Records maintained by Village staff

Metric: Amount of total public funds allocated for locally purchased goods and services

Desired Trend: Sustained or increased allocation

Potential Data Resource: Itemized annual budgets for the Village and other local forms of government

What others are doing...

Buying Local

Detroit, MI

The Detroit Economic Growth Corporation's D2D business-to-business program helps large Detroit businesses buy products from smaller Detroit businesses. By redirecting purchasing away from external suppliers towards local businesses, the purchaser (e.g. a hospital, public school system, bank etc.) can invest in the local economy while also reducing other costs, such as transportation. For example, D2D recently matched a small business owner selling sweet potato products with several local restaurants and Detroit's new Whole Foods grocery, both whom now sell her products.

For more information on the D2D program, please visit <http://d2dbusiness.org/>.



What others are doing...

Growing New Businesses

Youngstown, OH

Situated in the heart of the Rust Belt, the Youngstown Business Incubator (YBI) offers cheap rent, technical assistance, and networking opportunities to information technology entrepreneurs seeking to start new businesses. In addition to “hatching” new companies, the YBI also works to retain the companies by providing commercial space after they have successfully launched. Collectively, YBI associated firms have created or supported 610 new jobs and recorded sales of \$76 million.

For more information on the Youngstown Business Incubator, visit <http://www.ybi.org/>

GOAL 12.4. DIVERSIFY AND STABILIZE THE VILLAGE’S TAX BASE.

Diversification of the tax base protects the Village from over-reliance on a single revenue source. Communities that relied heavily on retail sales tax suffered budget short-falls when the economy weakened and consumer expenditures declined. Equally, placing the burden of paying for municipal services on property taxes negatively impacts the village’s residents. The following objectives describe ways local government and stakeholders can remain appropriately positioned to sustain the community’s tax base over time.

Understanding Oak Park’s Context

Objective 12.4.1 - Continually review the balance of local land uses and related tax revenue to avoid over-reliance on a particular revenue stream (i.e. residential property taxes or sales tax).

Understanding the current balance of revenue and how it compares with similar communities is the first step in determining an ideal approach to a diverse tax base. Village government could prepare an annual analysis of land uses and resulting tax and fee revenues to determine if 1) there is an imbalance between the types of uses in the community and the amount of revenue they create, and 2) if any tax revenue sources are supporting an especially high share of capital improvement or service expenditures. While there may not be a specific “ideal” scenario, doing this annually and comparing Oak Park to other communities will establish trends and context by which leaders can assess the stability of local revenue sources.

Capturing Market Share and Increasing Tax Revenue

Objective 12.4.2 - Actively recruit businesses and development that addresses gaps in local land use and tax revenue balance.

Previous objectives in this chapter describe the importance of monitoring unmet gaps in local market demand and the balance of tax revenue. With these analyses in place as a foundation, Village government could work with local partners to target specific types of businesses or tenants for local economic development. This may involve forging relationships with potential investors, maintaining an inventory of available properties, and providing assistance in understanding development review and business licensing procedures and requirements.

Responding to a Changing Economic Conditions

Objective 12.4.3 - Continually review municipal codes and ordinances to determine whether they accommodate evolving development needs and trends.

Local development regulations can sometimes be misaligned with the needs or objectives of the business community. Village government could maintain communication with the business community and regularly review requests for variations or relief from development standards in order to better understand specific regulations that inhibit local investment. Amendments should be made as appropriate, recognizing that the regulations must balance a number of local goals beyond economic development, including historic preservation, neighborhood character, and the local provision of goods and services.



Highlighting Development Opportunities

Objective 12.4.4 - Identify and market preferred development sites for missing or underrepresented uses in order to streamline business recruitment efforts.

In order to maximize the likelihood of landing local business investment, Village government could support the distribution of information related to sites and locations capable of accommodating a targeted activity or tenant. Available sites should be listed on the municipal website and in industry databases and include a list of available incentives. Marketing efforts, including advertising in publications such as Crain's Chicago Business and attendance at conferences like the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), help market sites and programs that foster business development. For Village-owned properties, Village government could conduct a developer solicitation process including preparing a request for qualifications/proposals.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in creating a diverse and healthy tax base.

Metric: Diversity of businesses and alignment with targeted business mix

Desired Trend: Sustain or increase diversity

Potential Data Resource: State and Village data by NAICS codes

Metric: Property and sales tax revenue by business district

Desired Trend: Equitable distribution

Potential Data Resource: State and Village data

Metric #4: Daytime population/employment

Desired Trend: Increase in the daytime population

Potential Data Resource: Annual business licenses or surveys



GOAL 12.5. POSITION OAK PARK AS A DESTINATION FOR SHOPPING, DINING, ENTERTAINMENT, AND CULTURE.

The village has a tremendous amount of cultural and entertainment attractions. Leveraging these assets and positioning the village as a destination for people from outside the community would not only increase revenue, but also would serve to enhance the village's image and reputation.

Encouraging Collaboration

Objective 12.5.1 - Encourage cross-promotion among businesses and commercial areas.

Collective promotion, as opposed to individual promotion, has the potential to reach a broader audience in a more cost-effective manner. Village government can support local businesses and business districts in cross-promotional efforts that enhance the visibility of the village as a whole for both local residents and those from throughout the Chicago region. Initiatives may include reciprocal discounts or coupons, collective marketing, progressive shopping or restaurant tours, or pooled marketing and advertising.

Promoting Accessibility by Public Transit

Objective 12.5.2 - Prepare a regional marketing campaign that promotes Oak Park assets and highlights regional access to the village through public transit.

Oak Park has many unique assets and cultural amenities that, unlike many other communities, can be accessed by public transit. With both CTA and Metra service, Oak Park is one of only a few suburbs with public transportation networks to the City of Chicago as well as outlying suburban areas. Village government could work with local business districts, Metra, CTA, Pace, and the RTA to develop marketing information and maps that highlight Oak Park destinations near train stations and bus lines.

Promoting Tourism

Objective 12.5.3 - Work collaboratively to promote events and attractions.

Oak Park benefits from a wealth of cultural attractions, historic architecture, local events, and high level of regional accessibility. Village government can work closely with local partners to promote the community at the regional and national levels. Programs may include packages that provide access to tours, events, and entertainment venues, regional marketing that provides information on day-trip itineraries and activities, and promotion through national travel companies that captures tourists coming to the Chicago region.

To complement this effort, Village government could work with the development community to assess the viability of local hotel or extended stay facilities.



Accommodating Major Business and Social Events

Objective 12.5.5 - Support the development of a multi-purpose venue or capacity with conference/meeting space to attract trade shows, conferences, banquets, etc. and create local jobs related to those activities.

The area is lacking conference/meeting capacity to meet existing demand and attract outside events and visitors to Oak Park. Village government could work with potential developers and local partners to assess the viability of such a project and identify tools for development.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in becoming a regional or national destination.

Metric: Revenue for tourism-related activities and attractions

Desired Trend: Increase in revenue

Potential Data Resource: Report issued by individual attractions or held by the Visitors Bureau

Metric: Attendance at major festivities

Desired Trend: Increase in attendance

Potential Data Resource: Ticket sales or estimates from event sponsors

Metric: Hotel/Motel revenue per resident capita

Desired Trend: Increase in revenue

Potential Data Resource: CVB, State of Illinois

Total retail and restaurant sales

Desired Trend: Increase in sales

Potential Data Resource: Village tax revenue reports

Metric: Percentage of business or attraction patrons from outside Oak Park

Desired Trend: Increase in the percentage

Potential Data Resource: ZIP code or license plate survey data maintained by the Visitors Bureau

GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

ECONOMIC HEALTH & VITALITY

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 12.1 – Ensure that economic vitality is spread throughout the Village.			
12.1.1	Determine Oak Park’s appropriate and supportable market mix to maximize economic potential.	Policies and Regulations	Total amount of commercial square footage in each district Number of business licenses per district Commercial occupancy in each business district
12.1.2	Maintain the condition and capacity of Village infrastructure and technology to ensure that it is suitable for all types of development.	Capital Improvements	
12.1.3	Identify impediments to attracting investment through continuous contact with businesses, developers and other industry professionals.	Policies and Regulations	
12.1.4	Ensure that neighborhood and commercial area plans adequately reflect the needs of both residents and the business community.	Policies and Regulations	
Goal 12.2 – Ensure that Oak Park maintains a “business friendly” environment.			
12.2.1	Ensure that all boards, commissions and departments understand the impacts of programs and policies on the economic health of the village.	Village Administration	Level of customer service satisfaction among business owners, investors, and associations
12.2.2	Objective 12.2.2 - Identify and implement ways to streamline standard approval procedures.	Policies and Regulations	
12.2.3	Ensure that all entities and individuals impacted by a process are actively engaged and involved before policies are drafted and adopted.	Village Administration	Percentage of permitting and business applications submitted on-line Timeliness of Board and Commission review and issuance of permits

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 12.3 – Expand and promote business support services.			
12.3.1	Provide access to enhanced data and communications technology and infrastructure.	Village Administration	Total amount of investment in new business development Amount of total public funds allocated for locally purchased goods and services
12.3.2	Ensure a strong relationship between the business community and local government.	Village Administration	
12.3.3	Recognize businesses that invest in projects that accomplish broader goals of the Oak Park community.	Village Administration	
12.3.4	Encourage creation of a business incubator for startup businesses and entrepreneurs.	Policies and Regulations	
12.3.5	Where feasible and economically competitive, encourage local governments, institutions, not-for-profits, other businesses and residents to buy locally from Oak Park businesses.	Policies and Regulations	
Goal 12.4 – Diversify and stabilize the Village’s tax base.			
12.4.1	Continually review the balance of local land uses and related tax revenue to avoid over reliance on a particular revenue stream (i.e. residential property taxes or sales tax).	Village Administration, Policies and Regulations	Diversity of businesses and alignment with targeted business mix Property and sales tax revenue by business district Daytime population/employment
12.4.2	Actively recruit businesses and development that addresses gaps in local land use and tax revenue balance.	Policies and Regulations	
12.4.3	Continually review municipal codes and ordinances to determine whether they accommodate evolving development needs and trends.	Policies and Regulations	
12.4.4	Identify and market preferred development sites for missing or underrepresented uses in order to streamline business recruitment efforts.	Policies and Regulations	
Goal 12.5 – Position Oak Park as a destination for shopping, dining, entertainment, and culture.			
12.5.1	Encourage cross-promotion among businesses and commercial areas.	Village Administration	Revenue for tourism-related activities and attractions Attendance at major festivities Hotel/Motel revenue per resident capita Total retail and restaurant sales
12.5.2	Prepare a regional marketing campaign that promotes Oak Park assets and highlights regional access to the village through public transit.	Village Administration	
12.5.3	Work collaboratively to promote events and attractions.	Village Administration	
12.5.4	Support the development of a multi-purpose venue or capacity with conference/meeting space to attract trade shows, conferences, banquets, etc. and create local jobs related to those activities.	Policies and Regulations	



13

Environmental Sustainability

Oak Park has built its reputation as a leader within the arena of environmental sustainability. The community's ground-breaking sustainability plan was initiated in 2010 and represents the region's first dual community sustainability plan and implementation project. This plan was created by stakeholders within both the River Forest and Oak Park communities and provides the foundation for the environmental and urban sustainability components of the Oak Park Comprehensive Plan. As issues and technologies evolve, regular updates to the sustainability plan will ensure that Oak Park is on the forefront of long-term resiliency.

