

Down town OAK PARK

BUSINESS ALLIANCE

1010 Lake Street, Suite 114
Oak Park, Illinois 60301
downtownoakpark.net



Down town OAK PARK

BUSINESS ALLIANCE

ANNUAL REPORT
2023

A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

May 2024

When I think of 2023, a quote from the three-time Grand Slam-winning tennis player Arthur Ashe comes to mind: “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”

Starting Where We Are

In March 2023, the Downtown Oak Park Board of Directors voted to change our name from Downtown Oak Park to Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance. This name change followed the development of a two-part marketing campaign, We Are Downtown Oak Park, created to define the organization to our members and to our community. It was important for us to define ourselves by who we are and what we do—beyond our location. We are so much more than just our location.

Using What We Have

With a new name, it was time for a new logo. We wanted to continue building on the success of the brand recognition we have established over the last decade. Did you know that the last time we updated our brand, FroYo was the top food trend, “selfie” was the word of the year, and Vine was the leading social media platform? It was definitely time for a brand update! In October, we enlisted the help of Famous Victory Branding & Design to lead us through a complete rebranding process.

Doing What We Can

We continued to work together to promote our business district through a series of promotions and events, kicking off the year with Jazz Thaw and wrapping up with Home for the Holidays. We even broke some records! For the first time, Thursday Night Out hosted a Pride Night on June 22 to celebrate Gay Pride Month. Now, this night holds the record for the most well-attended TNO event, with 887 books sold in one evening! Our Shopper’s Reward Program surpassed pre-pandemic sales numbers with 1267 awards given out.

The organization also implemented phase two of our general marketing campaign, You Belong Here, to showcase our community’s mission and values relating to sustainability, ADA accessibility, and inclusion.

Moving Forward As An Alliance

Right now, I’m going to volley the ball back to our board of directors, who, day in and day out, embody our mission to grow our district and ensure that we evolve every year into a community that attracts business, commerce, residents, and visitors, to the heart of Oak Park.

Susie Goldschmidt
Board President
Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance

A NEW NAME & A NEW LOGO

In March 2023, the Downtown Oak Park Board of Directors voted to change our name from Downtown Oak Park to Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance. Inspired by the creation of the two-part We Are Downtown Oak Park marketing campaign, we understood the importance of defining our organization by what we do—not only by our location.

In October, we hired Famous Victory Branding & Design to lead us through a complete rebranding process. The objective was twofold—build on the strong foundation of the Downtown Oak Park brand and establish a new Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance brand. They worked closely with our team to clarify our existing mission and vision statements to create a verbal and visual identity based on the following pillars:

Mission Statement

To create and support a thriving and vibrant business environment in Downtown Oak Park.

Vision Statement

To be the lead agent in building a highly successful and dynamic business environment that serves its members and community.



YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!

Our annual membership drive started in February with the goal of reaching out to both current members and non-members. This year, we successfully gained 79 paid members, which is an increase from the 64 members we had in 2022.

Membership comes with various benefits, and in 2023, our members took advantage of these benefits by redeeming over \$287,000 from programs sponsored by Downtown Oak Park.

Along with additional revenue from our events, our members are eligible for special programs and discounts.

AWNING AND SIGNAGE GRANTS PROGRAM

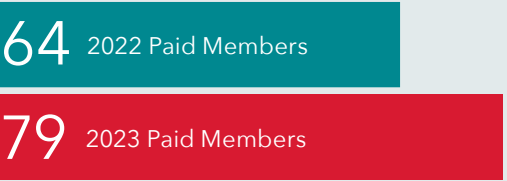
This is a long-standing program administered and funded exclusively by DTOPBA for its members. We provide a 50% match up to \$2000 for new awnings or signage to any member.

In 2023, four businesses took advantage of this program, and we awarded \$3600 in grants.

BANNER PROGRAM

For over ten years, Downtown Oak Park has selected a local artist to create three custom art pieces, each reflecting different vignettes of the district and capturing the overall “spirit” of our community. Each banner is sponsored by an individual business, displaying its name at the bottom. In 2021, we began offering a 40% discount to DTOPBA members.

Last year, we hired local artist Jennifer Dunk to capture the diversity of our district and community. We are thrilled to report that over 18 businesses signed up to sponsor banners in 2023.



