



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

May 2021

What a year it has been! A streetscape and pandemic created the most challenging year in Downtown Oak Park's history. But I cannot be more impressed by the focus of our staff, our merchants, and our Village in supporting our businesses during this time.

Our merchants pivoted their business models to accommodate road closures, state restrictions, and a huge shift in consumer demand and shopping behavior. We watched in awe as our business owners worked tirelessly to create online shopping, curbside pickup, and delivery services in ways that did not exist before. They worked together on cross-collaborations and supported each other in big and little ways. While we had some unfortunate business closures over the last year, it is encouraging to see new business interests coming into the district.

Our partners at Village Hall provided outdoor seating and curbside solutions, grant opportunities, vaccine clinics, and a constant stream of communication and guidelines specifically targeted toward business operations. All while completing the Better Lake Street project and all that it brings.

And last, but not least, our amazing staff at Downtown Oak Park that remained completely focused on finding creative ways to promote our business district at a time when in-person events were not an option. They designed virtual events, launched ecommerce, booked news appearances, created al fresco street dining, and constantly amplified and supported the merchants' own promotions and messages through social media.

Thankfully, we are now in our renewal phase. We will move on in many ways as restrictions are lifted. But we have built knowledge and capabilities that can only make future promotions and events more successful. I look forward to seeing it happen.

Cindy Summers
President, Downtown Oak Park
Owner, Sugar Fixé Patisserie

BETTER LAKE STREET STREETSCAPE PROJECT

After several years of planning and community input, the Lake Street Improvement Project got underway in March of 2020. Lake St. was last resurfaced in 1989 so it was in much needed repair and improvement. Sidewalks were hazardous and congested as trees were overgrowing their grates, crosswalks and traffic signals were out of date and the connection between districts was unapparent and unsafe.

The goal of the project was to improve traffic circulation and capacity, enhance pedestrian and bicycle linkage between retail districts, replace aging roadway and utilities, promote private investment and economic development and strengthen Lake Street's role as a community's central tourism and retail corridor.

Key Features & Improvements that were done:

- New concrete and asphalt roadway surfaces
- Enhanced vehicle detection at traffic signals
- New pavement markings
- Improvements to street crossings to better accommodate citizens with disabilities
- High-quality street furniture
- Enhanced street and pedestrian lighting
- Decorative sidewalk and crosswalk materials
- New trees and landscaping

The project lasted through fall 2020 with final details installed in late fall. Holiday approached Downtown Oak Park with a beautiful new Lake Street.