The recommendations in this chapter focus on water quality and conservation, energy stewardship and renewable energy, local, healthy and sustainable food, green infrastructure and the goal of moving toward becoming a zero waste community. They are largely resource focused – water, food, energy, and waste – and complement recommendations in other chapters that speak to other components of environmental sustainability, including land use, transportation, and parks and open space.

This period will be looked upon as one of environmental sustainability, and will be evaluated based on our resolve and capacity to bring our planet back into balance.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

As history is defined by the dominant events and challenges of its time, we now find ourselves in an era that is experiencing the impact that humanity has made on our natural resources and planet. This period will be looked upon as one of environmental sustainability, and will be evaluated based on our resolve and capacity to bring our planet back into balance. Environmental sustainability is important to Oak Park because we are impacted every day by climate change, toxic materials in our air, food, soil, and water, and the degradation of our biodiversity and natural habitat, all of which impact the health of our residents and the economy of our community. We realize that our planet is near a critical tipping point, and that it is imperative that we make drastic changes now. This issue is also important to us because Oak Park has defined itself throughout its history as a community that not only understands global and local responsibility, but prides itself on driving change at the cutting edge. Oak Park's character – which embraces diversity, innovation, value for the historic and the new, and willingness to be the trail blazer for positive change – positions us well to be a leader on this issue, and to provide a model and a path for other communities to learn from and emulate.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement describes Environmental Sustainability as it exists in Oak Park in 2030.

Our understanding of the local and global implications of sustainable living has grown exponentially. Because of its impacts on our planet, people, and economy, environmental sustainability has become not simply one influence, but rather a primary lens through which community decisions are made. Our vision for environmental sustainability is framed by its interdependent nature, and the role that social interconnectedness has in building sustainability within the fabric of our community.

Our vision is built on the premise that we are already experiencing the negative impacts of climate change, permeating toxic materials, excessive waste, and a built environment that is out of line with the natural world. As a result, building a community that is resilient to these impacts is fundamental. Building on our legacy of being a forerunner of sustainability, Oak Park aspires to be a leader in distributed renewable energy; active transportation; green infrastructure; climate change mitigation and adaptation; and green business development such as locally grown food procurement and year-round cultivation, “cradle to cradle” material procurement and production and locally-produced goods and services. Ultimately Oak Park strives to become a zero impact community with respect to our use of natural resources.

We must continue to engage young people and residents of all ethnic and economic backgrounds on the front lines of building a sustainable community, testing new ideas while demonstrating a willingness to learn from others. The interdependent and systemic nature of sustainability and our history of building bridges across great divides requires that we go beyond our own borders – whether across Austin, within the Chicago metro area, or across our country and internationally – so that we position ourselves as learners, leaders and collaborators in advancing environmental sustainability goals.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 13.1. MINIMIZE OVERALL ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND INCREASE INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES.

Energy consumption is a critical issue that impacts the natural environment and personal finance. The following objectives describe how the Oak Park community, including local government, residents, and businesses, can create a more sustainable local energy model that can serve as an example for other communities.

Educating Consumers about Energy Efficiency

Objective 13.1.1. Support public awareness campaigns and hands-on workshops to educate consumers about energy efficient systems and practices for private residences and businesses.

Using energy efficiently provides two primary benefits. First, it preserves critical fossil fuels and natural resources that would otherwise be exhausted. Secondly, as energy prices are anticipated to rise, energy audits and new technologies can reduce energy costs for consumers. Strategies to tighten the housing envelopes, incorporate new highly efficient energy systems, and energy conservation behaviors will be important elements of an overall efficiency strategy. Village government could work with advocates and local partners to distribute information to residents and businesses explaining the rationale, tools and resources to reduce overall energy consumption. Connecting energy consumers to low-cost financing programs, efficiency experts, new technologies and up to date information on the economic return of efficiency investments is a recommended focus for the future.

Advancing Green Buildings and Renewable Energy

Objective 13.1.2. Support and promote green buildings, energy-efficient systems and practices, renewable energy installations, and net zero developments for both new construction and existing building renovations through grants, incentives, and regulations.

Oak Park built the first LEED-certified Public Works facility in Illinois, and has since incorporated LEED green building criteria into policy and planned unit development compensating benefits. Through its own geothermal and solar panel installations and its decision to procure 100% renewable energy through Community Choice Aggregation, the Village of Oak Park is leading the shift to renewable energy by example. As a leader in innovation and historic preservation, Oak Park has the opportunity to forge new ground that blends these important values as we move toward a sustainable and resilient future. Village government should explore various funding sources including the procurement of outside grant funding, that facilitate green building and renewable energy installations for residents, businesses and institutions, and make green technologies more affordable and easier to access.



Fostering a Culture of Sustainability Among Village Staff

Objective 13.1.3. Support knowledge and awareness of the latest best practices and technologies related to energy conservation and green energy development to guide government decision-making.

The Village of Oak Park has done much to lead by example across many disciplines, understanding that as a local government it has the capacity to implement policy, educate its citizenry and demonstrate practices that it would like to see emulated throughout the community. Village government should continue this effort, and encourage other forms of local government to follow its model. A local culture of sustainability should guide decisions at every level of government, from day-to-day office behavior to major capital improvement projects. Local government can help create a more sustainable community by staying up-to-date on emerging issues and techniques, implementing sustainable practices locally through government actions and projects, and advocating for private development and neighboring communities to make sustainability a priority.

Maintaining 100% Renewable Commitment

Objective 13.1.4 Advocate for and maintain 100% renewable energy procurement through community choice aggregation.

With voter approval in April 2011, Oak Park adopted a program to bundle — or aggregate — all residential and small business electric accounts and seek bids for electricity on the open market, an option many large industrial and commercial enterprises long had used to reduce electricity costs.

Oak Park launched its Community Choice Aggregation in 2012 and became the first municipality in Illinois and the nation to require its supplier to provide 100% renewable energy for its residents and small business operators. Village government could maintain its 100% renewable energy procurement policy as part of our community's ongoing effort to transition to a renewable energy economy.



Strengthening Energy Diversity and Resiliency

Objective 13.1.5. Support policies and programs that increase local grid reliability, diversify Oak Park's energy sources and strengthen its resiliency from local impacts of climate change.

Village government's Smart Grid Initiative mainly targets the modernization of electric power systems. The technology is designed to enhance energy efficiency, address climate change issues, and be a catalyst for a green energy economy. Smart Grid integrates information technology with the existing power network to optimize energy efficiency through the interactive exchange of real-time information between the supplier, the distributor and the consumer, and has an automated recovery system which will ensure a reliable high-quality power supply in the case of natural or human-induced disasters. Village government could continue the application of this and other technologies within the community to increase local grid reliability, diversify Oak Park's energy sources and strengthen the community's resiliency against the impacts of climate change.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in minimizing energy consumption.

Metric: Number of LEED-certified or equivalent projects in Oak Park

Desired Trend: Increase in number of projects

Potential Data Resource: LEED-certified inventory

Metric: Total village-wide energy consumption per household

Desired Trend: Decrease in energy consumption

Potential Data Resource: Reports provided by energy providers



GOAL 13.2. CONSERVE WATER AND IMPROVE WATER QUALITY.

Many residents in the Chicago metro area assume that our water resources are inexhaustible given our proximity to 20% of the world's fresh water. However, as Lake Michigan and local aquifer water levels drop, metro area population increases, and the world's demand for water increases, we all need to be stewards of this precious resource. To this end, the Village of Oak Park in collaboration with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning crafted the Water Conservation Plan for Oak Park. The Plan recommends priority strategies including: engaging the top five institutional water consumers through multiple strategies; reducing water leakages through programs and education; amending billing information and pricing to promote conservation; advocating for rainwater harvesting, greywater reuse systems and homeowner friendly permitting; and broad-based education of residents and consumers.

Educating the Consumer about Water Conservation

Objective 13.2.1. Encourage reduced water consumption through outreach, pricing, and water billing information and statistics.

Encouraging water conservation among residents who don't consider it a priority is a difficult task. Water pricing is low, our regional water supply through Lake Michigan, surface rivers and aquifers at this juncture is plentiful and adequate through 2030 according to the Northeastern Illinois Regional Water Supply/Demand Plan, and there are other environmental issues that seem to occupy more of our community's attention than water. This was true for energy at one point too, and so the plan recommends that we begin to educate our residents more on the values of water conservation, trends in population and use, the local impacts of climate change on our water supply, and strategies for fulfilling our local community and global citizen responsibilities to preserve this precious resource so our children and grandchildren can enjoy the same benefits of water that we have in years to come. In some European cities, the strategy of putting energy meters in the home had a profound effect on consumption behaviors. Village government could work with local utility companies to establish billing education and price structuring that incentivize water conservation while continuing to educate residents on its rationale and benefits.



Improving and Maintaining Overall Water Quality

Objective 13.2.2. Facilitate the elimination of use of synthetic herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and salt, and promote non-toxic products and practices for local government, residents and businesses.

Toxic herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, cleaning products and other materials are infiltrating our soils, water systems, and bodies in alarming proportions. The health consequences of these chemical cocktails are showing up regularly in our communities in the form of cancers, defects, infertility, neurological dysfunction, and other health issues. Leading businesses, universities and agriculturalists are demonstrating alternative practices and products that are both effective and safe. Village government could support increased consumer and business education about the impact of toxic materials on our resources and health, and complements current initiatives underway to promote non-toxic material policies and best practices throughout the community.

Harvesting Rain Water and Reusing Grey Water

Objective 13.2.3. Promote and incentivize the use of high efficiency water conservation, rainwater harvesting, and greywater re-use systems.

As the result of recent Illinois legislative action, Illinois communities are now able to incorporate new systems and technologies that conserve, harvest and re-use water. The opportunity for Oak Park residents and Village government is to promote and incentivize these systems and ensure that permitting processes facilitate these changes. Village government could work with local partners to provide citizen and business education about these systems, including water and cost savings features, and additional incentives to increase their use.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in managing its water resources.

Metric: Water usage per capita

Desired Trend: Reduction in use per capita

Potential Data Resource: Records from water providers

Metric: Greywater capture and reuse

Desired Trend: Increase in greywater capture and reuse

Potential Data Resource: Development plans approved by Village government



GOAL 13.3. PROVIDE ACCESS TO LOCALLY PRODUCED, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD.

Local healthy foods are an important part of community health. They also optimize the use of local land and minimize costs and environmental impacts related to transportation. The following objectives describe ways Oak Park can enhance access to local healthy foods for residents and businesses.

Establishing Local Food Procurement Outlets

Objective 13.3.1. Advance year-round access to local healthy food through the support of markets, co-ops, community supported agriculture (CSA), and local food store procurement.

