

## Neighborhood Partnerships fostering community connection

**T**he Village recently established a Neighborhood Partnerships Division to lead and support community and civic engagement through a neighborhood-focused lens. Its mission is to strengthen connections between residents and local government by enhancing access, transparency and responsiveness. As a newly formed team, the division is working to improve how the Village connects with and serves the community. These efforts include developing clear, consistent communication processes, reimagining the Welcome Center at Village Hall as a more inclusive and welcoming space, and strengthening support for public-facing services and events through management of the Village's special events permitting process. Additionally, the division will work with the community to develop a Neighborhood Registry, which aims to foster resident-to-resident connections, support neighborhood identity and make it easier for community groups to access Village resources. The division also serves as a liaison between the community and Village departments — helping residents, partners and community organizations navigate services and connect with the right resources. For more information, visit [www.oak-park.us/neighborconnect](http://www.oak-park.us/neighborconnect), email [NeighborConnect@oak-park.us](mailto:NeighborConnect@oak-park.us) or call 708.358.5410.



### Meet the team:

- **Carlton McBeth** (left), **Customer Service Representative**, serves as the first point of contact at Village Hall, ensuring every visitor feels welcomed and supported.
- **Paola Garibay** (center), **Neighborhood Partnerships Administrator**, leads the division and oversees strategic engagement efforts to build public trust and foster inclusive governance.
- **Ele Hein** (right), **Welcome Center Coordinator**, manages day-to-day operations and supports initiatives that expand the Village's connection to the community.



## Outdoor sculpture walk expands to two locations

**T**he Oak Park Sculpture Walk is back with 17 sculptures newly on display as part of an outdoor exhibit spread across two locations. From bold and thought-provoking to whimsical and inspiring, each piece celebrates the creativity and imagination that thrives in Oak Park. The sculptures will be on display for a full year in the Oak Park Arts District along Harrison Street and in the Downtown Oak Park business district in the vicinity of Lake Street and Marion Street. Organized by the Oak Park Area Arts Council and funded by the Village, this annual public art tradition features sculptures chosen through a juried competition. Visitors will soon be able to download the free Otocast app onto their smartphones to access information about the sculptures and hear descriptions of the work by the artists. For more information, contact [info@oakparkareaartscouncil.org](mailto:info@oakparkareaartscouncil.org).

## Fire Department testing hydrants



**T**he Oak Park Fire Department is testing fire hydrants throughout the summer as part of a routine procedure to ensure proper operations of these vital emergency response devices. Crews will be out until the end of September inspecting, flushing and measuring flow rates on all 1,240 fire hydrants in the Village. The inspections also will make sure all hydrants are accessible and not damaged in any way. Residents on the same water line may notice cloudy water the first time a tap is opened after a nearby test. Officials say any cloudiness in the water should clear up if the tap is allowed to run for a few minutes. The test entails attaching a short hose with a diverter to the hydrant. The hose and diverter help

make sure the rush of water from the hydrant goes into the street and does not damage any nearby landscaping. A gauge attached to the hydrant provides water flow data that is recorded and compared to data from the same hydrant compiled over the previous five years. The comparison can help identify any changes in pressure that could indicate a problem with the water supply system that needs to be investigated, according to Fire Department officials. For questions about hydrant testing, call 708.358.5600 or email [fire@oak-park.us](mailto:fire@oak-park.us). For more information about the Fire Department, visit [www.oak-park.us/fire](http://www.oak-park.us/fire).

## Avoid risks around downed power lines

**W**hen severe weather brings down power lines, public safety personnel urge residents to be aware of the danger. Their advice — always assume power lines are live, since even momentary contact with a live power line can injure or kill. If a power line comes down, ideally a firefighter or police officer will stand by the site until utility workers arrive. But when emergency conditions are widespread, personnel may not be available for this level of service. In those instances, affected streets or alleys are blocked and the area around the downed wire isolated by yellow warning tape. Residents who see a downed power line should call 911 right away and report the location. For more information, call 708.358.5600 or email [fire@oak-park.us](mailto:fire@oak-park.us).

## Vehicle license deadline nears

**E**very Oak Park resident is required to purchase a license for each owned or leased motor vehicle before July 15. Vehicle licenses can be purchased and renewed online at [www.oak-park.us/ParkingPortal](http://www.oak-park.us/ParkingPortal). Vehicle license rates vary by type of vehicle. Persons age 65 and older, and anyone who has a state-issued handicapped license plate or placard, can apply for a discount. Disabled and active-duty veterans with proper documentation can apply for free vehicle licenses. The rate increases by \$20 after the deadline. Failure to purchase a license also could result in a ticket. For more information, call 708.358.7275, email [parking@oak-park.us](mailto:parking@oak-park.us) or visit [www.oak-park.us/VehicleLicense](http://www.oak-park.us/VehicleLicense).