THE PANDEMIC ALTERS OUR PLANS

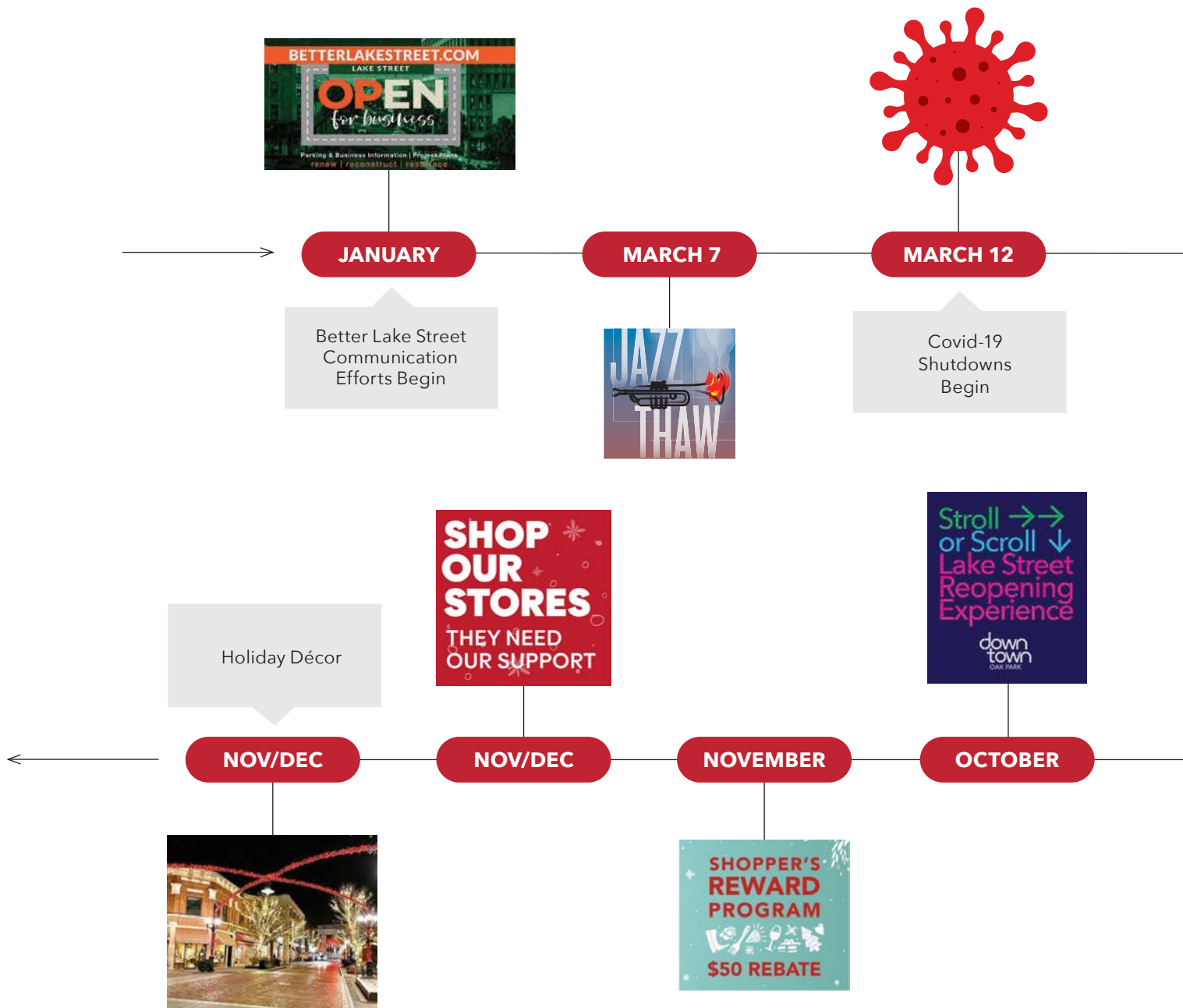
Lake Street Construction communication planning began in December 2019 at special Marketing & Events task force meetings. Goals were outlined after these meetings:

Our goals for the Lake Street Construction communications efforts pre-pandemic:

- Positive message for downtown parking options
 - Communicate safe, clean, cost & convenience
- Draw people downtown "Support Local" message
 - Communicate sustainable, tax dollars spent here, convenience & community connection

When Covid-19 hit in Mid-March we were already prepared with a communication plan to encourage people to support local businesses while Lake Street was closed due to construction.

We quickly added DTOP Delivers as a resource for the community to find online shopping, delivery & pick-up information from Downtown Oak Park businesses.



2020 COMMUNICATION PLAN

1. 52 Reasons to Experience Local
2. Better Lake Street Rewards Program
3. Lake Street Construction Updates
4. DTOP Delivers

DTOP Delivers
Launched



MARCH 16

APRIL

APRIL

DTOP DELIVERS
SUPPORT LOCAL / SHOP ONLINE / DELIVERY / PICK-UP
NOW OPEN / OUTDOOR DINING

Lake Street
Construction
Begins

52 Reasons to
Experience Local
Launched

Lake Street
Reopens



Public
Outdoor Seating



SEPTEMBER

AUGUST

JUNE

MAY

Better Lake Street
Reward Program
Begins



2020 COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

52 REASONS TO EXPERIENCE LOCAL

What: Shop Local campaign originally planned to launch before construction.

Message: An experience around every corner. Discover 52 Reasons to love where you live, shop, eat and explore. Find your happy place every day and each week of the year in Downtown Oak Park.