Locally and sustainably raised, healthy food has become a larger part of our culture in recent years as consumers learn about the health, environmental, security and economic benefits of eating locally raised food. Shorter travel distances reduce carbon emissions while allowing farmers to pick crops at their ripest and best. Eating local food closer to its harvest ensures greater nutritional benefits, and provides a freshness that adds tremendous value. Knowing your farmer and his or her practices creates greater accountability, security and trust within our food system. And buying from farmers whose agricultural practices nurture rather than degrade the natural environment ensures a long-term healthy and sustainable food system. Village government and other local partners could support year-round local food procurement through building upon Oak Park's established infrastructure of local food sources and encouraging the development of new outlets. Village government could also encourage and support new Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) venues, new food markets and co-ops that buy from local growers, and increased local food procurement among existing community food markets and restaurants.

Measuring Institution and Business Local Food Procurement

Objective 13.3.2. Promote policies, strategies and metrics that make local, healthy food procurement a priority for schools, institutions, restaurants and grocery stores.

Much of our food consumption happens through our community institutions and restaurants. Local schools serve their students breakfast and lunch. Day Care Centers provide snacks and beverages. Hospitals serve patients and visitors. Restaurants and grocery stores serve our community's residents and visitors, but may not provide locally-grown good. Village government could encourage local institutions and businesses to adopt policies that establish and increase local, healthy food procurement goals, and establish metrics that enable the community's institutions to track and report procurement against policy goals.

Increasing Indoor Growing Space

Objective 13.3.3. Support development of indoor facilities for local food production utilizing available private and public green space.

When we think of agriculture we typically imagine fields of corn or diverse rows of vegetables or fruit trees planted in a beautiful outdoor setting. As our urban centers grow in population and decrease in available land, and as interest in growing local food continues to rise, many new agriculturalists are experimenting with indoor growing systems. Vertical farms and indoor aquaponic systems are among the relatively new wave of urban agriculture projects that are allowing built urban communities to grow food within their boundaries. Village government can foster collaboration between public and private stakeholders to implement the use of available facilities to incubate new vertical farms and indoor growing systems that can help to meet locally grown, sustainable food demand.



Educating Community on Growing and Eating Healthy Food

Objective 13.3.4. Support the development of a community greenhouse, aquaponics, and growing center in an existing underutilized facility that supports and trains people on growing and eating healthy, local food.

Urban sustainability embodies the value of reusing existing resources in ways that create new value. The value of “one person’s junk being another’s treasure” is being applied to the re-purposing and development of existing community structures and land across the country. New developments in the local, sustainable food arena are combining for-profit businesses with community education. As obesity rates continue to manifest in epidemic proportions, many healthy communities are finding new ways to educate residents on how to grow, cook and eat healthy food. Village government could utilize regulations and relationships with local advocates to support the increase of indoor growing space to create community greenhouses, vertical farms, food centers and training facilities that educate residents and neighbors on the whys and hows of creating a healthy food lifestyle.

Amending Regulations to Support Urban Agriculture

Objective 13.3.5. Amend municipal regulations to allow urban agricultural and related business activities.

As more people have embraced “buying local” as a way to support our local economy, access fresh, healthy food and reduce carbon emissions related to transporting food, interest in the growing of local food in urban areas has also increased. Growing food in backyard gardens for one’s own consumption is an accepted practice, but larger-scale growing, beekeeping, chicken coops and livestock may also be viable. Village government could review and amend ordinances as needed to allow for more urban agriculture and related business options within the village where they are appropriate given anticipated impacts and land use context.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village’s success in providing access to local food.

Metric: See metrics established in the adopted Sustainability Plan



GOAL 13.4. ADVANCE REGULATIONS AND PROGRAMS FOR GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE TO BUILD A RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY.

Anticipated climate change is expected to significantly alter the local natural environment. Many experts feel more frequent and more severe weather events are likely to occur, including periods of drought, heavier storms and snowfall, and deeper freezes. The following objectives describe actions Village government can take to prepare for such change and make the community more resilient to resulting impacts.

Reducing Stormwater Runoff

Objective 13.4.1. Reduce the demand on local and regional stormwater collection and treatment infrastructure through the use of various techniques applicable to streetscapes, infrastructure and development.

Traditional development can increase the volume of water runoff during storms, transporting pollution into waterways and damaging habitats for aquatic flora and fauna. As stormwater flows through our sewer systems, we lose the opportunity to recharge our groundwater supplies and support stream flows. Village government could establish a long-term plan to incrementally and systematically implement the installation of stormwater reduction technologies and practices, including bioswales, rain gardens, green roofs, cisterns, porous paving and other infrastructure measures that return water to the groundwater systems and reduce the amount of stormwater runoff. Village government could also work with neighboring communities and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) to establish policies and practices that reduce the impacts on regional stormwater infrastructure and natural environments.

Creating Green Infrastructure Corridors

Objective 13.4.2. Where appropriate, create “green corridors” that foster habitat ecosystem restoration.

Urban areas are typically characterized by the built environment, including their housing stock, streets, business shops, and other features which support local community interaction. Parks and green spaces have been part of this equation, too, and the Chicago metro area has been guided by Daniel Burnham’s plan to include the conservation of forest preserves as part of the development landscape. Tree-lined streets and beautiful parks are part of what makes Oak Park unique, and our community understands that we are part of a larger ecosystem. We appreciate the inherent value in preserving and enhancing our green space and infrastructure. Village government could identify opportunities to connect its green spaces to create “green corridors” that foster an enhanced natural habitat and ecosystem.



Developing Climate Change Adaptation Plan

Objective 13.4.3. Develop and implement a comprehensive climate change adaptation plan.

Adaptation to climate change is an approach that seeks to reduce the vulnerability of biological and urban infrastructure systems to local impacts of climate change and to prepare communities for the impacts of a variety of changes, including increasing surface and water temperatures, increasing and new varieties of insect-borne illnesses, flooding, tree species disease and others. New tree species selection based on climate, energy supply, the health of our citizens during extreme weather events, and other impacts must be considered as our climate continues to shift. Village government could develop a comprehensive Climate Change Adaptation Plan that forecasts scenarios and develops strategies to complement the Village's Multi-hazard Mitigation Plan and adapt to the consequences of climate change.

Supporting Sustainable Development

Objective 13.4.4. Amend local regulations so that they support sustainable development and design.

The Oak Park community will continue to experience development and redevelopment of its neighborhoods, commercial districts, parks, and public facilities. This on-going investment provides the opportunity to enhance the sustainability of the village and region by incrementally integrating appropriate tools and techniques. Village government could amend regulations to support sustainable development and design, and adopt sustainability criteria for all future development within the community.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in supporting green infrastructure development.

Metric: Amount of large-scale development with reduced stormwater runoff

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of projects that integrate stormwater management

Potential Data Resource: Development permits approved by Village government and MWRD

Metric: See metrics established in the adopted Sustainability Plan



GOAL 13.5. CREATE A ZERO WASTE VILLAGE.

Becoming a Zero Waste village will require a thorough assessment of our community's waste stream, an analysis of the drivers, incentives and policies that other communities are using to move toward producing zero waste, and development of a comprehensive action plan built around our community's specific waste reduction opportunities. The following objectives describe ways the community can work towards becoming a zero-waste village.

Expanding Commercial/Multi-family Recycling and Composting

Objective 13.5.1. Sustain and expand commercial and multi-unit recycling and composting programs.

Oak Park's residential recycling rates continue to increase, and the Village now has in place a residential food scrap collection program that will continue to support our community's goal of reduced consumption and material diversion from landfills. Commercial and multi-unit recycling and composting are neither mandated nor tracked, and occur sporadically within the village. Through PlanItGreen, major community institutions are beginning to renegotiate waste hauling contracts to incorporate food scrap collection, and our schools have led the way with Zero Waste implementation for the past five years. However, many of the community's downtown buildings and businesses are doing neither. Village government could pursue aggressive expansion of commercial and multi-unit recycling – through incentives and regulation – that increase recycling and food scrap composting in these areas.

Creating Systems for Materials Re-Use

Objective 13.5.2. Provide residents and businesses with local opportunities for discarding or retrieving reusable materials and items.

A key strategy for moving toward becoming a Zero Waste Community is to capture materials for re-use and new production. Whether retrieving vegetable oil from our restaurants to make biodiesel, collecting unused food for people in need, gathering school supplies for redistribution, or refurbishing and finding new homes for used computers – there are many opportunities for saving materials from heading to the landfill. Village government could work with local partners to provide businesses and residents with information, venues, and systems for capturing these materials and finding new ways to use them productively.

Enhancing Building Materials Re-Use

Objective 13.5.3. Encourage and require the deconstruction and reuse of building materials rather than demolition and landfill.

A key recommendation of the Cook County Solid Waste Plan is to address construction and demolition (C&D) debris, the largest single category of waste in Cook County. The USEPA has found that, nationally, 40% of what ends up in our landfills is building waste. In 2012, Cook County passed an ordinance that requires all demolition projects in suburban and unincorporated Cook County to decrease what they are sending to the landfills by recycling and reusing debris. Specifically, the ordinance requires demolition contractors to recycle 70% by weight of debris for all demolition projects (excluding sheds and garages) and that residential properties also demonstrate 5% by weight is being diverted for reuse. Village government could work with local partners and advocates to educate contractors and building owners about the requirements and benefits of the new ordinance, and support the local implementation of construction debris diversion from landfills.



Exploring Options for Regional Organic Waste Facility

Objective 13.5.4. Explore opportunities to support a regional organic waste facility that can take advantage of economies of scale in waste reduction and management.

Keeping our organic materials close to home provides benefits of reduced carbon emissions created through the transporting of materials, and the potential to use food scrap-amended compost for our community's landscaping, garden, and other soil enrichment needs. Village government could work with neighboring communities to explore technology and site options for a local/regional organic waste facility that can process yard waste, food scraps, and organic materials and convert them into usable compost for our community. A facility would additionally support job creation goals for members of our community and neighboring communities.

Minimizing Residential Waste

Objective 13.5.5. Support the expanded use of single-family residential recycling and composting.

Large-scale change can be implemented through incremental action. Single-family residences are the smallest unit of development in the community, but represent the majority of the land area in Oak Park. Village government could support the expanded participation of single-family households in recycling and composting through education and awareness, reliable services, and materials and facilities that make them a convenient choice.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in supporting green infrastructure development.

