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From: David Powers
Communications Director
708.358.5781

Contact: Robert Cole
Assistant to the Village Manager
708.358.5791

Survey: Residents give high marks to life in Oak Park

When it comes to quality of life, acceptance of people of diverse backgrounds, sense of community and overall appearance, Oak Parkers say it doesn't get much better than right here. These are some the key findings of a formal community survey unveiled Monday in a presentation to the Village Board.

Survey respondents also ranked Oak Park's fire and police services very high – in the top 10 percent of national comparisons – while giving Village workers fine marks for their knowledge, responsiveness and courtesy.

The survey was conducted by the National Research Center (NRC), a firm renowned for its comprehensive studies of citizen perceptions and views, known collectively as *The National Citizen Survey™*. NRC previously conducted surveys for the Village in 2000 and 2004. These past surveys, along with the latest survey results, are posted on line at www.oak-park.us/villagemanager – just look for the link along the right margin.

For the current findings, Oak Park residents were surveyed randomly by mail in the fall, a shift from previous survey methods that relied on telephone calls, a traditional approach researchers say is becoming less reliable as many households shift from landlines to mobile phones. Mail surveys also are more cost-effective and tend to generate more candid responses, according to researchers.

Some 1,200 Oak Park households received the mail survey, and 425 were completed and returned. This 37 percent response rate provided a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent. With a confidence level of 95 percent, the survey provides an accurate, scientifically valid snapshot of the entire community, according to NRC.

The survey looked at six separate categories – quality of life, community design, public safety, environmental sustainability, recreation and wellness, community inclusiveness, civic engagement and public trust. NRC, through its collaboration with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), placed many of the Oak Park findings into a national context through comparisons to the findings of similar surveys in other communities across the country.

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The 90-plus page survey report delves not only into questions about quality of life, sense of safety, municipal services and a range of other categories, but also into how respondents' views were related to their length of residency, income, age and gender.

Results of the survey will provide both short and long-term benefits to the community. Village officials and staff will be able to use the information to help focus resources immediately on activities deemed most important to residents, as well as plan for the future.

For more information on the survey, call 708.358.5770 or e-mail village@oak-park.us.

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