

## South Marion Street transformed into elegant new downtown district



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The newly refurbished South Marion Street officially reopened in December after nearly six months of reconstruction.

Renamed the Pleasant District, the project transformed the stretch of roadway from North Boulevard to Pleasant Street to resemble the award-winning section from Lake Street to North Boulevard completed in late 2007.

More than 150,000 brick street pavers, 9,000 pieces of bluestone sidewalk and 4,000 pieces of granite curbs, gutters, crosswalks and planters replaced the asphalt and concrete of the old street. The long-life materials are projected to last for many decades.

In addition, 32 trees were planted to replace the 26 trees that were removed during the project. Older inefficient street lighting was replaced with energy efficient, LED lighting that can be dimmed during low usage hours.

A twinkling Tivoli lighting system adds interest to the now festive Pleasant Street intersection, and a garden is planned near Mills Park.

Sidewalk width was increased significantly, greatly enhancing the walkability of the area and adding the potential for special events. New site furnishings and pedestrian-friendly enclaves also were created among the new streetscape.

Construction included replacement of aging water and sewer lines beneath the pavement. The \$5.4 million project was funded by the Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district.

The new district currently boasts a variety of businesses, including retail outlets and restaurants, as well the Carleton Hotel. Downtown's new Pleasant District is bounded by the Green Line and Metra west line on the north, Harlem Avenue on the west, Home Avenue to the east and Randolph Street on the south.

For more information on the project, e-mail [planning@oak-park.us](mailto:planning@oak-park.us).

## Firearm regulation forum set

A community forum to gather public input for consideration in regulating the sale and possession of firearms is scheduled for 7 p.m., Tues., Jan. 24, at Village Hall, 123 Madison St. Hosted by the Board of Health as a public safety issue, the forum is part of a process that ultimately will lead to recommendations to the Village Board for possible action. Prohibiting businesses from selling firearms is considered unlikely, officials say, given recent U.S. Supreme and Appellate Court rulings. However, laws that regulate where, how and to whom firearms are sold and kept are among those considered legally defensible. For more information on the meeting, call 708.358.5480 or e-mail [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us).

## Rate hikes prompt call for water conservation plan

With the City of Chicago dramatically increasing charges to communities for Lake Michigan water, Oak Park is launching a community-based effort to create a water conservation and use efficiency plan. The effort, which will rely heavily on citizen input and participation, will begin with a focus group scheduled for 7 – 9 p.m., Tues., Jan. 31, at Village Hall, 123 Madison St. The goal is to create a plan that will focus on water supply issues to promote efficient water use and conservation in the community. The final plan could be a model for other communities with similar water supply issues. The City of Chicago, which supplies Lake Michigan water to Oak Park and nearby communities, raised rates 25 percent in 2012. Rates are scheduled to rise another 15 percent each year in 2013, 2014 and 2015. For more information on the plan, call 708.358.5778 or e-mail [sustainability@oak-park.us](mailto:sustainability@oak-park.us).

## Be cautious, but don't run from a coyote



**A**s coyotes have begun to make regular appearances in Oak Park over the years, wildlife experts agree that simply seeing one does not necessarily constitute a problem or a dangerous situation. If a coyote approaches, they say do not run, but yell, stand up straight, clap your hands and wave your arms — or even throw something to scare it away. However, if a coyote is aggressive or shows no fear, move to a safe location and contact the Animal Control Division at 708.358.5680. Be sure to provide details including the date and address where the interaction occurred. To discourage coyotes from being attracted to your property, limit the amount of bird and pet food left outside. Garbage also should be stored securely — even though coyotes are not likely to eat garbage, they may be attracted by the rodents that feed there. In addition, do not leave small pets, especially cats, outside unattended. A fence at least four feet high can help prevent entry into the yard. Links to more detailed information on coyotes are posted on the animal control page at [www.oak-park.us/health](http://www.oak-park.us/health).

## Tree pruning planned

**T**ree pruning is scheduled from early January to mid-March, weather permitting. The 2012 trim area is between Madison Street and the Eisenhower Expressway, from Harlem Avenue to East Avenue, and Madison Street to South Boulevard, from Austin Boulevard to Harlem Avenue. Village crews will prune about 1,500 parkway trees up to 10 inches in diameter, and contractor Winkler Tree Service will prune 3,000 larger trees. For more information about tree pruning, replacement and removal, or questions about general tree health, call 708.358.5700 or e-mail [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).