Metric: Total waster per household

Desired Trend: Decrease in the number of waster per household

Potential Data Resource: Public Works records

Metric: Total recycling and composting per household

Desired Trend: Increase in the amount of recycling and composting

Potential Data Resource: Public Works records

GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 13.1 – Minimize overall energy consumption and increase investment in renewable energy sources.			
13.1.1	Support public awareness campaigns and hands-on workshops to educate consumers about energy efficient systems and practices for private residences and businesses.	Village Administration	Number of LEED-certified or equivalent projects in Oak Park Reduction in energy consumption for public buildings and sites Total village-wide energy consumption per household
13.1.2	Support and promote green buildings, energy-efficient systems and practices, renewable energy installations, and net zero developments for both new construction and existing building renovations through grants, incentives, and regulations.	Policies and Regulations, Funding/Incentives	
13.1.3	Support knowledge and awareness of the latest best practices and technologies related to energy conservation and green energy development to guide government decision-making.	Policies and Regulations	
13.1.4	Advocate for and maintain 100% renewable energy procurement through community choice aggregation.	Village Administration, Funding & Incentives	
13.1.5	Support policies and programs that increase local grid reliability, diversify Oak Park’s energy sources and strengthen its resiliency from local impacts of climate change.	Village Administration	
Goal 13.2 – Conserve water and improve water quality.			
13.2.1	Encourage reduced water consumption through outreach, pricing, and water billing information and statistics.	Policies and Regulations	Water usage per capita
13.2.2	Facilitate the elimination of use of synthetic herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers, and promote non-toxic products and practices to residents and businesses.	Policies and Regulations	
13.2.3	Promote and incentivize the use of high efficiency water conservation, rainwater harvesting, and greywater re-use systems.	Policies and Regulations, Governmental Collaboration	

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 13.3 – Provide access to locally produced, healthy, and sustainable food.				
13.3.1	Advance year-round access to local healthy food through the support of markets, co-ops, community supported agriculture (CSA), and local food store procurement.	Regulations & Policies	As measured in the adopted Sustainability Plan	
13.3.2	Promote policies, strategies and metrics that make local, healthy food procurement a priority for schools, institutions, restaurants and grocery stores.	Regulations & Policies, Governmental Collaboration		School Districts
13.3.3	Support development of indoor facilities for local food production utilizing available private and public green space.	Regulations & Policies		
13.3.4	Support the development of a community greenhouse, aquaponics, and growing center in an existing underutilized facility that supports and trains people on growing and eating healthy, local food.	Regulations & Policies		
13.3.5	Amend municipal regulations to allow urban agricultural and related business activities.	Regulations & Policies		
Goal 13.4 – Advance regulations and programs for green infrastructure to build a resilient, sustainable community.				
13.4.1	Work with regional agencies including the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) and surrounding communities to undertake large-scale stormwater management planning and infrastructure upgrades.	Governmental Collaboration	MWRD, surrounding communities	Amount of large-scale redevelopment with reduced stormwater runoff As measured in the adopted Sustainability Plan
13.4.2	Reduce the demand on local stormwater collection and treatment infrastructure through the use of various techniques applicable to streetscapes, infrastructure and development.	Regulations & Policies, Capital Improvement Program		
13.4.3	Where appropriate, create “green corridors” that foster habitat ecosystem restoration.	Capital Improvement Program		
13.4.4	Develop and implement a comprehensive climate change adaptation plan.	Policies and Regulations		
13.4.5	Amend local regulations so that they support sustainable development and design.	Policies and Regulations		

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 13.5 – Create a Zero Waste Village.			
13.5.1	<i>Sustain and expand commercial and multi-unit recycling and composting programs.</i>	<i>Policies and Regulations</i>	
13.5.2	<i>Provide residents and businesses with local opportunities for discarding or retrieving reusable materials and items.</i>	<i>Policies and Regulations</i>	
13.5.3	<i>Encourage and require the deconstruction and reuse of building materials rather than demolition and landfill.</i>	<i>Regulations & Policies</i>	<i>Total waste per household</i>
13.5.4	<i>Create and implement a comprehensive Community Zero Waste Plan.</i>	<i>Regulations & Policies</i>	<i>Total recycling or composting per household</i>
13.5.5	<i>Explore opportunities to support a regional organic waste facility that can take advantage of economies of scale in waste reduction and management.</i>	<i>Governmental Collaboration</i>	<i>Neighboring communities</i>



14

Governmental Excellence

The way that local government serves its constituents has a significant impact on quality of life. The Village of Oak Park is one of six bodies of local government that provide a range of public services related to public safety, education, health and well-being, and others. Over that past several decades, the village has been proactive about addressing the needs of its residents through the formation of citizen boards and commissions, the hiring of specialized staff, and the adoption of regulations and procedures aimed at preserving and strengthening the community's closely guarded values.

The Oak Park community is a complex place that requires a balanced approach to addressing specific local issues while providing effective and efficient services. It falls upon the Village and other local forms of government to ensure that resources are used effectively and that residents and businesses receive high-quality services. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan addresses a broad range of recommendations related to various topics – including municipal regulations, responsiveness and professionalism of staff, collaboration, transparency, and others – that collectively aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of local government in the Oak Park community.

Governmental excellence represents a comprehensive approach to fiscal policy, local services, communication and transparency, collaboration, and customer service that aims to sustain a high quality of life.

STATEMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Oak Park is an expression of its citizens. It is defined by its residents, businesses, and visitors. The way that local government operates influences how and where people invest their time, energy, and money. Sound governance is directly related to fiscal conditions, the impacts on residential and business property tax payers, the ability to provide local services, and ultimately, the desirability of Oak Park. Governmental excellence is not simply a virtue, but a necessity if Oak Park expects to remain a community of choice for future generations.

Governmental excellence will define the relationship between Oak Park and its citizens. In order to remain as socioeconomically diverse as possible, Oak Park must provide high quality services as efficiently as possible. In order to attract businesses that serve residents' needs, local government must be a partner in defining what is desired to encourage quality development. In order to build trust throughout the community, government must maintain open communication and demonstrate how and why decisions are made. In order to maximize its effectiveness, government must forge strong relationships with partners that complement municipal services.

Governmental excellence represents a comprehensive approach to fiscal policy, local services, communication and transparency, collaboration, and customer service that aims to sustain a high quality of life. With several local governing bodies overlapping in Oak Park, there is a unique opportunity to achieve such excellence.

VISION STATEMENT

The Vision Statement describes Governmental Excellence as it exists in Oak Park in 2030.

Oak Park has gained the reputation as a desirable place for residents, businesses, and visitors to invest. Whether they have lived in the community for several generations or just a few months, residents enjoy high quality services that make the most of municipal resources. Businesses clearly understand the expectations of the community and provide services that respond to local needs and aspirations. Oak Park has remained competitive in the Chicago region by effectively balancing available resources with the highest quality of local services.

Communication and collaboration has become a hallmark of local government, whether it is Village government, School Districts, Township, Library, or Parks. Residents feel informed about the factors that go into establishing priorities, and decisions are justified through a transparent process, public statements and documents. This has ensured the predictability of local decision-making and the trust by residents of local leadership. By maintaining close ties with partners and aligning goals related to strategic and fiscal planning, local government is able to maximize the positive impacts of its services, whether it is education, healthcare, infrastructure, or public outreach. The resulting efficiencies have kept Oak Park accessible to a highly diverse spectrum of people, a key defining characteristic of the community.

Oak Park has remained a premier community in the Chicago metropolitan region through its well-run local governments. Each governmental body provides a high level of customer service, making it easy for residents and businesses to get answers to important questions, understand local rules and regulations, and address issues and concerns. This has helped Oak Park build upon its assets and provide a high quality of life for all who experience it.



GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND METRICS

GOAL 14.1. PROVIDE HONEST, EFFECTIVE, HIGH QUALITY GOVERNMENT AND SUPERIOR CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Providing high quality and effective service is one way to attract investment by residents and businesses in the community. The following objectives consider ways Village government and its partners can assess and improve how effective they are at meeting the needs of their constituents.

Maintaining Performance Measures

Objective 14.1.1. Maintain comprehensive performance measures to objectively evaluate performance levels and set the foundation for improvement.

In order to ensure that government services are being provided in an efficient, effective, and high quality manner, it is essential that performance be measured on a regular basis. Available and easy to understand metrics and performance measures must be identified and utilized. While performance measures may range from one or more quantifiable metrics, such as the time it takes to issue a permit, to a more qualitative metric such as the scoring of a customer evaluation survey completed by a resident who had an interaction with local government, establishing performance measures and using them for evaluation purposes remains one of the most effective ways to determine the overall performance of local government and the various services and functions for which it is responsible.

Enhancing Electronic Access

Objective 14.1.2. Increase ability for residents and stakeholders to accomplish needed activities through electronic means.

More and more, people seek to conduct transactions online via the internet and the expectation is that they should be able to do so. Village government and other local governments could improve their on-line services to improve the ability of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders to conduct transactions on line, rather than having to visit the Village Hall or other appropriate agencies or facilities. Improving online transaction capabilities and service delivery can significantly improve organizational efficiency and customer service.

Assessing Level of Customer Service

Objective 14.1.3. Regularly survey residents, businesses, and stakeholders to assess their impressions of local government customer service levels.

Although currently being undertaken in a very limited manner, Village government could develop and implement a comprehensive customer service survey protocol to engage individuals after interaction with Village government. By regularly utilizing such a survey process, Village government would be better able to assess on an on-going basis the level of customer service being provided, as perceived and rated by the consumers of municipal services. This method of assessing the level of customer service and satisfaction is routinely utilized throughout the private sector/business world and it can be very informative in helping to identify way Village government can improve its level of customer service.



Developing Customer Service Oriented Performance

Objective 14.1.4. Develop a strong culture of customer service oriented performance that crosses all six local jurisdictions, including the recruitment, training, and maintenance of high quality professional staff at all levels.

All employees and staff from local governmental jurisdictions, especially those with direct contact and interface with the public, should be trained and oriented toward customer service. Residents, business owners, and other stakeholders are dependent on services provided by local government and typically have no other options for such services (permits, inspections, public hearing, emergency response, etc.) Because there is often no other place for residents to go for these services, there is not the “free market competition” motivation to focus on customer service in order to retain and attract customers. For this reason, it is even more important to emphasize the importance of and hire and train personnel with an awareness of and focus on customer service oriented performance. It is important that local government earn and maintain the respect and trust of the community and prioritizing customer service based performance is an important component of such a relationship.

Improving Responsiveness

Objective 14.1.5. Ensure the concerns of residents/stakeholders/customers are handled properly and that an appropriate response/action is undertaken in a timely manner.

Emphasis should be placed on providing a timely and appropriate response when Village government is engaged on a particular task by a resident, business, or stakeholder. What is considered “appropriate” and “timely” will vary greatly depending on the type of service to be provided. For example, informal queries may be handled immediately and require little research, where formal approval for certain actions may require additional review time, public hearings, and board or commission action. However, for each encounter with or service provided to a resident, business, or stakeholder, there should be an assurance that Village government will be as responsive as it can be in terms of the quality and timeliness of the service being provided.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village’s success in enhancing customer service.

Metric: Establishment of municipal performance measures for various aspects of local government

Desired Trend: Establishment of performance measures

Potential Data Resource: Municipal agendas and minutes for boards, commissions, and departments

Metric: Overall quality of customer service and satisfaction for various types of municipal services and procedures

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in level of satisfaction

Potential Data Resource: Regular community survey



GOAL 14.2. ACHIEVE SUPERIOR EFFICIENCY IN THE DELIVERY OF GOVERNMENTAL SERVICES.

