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Gumbusters to Take on Downtown

Chewing gum on the sidewalks may soon be a thing of the past in downtown Oak Park thanks to a new device that uses steam, an automated brush and an environmentally safe solvent to quickly remove the gooey mess.

“Most people probably look at those ugly, black spots on the sidewalk and don’t know it is gum,” said Karen Rozmus, the Village’s Solid Waste Coordinator and the Public Works Department’s resident expert on recycling and keeping Oak Park beautiful. “But on a hot day, they might find out the hard way that old gum takes a long time to break down on its own.”

Known as the GumCart, this easy to operate device gives the Village a tool to keep the shopping district walkways gum free, according to Rozmus who added, “Best of all, we will be able to do it in an environmentally friendly way.”

Manufactured in Holland, the machine combines high-temperature steam with low pressure and a special non-toxic solution. The equipment consists of a cart with the solution and a hose with small bronze brushes. The operator exerts only minimum pressure and must stay on contact for only five to 10 seconds per piece of gum.

“The GumCart is unbelievably efficient, especially when compared to other methods like using chemicals to freeze the gum, then scraping it up, or high-pressure washers that use thousands of gallons of water and actually erode the surface.”

A public demonstration of the machine is scheduled for 1:30 pm, Sat., Aug. 24, on the Lake Street mall during Downtown Oak Park’s (DTOP) scheduled end-of-summer promotion activities.

Purchased with \$5,000 state grant and \$1,500 in Keep Oak Park Beautiful funds, the machine will be on loan to DTOP, which will man the device. Focusing first on the downtown area, Rozmus said the “gumbuster” pilot program could eventually be used in all of the business districts.

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DTOP Don Peters tries out “GumCart” the machine as DTOP Executive Director Donna Ogdon Chen looks on.



DTOP Executive Director Donna Ogden Chen wheels the GumCart to her office, demonstrating its portability and how easy it is to handle.