## Fight the bite this West Nile season

**A**s temperatures rise, so does the threat of the mosquito-borne West Nile Virus. Last year, the Illinois Department of Public Health reported 69 human cases, 19 of which were in Cook County, and 13 deaths.

**Take precautions...**Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes by wearing long sleeves and pants, limiting time spent outdoors at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active and using insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol. Residents also are urged to eliminate potential mosquito breeding sites by cleaning roof gutters, storing containers upside down, emptying birdbaths every few days and any other precautions to avoid standing water on their property. Make sure to repair torn window screens, which should be tight-fitting and without gaps, to avoid mosquitos getting inside. For more information, call 708.358.5480, visit [www.oak-park.us/fightthebite](http://www.oak-park.us/fightthebite) or email [healthinspector@oak-park.us](mailto:healthinspector@oak-park.us).

**Report dead birds...**If you see a dead bird, call the Oak Park Public Health Department at 708.358.5480 or email [healthinspector@oak-park.us](mailto:healthinspector@oak-park.us).

Depending on the bird's condition and species, a Health Department staff member may pick up the carcass for testing.

**Abatement efforts...**The Des Plaines Valley Mosquito Abatement District treats all street catch basins with larvicide every seven to 10 days during the mosquito-breeding season. The abatement district also will treat catch basins on private property by request and pick up old vehicle tires. Call 708.447.1765 or visit [www.desplainesvalleymad.com](http://www.desplainesvalleymad.com) for more information.

**Spraying notification...**Residents who wish to be notified when the Des Plaines Valley Mosquito Abatement District has scheduled spraying for adult mosquitoes can sign up at [www.oak-park.us/notifyme](http://www.oak-park.us/notifyme). Registrants will be notified by an automated telephone system, email or text message.



## Village fills several key leadership positions

Through the first half of 2025 the Village has filled several key municipal government leadership positions:



### Assistant Village Manager of Economic Vitality...John C. Melaniphy

**Melaniphy** is leading the Village's newly established Office of Economic Vitality after recently accepting the role of Assistant Village Manager of Economic Vitality. In this executive leadership role, Melaniphy is guiding the

Village's strategic efforts to support and enhance Oak Park's economic vitality, working closely with business owners, developers, residents and community stakeholders. A proven industry leader, he brings nearly four decades of experience in economic development, site selection, real estate market analysis and public-private partnerships. He most recently served as the Director of Economic Development for the Village of Niles. Read more about Melaniphy's background at [www.oak-park.us/melaniphy](http://www.oak-park.us/melaniphy).



### Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer...Kellye A. Keyes

**Keyes** is the Village's new Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, bringing more than 25 years of legal, executive and community-based experience to this critical leadership role. Most recently, Keyes served as the inaugural Chairperson and Executive

Director of the Illinois Commission on Equity and Inclusion, where she was appointed by Governor JB Pritzker to launch and lead a new state agency tasked with dismantling systemic barriers to equity in public contracting and hiring. A resident of Oak Park, Keyes will lead the Village's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, guiding the development and implementation of the Village's first-ever Racial Equity Action Plan, advancing inclusive policy across municipal operations and strengthening partnerships throughout the community and region. Read more about her background at [www.oak-park.us/keyes](http://www.oak-park.us/keyes).



### Development Services Director...

**Craig Failor** was named Development Services Director earlier this year. The Oak Park resident has more than 22 years of experience serving the Village as the Village Planner and Planning and Urban Design Manager. He oversees a Development Services Department

that manages business services, planning, parking, building permits, historic preservation and zoning. Read more about his appointment at [www.oak-park.us/failor](http://www.oak-park.us/failor).



### Finance Director...Carrie Marckess

**Marckess** arrived as the Village's new Finance Director earlier this year. Marckess is primarily responsible for managing the Village's finances, including financial planning and analysis, budgeting, accounting record keeping, decision support and analysis, and assessment and

management of financial risks and emerging trends. She comes to Oak Park after serving as Assistant Finance Director for the Village of Bloomingdale. More information is at [www.oak-park.us/marckess](http://www.oak-park.us/marckess).