Efficiency is critical in meeting the needs of citizens and managing the finite resources available to local government. The following objectives describe ways Village government can work with other local jurisdictions to maximize the return on public investment in services.

Enhancing Efficiency of Service-Delivery and Decision-Making

Objective 14.2.1. Explore alternative approaches to service delivery and government decision making that could enhance efficiency.

In addition to refining and improving service delivery systems that are already in place, Village government could explore alternative methods to improve the efficiency of delivering services to residents, businesses, and stakeholders (e.g. data access, in-sourcing, outsourcing, multi-jurisdictional collaboration, merger of local governing bodies, sub-regional partnerships; and collaboration across municipal and jurisdictional boundaries, etc.) Village government could also identify resources and systems that would aid in the decision-making process, thus improving the responsiveness and efficiency of local government. By ensuring data is more available and readily accessible, decisions can be made more quickly and in a more informed manner. Similarly, other local governing bodies, agencies, and organizations could be utilized as resources to aid in the delivery of services where appropriate and in assisting with information that can aid in local decision-making. To identify possible opportunities for enhanced collaboration, regular meetings could be held with other local governing bodies, agencies and organizations with the specific purpose of exploring and identifying service delivery and decision-making improvements.

Consolidating Service Providers

Objective 14.2.2. Where appropriate, consolidate or combine various service providers into fewer facilities through collocation or facility consolidation.

Fleet vehicle storage and maintenance yards, recreation facilities, and administrative support services are examples of just some of the different facilities and support functions that could be considered for collocation or consolidation. For example, Village government, Park District, and School District all have fleet vehicles. There may be opportunities to consolidate maintenance facilities, thereby creating efficiencies and opening up land for community development. This is an example of the possible facility collocation or consolidation that may benefit the community and the various service providers. Possible opportunities to reduce cost and improve service delivery could be explored jointly by the various local governing bodies. Also of note, given the fully built out and locked nature of Oak Park, any elimination of facility redundancy or duplication may provide new opportunities for the development of other needed or desired land use or facilities, possible bringing previously tax-exempt property back onto the tax rolls.



Streamlining Procedures

Objective 14.2.3. Streamline procedures and eliminate redundancy where possible by reviewing the Village's organizational structure, departments, staff positions, and boards and commissions to determine their respective roles and responsibilities.

When the purpose, role, or function of a staff position, department, board or commission is not clearly understood by all involved, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of service delivery can be in jeopardy. Village government could work internally to define and make clear the responsibilities of every department, staff position, and board and commission to eliminate any confusion or duplication of effort, and work to streamlining existing procedures. This streamlining of procedures and clarification of roles and responsibilities will greatly improve the municipal service experience for two groups: 1) the staff, board, or commission members who are currently unsure of their role and responsibility or who may be frustrated by the inefficiency of existing procedures; and 2) the resident, business, or stakeholder that is currently subject to existing inefficiencies, uncertainty, redundancy, and cumbersome procedures.

Ensuring Strong Intra-Agency Communications

Objective 14.2.4. Ensure strong intra-agency communications between all departments, boards, commissions, and committees.

Fostering effective communication is often the first and most critical step to solving many problems. While communication with the community at large is important, intra-agency communication must be the first communication priority. An open and on-going communication protocol should be in place to ensure there is strong communication between all boards, commissions, and committees. This protocol should consider communication between all levels of municipal government. These lines of communication should be structured to be open and seamless and be supported by regularly scheduled meetings to facilitate such dialogue. Boards and commissions could have regular joint meetings to discuss issues, concerns, and opportunities with representatives of all boards and commissions present. More frequent updates of all board, commission and committee activities could also be provided in order to keep everyone informed of recent activity and initiatives.



Developing Benchmark Comparisons

Objective 14.2.5. Develop appropriate benchmark comparisons to gauge efficiency—measuring performance against corresponding Oak Park levels over time as well as against leading edge communities.

Although several steps can be undertaken to improve efficiency and customer service levels, ultimately it will require the establishment and utilization of benchmarks to gauge efficiency over time. To ensure that Village government is making progress and improving efficiencies and service delivery, it must identify appropriate metrics and benchmarks and use these to track municipal performance over time against corresponding Oak Park levels and against other communities identified as being “comparable” and committed leaders in providing overall high quality of life for residents. Metrics must be consistently available and accurate year after year to ensure accuracy in tracking performance trends over time. Benchmarks must be well defined and consistent between municipalities if measuring the performance of Oak Park against them is to provide useful and meaningful feedback on an on-going basis.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village’s success in creating efficiencies in local government.

Metric: Efficiencies created through service sharing or consolidation

Desired Trend: Increase in money saved

Potential Data Resource: Budgets of all units of local government



GOAL 14.3. MANAGE THE TOTAL REAL ESTATE TAX BURDEN ON THE COMMUNITY.

The total tax real estate burden includes taxes paid by residents and businesses to all local governmental jurisdictions. When examined collectively, solutions to providing more efficient and higher quality services can be examined collectively. The following objectives describe ways Village government and its partners can provide a greater return on the investment of local citizens.

Establishing a CFO Council

Objective 14.3.1. Create a standing, community-wide citizen's financial oversight council to assess the overall tax burden and trends, review 5-year revenue and spending projections, and offer recommendations for improvement to the six local governing jurisdictions.

Assessing the total tax burden falls outside of the responsibility of any one local jurisdiction. However, by creating a community-wide citizen's financial oversight council, informed residents can help assess the tax burden, review trends and projects, and help to identify possible ways to lessen the burden on residents and businesses. This group can be an effective way of tapping into the pool of local resident expertise and providing feedback to all local governing jurisdictions. The group could be made up of representatives of all units of local government, as well as citizens that regularly review budget summaries. Village government could support the formation of such a committee in order to identify efficiencies that would reduce the overall tax burden on Oak Park residents and businesses.



Developing Financial Projections

Objective 14.3.2. Develop coordinated five-year financial projections across all local jurisdictions based on common assumptions.

By developing coordinated five-year projections based on common assumptions, a more clear and accurate picture can be established as to the cumulative community impact of local government revenue and spending. Forecasts can be used to create a strategic context for evaluating the annual budget, establish a baseline for measuring the long-term effects of decisions, test the economic effects of best-case and worst-case funding scenarios, and establish a baseline projection of revenues, expenditures, and future cash flows and fund balances. A financial projection is not an absolute prediction of the future. Instead, it anticipates a range of possible outcomes, based on a set of known variables and assumptions, it is always subject to revision based on new information. If prepared and managed properly in a coordinated manner across all local government jurisdictions, a financial projection can help public officials evaluate the cumulative financial effects of proposed initiatives, and it can help educate constituents about present and potential financial capabilities.

Conducting Orientation for Officials

Objective 14.3.3. Conduct coordinated orientations for all newly elected officials of all local governing bodies and regularly review with all elected representatives the drivers of overall revenue and spending.

Elected officials come from all walks of life, and, like many individuals starting a new position with an organization, need training and orientation upon assuming their new roles and responsibilities. Coordinated orientation for all newly elected officials and regular review with all elected representatives could be conducted that covers revenue and spending for specific governing bodies and as a governing collective. Such efforts would ensure that elected officials are better informed of and aware of the total tax burden placed on Oak Park residents, businesses, and property owners by the collective actions of all six local governing entities. Such a review could take place on an annual basis and would help local policy-makers better understand the impact of their decision when taken by themselves and when compounded by the actions and decisions of other local jurisdictions.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in minimizing the total tax burden.

Metric: Per capita tax burden

Desired Trend: Maintenance or reduction in the per capita tax burden

Potential Data Resource: Cook County property tax reports



Welcome
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GOAL 14.4. PROMOTE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION AND COOPERATION IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES.

Coordination among service providers can be an important way to provide more effective and efficient services. The following objectives describe ways Village government and other local forms of government can work together to understand existing deficiencies and provide higher-quality services.

Conducting Multi-Jurisdictional Status Update Meetings

Objective 14.4.1. Continue to conduct multi-jurisdictional meetings at all levels and regularly update Village officials and staff on status of discussion and initiatives.

Already a practice with Village government and its local governmental counterparts, regular meetings could continue to be conducted to allow for the sharing of information and the exchange of ideas. Meetings could include elected officials and senior staff from all of the six local governing jurisdictions. Meeting attendees could then provide regular updates to others in their organizations as deemed appropriate.

Publishing a Community Report Card

Objective 14.4.2. Publish a community-wide Report Card that encompasses performance information for all six local governmental jurisdictions that includes consistent objective evaluation criteria, multi-year trends, and relevant comparison information.

A community report card, like its model, the academic report card, is a tool for reporting progress – or lack of progress – toward a series of community goals. The community report card can be an effective tool for both taking stock and prompting action. In addition to the information contained in the report card, it is also an important act of communication between the governmental jurisdiction and the local population. Whatever the “grade”, good or bad, there should be a response by the local government and engaged citizens. Grades for good performance need encouragement and new challenges, and when performance falls below the expectations of citizens or municipal leadership, a constructive response is needed to search for ways to improve the next report card. Community Report Cards can encourage better problem solving responses and allow progress to be tracked over time. Once community goals and priorities are identified, progress can be determined by establishing baseline metrics and monitoring progress at regular intervals. The Village of Oak Park and the other local governing jurisdictions could work cooperatively to create a community report card based on local priorities and goals. Through this tool, the Oak Park community will be more aware of its success in achieving its goals and how to respond and adapt shortcomings.



Collaborating at Local and Regional Levels

Objective 14.4.3. Explore and evaluate opportunities for multi-jurisdictional planning and service collaboration at the local and regional level to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

At the heart of providing services efficiently and effectively is the need to partner appropriately and strategically. Collaboration among entities such as Village government, school districts, Park District, Library, County, Township, IDOT, neighboring municipalities, and others should be maintained on an on-going basis to evaluate the potential for planning and service delivery. In addition to coordinated service delivery and providing of facilities for residents and stakeholders, Oak Park should work with its neighboring communities with which it shares several corridors. These neighbors include River Forest, Forest Park, Chicago, Berwyn, Elmwood Park, and Cicero. These corridors represent shared interests between the communities and are an example of where Village government can plan collaboratively with its neighbors. As it has in the past, Village government could continue to explore new opportunities for collaborative planning and for forming new relationships and partnerships for the enhanced delivery of services and provision of facilities. A good example of regional collaboration is the West Cook County Housing Collaborative, which applied for funding that paid for this Comprehensive Plan as well as efforts in Bellwood, Berwyn, Forest Park, and Maywood.

Merging Local Jurisdictions

Objective 14.4.4. Explore and evaluate opportunities to merge local jurisdictions.

As local governments seek ways to improve the efficiency of their operations, many have already undertaken activities to extensively reduce their costs. However, many public sector entities, like so many private sector ones, are considering more radical new approaches to ensure positive outcomes for local citizens (customers). It is not surprising then, that several local authorities across the country are now taking a fresh look at mergers and other corporate restructuring activity. However, most local jurisdictions that are considering such alternatives are actually exploring large scale back office shared services or front line integration as opposed to full scale political merger. The range of options that can be considered range from integrating front and back office services to potentially merging organizations. Any action taken should be driven by the desire of local jurisdictions to provide quality services in an efficient, high quality, cost effective manner. Whether jurisdictions embark on service integration or full merger, the focus should be on ensuring collaborative efforts that deliver optimum value for tax payers.