## CPR classes offered

**T**he Oak Park Fire Department offers a variety of life-saving classes including CPR and training in how to use an automated external defibrillator, or AED. Four different classes are offered — Infant/Child CPR, Heartsaver/First Aid, Heartsaver/AED and CPR/AED for Health Care Providers. Classes are held from 6 – 10 p.m. at the Department's certified American Heart Association community training center in the main fire station, 100 N. Euclid Ave. All courses are taught by an AHA-certified instructor. Classes are \$25 for Oak Park residents and \$50 for non-residents, in addition to a \$12 textbook fee. In-person registration at least two weeks prior to the date of the desired course is recommended. The 2012 class schedule is posted at [www.oak-park.us/fire](http://www.oak-park.us/fire). For more details or to register for any of the offered courses, call 708.445.3300 or e-mail [fire@oak-park.us](mailto:fire@oak-park.us).

## Beekeeping approved; rules protect those with allergies

**A** new ordinance allows property owners to establish up to two honeybee colonies as long as the apiary meets specific Village code requirements. Beekeepers must register with the Illinois Department of Agriculture, provide an on-site water source for the bees, keep records of hive maintenance, provide a flyaway barrier and surround the apiary with dense vegetation or a fence at least five feet high. Beekeepers also must apply for an annual permit, pay a \$75 fee and have their properties inspected by the Department of Public Health prior to issuance of the permit. The beekeeping ordinance also allows residents with an allergy to bee stings documented by a licensed physician to register their address with the Village. An original beekeeping permit will not be issued for an apiary within 150 feet of any address on the bee allergy registration. For more information, call 708.358.5480 or e-mail [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us).



## Volunteers sought for Medical Reserve Corps

**T**he Village is seeking volunteers for the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), which will begin a new training cycle in January. Working with and supporting the Oak Park Health Department, the Medical Reserve Corps relies on experienced health professionals and others who volunteer their expertise in times of need such as an influenza epidemic, chemical spill or other emergency. MRC volunteers also assist in promoting disease prevention, improving health literacy and enhancing emergency preparedness. For more information on training, how to join and to learn more about the corps, e-mail [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us) or visit [www.medicalreservecorps.gov](http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov).

## School districts, Village settle TIF lawsuit

**T**he governing boards of the Village of Oak Park, OPRF High School District 200 and Elementary School District 97 in a joint tri-board meeting last month approved an agreement to resolve litigation related to the 2003 intergovernmental agreement on the Downtown Tax Increment Financing District (TIF). The agreement allows the Downtown TIF to continue through 2018, but for limited, specified purposes. TIF dollars will continue to pay off bonded debt obligations and other pre-existing commitments. However, economical development funds collected above those necessary to meet these obligations, estimated to be nearly \$49 million dollars over the remaining life of the TIF, will be distributed to all local taxing bodies, including Cook County, Triton College and the mosquito abatement district. Details on the agreement are posted online at [www.oak-park.us/tifsettlement](http://www.oak-park.us/tifsettlement).

## Unpermitted work caused building façade collapse



The partial collapse of the brick façade along Harrison Street at Lombard Avenue was caused by work beyond the scope of the original permitted project. That was the key finding of the Village Building Codes Advisory Commission (BCAC) after a two-month study of the facts related to the incident. Following the collapse in August, the citizen commission was asked to bring an objective eye to the incident, not only helping to establish the cause, but determining if any steps could have been taken to prevent this and future incidents. The commission also examined the policies and practices of the Building & Property Standards Department and made recommendations on steps that could be taken to prevent future incidents of this kind. The full report is available for public view at [www.oak-park.us/building](http://www.oak-park.us/building). Meanwhile, repairs were expected to begin this month.

## VOP-TV on the web

Cable television is no longer the only way to watch VOP-TV, Oak Park's official government television station. In addition to streaming live Village Board meetings at [www.oak-park.us/boardtv](http://www.oak-park.us/boardtv), meetings are archived, allowing users to access past events by date, click on



the agenda item and jump right to that part of the meeting. VOP-TV continues to be available to Comcast subscribers on channel six and AT&T Uverse subscribers on channel 99. For more information, call 708.358.5775 or e-mail [voptv@oak-park.us](mailto:voptv@oak-park.us).

## New bank means new address for water bill payments

Oak Park property owners who have their bank pay their water bills need to update the payment address to ensure their payments are not delayed. Village officials say some customers assume because they are paying their bills through their bank's online bill paying option that an electronic transfer is occurring. However, the customer's bank actually mails the payment to the Village's bank for processing. The Village recently changed banks, which means a new mailing address is necessary for payments sent in by mail. While payments will be forwarded for a time, customers are urged to alert their banking institution to the new address — Village of Oak Park, P.O. Box 4583, Carol Stream, IL 60197-4583. A notice of the change is included in water bills. For more information call 708.358.5478 or e-mail [waterbilling@oak-park.us](mailto:waterbilling@oak-park.us).