**Fire Chief...JT Terry**, a highly experienced first responder with a passion for promoting health, safety and security, assumed the role of Oak Park Fire Chief on June 16. Terry has served the Village in various leadership roles since joining the department in 2007. Most recently he served as Deputy Fire Chief of

EMS Operations and Infectious Disease. In that role, he led initiatives to reduce injuries, streamline medical equipment procurement and improve emergency response for high-risk populations. Read more at [www.oak-park.us/terry](http://www.oak-park.us/terry).

## Save the date for next paper shredding/foam recycling event

**O**ak Parkers are invited to safely dispose of sensitive documents and foam products with the No. 6 symbol at a free paper shredding and foam recycling event scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Sept. 20 at the Public Works Center, 201 South Blvd. For more information about the event, email [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us) or visit [www.oak-park.us/shredding925](http://www.oak-park.us/shredding925).

## Police lobby safe venue for transactions

**T**he Oak Park Police Department lobby is always available as a safe venue for finalizing transactions or conducting exchanges. The lobby, located in the lower level of Village Hall, 123 Madison St., is well-lit and staffed 24 hours a day. Residents are encouraged to make use of the lobby if they are buying or selling items online that require an in-person transaction. For more information about the Oak Park Police Department, visit [www.oak-park.us/police](http://www.oak-park.us/police) or email [police@oak-park.us](mailto:police@oak-park.us).

## Be cautious of electricity service scams

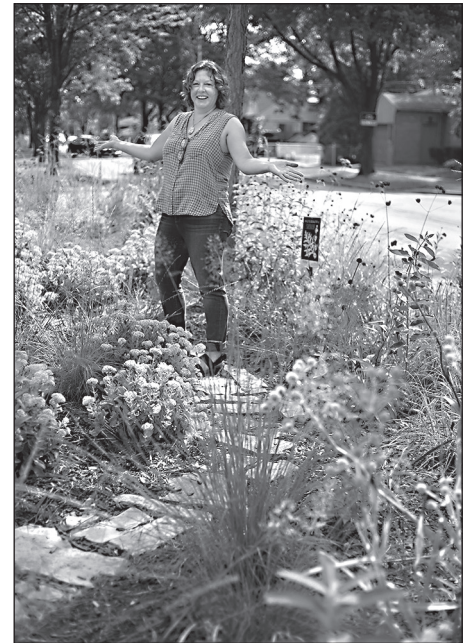
If someone calls or knocks on your door promising a better deal on electricity, be cautious — you could be misled into switching to a supplier that will cost more. Salespeople who offer to save you money may ask for your account number or to see your bill. Most likely they are selling a low introductory rate or trying to get your account number so they can switch you to a different provider without your permission. Representatives from the Village and its electricity supplier, MC Squared Energy, never solicit door-to-door or by telephone. Each year the Village bundles residential and small business electric accounts and seeks competitive bids from electricity suppliers. The state law that gave the Village this authority also allows companies to market their programs directly to consumers. While these companies may be approved by the state, high-pressure salespeople often are accused of misleading consumers about the costs and risks of signing up. ComEd, which owns the wires and poles, continues to distribute the power and is responsible for outages and billing, regardless of the power supplier. Bills from ComEd list the name of your electricity supplier. Enrollment for Oak Park's municipal electricity aggregation program typically opens in the fall, and eligible customers are enrolled automatically unless they have opted out previously through a very specific process. Residents who feel threatened by an aggressive solicitor are urged to call 911. Anyone with concerns about the status of an electricity account can call ComEd at 1.800.334.7661. For more information about the Village's electricity aggregation program, visit [www.oak-park.us/aggregationfaqs](http://www.oak-park.us/aggregationfaqs), call 1.855.251.1179 or email [oakpark@mc2energyservices.com](mailto:oakpark@mc2energyservices.com).

### Tips for avoiding scams:

- Never share your account number in person or over the telephone
- Never allow a solicitor to see your bill
- Never make a payment to a door-to-door solicitor or over the telephone
- Never share your credit card number, social security number or other personal information

## Follow policy-making online, on demand

Residents interested in keeping up with local municipal policymaking can follow Village Board meetings at [www.oak-park.us/boardtv](http://www.oak-park.us/boardtv), where meetings are streamed live and archived for on-demand viewing. The online meetings database offers the option to search the meetings archive using key words to find a particular topic of interest. Users also can select a video by meeting date and then choose to view only the portion of the meeting that addresses the topic of interest just by clicking on the agenda item. Village Board meetings are broadcast live on VOP-TV, which is available to Comcast subscribers on channel 6 and AT&T Uverse customers on channel 99. For those residents who want to dig even deeper into the details, complete board packets — the materials trustees use to prepare for meetings — are posted on the board TV web page as well, along with the approved minutes of past meetings, which are the official record of Village Board actions. The page also links to information on how to contact officials by telephone and email. For more information on Village Board practices and processes, email [village@oak-park.us](mailto:village@oak-park.us).