Pursuing Revenue Sources

Objective 14.4.5. Cooperatively pursue a variety of revenue sources with other agencies and governmental bodies to offset expenditures and explore ways to reduce costs and increase fund balances.

Raising revenue in the form of taxes, fees, and fines can be a necessary function of doing business for local governments. But so too is balancing revenue with the services provided and the ability of residents and businesses to pay to get the services and facilities they need and/or expect. Village government, Park District, schools and more provide quality services and facilities, and the residents and businesses provide much of the revenue to make that happen. However, like most institutions, the cost of running and maintaining services and facilities increases over time. In addition to identifying cost saving strategies and opportunities, local jurisdictions must also examine the revenue side of the equation to ensure appropriate revenue exists now and in the future to provide the essential and desirable services and facilities that citizens desire.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in promoting inter-governmental collaboration.

Metric: Community-wide report card trends

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in positive operations

Potential Data Resource: Community report card

GOAL 14.5. MAXIMIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIZENS TO ENGAGE WITH GOVERNMENT AND PLAY A ROLE IN ASSURING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Government services are intended to be in the interest of preserving and protecting citizens and values held by them. Oak Park has a legacy of engaging the community in order to continuously assess local issues and priorities. The following objectives describe ways Village government can continue this effort in the light of changing technology and an evolving and diverse community.



Improving Access to Information

Objective 14.5.1. Provide readily available access to information to enable citizens to understand government operations and finances, identify opportunities to support or collaborate with government, and hold government accountable.

Access to information is key to good decision-making. More and more, local governments are publishing public data to help people understand how government works. While much of the data is already available, the idea is to bring it together on one searchable location, such as a web-based clearinghouse. This means it will be easier for people to make decisions and offer suggestions about policies affecting local governance. Open data and access to information increases transparency and accountability and can increase awareness of the opportunities for potential collaboration. Village government could consider developing an Oak Park data site that provides up to date information about the community, governing jurisdictions, non-profits and local organizations, budgets and spending, revenue, services and facilities, strategic partnerships, information on regional and local influences and conditions, and much more.

Utilizing Resident Expertise

Objective 14.5.2. Provide long and short-term opportunities for citizens to offer their expertise in meaningful ways to help identify, analyze, and solve issues facing governmental bodies.

Oak Park benefits from an abundance of citizen expertise – from sustainability and finance to community health and education. Although involving local expertise should be considered an essential part of local government, there is no one best way to provide opportunities for citizens to offer their expertise to the issues facing the community. Regular boards, commissions, and committees offer residents an opportunity to get involved on an on-going basis, while ad hoc committees, blue ribbon panels, and advisory groups are examples of utilizing citizen expertise by appointing resident experts to examine a particular issue or to undertake a particular task. Citizen experts could be used as appropriate by local government to aid in the advancement of community objectives. Citizen experts could discuss, analyze, formulate, and forward well-developed, insightful recommendations to local government on a variety of topics and concerns.



Providing Idea Sharing Opportunities between Residents and Local Officials

Objective 14.5.3. Create opportunities for all community members to share their attributable perspectives with governmental officials and to explore possible solutions through in-person gatherings, surveys, and on-line engagement.

Local government could provide regular on-line and face-to-face forums to facilitate discussion of ideas and perspectives between residents and officials. A dedicated webpage could be created to allow residents to provide feedback on a variety of topics, as well as open feedback on any matter facing the community. Annual or bi-annual town hall forums could be designed to allow residents to provide their feedback directly to local officials on matters not necessarily related to an agenda item, active project, or other initiative. The intent is to provide enhanced dialogue between policy-makers and residents on an on-going basis to create a more aware and responsive local government. Such activities would need to be well designed, managed, and facilitated to ensure that all participants have equal opportunity to participate, and individual issues or agendas do not take over the discussion. If facilitated appropriately, these events, websites, and surveys could help to strengthen the relationship between local government and the community and help to create a more inclusive and creative approach to addressing community issues and priorities.

Collaborating with Local Groups and Individuals

Objective 14.5.4. Promote governmental collaboration with local non-profits, active citizens and citizen groups to jointly address issues of shared concern.

As a community, Oak Park is rich with local non-profits, active citizens and citizen groups. In fact, there are so many, it is difficult to know them all and effectively engage them. These non-profits and citizens groups are valuable resources that can help Village government and other local governments with implementation of tasks geared toward achieving community objectives. Many of the issues facing a community cannot be adequately addressed by a single local government entity. It may be that a priority concern is important to the community, but not the direct responsibility of local government. For instance, childhood obesity and healthy children initiatives are very important and local government recognizes this fact. However, local government may not be the best equipped to address the problem. Local government can, however, be a strategic ally, in partnership with local nonprofits that are already engaged and effectively working with the community on this or any other issue. This is just one example of where local government could identify and work jointly with other individuals and groups to address community concerns, with the local government often taking a supportive role, rather than the lead.



Mitigating Undue Influence

Objective 14.5.5. Develop protections to avoid undue influence by any citizen or interested party on governmental decisions.

Transparency in local government is the best defense against undue influence. Making information and data available to the public, adhering to all notice and procedural requirements, following proper meeting conduct and Robert's Rules of Order, providing adequate rationale on the record for decisions made, and making sure everyone has equal access and opportunity to participate in local government procedures and policy-making processes, are just some of the basic tenants that should be utilized to avoid undue influence on local government decisions.

Potential Metrics

The following are potential metrics that may be used to measure the Village's success in maximizing citizen engagement and accountability.

Metric: Number of citizen citizens engaged in policy analysis and decision making

Desired Trend: Maintenance or increase in participation

Potential Data Resource: Meeting agendas and minutes for all units of local government

GOALS & OBJECTIVES SUMMARY MATRIX

GOVERNMENTAL EXCELLENCE

Recommendation Types

See Chapter 15: Plan Implementation for detailed recommendations related to the following recommendation types:

- **Village Administration:** the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, communication with the community, and internal operations.
- **Policies and Regulations:** the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the vision for the community.
- **Capital Improvements:** the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that advance the objectives of this Plan.
- **Governmental Collaboration:** the coordination among local forms of government in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction or capacity of Village government.
- **Funding and Incentives:** the use of resources to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations.

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 14.1 Provide honest, effective, high quality government and superior customer service.			
14.1.1.	Maintain comprehensive performance measures to objectively evaluate performance levels and set the foundation for improvement.	Village Administration	
14.1.2	Increase ability for residents and stakeholders to accomplish needed activities through electronic means.	Village Administration, Capital Improvement Program	
14.1.3	Regularly survey residents, businesses, and stakeholders to assess their impressions of local government customer service levels.	Village Administration	Establishment of municipal performance measures for various aspects of local government
14.1.4	Develop a strong culture of customer service oriented performance that crosses all six local jurisdictions, including the recruitment, training, and maintenance of high quality professional staff at all levels.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government Overall quality of customer service and satisfaction for various types of municipal services and procedures
14.1.5	Ensure the concerns of residents/stakeholders/customers are handled properly and that an appropriate response/action is undertaken in a timely manner.	Village Administration	
Goal 14.2 Achieve superior efficiency in the delivery of governmental services.			
14.2.1	Explore alternative approaches to service delivery and government decision making that could enhance efficiency.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
14.2.2	Where appropriate, consolidate or combine various service providers into fewer facilities through collocation or facility consolidation.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
14.2.3	Streamline procedures and eliminate redundancy where possible by reviewing the Village’s organizational structure, departments, staff positions, and boards and commissions to determine their respective roles and responsibilities.	Village Administration	Efficiencies created through service sharing or consolidation
14.2.4	Ensure strong intra-agency communications between all departments, boards, commissions, and committees.	Village Administration	
14.2.5	Develop appropriate benchmark comparisons to gauge efficiency—measuring performance against corresponding Oak Park levels over time as well as against leading edge communities.	Village Administration	

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics	
Goal 14.3 Manage the total real estate tax burden on the community.				
14.3.1	Create a standing, community-wide citizen's financial oversight council to assess the overall tax burden and trends, review 5-year revenue and spending projections, and offer recommendations for improvement to the six local governing jurisdictions.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	Per capita total tax burden
14.3.2	Develop coordinated five-year financial projections across all local jurisdictions based on common assumptions.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration, Funding & Incentives	Units of local government	
14.3.3	Conduct coordinated orientations for all newly elected officials of all local governing bodies and regularly review with all elected representatives the drivers of overall revenue and spending.	Village Administration		

Goal 14.4 Promote intergovernmental coordination and cooperation in the delivery of services.				
14.4.1	Publish a community-wide Report Card that encompasses performance information for all six local governmental jurisdictions that includes consistent objective evaluation criteria, multi-year trends, and relevant comparison information.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	Community-wide report card trends
14.4.2	Continue to conduct multi-jurisdictional meetings at all levels and regularly update Village officials and staff on status of discussion and initiatives.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
14.4.3	Explore and evaluate opportunities for multi-jurisdictional planning and service collaboration at the local and regional level to improve efficiency and effectiveness.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government, neighboring communities, local and regional agencies	
14.4.4	Explore and evaluate opportunities to merge local jurisdictions.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government	
14.4.5	Cooperatively pursue a variety of revenue sources with other agencies and governmental bodies to offset expenditures and explore ways to reduce costs and increase fund balances.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration, Funding & Incentives	Units of local government	

Objective	Recommendation Type	Key Partners	Metrics
Goal 14.5. Maximize opportunities for citizens to engage with government and play a role in assuring government transparency and accountability.			
14.5.1	Provide readily available access to information to enable citizens to (a) understand government operations and finances, (b) identify opportunities to support or collaborate with government, and (c) hold government accountable.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
14.5.2	Provide long and short-term opportunities for citizens to offer their expertise in meaningful ways to help identify, analyze, and solve issues facing governmental bodies.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
14.5.3	Create opportunities for all community members to share their attributable perspectives with governmental officials and to explore possible solutions through in-person gatherings, surveys, and on-line engagement.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
14.5.4	Promote governmental collaboration with local non-profits, active citizens and citizen groups to jointly address issues of shared concern.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
14.5.5	Develop protections to avoid undue influence by any citizen or interested party on governmental decisions.	Village Administration, Governmental Collaboration	Units of local government
			Number of citizens engaged in policy analysis and decision making



PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations related to the implementation of plan recommendations. As well as potential funding sources available to the Village and its key partners. This section includes:

Chapter 15. Plan Implementation



15

Plan Implementation

Plan implementation relies on the careful alignment of local policies and regulations, strategic partnerships, and fiscal resources that collectively support a common vision for long-term sustainability. This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan builds upon the recommendations of previous chapters to assist Village government in establishing a path for action that recognizes the specific roles of its partners in the community, but maximizes their potential in achieving the local vision.