DTOPBA also provides the following services for our members:

- Participation in our events and promotions
- Photography and videography services
- Inclusion in our digital marketing:
 - Bi-weekly DTOP eblast
 - Social media promotions
 - DTOP website
 - Around Downtown monthly flyer to high-rise residents
- Invitation to member meetings/seminars
- Special co-op advertising rates
- Inclusion in the DTOP gift certificate program
- Free job listing
- Discounts to partner agency programs
- Opportunities for one-on-one consulting on various matters
- Voting rights at our annual election
- Eligibility for an awning grant program
- Snow removal
- Sidewalk maintenance
- DTOP membership decal

EVENTS/PROMOTIONS

Valentine’s Day Advertising Section with the Wednesday Journal, we developed a two-page shopping guide highlighting gifts, dining, and events that ran on February 8 online and in print. The section featured specials like a Red Velvet Latte from Wise Cup and artisan-made, fair-trade jewelry from Ten Thousand Villages.



Jazz Thaw launched our DTOPBA event season with a series of concerts at 12 participating restaurants on Saturday, March 11, from 1 to 10 p.m. in partnership with 90.9 WDCB FM. This is one of our trademark events of the year! There is truly something for everybody, from straight-ahead jazz, Latin, and Brazilian music, along with jazz with vocals and instrumental jazz. We purposely select bands to present a diverse selection of jazz styles. And it’s free to the public!



Thursday Night Out is the flagship event that our community partners and our community members look forward to year after year! A total of 2,242 \$5 gift certificates were handed out. We also implemented our sustainability efforts. In 2023, the event launched on June 1 through August 31 and showcased:

- 27 restaurants
- 26 non-profit organizations and businesses
- 23 live bands

For the first time in the event’s history, Thursday Night Out hosted a Pride Night on June 22 to celebrate Gay Pride Month. This night holds the record for the most well-attended TNO event, with 887 books sold in one evening! The event featured a partnership with the Oak Park Chamber of Commerce and local LGBTQ+ non-profits like OPALGA+ (Oak Park’s local Lesbian and Gay Association) and PFLAG. Attendees had the opportunity to mix and mingle with Drag Queens, shop at an artist’s market and flower cart, and purchase a Pride tote, with 10% of the proceeds going to charity.

YEAR	JUN-AUG 2023	JUN-AUG 2022	JUN-AUG 2021	MAY-AUG 2019	MAY-AUG 2018
Books Sold	8,286	7,838	5,471	7,469	7,822
Revenue	\$207,150	\$195,950	\$109,420	\$149,380	\$156,440



Shop Outdoor Sale was held from July 13 to 16 and is our once-a-year opportunity to partner with the Hemingway District merchants for a big blowout midsummer end-of-season sidewalk sale. This year, the following DTOP merchants participated: The Book Table, Fitzgerald’s Fine Stationery, Scratch ‘n Sniff, JAYNE, Wheel & Sprocket, Pumpkin Moon, Einnim, and EcoKarat Jewelry. While browsing the racks and tables, shoppers also enjoyed food sold by Kyuramen from noon to 8 p.m.



In 2023, Oaktobefest celebrated its 28th anniversary! As always, our annual fall event has something for everyone, with 14 participating restaurants offering delicious fall menu items along with a selection of local craft beers like Oak Park’s Kinslahger Oktoberfest Festbier, Kinslahger Oktoberfest Marzen, Chicago’s Revolution Anti Hero, and new this year– Samuel Adams Non-Alcoholic Just The Haze. The event featured live music from DeeOhGee, Lilly Hiatt, CJ Chenier & The Red Hot Louisiana Band, and more.

For families, **The Kid’s Root Beer Garden** hosted 11 local groups and businesses providing the ever-popular zucchini races, alpine cap crafts, bubbles, face painting, and a decorate your bike table.

