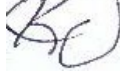





Memorandum

TO: Kevin J. Jackson, Village Manager 

FROM: Craig Failor, Development Services Director 

FOR: Village Board of Trustees

DATE: May 8, 2026

SUBJECT: Responses to Trustee Questions re: Historic District vs. Non-Historic District

Purpose

This memorandum is a response to Village Board of Trustees questions regarding the dissimilarity between our Historic Preservation Districts and Non-Historic Preservation Districts related to demographics (age, median income, race/ethnicity), affordability, and building permit activity.

Background & Explanation:

After the Shape Oak Park mid-project presentation by the Opticos Design team and the Historic Preservation educational presentation by community experts and village staff, members of the Village Board asked Village staff to analyze and report on the above-mentioned matters. Please note that most of the data was subjected to census tract boundaries vs. exact historic district boundaries, specifically for demographic information. It is staff's hope, in the future, to refine the boundaries, using census block information and eventually specific properties.

The Village Board asked the following questions:

Do the historic districts align with Board Goals and Affordability?

In staff's research and discovery, staff feel that the Historic Districts, in general, do align with the Village goals of affordability. Historic districts in Oak Park, specifically the Ridgeland historic district, are the most affordable part of the Village. Affordability can

be understood in multiple ways, but when looking at the map found [here](#). The highest level of lower- and middle-income residents live in the Ridgeland district.

The other approach the Village is taking is one that most municipalities are taking, which is exploring the missing middle. Due to the restrictions that come with being in a historic district, the middle housing has been able to exist. When the different historic districts were built, there were far fewer zoning laws, and housing occurred organically. Once the historic districts were created, though some changes had occurred, they locked in the archetype of missing middle housing.

What are the demographic changes (age, racial) in the historic districts over time, compared to the same changes in the rest of the Village? What are the demographic changes and how they have changed over time relative to the origins of the historic districts starting in the 80's vs the Village?

As research has shown overwhelmingly at the national level, the research at the Oak Park level has shown that the historic districts are diverse, more so in the Ridgeland historic district, which is the most diverse part of Oak Park. If you look at the map found [here](#). The 1980 census shows white residents make up 85% of the village. By 2020, it was 62%. Zooming in on the Ridgeland district, starting in census tract 8125, 74% of residents were white, but by the 2020 census, that number had dropped to 54%. Similarly, census tract 8126 in 1980 was 66% white, but by the 2020 census, it was 49%. This research shows that historic districts have had the highest levels of diversification or increases in diversity, depending on the district, and that indeed the village's overall increased diversity levels were led by historic districts. The least diverse parts of Oak Park are outside of the historic districts, barring census tract 8124, but it has also diversified. Please note the census expanded options for race/ethnicity identification in 2000.

Village Overall

Race	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Percentage Change
Black	10%	17%	22%	22%	19%	+9%
Asian	3%	3%	6%	7%	8%	+5%
Other	1%	1%				No Change (1980-1990)
White	86%	78%	69%	68%	62%	-24%
Hispanic			5%	7%	9%	+4%
2 or More			3%	4%	10%	+7%

Ridgeland Historic District

Race	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Percentage Change
Black	14%	24%	27%	28%	25%	+11%
Asian	3%	3%	7%	7%	9%	+6%
Other	1%	2%				+1% (1980-1990)
White	81%	72%	63%	61%	56%	-25%
Hispanic			4%	7%	10%	+6%
2 or More			3%	4%	10%	+7%

Frank Lloyd Wright Historic District

Race	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Percentage Change
Black	3%	8%	12%	14%	12%	+9%
Asian	2%	3%	6%	8%	10%	+8%
Other	1%	1%				No Change (1980-1990)
White	95%	88%	79%	76%	68%	-27%
Hispanic			4%	6%	8%	+4%
2 or More			2%	3%	9%	+7%

Gunderson Historic District

Race	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Percentage Change
Black	22%	26%	27%	24%	19%	-3%
Asian	3%	3%	5%	5%	7%	+4%
Other	2%	2%				No Change (1980-1990)
White	73%	69%	64%	66%	63%	-10%
Hispanic			5%	7%	10%	+5%
2 or More			4%	4%	12%	+8%

No Historic District

Race	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Percentage Change
Black	8%	16%	22%	21%	18%	+10%
Asian	3%	4%	6%	7%	7%	+4%
Other	1%	1%				No Change (1980-1990)
White	88%	78%	69%	69%	63%	-25%
Hispanic			5%	7%	9%	+4%
2 or More			3%	4%	11%	+8%