## Now is the time for native parkway gardens

The Village is encouraging homeowners to plant native gardens in the parkways adjacent to their properties. Native gardening helps support pollinators and local wildlife while improving soil health and water retention and reducing the need for pesticides and fertilizers. Residents interested in planting native gardens should follow the Parkway Planting Ordinance. Parkway gardens must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Plants must be maintained in a way that does not pose a danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public.
- Parkway plants should not exceed 36 inches in height, or 30 inches within a clear sight area for the safety of users of the sidewalks and streets.
- Keep the sidewalk and road clear of any plant material.
- Maintain a clear area of 4 feet around fire hydrants to maintain visibility and access.
- Garden containers less than 30 gallons can be placed in the parkway between March 1 and Oct. 31.

For more information and resources related to native gardening, visit [www.oak-park.us/nativegardening](http://www.oak-park.us/nativegardening) or contact [sustainability@oak-park.us](mailto:sustainability@oak-park.us).

## Open windows may invite burglars

Residents who leave their windows and patio doors open overnight to catch a summer evening breeze could unwittingly become targets of burglars. Oak Park Police urge residents to use devices that prevent entry by limiting travel of the sash or door. Making sure patio furniture cannot be used as a makeshift ladder to reach higher windows also is important. Find contact information for questions or concerns related to public safety within Oak Park's eight neighborhood zones at [www.oak-park.us/communitypolicing](http://www.oak-park.us/communitypolicing).



## Oak Park Film Festival accepting submissions

The Oak Park IL Film Festival is back for a second year with a gala opening night showing of "Moonstruck," featuring longtime Oak Park resident John Mahoney on Sept. 11 at the Lake Theatre. The independent



film showcase will run Sept. 13–14 at Madison Street

Theatre. After a successful launch last year, the festival is returning with a full slate of special screenings and panel discussions featuring the best film-making talent that Oak Park has to offer. The festival is open to movies of all genres and lengths – the only qualifying criteria is that the film must have a local connection, through cast or crew members from Oak Park, setting or shooting location. Submissions are being accepted until the July 31 entry deadline. For more information, visit [www.opilff.org](http://www.opilff.org).



## Gas-powered leaf blowers permanently prohibited

The use of gas-powered leaf blowers is permanently prohibited in Oak Park as of June 1. Electric leaf blowers are permitted year-round between the hours of 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Residents who witness someone using a gas-powered leaf blower can email [propertyissues@oak-park.us](mailto:propertyissues@oak-park.us) and provide the address where it was being used. The Neighborhood Services Department's Code Compliance Division will then follow up with the property owner to ensure future compliance. Find more information about leaf blower regulations at [www.oak-park.us/leafblowers](http://www.oak-park.us/leafblowers).

## Nominations sought for community awards

Nominations are being sought for the Village's 2025 Historic Preservation, Cavalcade of Pride and Sustainability Awards that recognize efforts made by organizations, individuals and businesses who have played roles in improving the community.

**Cavalcade of Pride...** These awards recognize property owners who have done an exceptional job of maintaining and improving the exteriors of their homes and businesses. Nomination categories include residential, multi-family, garden, commercial and sign. The deadline for nominations is Sept. 15. More details and an online nomination form are posted at [www.oak-park.us/cavalcadeofpride](http://www.oak-park.us/cavalcadeofpride).

**Historic Preservation...** Nomination categories include restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive use, additions/new construction, stewardship, detail and design. Nominations need not be in a historic district and interior work may be considered in conjunction with exterior work. The deadline for nominations is Oct. 10. More details and a link to the online nomination form are posted at [www.oak-park.us/preservationawards](http://www.oak-park.us/preservationawards).

**Sustainability...** Green Awards recognize community members and organizations going above and beyond for sustainability. The deadline for nominations is Oct. 31. More details and a link to the online nomination form are posted at [www.oak-park.us/greenawards](http://www.oak-park.us/greenawards). This year the Green Awards will include new categories:

- **Native Gardens in the Neighborhood Award:** In partnership with West Cook Wild Ones, this award will recognize homeowners increasing biodiversity in the Village by planting native gardens in their front yard or parkway.
- **Green Home Award:** In partnership with the Oak Park Climate Action Network, this award will recognize homeowners who demonstrate exceptional commitment to sustainability through improvements to their home in the form of energy efficiency, electrification or renewable energy.
- **Climate Ready Award:** This award recognizes community members, organizations, local businesses and collaborative projects and initiatives that demonstrate leadership in advancing equity-centered climate action, climate resilience and sustainability in alignment with Oak Park's community climate and sustainability plan, Climate Ready Oak Park.