This section includes a series of recommendations and resources that taken collectively will provide Village government and its partners with a toolbox to facilitate implementation of the plan. These summary matrices include a column entitled “Recommendation Type.” The designations used in this column correlate to the structure of this implementation chapter. The recommendations of the Plan can be categorized by one or more of the following types that are described in more detail in this chapter:

- *Village administration* includes recommendations related to the day-to-day use of the Comprehensive Plan to guide decision-making, maintain communication with the community, and manage internal operations to meet the objectives of the Plan.
- *Policies and regulations* include the use of local plans, ordinances and statutes to ensure development, investment, and priorities reflect the established and emerging vision for the community.
- *Capital improvements* include the use of municipal resources to invest in infrastructure, facilities, “bricks and mortar,” vehicles, and other elements that sustain the community and advance the objectives of this Plan.
- *Governmental Collaboration* includes the maintenance and forging of strategic relationships in order to implement recommendations that go beyond the jurisdiction, purview, or capacity of Village government.
- *Funding and incentives* includes the use of existing resources, or identification of new resources, to encourage implementation of Plan recommendations. It should be noted that this category does not necessarily imply the use of municipal resources. Rather, funding and incentives may be implemented through outside grant programs, partnerships with other agencies, etc.

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

As the governing body with regulatory jurisdiction over the planning area, the Village of Oak Park will be the primary entity tasked with the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. Even when specific actions or investments fall under the purview of other entities, Village government may have an important role in supporting actions through regulation, investment, or advocacy.

USE THE PLAN ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS

It is important that the Plan be referenced by all representatives of Village government, including elected officials, appointed members of boards and commissions, and staff that carries out duties related to development review and approval, capital improvements, fiscal policy, and others. This continuous use will reinforce the role of the Plan as the “playbook” and official policy guide for the community. In order to ensure the Plan is used as frequently as possible and remains responsive to evolving issues and priorities, Village government could:

- Make copies of the Plan available on-line for free, provide hard copies at Village Hall for purchase, and have a copy on file at the Oak Park Public Library for reference;
- Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
- Assist the Village Board and Plan Commission in the day-to-day administration, interpretation, and application of the Plan;
- Maintain a list of potential amendments, issues, or needs which may be a subject of change, addition, or deletion from the Comprehensive Plan.

UPDATE THE PLAN ON A REGULAR BASIS

It is important to emphasize that the Comprehensive Plan is not a static document. If community attitudes change or new issues arise which are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth at any time, Village government should regularly undertake a review of the Plan. Village government could initiate review of the Plan at least every three to five years. Ideally, this review would coincide with the preparation of the municipal budget and Capital Improvement Program.

In this manner, recommendations or changes relating to capital improvements or other programs can be considered as part of the commitments for the upcoming fiscal year. Routine examination of the Plan will help ensure that the planning program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations. This plan should undergo regular review.

Annual Review of the Plan

After adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, opportunities should be provided to identify any changes in conditions that would impact its recommendations. An annual report could be prepared by municipal staff and transmitted to the Plan Commission that provides information and recommendations related to potential Plan recommendations that, for one reason or another, may not align with the community vision or priorities. If the Plan Commission finds that policy issues or changes in basic assumptions or conditions have occurred that necessitate revisions to the Plan, they could advise staff to recommend potential amendments to be considered as part of a formal amendment process.

POLICIES & REGULATIONS

Village government's land use and development regulations and related policies are its most influential tools in implementing Comprehensive Plan recommendations. Often, the costs of updating these policies to align with the goals of the Comprehensive Plan primarily consist of staff time. With minor financial cost to Village government, changes to land use and development policies lay the foundation for the realization of the community's vision.

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan should be followed by a review and update of Village government's various development controls including the zoning ordinance and related regulations. It is essential that all development controls be consistent with and complement the Comprehensive Plan's vision, goals, and objectives. Reviews should consider the following issues that are specifically relevant to Oak Park and discussed in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Allowances for proper use mix and density in transit-oriented areas,
- The preservation of the character of neighborhoods and business districts,
- Allowances for proper mix of housing types that support housing accessibility and affordability,
- Encouragement or required use of sustainable design and development techniques, and
- Administrative amendments that may streamline the approval process and foster appropriate investment.

PUBLIC WORKS STANDARDS

Public Works standards impact the way Village government invests in capital improvements and maintenance. Village government should review its standards to ensure that they support various goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Considerations related to the review could include:

- The development of municipal infrastructure that potentially reduces demand on stormwater and wastewater processing through the integration of emerging design techniques and technologies;
- An assessment of Village government's fleet to explore opportunities for the incremental procurement of more efficient or low emissions vehicles as current vehicles approach their useful lifespan;
- The adoption of facility and infrastructure maintenance techniques, such as alternatives to salt for snow mitigation or the use of low-maintenance landscape areas on public grounds, that reduce impacts on residents and natural resources, and;
- Modifications to design standards for roadways, sidewalks, and trails to ensure that multi-mobility is considered as new transportation infrastructure is developed.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Village government adopted its Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1999 (Chapter 7, Article 9 of the Village Code). Chapter 2, Article 23 of the Village Code includes regulations related to administration of that ordinance. These regulations stipulate that the Historic Preservation Commission may make recommendations to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Plan Commission, Community Design Commission and Board of Trustees on all zoning amendments and special uses involving historic landmarks and structures. Village government could continue to support the Historic Preservation Commission in its multi-faceted role of seeking designation for historic districts, sites, structures, and landmarks, providing design review for projects on designated historic sites, and procuring grants to support the rehabilitation of historic structures, in addition to other designated tasks.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LOCAL PLANS

Oak Park has a rich heritage of community planning and prior to the development of the Comprehensive Plan, Village government has adopted numerous neighborhood plans, corridor plans and studies, streetscape plans, a downtown master plan, bicycle plan, and others. Unless explicitly noted, the Comprehensive Plan is not intended to replace or supersede any of these existing plans. The high-level, Village-wide policies identified in the Comprehensive Plan serve to complement more detailed planning efforts and, wherever possible, Comprehensive Plan recommendations have been based on the policies and recommendations included in existing community-supported plans and studies.



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Village government's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) represents the fiscal commitment to initiatives aimed at maintaining and improving the community. As a critical tool for the Envision Oak Park Comprehensive Plan implementation, Village government should review and update its Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as needed to reflect Comprehensive Plan recommendations. These might include the restoration and upgrading of existing utilities and infrastructure, and the renovation, expansion, or relocation of Village facilities.

ANNUAL REVIEW

A CIP is essential to the coordinated and efficient implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and could be reviewed annually. The costs and benefits of proposed improvements should always be examined in comparison with Comprehensive Plan priorities. The annual review of the CIP would seek and examine both near-term projects and long-term needs and opportunities.

In reviewing the Capital Improvement Program, Village government could first prepare a list of all public improvements within the next five years that are recommended in the Comprehensive Plan. All projects could then be reviewed and prioritized and cost estimates prepared along with potential funding sources. The CIP may need to be expanded, condensed, or completely reworked based on the goals set by the Comprehensive Plan.

PROJECT PHASING

The CIP should consider how short-term investments can be part of the community's long-term vision. Priority could be given to projects that represent incremental progress towards a broader community goal. Such projects could be designed to be easily retrofit or expanded to meet a larger objective.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER IMPROVEMENTS

Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require partnerships and coordination with several entities. For example, IDOT has jurisdiction over several of the roadways in the community, while other units of local government operate the majority of the schools, parks, and libraries. Village government's CIP should consider the initiatives of its implementation partners and identify opportunities to align municipal investment with other projects supported by these partners. Examples of this approach may include the relocation or upgrading of infrastructure as part of a roadway improvement project, new telecommunications technology as a component to a streetscape installation, or the construction of a new Village facility as part of a significant development project, among others.



GOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

The Village of Oak Park should assume a leadership role in implementing the new Comprehensive Plan. In addition to carrying out the administrative actions and many of the public improvement projects called for in the Plan, Village government may choose to administer a variety of programs available to local residents, businesses, and property owners.

However, for the Comprehensive Plan to be successful it must also be based on a strong partnership between Village government, other forms of local government, residents, neighborhood groups and organizations, institutions, businesses, not-for-profits, neighboring communities, and local, regional and state agencies. Collaboration is needed to ensure that resources, policies, and programs respond in an efficient and transparent manner to issues within the village and those that extend beyond its jurisdiction.

Village government should be the leader in promoting the collaboration needed to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Village government's primary partners in implementing the Comprehensive Plan are likely to be other forms of local government, including:

- Oak Park Township,
- Oak Park Elementary School District 97,
- Oak Park and River Forest High School District 200,
- Oak Park Public Library,
- Park District of Oak Park, and
- Cook County.

The summary matrices at the end of Chapters 4-14 identify other forms of local government as key implementation partners for plan recommendations. However, Village government could also seek to forge and strengthen strategic partnerships with other entities that may have the resources, expertise or capacity to implement the community's vision. These may include:

- Regional partners and agencies, such as the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), and the West Cook County Housing Collaborative;
- Neighboring communities including Berwyn, Cicero, Elmwood Park, Forest Park, River Forest, and the City of Chicago and its Austin and Galewood neighborhoods.
- Not-for-profit organizations, of which it is estimated nearly 500 provide services to the Oak Park community.
- The business and development community, who should be encouraged to invest in Oak Park and undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance overall quality of life and community character; and,
- The Oak Park community, since all residents and neighborhood groups should be encouraged to participate in the on-going planning process, and all should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on improvement and development decisions within the community.

FUNDING & INCENTIVES

Many of the projects and improvements called for in the Comprehensive Plan can be implemented through administrative and policy decisions or traditionally funded programs. However, other projects may require special technical and/or financial assistance.

Village government could continue to explore and consider the wide range of local, state, and federal resources and programs that may be available to assist in the implementation of planning recommendations. For example, initiatives related to economic development, neighborhood stabilization and housing, or sustainability and environment can receive assistance from grant programs established for specific categories of actions or projects.

Funding sources are identified throughout this section as they apply to the implementation of various Comprehensive Plan recommendations. These funding sources are subject to change and do not represent a complete list of all possible grants, incentives, and other available programs. Village government could continue to seek ways to fund the recommendations presented in the Plan by researching and monitoring grants, funding agencies, and programs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH

Providing needed services Oak Park's businesses will be crucial to the village's continued economic growth and diversification. This section identifies a variety of funding strategies for making improvements related to business growth and development.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Tax Increment Financing, commonly referred to as TIF, is an economic development financing mechanism that is used to incentivize and attract desired development within key commercial and industrial areas. TIF utilizes future property tax revenues generated within a designated area or district, to pay for improvements and further incentivize reinvestment. TIF dollars can only be used within the TIF district for projects such as infrastructure, streetscaping, public improvements, land assemblage, and offsetting the cost of development.

TIFs can only be established in areas that are considered "blighted" or at risk of becoming blighted. Once established, the incremental growth in property tax over the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) of properties is reinvested in that area. Local officials may then issue bonds or undertake other financial obligation based on the growth in new revenue. Over the life of the district, existing taxing bodies receive the same level of tax revenue as in the base year. Provisions exist for schools to receive additional revenue. The maximum life of a TIF district in the State of Illinois is 23 years, although a district can be extended beyond that horizon through authorization from the State Legislature.