Reasons to shop local include:

- When you shop here, you support your friends and neighbors
- Your dollars have local impact
- A commitment to jobs in our community

Website: downtownoakpark.net/52reasons

Marketing Highlights:

- Window clings in businesses
- Mentions in eblasts, ads etc.
- Weekly social media
- Street kiosk
- Street compactors signs
- Park District ad
- Postcard

BETTER LAKE STREET REWARD PROGRAM

What: Reward program began May 1

Message: Save your receipts when you support local businesses in Downtown Oak Park, Hemingway District or Pleasant District between May 1 & August 31, 2020—Receipts from online shopping & delivery purchases will also be accepted. Earn \$25 in reward certificates by spending \$20 or more at five participating businesses with a grand total of \$200 or more. Reward certificates must be used September 1 through October 15, 2020 at participating businesses. Find online shopping, delivery & pick-up information from 35+ Downtown Oak Park businesses at dtopdelivers.com!

- **Added:** Receipts from online shopping & food delivery purchases will also be accepted! Gift certificate purchases will also be accepted.
- Almost \$24,000 was redeemed to Merchants for the Better Lake Street Rewards Program.

Website: downtownoakpark.net/betterlakestreet

Marketing Highlights:

- Eblast to Downtown Oak Park list & *Wednesday Journal* list
- *Wednesday Journal* ad
- Envelopes inserted in *Wednesday Journal*
- Asked community organizations to share in their newsletters
- Social media posts & ads
- Postcard
- Distributed Better Lake Street Reward Program envelope
- Sent promotional toolkit information to merchants to share to their audiences



Message from a customer:

I was about to order from a giant, online retailer (that shall not be named) when I got an email from Downtown Oak Park listing the local stores that were open online. And I was happy to see that you were!



DTOP DELIVERS

What: Launched DTOP Delivers as a resource for the community to find online shopping, delivery & pick-up information from Downtown Oak Park businesses.

Message: Downtown Oak Park businesses need your support now more than ever. Up-to-date information including which businesses are currently offering delivery, curbside pick-up, online shopping, online gift cards & virtual tip jars.

Website: dtopdelivers.com

Marketing Highlights:

- *Wednesday Journal* pop-up ad, print ads, eblasts
- Downtown Oak Park eblast
 - Street Banner
 - Digital screens in downtown developments
 - Better Lake Street shared in their email newsletter
- Postcard
- Social media ads

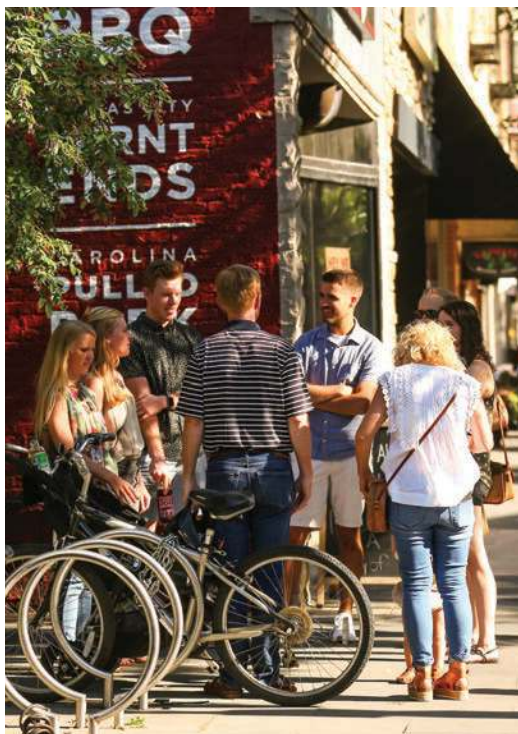
LAKE STREET CONSTRUCTION COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

- Eblasts sent to Downtown Oak Park list, *Wednesday Journal* & Oak Park Eats lists
 - More trees coming to Lake Street
 - Lake Street in DTOP is currently closed, but sidewalk access remains OPEN
 - Better Lake Street Reward Program
 - Connect with local businesses + Lake Street Improvement Project begins
 - Support Local Businesses During Difficult Times

- Created a postcard including information on DTOP Delivers, Better Lake Street Reward Program & 52 Reasons to Experience Local
- Social media posts & ads
- Outlined project “whys” 3 Good Reasons
 - It’s time
 - It will be safer
 - It will be a better Lake Street