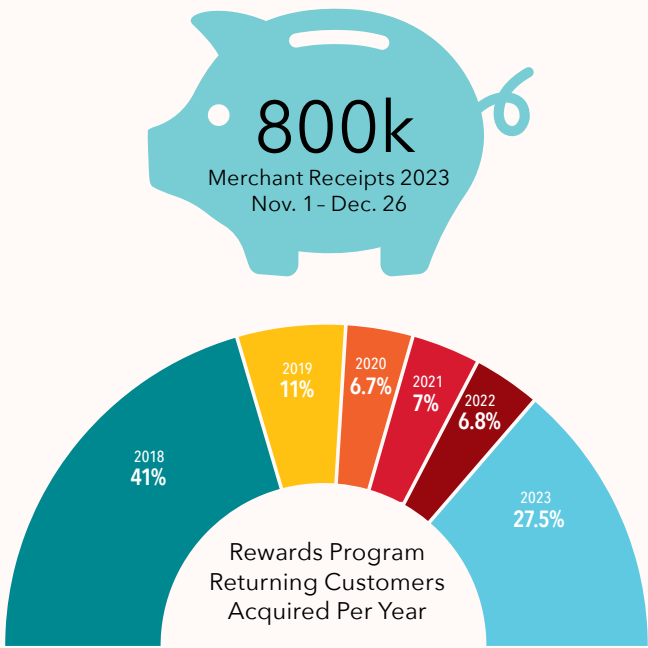
This year, event sponsors included Byline Bank and Oak Park Place Apartments, which provided \$4000 in sponsorship dollars. We also continued to partner with local non-profit organizations, such as Collaboration for Early Childhood, Oak Park Education Foundation, NAMI West Suburban, and Thrive Counseling Center, which sent volunteers to work the beer and wine tents for tips to benefit their charities.

YEAR	2023	2022	2019	2018
Revenue	\$124,775	\$117,762	\$92,344	\$108,425
Expenses	\$118,753	\$113,889	\$92,284	\$100,047
Net	\$6,022	\$3,873	\$60	\$8,377

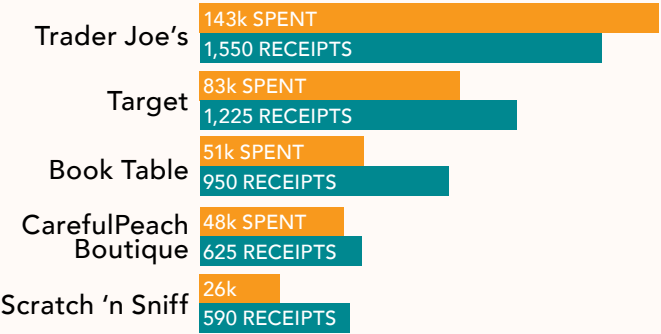
HOLIDAY EVENTS & PROMOTIONS

Shopper’s Rewards by the Numbers

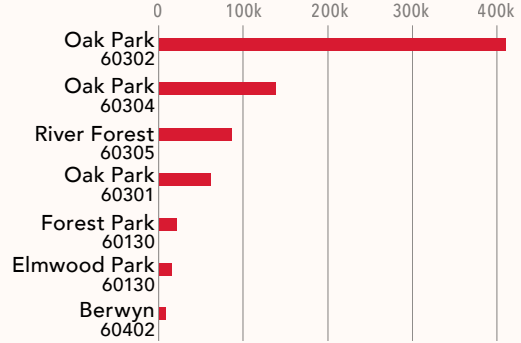
YEAR	2023	2022	2021
Rewards Given	1,267	1,234	1,213
Value	\$63,350	\$61,700	\$60,650



Spending and Receipt Count from the Top Five Merchants in 2023



Top Customer Spending by Zip Code in 2023



Small Business Saturday launched the shopping season in downtown Oak Park. The national event was on November 25, and we hosted a tent on Marion at Westgate from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. with free coffee, giveaways, and merchant promotions.



Winterfest was held on Saturday, December 2, and featured our annual Cookie Walk, a free showing of *The Grinch* at the Lake Theatre, Santa’s visit, carolers, and a hospitality tent with free hot chocolate and coffee from Wise Cup. The Winterfest Cookie Tin sales were at \$12,578. Byline Bank sponsored the event for \$1500, which included their logo on the cookie tin.



Home For The Holidays was held on Saturday, December 16. The event included a free Hot Chocolate Walk, live music throughout the district, another visit from Santa outside Sugarcup Trading, and a free showing of *The Polar Express* at the Lake Theatre.

Holiday Gift Certificates

In 2023, DTOPBA gave out \$2,350 in holiday \$25 bonus gift certificates to shoppers. Downtown Oak Park Gift Certificates always make a perfect gift for teachers, students, coaches, customers, family, or friends. Over 60 Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance participating retailers, salons, services, and restaurants offer gift certificates.

High Rise Holiday Happy Hours

In 2023, we added **High Rise Holiday Happy Hours**, which were exclusive events for high-rise residents featuring coffee, hot cocoa, Irish coffee, and giveaways. This gave us an opportunity to hand our Shopper’s Rewards Envelopes and build our email database by collecting emails.