## Electronic options offered for water bill payments

Property owners can pay their water bills electronically, either by using a credit/debit card online or setting up an automatic debit from a checking, savings or credit card account. To pay online, visit [www.oak-park.us/onlineservices](http://www.oak-park.us/onlineservices) and look for the *manage your water account* link. An application form for automatic debit payment is posted at [www.oak-park.us/finance](http://www.oak-park.us/finance). In addition to water, the quarterly bill includes charges for sewer, garbage disposal and recycling. For more information on water billing and payment options, call 708.358.5478 or e-mail [waterbilling@oak-park.us](mailto:waterbilling@oak-park.us).

## Voter registration underway

Oak Parkers planning to vote in the spring federal and state primary elections can register through Tues., Feb. 21, at Village Hall, 123 Madison St. Registration is offered from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., Mon. - Fri. in the Village Clerk's Office. Voter registration requires two types of identification, at least one with the current address. A driver's license or picture ID is preferred, along with an additional item such as a lease or utility bill. Early voting is scheduled for 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., from Mon., Feb. 27 – Thurs., March 15. Registered voters do not need a reason to vote early. Election Day is Tues., March 20. For more information, call 708.358.5670 or e-mail [clerk@oak-park.us](mailto:clerk@oak-park.us).



## Park District begins 100th anniversary celebration

The Park District of Oak Park will kick off its year-long, 100th anniversary celebration with a Winterfest event from 1 – 4 p.m., Sun., Jan. 29, at the Paul Hruby Ice Arena in Ridgeland Common, 415 Lake St.

The family oriented event will feature open skating with music by Chicago Blackhawk organist Frank Pellico, as well as contests and prizes, a snow sculpture and refreshments. Attendees are urged to bring nonperishable food items for the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry. Visit [www.oakparkparks.com](http://www.oakparkparks.com) for event details.

## Seat belt rules expanded



**B**eginning Jan. 1, everyone in a motor vehicle, no matter the age or seating position, will be required to wear a safety belt or risk a ticket. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) statistics show that those least likely to buckle up are teens, young adults, males, and individuals traveling in pickup trucks. Late-night hours are especially dangerous. The highest percentage of motorists die in alcohol-involved crashes and the lowest percentage of vehicle occupants are properly restrained during late-night hours, data show. Regular safety belt use is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes, according to the NHTSA.

Research has shown that when lap and shoulder belts are used properly, the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants is reduced by 45 percent, and the risk of moderate to serious injury is reduced by 50 percent. For more information on the new law, visit [www.buckleupillinois.org](http://www.buckleupillinois.org).

## Solar collectors, charging stations approved

**E**nhancing its image as a leader in environmental initiatives, Oak Park soon will install solar collectors to power the Avenue Parking Garage and electric car chargers at two sites. The panel on the garage, located on North Boulevard just east of Oak Park Avenue, will be used to directly power garage operations, including lights and gates. Meanwhile, an agreement with iGo car sharing and 350 Green, which installs electric car recharging stations, will create two, solar-powered canopies to recharge electric vehicles. One canopy will be in the parking lot at Village Hall, 123 Madison St., and the other on North Boulevard between Marion Street and Forest Avenue. Each vehicle recharging station will have four spots — two for iGo cars and two for the public. Three chargers under each canopy will recharge a vehicle in three to eight hours and one, high-powered charger will recharge a battery in less than an hour. Users can sign up with 350 Green for a monthly membership or pay for a recharge by calling a number listed at the stations. Solar power generated by the systems that exceed needs will be pushed back into the electricity grid. Most of the cost for the garage collector will be paid by a state grant. The car recharging stations are being funded by iGo and 350 Green. Approval of these initiatives comes as the Village launches an electricity aggregation program that opted for all renewable generation sources, primarily wind. For more information on these and other environmental initiatives, call 708.358.5778 or e-mail [sustainability@oak-park.us](mailto:sustainability@oak-park.us). Information on the electricity aggregation program is posted at [www.oak-park.us/aggregation](http://www.oak-park.us/aggregation).













## Refuse hauling rates increase

**M**onthly residential refuse rates have increased for 2012. Beginning Jan. 1, the cost for a 96-gallon refuse cart is \$21.15, up from \$19.89, and the cost for a 64-gallon refuse cart is now \$17.90, up from \$16.76. Refuse rates are charged on quarterly water bills. Sticker prices also increased. Green yardwaste stickers are now \$2.35, up from \$2.15, and pink bulk-item refuse stickers are \$2, up from \$1.90. For more information on refuse collection, including recycling, call 708.358.5700 or e-mail [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).