Early Lake Street Construction Communication efforts included:

- Encouraging parking in Public Parking Garages in DTOP
- Banners with Public Parking Garage information at Park District pool & dog parks in South Oak Park
- Parking info on 2019 Save the date postcards
- Better Lake Street window clings in vacant businesses
- Better Lake Street message on Lake Street kiosks
- Better Lake Street message in 2019/2020 Holiday Shopper’s Reward Program books
- Better Lake Street ad in Park District spring program
- Better Lake Street message in social media & eblasts
- Better Lake Street team at MAC meeting
- Email to merchants outlining DTOP’s marketing & communication efforts
- Merchant Meeting with Better Lake Street
- GPS Parking capability on our website
- Merchant Mingle to discuss our Marketing Campaign during Lake Street construction project



2020 COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS, CONT

PHASE 4 MESSAGING

- In June/July we transitioned our messaging to reflect that the district was reopening & vibrant!
- Hired a professional photographer to take photos of outdoor dining, shoppers etc.
- Highlighted safety measures & reminders in messaging.

PUBLIC OUTDOOR DINING

Closed Westgate at Marion east of Maple & set up ten picnic tables from June to October 2020.

- Set up tables with 80 chairs on Marion Street between Lake & North Boulevard on Thursday evenings from 5-9PM. Cleaning crew was onsite to sanitize tables.
- We welcomed the community to grab take-out from DTOP restaurants & dine outside!

THURSDAY NIGHT TAKE OUT

A twist on Thursday Night Out for 2020!

- Encouraged the community to order take-out or delivery on Thursday nights from August through October.
- A percentage of sales was donated to the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition. \$1,800 donation was made in November.
- Web page had 1,800 views.
- 14 participating restaurants offered specials.

STROLL OR SCROLL-LAKE STREET REOPENING EXPERIENCE

- October 14-18
- 15+ businesses included on web page
 - The promotion encouraged the community to support local businesses & celebrate Lake Street's reopening in Downtown Oak Park! "Find in-person or virtual experiences in Oak Park's vibrant downtown district! STROLL the new and improved Lake Street between Harlem and Forest Avenues OR SCROLL business videos, promotions & virtual events online."
- Lake Street Reopening Experience virtual video—6,000 video views

Pumpkin Patches

Promotion: "Stop by to pick up a free pumpkin at pumpkin patches throughout downtown on Saturday, October 17. 1 FREE pumpkin per family, while supplies last."

- Gave away 200 Pumpkins

Storywalk® Launched

Promotion: "Follow the StoryWalk® to read along with individual pages on display in business windows on Lake Street. This family activity will feature the kids' book *Wonderfall* by Michael Hall."

Truck Concert

Promotion: "Stroll the district or dine al fresco on Saturday, October 17 to experience a drive-by concert performed from the back of a pickup truck!"

- Sent promotional toolkit information to merchants to share to their audiences

HOLIDAY PROMOTIONS

SHOP OUR STORES PROMOTION

We launched our virtual holiday campaign on Monday, November 30, 2020.

Cookie Tin Giveaway

- Despite there being no cookie walk event this year, we gave away 100 souvenir cookie tins with 25+ individually wrapped sweet treats inside each tin! We had 670 entries, collecting email addresses.

Professional Videos

- Video featuring holiday lights, shopping & seasonal windows in our district
- Virtual visit from St. Nicholas video

Virtual Catalog

- Offered gift ideas & links to holiday gifts from DTOP merchants!

Gift Card Holiday Promotion

- Purchase \$100 in Downtown Oak Park gift certificates & get a \$25 gift certificate free!

Gift Certificates

Sales in 2020: \$52,830 Sales in 2019: \$28,095

Promotion Period (Thanksgiving to End of Year)

Sales in 2020: \$39,985 Sales in 2019: \$12,310

StoryWalk®

Follow the StoryWalk® to read along with individual pages on display in business windows on Marion & Lake. This family activity will feature the kids' book *The Joyful Book* by Todd Parr.