District	Average of Median Age 1980	Average of Median Age 2000	Average of Median Age 2010	Average of Median Age 2020
Frank Lloyd Wright	37.93	39.43	41.90	41.20
Gunderson	27.70	34.20	37.50	39.20
None	31.38	35.74	38.74	39.90
Ridgeland	31.74	35.36	38.22	39.74
Grand Total	32.65	36.29	39.14	40.07

District	Average of Median HHI 1980	Average of Median HHI 1990	Average of Median HHI 2006 to 2010	Average of Median HHI 2011 to 2015	Average of Median HHI 2016 to 2020
Frank Lloyd Wright	\$24,746	\$52,484	\$99,673	\$121,592	\$146,072
Gunderson	\$23,674	\$43,725	\$95,337	\$86,250	\$135,000
None	\$25,287	\$50,245	\$99,535	\$112,399	\$142,490
Ridgeland	\$16,480	\$32,098	\$55,636	\$54,615	\$66,578
Grand Total	\$21,911	\$43,778	\$83,587	\$91,864	\$115,611

What are the factors, such as the cost of obtaining a permit and the length of time it takes to get a permit within the Village’s historic districts vs. outside of a historic district? Examining the amount of time it takes to collect permits, staff have found that there is not a significant difference in timing nor is there a significant difference in cost, with some historic districts being less expensive than areas outside the historic district. Please see the table below, which provides a total for the overall village and inside and outside of the historic districts. Please note that these are averages based on information gathered from FY 2021 through March 2026. They include both commercial and residential permits.

Description	Overall	Non Historic	Historic Total	Ridgeland	Gunderson	FLW
Total Permits	12404	7919	4485	2062	272	2151
Days to Approval	9.0	8.8	9.3	10.5	7.4	8.4
Total Days to Issued***	17.1	16.8	17.5	18.9	14.1	16.5
Average Permit Cost	\$ 482.53	\$ 478.34	\$ 489.94	\$ 538.18	\$ 326.35	\$ 464.37
Residential Remodel	6927	4531	2396	919	194	1283
ADU	10	5	5	3	0	2
Residential New Bldg	9	7	2	1	0	1
Multi Family Remodel/New	750	305	445	305	4	136
ACC Structure	267	175	92	46	9	37
Plumbing	1375	892	483	211	28	244
Mechanical	1025	626	399	168	19	212
Electric	773	514	259	126	12	121
Fire	260	178	82	55	2	25
Elevator	69	36	33	25	1	7
Demo (Interior or Structure)	119	62	57	29	1	27
Commercial Remodel	591	423	168	129	1	38
Commercial New Building	8	7	1	1	0	0
Utility	48	25	23	14	1	8
Sign	154	125	29	26	0	3
Misc.	19	8	11	4	0	7

*** This includes the approval time above plus the time for an applicant to supply a list all contractors, ensure and properly register all the applicable contractors, and then pay all fees due.

Is there a decrease in the rate of permitting activity in historic districts vs others?

Staff should be open to trends that the Board should consider. The historic districts make up areas with the most permits, areas with the least number of permits, as well as an average number of permits. The Frank Lloyd Wright district has the highest number of permits pulled, Gunderson is average, and Ridgeland has the least amount.

Historic districts do not regulate interior work being done, which can make up the bulk of the permits being pulled. The wealthiest part of Oak Park, since its founding, has been in the modern-day center of the Frank Lloyd Wright district. These residents would have the ability to remodel interiors of homes, and this is true regardless of whether it is in a historic district or not. Gunderson, most of Frank Lloyd Wright, and parts of Ridgeland are average to the rest of the village. The parts of Ridgeland that have the least number of permits than average correspond to the most affordable parts of Oak Park. A correlation can be seen between the number of permits based on median household income, and that correlates to the most and least affordable areas of the village. Due to the highest and lowest parts of the Village pulling permits all being in historic districts – staff can determine that indeed, historic designation has no true effect on permit activity. See corresponding maps [here](#).

Conclusion:

The data collected and analyzed show that there is no significant variance between behaviors occurring within the Village's historic districts and outside of the Village's historic districts. Over time, shifts have occurred, but with relevant consistency. It was recognized that at the time of the census data collection change in 2000, there were shifts in race percentages, notably due to the adjustment of choice. The median income changed from 1980 to 2020 was significant overall, with the Ridgeland historic district being the lesser of the increases.

Staff will respond to any additional questions or look at any additional data available to the Village. For any questions, please contact Craig Failor at cfailor@oak-park.us or 708-358-5422.

cc: Lisa Shelley, Deputy Village Manager
Ahmad Zayyad, Deputy Village Manager
Christina M. Waters, Village Clerk
Gregory Smith, Village Attorney
Mike Bruce, Village Planner/Planning and Urban Design Manager
All Department Directors