### Stay connected...

-  [www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us)
-  [vopnews@oak-park.us](mailto:vopnews@oak-park.us)
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-  [oak-park.us/news](http://oak-park.us/news)
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-  [oak-park.us/enews](http://oak-park.us/enews)

### Clip and Save

#### Who to Call at Village Hall

Dial Direct (area code 708)

TTY	711
Automated Info Line	445.3340
Adjudication	358.5479
Building and Property Standards	358.5430
Licenses/permits	358.5433
Codes/status of plans	358.5434
Property complaints	358.5443
Inspections	358.5440
Community Planning/ Development	358.5420
Business Services	358.5648
Housing	358.5410
Historic Preservation	358.5417
Zoning	358.5449
Community Relations	358.5405
Graffiti Hotline	358.5429
Neighborhood Programs	358.5405
Finance	358.5460
Utility Billing Inquiries	358.5478
Fire (non-emergency)	445.3300
Human Resources	358.5650
Job Hotline	358.5650
Police (non-emergency)	386.3800
Crime Tip Hotline	434.1636
Public Health	358.5480
Animal Control	358.5680
Public Works	358.5700
Parking	358.7275
Day Parking Passes	option 3
Extended Pass	option 4
Night Parking Pass	option 2
Parking Permits	option 5
Snow Hotline	option 1
Vehicle Stickers	option 5
Village Clerk	358.5670
Village Manager's Office	358.5770
Village Web Site	<a href="http://www.oak-park.us">www.oak-park.us</a>
Police, Fire and Medical EMERGENCIES	911

## Holiday tree pick up scheduled

Holiday trees will be picked up on regular trash and recycling collection days during the weeks of January 9 and 16. Please follow these guidelines:

- Place trees in the regular collection area next to the refuse cart — only residents with no alley should put trees at the curb.
- Remove all tinsel, decorations and stands.
- Do not put tree in plastic disposal bag.
- Place wreaths and garlands in the refuse cart — they are held together

with wire and not recyclable.

For more information call 708.358.5700 or e-mail [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).

## Recycle holiday lights

The Village has partnered with Vintage Tech Recyclers to host a holiday light drop-off box at the Public Works Center, 201 South Blvd., through January. Mini-lights, C7 lights, C9 lights, rope and LED lights, as well as extension cords, are acceptable. Items may be dropped off from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information call 708.358.5700 or e-mail [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).



## Block party sponsor list available

Residents who plan to organize block parties in 2012 can sign up to receive reminders about when registration begins, ideas for activities and opportunities to share successful ideas. Applications for 2012 block parties are now being accepted. Some weekends fill quickly so plan your events early to get your preferred dates. To join the list, send your name, e-mail address and the block you represent to [clerk@oak-park.us](mailto:clerk@oak-park.us) or call 708.358.5670.

## HOUSING NEWS

[housing@oak-park.us](mailto:housing@oak-park.us)

**Multi-family grants...** Applications are being accepted for the *Multi-Family Housing Incentives* matching grant program that provides funds for owners of buildings with four or more units. Grants of up to \$10,000 are available to improve common building elements or individual units. Owners must invest \$2 for every \$1 invested by the Village. For details, call 708.358.5410 or e-mail [housing@oak-park.us](mailto:housing@oak-park.us).

**Single-family rehab loans...** Income-eligible residents are urged to apply for no-interest loans of up to \$25,000 to correct health and safety issues and building code violations. The loans, which do not require monthly payments, are repayable after 20 years or when the property is transferred. Call 708.358.5410 or e-mail [housing@oak-park.us](mailto:housing@oak-park.us) for more information.

**Small rental rehab program...** The Village is accepting applications for its *Small Rental Rehab Program* that assist owners of buildings with seven or fewer units. Forgivable loans of up to \$5,000 per unit are available for rehab, and an additional \$2,500 per unit may be available for qualified energy upgrades. For details, call 708.358.5410 or e-mail [housing@oak-park.us](mailto:housing@oak-park.us).

**Condo association training...** The Village has partnered with the Association of Condominium, Townhouse and Homeowners Associations (ACTHA) to sponsor a training program to help associations increase their knowledge of proven practices of successful associations. The curriculum is designed for individuals who currently are on an association board, thinking of joining a board or want to understand how an association should operate. All sessions start at 7 p.m., at Village Hall, 123 Madison St. No advance registration or fee is required unless an attendee is interested in pursuing certification. Curriculum details will be posted at [www.oakparkcondocorner.wordpress.com](http://www.oakparkcondocorner.wordpress.com). For more information, call 708.358.5410 or e-mail [housing@oak-park.us](mailto:housing@oak-park.us).