Holiday Lights Cruise

We encouraged the community to drive down Lake Street and Marion Street to see the district aglow with holiday lights with super-sized illuminated displays in flower beds throughout the district. The lit arch on Marion Street at Westgate was also a seasonal sight to see.

SHOPPER'S REWARD

Promotion included content about supporting local merchants during the holiday season!

When we work together, we all win! Earn \$50 while helping your local merchants. Here's how:

1. Save your receipts from Downtown Oak Park businesses between November 1 and December 25, 2020!
2. Receive \$50.00 in Shopper's Reward certificates by spending \$25.00 or more at at least seven participating businesses with a grand total of \$500 or more.
3. Spend your Shopper's Reward certificates at participating businesses. Rebate certificates must be used between January 1 and March 15, 2021.

Find convenient envelopes at participating businesses to keep track & collect your receipts!

Start your holiday shopping early & order take-out tonight! Your local merchants have always been there for you, now let's show up for them!

- We will promote Shopper's Reward in the *Wednesday Journal*, as well as create social media graphics.
 - Remind customers to ask for receipts
 - Receipts from take-out & online shopping included
 - Gift certificate receipts included this year

Shopper's Reward

Redeemed in 2020: \$68,210 Redeemed in 2019: \$69,650

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

NEW WEBSITE

- Developed in 2020, went live March 15, 2021
- The old website was custom built around 2014. It had not been updated since 2014 and was not update-able.
- New website has a solid, reliable, state-of-the-art, feature-rich foundation. We are able to easily create world-class custom content and pages without any HTML or CSS.
- The new website is similar to our old website design, but has an updated template.
- Staff can edit & the website is entirely optimized for long-term future use.
- New e-commerce capabilities with Shopify Lite with an online shopping cart & DTOP can now accept PayPal, Apple Pay, Google Pay, and every major credit card.



FACEBOOK

Top 3 Posts 2020

1. Boss Burrito Feature (highest reach) (promoted)

Reach: 8,500 Shares: 61
 Likes/Reactions: 339 Link clicks/conversions: 1,800
 Comments: 51

2. Tre Sorelle Ristorante Grand Opening

Reach: 8,400 Shares: 27
 Likes/Reactions: 410 Link clicks/conversions: 1,800
 Comments: 98

3. dtopdelivers.com / Support Local (promoted)

Reach: 8,400 Shares: 38
 Likes/Reactions: 236 Link clicks/conversions: 833
 Comments: 22

Facebook Follower growth: +400

2019: 11k 2020: 11.4k

INSTAGRAM

TOP 3 POSTS 2020

1. Sunset Views from Vantage

Reach: 2,900 Comments: 3
 Likes/reactions: 181

2. DTOP Pumpkin Patch

Reach: 2,400 Comments: 5
 Likes/reactions: 231

3. Marion Street B-Roll

Reach: 2,500 Comments: 7
 Likes/reactions: 225

Instagram Follower growth: +1,400

2019: 3.3k 2020: 4.7k

MERCHANT SPOTLIGHTS

Merchant Spotlights were created to help us introduce our merchants to the community. The 2020 spotlights helped shine a light on supporting local businesses during the pandemic.

Spotlight Stats: TOP 3 highlighted

Merchant	Reach	Likes React	Comments	Shares	Link clicks
Tre Sorelle	3,290	192	8	10	151
Little Gem	1,778	51	1	1	29
Khyber Pass	2,506	173	9	10	75
Jerusalem Cafe	2,842	186	5	23	111
Book Table	4,810	292	10	16	409
Wise Cup	2,657	98	0	3	42
BeerShop	2,597	89	2	3	79
Sugarfixe	3,661	223	14	2	162
JAYNE	2,421	59	0	2	29
Carefulpeach	2,923	141	10	1	104
Lea's	2,875	139	6	8	89
Poke Burrito	2,904	136	20	7	57

PR Strategist, Jenny Shepherd

DTOP hired PR Strategist, Jenny Shepherd to help bring visibility to DTOP merchants through media coverage and content creation. In 2020 she helped DTOP merchants land five news segments on Fox32 Chicago, 2 write ups with OakParkEats.com, 2 articles with the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as a Live segment on NBC5.



