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Tampa Woos Away Village's Top Economic Development Executive

The Village of Oak Park's top economic development executive has been wooed away by the City of Tampa, Florida. Michael Chen, a key figure in the Village's community development efforts since late 1999, has been named the Director of Urban Development for Tampa's economic development programs. His last day on the job in Oak Park will be in mid-August.

"It is with regret that I have accepted Mike Chen's resignation," said Village Manager Carl Swenson. "He has helped the Village Board take some very important steps in revitalizing Oak Park's commercial business base. His knowledge, experience and expertise will be missed."

Chen joined the Village's Development Services Department in November 1999, and became its director the following October. The Development Services Department oversees economic development and redevelopment, Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Districts and business retention and development programs with emphasis on projects designed to strengthen the economic base of the community.

"Leaving Oak Park is bittersweet. I have enjoyed my time here," Chen said. "I am proud to have played a role in the significant progress made in putting the community on track to overcome what had been decades of commercial stagnation and decline. Much remains to be done here, but an opportunity to help lead the economic development efforts of a city the size and vitality of Tampa, Florida, is a career opportunity I simply can't refuse."

Swenson said that while he regretted losing Chen, it was not entirely unexpected.

"When you hire executives with the education, experience and expertise of a Mike Chen you know others will recognize their value, too," he said. "The fact that a city the size of Tampa would look to Oak Park to recruit an economic development director speaks volumes not only about Mike's credentials and qualifications, but to the quality of the Village's entire management staff."

Located on the west coast of central Florida, the City of Tampa includes some 116 squares miles and more than 327,000 residents.

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