## Village to share in regional housing grants

Oak Park, through its affiliation with the West Cook County Housing Collaborative, will share \$7.2 million in state and federal grants to promote transit-oriented development and increase affordable housing for families here and in Bellwood, Berwyn, Forest Park and Maywood. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Sustain-



able Communities Program awarded a \$3.2 million grant and a \$4.2 million grant will come from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The Collaborative intends to use the new funds to acquire, rehabilitate and make affordable currently foreclosed, vacant and municipal-owned homes near transit stops. The initiative targeting low- and moderate-income households will provide buyer assistance and establish a revolving loan fund that emphasizes energy efficiency. Oak Park is the lead agent and will receive and disburse the funds, as well as oversee accounting. More details will be released as the programs become established. For more information, call 708.358.5410 or e-mail [housing@oak-park.us](mailto:housing@oak-park.us).



Village of Oak Park  
Village Hall  
123 Madison Street  
Oak Park, Illinois 60302-4272



OP/FYI

Village President David Pope

Trustees

Glenn Brewer  
John Hedges  
Ray Johnson  
Colette Lueck  
Adam Salzman  
Bob Tucker

Village Clerk Teresa Powell  
Village Manager Thomas W. Barwin

Residential Customer Local  
Oak Park, Illinois

Postal Carrier  
Pre-Sort

Presort  
Standard  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 26  
Oak Park, IL

## Register for public safety notifications

A system to communicate directly with residents when public safety issues arise is now available to residents. A simple, two-step process is all it takes to register. Just go to [www.oak-park.us/notifyme](http://www.oak-park.us/notifyme) and complete a brief online form. Once submitted, the registrant will receive an e-mail with a link that must be followed to complete the process. The system allows residents to choose how they would like to be notified should an issue arise — by telephone, e-mail or text message. Residents who do not have an e-mail address can call 708.358.5698 to register to receive messages by telephone.

## Special events summit set

A meeting to help local business associations and non-profits understand the rules of using sidewalks, alleys or streets for special events is scheduled for 7:30 p.m., Fri., Jan. 20 at Village Hall, 123 Madison St. For events with alcohol or more than 500 people, a permit application must be filed at least three months before the event. Permit applications for smaller events with no alcohol must be filed at least two months in advance. For more information call 708.358.5670 or e-mail [clerk@oak-park.us](mailto:clerk@oak-park.us).

## Forecast key to planning parking when it snows

The Village has specific rules that govern parking when it snows — rules that are enforced seven days a week, including holidays. Residents are urged to monitor local forecasts and plan accordingly. When a snow emergency is declared by the Public Works Department, all parking is prohibited on the main streets posted as snow routes. Parking on other streets is restricted to one side from 8 a.m. until 10 p.m. in residential areas and from midnight to 8 a.m. in designated commercial districts, the side determined by the odd/even date. To find out if snow-related parking restrictions are in effect, call 708.358.SNOW (708.358.7669) for a recorded message. Cable television subscribers can tune into VOP-TV, broadcast on Comcast channel 6 and AT&T channel 99. Residents who sign up at [www.oak-park.us/notifyme](http://www.oak-park.us/notifyme) will be alerted. The snow emergency parking rules and a list of frequently asked questions also are posted at [www.oak-park.us/snow](http://www.oak-park.us/snow).



## Sidewalk shoveling required

Property owners who shovel their sidewalks are doing more than making it safer for pedestrians of all ages, they are complying with the law. Village ordinance requires snow and ice to be removed from the public sidewalk within 24 hours following any snow, sleet or freezing rain. Being a good neighbor is important, too, so property owners are urged to help those who may need help clearing a sidewalk. For more information on the shoveling requirement or help resources, call 708.358.5700 or e-mail [publicworks@oakpark.us](mailto:publicworks@oakpark.us).

## Warming centers open

Warming centers are open from 5:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. at West Suburban Hospital, Erie Street at Austin Boulevard, and from 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. at Rush Oak Park Hospital, 500 S. Maple Ave. Hours may be extended when weather conditions warrant. To find out if the warming center is open after hours, call West Suburban Hospital at 708.763.6747 or Rush Oak Park Hospital at 708.660.6000. If transportation is needed, call the Oak Park Police Department's non-emergency number 708.386.3800.