1. Delia's Kitchen, 2. Personalization House, 3. Lake Street Kitchen + Bar, 4. Scratch 'n Sniff, 5. 16 Suitcases

STRATEGIC PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

In 2019, the Downtown Oak Park board of directors commenced a visioning process to re-energize board, staff, and membership around a compelling vision for Downtown Oak Park's work and provide the strategic direction for the next 3-5 years.

DTOP also engaged in examination of its governance, seeking to refine board governance policies, procedures, and commitments in order to support the board in meeting its goals and allow the board to better communicate its purpose to potential new board members and its constituents.

Key Findings: The customer and business surveys and the retreat discussion revealed these strategic priority areas for DTOP in the next three years:

1. Marketing and events
2. Business support & training
3. Business attraction/fill vacancies/business mix
4. Parking improvements
5. 2020 construction remediation
6. Governance: board and organizational purpose/structure
7. Panhandling/homelessness

These findings were given year 1, 2, or 3-year priorities.

Top priorities accomplished Year-1 in 2020

MARKETING

- Shop Local Campaign "52 Reasons to Experience Local" (see page 6)
- Spotlight local businesses (see page 9)
- Parking Marketing-Positive message for downtown parking options (see page 7)
- Construction Remediation (see page 7)
- New state of the art website (see page 9)

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND TRAINING

- Partner with Chamber of Commerce on a 4 part Professional Development program
- Two Covid-19 financial assistance webinars
- An outdoor heater grant created
- Coordinated Delivery Service for restaurant and retailers
- Complimentary Website/Social Media assessment
- Free one-on-one social media assistance

BOARD GOVERNANCE

- Roles and responsibilities of board members and officers was accomplished with board approval January 2021
- Basic Requirements of the Board of Directors form
- Board Matrix

PANHANDLING/HOMELESSNESS

- Webpage and resources made available to residents and business owners
- Development of educational info graphic for public coming soon
- Actively participating in Homelessness Coalition
- Coordinate porta potties in district to help eliminate issues businesses were experiencing

Year-2 2021 priorities: revisit with board

MARKETING

- Pandemic recovery plan
- Gift Certificates / Gift Cards
- Event development for 2022

GOVERNANCE

- Plan for board and officer recruitment
- Implement new board member orientation policy and practice
- Governance policy document
- Improve board meetings for greater productivity



LANDSCAPING

DTOP contracted with Woodlawn Landscapes Company for the third year in a row to install eye-catching planter boxes and planters for spring and summer. Spring showcased Lemon Cypress and Ferns with a combination of annuals. Hydrangeas were also installed in beds as a permanent variety. Summer plantings were filled in with Acorus and Alocasia to showcase an attractive and innovative mix of seasonal annuals and perennials.

SNOW REMOVAL

Snow removal is a primary responsibility to the members of Downtown Oak Park. While we were fortunate enough to have had a light snowfall during the holiday season this past year February made up for it with record snow falls. Every effort was made by DTOP, the Village and its grounds and maintenance contractor to ensure that primary thoroughfares remained clear of snow and debris. DTOP contracts for snow removal along all sidewalks and for the creation of up to 24 "cut-throughs" along Lake Street, in snow embankments between parking stalls and curb lines, so as to further improve accessibility to meters and pay terminals. The DTOP contract was re-negotiated this year basing our cost on snowfall verse a flat fee.

HOLIDAY DÉCOR

- The district came to life again this year as all the boxwoods on Lake Street and 18 trees on Marion, Westgate and North Boulevard were adorned with soft white LED lights.
- Large custom seasonal décor pieces from Artistic Holiday Décor added spectacular ambiance to Lake Street this year since the new trees were too young to be lit. They embellished the street in twinkling red, silver and gold soft lights.
- Fresh evergreens with twinkling gold accents were installed in 99 pots and 5 beds.
- Red lights and ribbon on our 91 small globe poles and the archway on Marion Street.
- The 12 tall light poles had custom lighting décor installed to round out our holiday decorations for 2020.