## Ride and ceremony to honor Detective Reddins on July 13



On the afternoon of Sunday, July 13, community members are invited to line Madison Street from Harlem Avenue to Lombard Avenue as the 21st annual Cycle Across Illinois bicycle ride travels through Oak Park. The ride benefits Illinois Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.), an organization dedicated to supporting the families of fallen officers. This year's ride will include a stop in Oak Park to honor Detective Allan Reddins, who was killed in the line of duty on Nov. 29, 2024 while responding to a call. Oak Park Police Sergeant Samantha Deuchler will be among the more than 100

cyclists traveling more than 350 miles across the state from July 10–13. Deuchler will help lead the contingent of cyclists to Village Hall for a ceremony and dedication honoring Reddins. Organizers anticipate the riders will arrive on Madison Street around 2:30 p.m. with the ceremony to follow soon thereafter. Find more information and how to support the participants at [www.oak-park.us/honor-ride](http://www.oak-park.us/honor-ride).



Village of Oak Park

Village Hall

123 Madison Street

Oak Park, Illinois 60302-4272

**OP/FYI**

**Village President** Vicki Scaman

**Trustees**

Derek Eder

Brian D. Straw

Chibulike Enyia

James J. Taglia

Cory J. Wesley

**Village Clerk** Christina M. Waters

**Village Manager** Kevin J. Jackson

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## 50 years of freshness at the Oak Park Farmers' Market

The Oak Park Farmers' Market is celebrating a milestone season this year, hosting the 50th season of one of Oak Park's most treasured traditions. In 1976, community members Marge Gockel and Carla Lind worked together to start the Market. Since then, a series of Market Managers, volunteers and Farmers' Market Commission members have kept the Market running, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out new 50th season commemorative merchandise on sale at the information tent each Saturday.

**Corn roast...**The Farmers' Market's annual corn roast is set for Aug. 9. Guests can enjoy fresh-picked corn sold by the ear hot off the roaster from about 9 a.m. to noon. Be sure to bring cash for this fundraising event, as credit cards are not accepted when purchasing roasted corn.



**SNAP/LINK among payment options...**Making fresh produce affordable for all patrons is a priority at the Oak Park Farmers' Market, which has been providing SNAP/LINK card processing since 2011. The Market also offers matching value coupons throughout the season. For each dollar SNAP/Link participants spend, they receive a \$1 coupon to spend on produce at the Market. Many vendors also accept Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons.

**Transportation available for seniors...**Oak Park Township offers rides for seniors to and from the Oak Park Farmers' Market throughout the season. Pick-ups are made from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday for seniors who live in Oak Park and River Forest. Reservations for rides to the Market can be made by calling 708.383.4806 between 8:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. A \$1 donation is suggested.

**About the Market...**Visit [www.oak-park.us/farmersmarket](http://www.oak-park.us/farmersmarket) for updated information about what's coming up at the Market, including bake sales and special events. The webpage also features information about all of the Market's vendors. The Market is held from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. rain or shine every Saturday through October in the Pilgrim Congregational Church parking lot, 460 Lake St., one block west of Ridgeland Ave. For more information, call 708.358.5780 or email [farmersmarket@oak-park.us](mailto:farmersmarket@oak-park.us).

## Village Hall closing at noon on Fridays this summer

Village Hall will be open only from 9 a.m. to noon on Fridays during July and August. The shortened summer Friday hours begin July 11 and continue through Aug. 29. Anyone needing to conduct in-person business on those dates is encouraged to do so in the morning. Residents are also reminded that many routine municipal services that do not require a visit to Village Hall are available online via links at [www.oak-park.us/onlineservices](http://www.oak-park.us/onlineservices), including construction permits, business licenses and parking permits. Services provided by sworn public safety staff in the Village's Fire and Police Departments will not be impacted by this change. Village Hall will maintain regular 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. hours Monday through Thursday during the summer. More information is at [www.oak-park.us/villagehallsummer](http://www.oak-park.us/villagehallsummer).

## Climate Ready Energy Grants available

All Oak Park residents and property owners are eligible to receive Climate Ready Energy Grant funding to support a range of energy efficiency upgrades and retrofits. Learn more about what expenses are eligible and how to apply at [www.oak-park.us/EnergyGrants](http://www.oak-park.us/EnergyGrants).