The Village of Oak Park maintains three TIF districts:

- Madison Street TIF, established in 1993 for the purpose of improving the vitality of the Madison Street Business Corridor;
- Downtown Oak Park (DTOP) TIF, established in 1983 and extended in 2005 with the intent of revitalizing the downtown business district; and,
- Harlem Garfield TIF, established in 1993 for the purpose of remediation the site for a retail redevelopment project.

Special Service Area (SSA)

A Special Service Area (SSA) provides a means of funding improvements and programs within a designated area. In an SSA, a small percentage is added to the property tax of the properties within the defined service area. The revenue received from this targeted increase is channeled back into projects and programs benefiting those properties. An SSA can be rejected if 51% of the property owners and electors within a designated area object. SSA's are particularly useful in areas with a concentration of businesses such as portions of the North Avenue or Madison Street corridors.

SSA funded projects can include such things as district marketing and advertising assistance, promotional activities and special events, streetscape and signage improvements, property maintenance services. SSA's can also be used to fund various incentives and tools such as small business loan funds or façade improvement programs. The Village of Oak Park has established SSA #1 in the greater downtown Oak Park area to assist in the marketing and promoting of businesses in the district.

Business Districts

As permitted in Division 74.3 of the Municipal Code of the State of Illinois, a municipality may designate, after public hearings, an area as a Business District. A Business Development District (BDD) would allow Village government to levy up to an additional 1% retailers occupation tax, 1% hotel tax, and 1% sales tax within a designated district. Similar to a TIF district, a BDD has a maximum life of 23 years. BDD legislation also permits municipalities to utilize tax revenue growth that has been generated by BDD properties to fund improvements in the district. Business district designation also empowers a municipality to carry out a business district development or redevelopment plan through the following actions:

- Approve development and redevelopment proposals.
- Acquire, manage, convey or dispose of real and personal property acquired pursuant to the provisions of a development or redevelopment plan.
- Apply for and accept capital grants and loans from the federal and state government, for business district development and redevelopment.
- Borrow funds for the purpose of business district development and redevelopment, and issue obligation or revenue bonds, subject to applicable statutory limitations.

- Sell, lease, trade or improve such real property as may be acquired in connection with business district development and redevelopment plans.
- Business district planning activities.
- Establish by ordinance or resolution procedures for the planning, execution and implementation of business district plans.
- Create a Business District Development and Redevelopment Commission to act as an agent for the municipality for the purposes of business district development and redevelopment.

BDD funds can be used for a multitude of cost items including infrastructure improvements, public improvements, site acquisition, and land assemblage. Given the limited amount of funds that a BDD is capable of generating, compared to a TIF district, BDD is best suited for funding small scale improvements and property maintenance programs. The Village of Oak Park has not established any business development districts.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

MAP-21

In July 2012, the “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century” (MAP-21) bill was signed into law. The goal of MAP-21 is to modernize and reform the current transportation system to help create jobs, accelerate economic recovery, and build a foundation for long-term prosperity.

MAP-21 is set to expire in September 2014 and the future of the transportation bill, and ultimately those programs it includes, is unknown at this time (June 2014). Whether MAP-21 is further extended or renewed is yet to be decided. However, typically when federal programs of this nature are not extended and expire, new programs are implemented. Village government should continue to stay informed as to the status of these programs and any new funding sources that may be introduced in the near future.

The following discussion summarizes grant programs currently covered under MAP-21 that could be utilized by Village government to make enhancements to local transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, sidewalks, and trails. Since the possibility for renewal remains, these programs are included in this section for informational purposes.



Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

The SRTS program has provided funding for the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bike to school. Village government could pursue additional grant funding to create safe pedestrian and bicycle networks that connect residential areas to neighborhood schools.

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

The Illinois Department of Transportation administers the ITEP and has funded projects including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, streetscaping, landscaping, historic preservation, and projects that control or remove outdoor advertising. In the past, federal reimbursement has been available for up to 50% of the costs of right-of-way and easement acquisition and 80% of the cost for preliminary engineering, utility relocations, construction engineering, and construction costs.

Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the administrator of CMAQ funds for the northeastern Illinois region. CMAP supports a wide range of projects through the CMAQ program including improvements to bicycle facilities, transit facilities, intersections, sidewalk improvements, and signal timing. Funds have also been used to make transportation improvements to eliminate traffic bottlenecks, limit diesel emissions, and to create promotional campaigns to enhance use of transit and bicycles.

Surface Transportation Program (STP)

In the past, these funds have been allocated to coordinating regional councils to be used for roadway and roadway related items. Projects in this funding category have required a local sponsor and have been selected based on, among other factors, a ranking scale that takes into account the regional benefits provided by the project among other factors. STP funds have been used for a variety of project types including roadway rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoration; widening and adding lanes; intersection improvements; traffic signal improvements; and green infrastructure funding.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program is a federally funded grant program for trail-related land acquisition, development, or restoration. The grants are awarded based on the results of a competitive scoring process and the application's suitability under MAP-21. A minimum 20% match is required by the applicant. Grants are to be used for motorized or non-motorized trail development, renovation, and/or preservation. All projects must be maintained for 25 years. Eligible applicants include municipalities, counties, schools, non-profits, and for-profit businesses.

HOUSING FUNDING

The Comprehensive Plan provides a range of recommendations related to the issues of affordable housing, housing variety and choice, and historic renovation and rehabilitation. Several funding sources are available to Village government and its partners as they seek to address these issues.

Community Development Block Grant

The Village of Oak Park is the recipient of Federal funds through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). An annual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement is primary source of HUD funding for Oak Park which is complemented by leveraged funds from the state and federal governments, and other sources. Village government also partners with the Oak Park Housing Authority which operates and manages the Mills Park Tower public housing development and the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

In 2014, Village government anticipated more than \$15 million would be for affordable housing and other community development activities. The Village of Oak Park is committed to allocating funds that serve the needs of low and moderate-income households, with a priority on those households with incomes less than 50% of the area median income. Village government has also identified special needs individuals as among those who face the greatest challenges and who could receive high priority in the expenditure of federal funds, including at-risk children and youth, low income families, the homeless and persons threatened with homelessness, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The following needs address this priority:

- Affordable and fair housing
- Investment in community development activities in lower income neighborhoods and in facilities that serve lower income populations, and
- Supportive services to gain or maintain independence.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program

The federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit was created in 1986 and incentivizes the development of rental housing for low-income individuals and families. Tax credits are awarded to developers of authorized projects based on the amount invested in affordable housing. These credits offer a dollar-for-dollar reduction that offsets federal tax liability on an ordinary income over a 10-year period. Developers are then permitted to sell credits to investors to raise equity for their development projects. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) allocates these tax credits on behalf of the federal government in Illinois.

To be eligible for obtaining this tax credit, the property being developed:

- Must be a residential property for rent;
- May be multi-family, single-family, duplexes, townhomes, or multi-family apartments;
- May be new construction, rehabilitation, or acquisition;
- Must either allocate 20% of the units in the project to individuals/families earning 50% or less of the area's median gross income OR 40% or more of the units in the project be reserved for individuals/families earning 60% or less than the area median gross income. In both cases, units must be rent restricted.

New Market Tax Credits

The U.S. Congress established the New Market Tax Credits (NMTC program) in 2000 to encourage new investment in businesses and real estate projects located in underserved areas. Criteria for such areas include census tracts with high unemployment, low incomes, and significant out-migration. Individual and corporate investors receive a tax credit on their federal income tax return in exchange for making investments in federally-designated financial institutions called Community Development Entities (CDEs). CDEs, in turn, develop projects in low-income areas. The credit equals 39% of the original investment and is allocated over seven years. Several census tracts in southwestern Oak Park are eligible for NMTC investment.

Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program

The Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program provides federal income-tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic income-producing properties. Under the provisions of the Tax Reform Act of 1986, a 20% tax credit is available for the substantial rehabilitation of commercial, agricultural, industrial, or rental residential buildings that are certified as historic. The credit may be subtracted directly from federal income taxes owed by the owner.

The Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program benefits the owner, the occupants, and the community by:

- Encouraging protection of landmarks through the promotion, recognition, and designation of historic structures;
- Increasing the value of the rehabilitated property and returning underutilized structures to the tax rolls; and,
- Upgrading downtowns and neighborhoods and often increasing the amount of available housing within the community.

PARKS, OPEN SPACE, & ENVIRONMENT FUNDING

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Village government could work with the Park District of Oak Park to identify projects where a cooperative pursuit of parks and open space grants may be beneficial. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers several grants-in-aid programs to help municipalities and other local agencies provide a number of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The programs operate on a cost reimbursement basis to a government or not-for-profit organization. Local governments can receive one grant per program per year, with no restriction on the number of local governments that can be funded for a given location. IDNR Grants are organized into three major categories. Of these categories, two - Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) and the Illinois Trails Grants Program - could be applicable in Oak Park.

OSLAD

The OSLAD program awards up to 50% of project costs up to a maximum of \$750,000 for acquisition and \$400,000 for development/renovation of such recreational facilities such as playgrounds, outdoor nature interpretive areas, campgrounds and fishing piers, park roads and paths, and beaches. IDNR administers five grant programs to provide financial assistance for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of trails that are used for public recreation uses.

Green Building

While Village government can adopt various policies to ensure that future development is energy efficient, there are also a variety of grants that can be used to reduce the energy consumed by existing residences, businesses, and community facilities and minimize Oak Park's carbon footprint. Grants exist to enhance the energy efficiency of public buildings, including Village facilities. Funding sources are also available to provide incentives to individual property owners to renovate existing buildings and increase energy efficiency.

- The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Renewable Energy (RE) & Energy Efficiency (EE) Grants provide substantial assistance to municipalities retrofitting building lighting systems and investing in renewable energy.
- As part of its small rental rehab program, Village government utilizes CDBG funds to provide incentives for property owners to conduct energy retrofits and reduce energy consumption by at least 15%.
- Village government is also in the process of obtaining funding from the DCEO to establish an Energy and Water Efficiency Rebate Program, which would provide incentives to homeowners to invest in energy audits to determine energy savings options and water efficiency fixtures that would reduce water bills.

Green Infrastructure

Since 2011, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) has awarded nearly \$15 million through its Green Infrastructure Grant (IGIG) Program for Stormwater Management. The program defines green infrastructure as stormwater management techniques and practices that help restore, mimic or enhance natural hydrology to protect and improve local water quality.

IGIG assists communities in demonstrating green infrastructure best management practices to control stormwater runoff for water quality protection in Illinois. Examples include:

- Green roofs;
- Permeable paving;
- Trees and tree boxes;
- Vegetated filter strips;
- Bioinfiltration systems such as bioswales and rain gardens;
- Stormwater wetlands and naturalized detention basins;
- Rain water harvesting systems such as cisterns, rain barrels, and stormwater reuse systems; and,
- Stream, riparian, and floodplain restoration.