HELP FOR THE HOMELESS

DTOP branded and created a webpage devoted to information, resources and solutions for residents and for merchants. There is ongoing coordination and collaboration with the Homelessness Coalition to address the increasing issue with the homeless population in our district. Guiding the community and business owners on the proper steps to take when encountering this population is critical to addressing the problem.

COVID BUSINESS RESOURCES

Curbside Pick-up Parking spots

Numerous areas throughout the district were transformed into 15 minute Curbside Pick-up parking spaces. This supported the merchants as the pandemic would not allow their shops to be open to the public.

Covid-19 financial support webinars

Coordinated two separate Covid-19 webinars to assist merchants through the complex financial relief programs available to small business through the state of Illinois and the federal government.

Delivery Service

DTOP orchestrated and organized a delivery service and made it available to any merchant in the district. It was structured for restaurants and retail for a nominal fee.

Outdoor heater grant

To help alleviate the financial burden on businesses during the Coronavirus Pandemic the outdoor heater grant was established. Outdoor patios and outdoor waiting areas are critical for businesses during the pandemic.

Website/Social Media assessment

Chicago Producers, a local company, was hired to assess and assist merchants with their Website and Social Media platforms. DTOP underwrote a free 60-90 minute consultation. The pandemic made it critical for merchants to have an efficient online presence and process.

One-on-one social media assistance

Staff offered merchants free one-on-one social media assistance. Social Media is a key tool to engage with and communicate with customers. Anna and Naomi assisted shops, services and restaurants in the creation of a strategy and posting calendar.



2020 FINANCIALS

Income	Jan-Dec 2020
Special Service Area Funds	\$700,000
Program Income (Events)	\$2,500
VOP Plant Agreement	\$0
Holiday Décor	\$5,248
Member Dues	\$2,425
Street Pole Banners	\$3,500
Interest	\$68
Miscellaneous	\$0
Better Lake Street Rewards	\$50,000
Total Income	\$763,741
Expenses	
Marketing	\$152,075
Operating & Administration	\$304,940
Grounds	\$189,683
Member Services and Programs	\$5,713
Better Lake Street Rewards	\$50,000
Total Expenses	\$702,410
Net Revenue	\$61,330
Byline Bank Balances as of 12/31/20	
Operating Accounts	\$106,135
Reserve Account	\$136,087
Snow Reserve Account	51,180
Total Cash	\$293,401

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cindy Summers, President / Merchant Director
Judith Lalor, Vice President / Merchant Director
Robbin O'Harrow, Secretary / Merchant Director
Eric Wagner, Treasurer / Merchant Director
Mike Fox, Owner Director
Kristen Halverson, Owner Director
John Linton, Owner / Merchant Director
Jeff Long, Merchant Director
Mary Ludgin, Owner Director
Nina McCaffrey, Merchant Director
David Schrodt, Counsel
John Lynch, OPEDC Designee
Tammie Grossman, VOP Representative

DTOP STAFF

Shanon Williams, Executive Director
Anna Kosowski, Marketing Director
Naomi Soto, Marketing & Communications Manager
Jeff Eng, Finance Manager

COMMITTEES

MERCHANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The MAC is comprised of Merchant Members and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors in general regarding promotional activities and grounds maintenance in SSA #1.

Llyn Longwell, Chair, The Jewelry Studio
Jonathan Kaufman, Wells Street Popcorn
Eric Krzystofiak, Wheel & Sprocket
Karen Morava, Careful Peach Boutique
Karen Pauwels, Sugar Fixe Patisserie
Shivangi Sandal, Wise Cup
Erin Van Buskirk, JAYNE Boutique
Michelle Vanderlaan, Sugarcup Trading & 16 Suitcases

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Finance Committee started meeting every month in 2020. This group oversees and manages the finances for the organization as well as the annual audit. They meet annually with the Village Manager to present the budget for approval.

Jeff Eng, Finance Manager
Judith Lalor, The Little Gem Restaurant
Llyn Longwell, The Jewelry Studio
Mary Ludgin, Shops of Downtown Oak Park/Heitman
Cindy Summers, Sugar Fixe Patisserie
Eric Wagner, Visit Oak Park