YOU BELONG HERE DOWNTOWN OAK PARK CAMPAIGN

In 2023, Downtown Oak Park implemented phase two of our general marketing campaign, **You Belong Here**, to showcase our community’s mission and values relating to sustainability, ADA accessibility, and inclusion.

Through the following marketing tactics, such as e-mail marketing, print promotions, and social media, we highlighted messaging focused on what makes the Oak Park community unique.

- We embrace openness and new ways of thinking as we welcome community members of all backgrounds.
- Our cultural richness provides opportunities for everyone to interact and support one another.
- Try out new tastes, moves, and expressions.
- We encourage sustainability and eco-conscious practices.
- Our welcoming atmosphere builds bridges between long-time and new residents.



You Belong Here

2023 UPCOMING EVENTS

SHOPPER'S REWARD PROGRAM November 1 through December 25	WINTERFEST & COOKIE WALK December 2 10 am - 3 pm	HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS December 16 10 am - 3 pm
---	---	---

For more info visit downtownoakpark.net



You Belong Here

More than just a place on a map, Downtown Oak Park is a vibrant, welcoming business organization that connects community to commerce and culture. We are the heart of Oak Park in so many ways. Where city lifestyles blend with village charm for new perspectives. Where you can meet up to taste, toast, dance, play, be well, and live out loud. There's a place for everyone throughout DTOP. **It's where you belong.**





You Belong Here

Welcome!

Thank you for joining our email list. Downtown Oak Park is a vibrant, welcoming business organization that connects community to commerce and culture. We are the heart of Oak Park in so many ways. Where city lifestyles blend with village charm for new perspectives. Where you can meet up to taste, toast, dance, play, be well, and live out loud.

There's a place for everyone throughout DTOP. **It's where you belong.**

Discover how to make DTOP your place to be.

local retail
more than **29** local shops, **15** beauty & hair care salons, and **25** service businesses.
Unique products and services with friendly, customer-focused service. We're committed to sustainability, environmental practices, accessibility, and creating local jobs.

dining
over **36** places to eat & drink.
From cozy cafes to upscale restaurants, our members bring some serious talent that spans every season. From the north to the south, you'll find the best food, drink, and everything in between. Head up for your favorite cafe, cocktail or restaurant, or just enjoy the view.

events
5 annual signature events.
Our public spaces and events foster social interaction, understanding, and empathy through inclusive programming and educational traditions. Our welcoming atmosphere builds bridges between long-time and new residents who call DTOP home.

fun & games
where culture celebrates.
Art and entertainment thrive throughout our community. It's that place where everyone is welcome to experience traditions, celebrate culture, and try out new tastes, moves, and expressions.

We can't wait to see you!



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



On Saturday, October 29, a beautiful historical marker was dedicated to commemorate Mr. Carmel Baptist Church and the Black community living in Oak Park from the late 1800's to the mid-1930s. Mt Carmel Baptist Church served as the spiritual, social, and political center of Oak Park's early Black community until a mysterious fire occurred on Christmas Day 1929. Be sure to stop by, see the plaque located in the cul-de-sac at 1100 Westgate, and read more about the history of this thriving community. The plaque was made possible by a collaboration between the Oak Park Reparations Task Force, Black Residents of Oak Park, the Oak Park River Forest Museum, the Oak Park Area Arts Council, and the village of Oak Park.

The Oak Park Sculpture Walk returned on May 11 after a three-year hiatus for a year-long exhibition on Lake Street. We were thrilled to co-host the exhibition with the Oak Park Area Arts Council. The exhibition featured 12 outdoor sculptures selected through a juried competition and varying in materials. Did you know seven of the sculptures on this year's Oak Park Sculpture Walk were created using recycled materials? Leo the Lion, located in front of the Lake Theatre, was made entirely out of recycled bicycle parts!



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Downtown partners with and supports local organizations through various events and sponsorships.

- Wright Plus Housewalk
- Seven Generations Ahead
- Festival Theatre
- The Village of Oak Park
- Infant Welfare Society Holiday Housewalk
- Green Community Connections Film Festival
- Historical Society of Oak Park River Forest
- OPALGA+
- Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce
- Oak Park Arts District
- Oak Park Area Arts Council
- Hemingway District
- Pleasant District

HELP FOR THE HOMELESS

DTOPBA was an active member of the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition throughout 2023. This engagement helped the organization work closely with over 50 community stakeholders on issues such as encampments, panhandling, warming/cooling centers, and special populations impacted by homelessness. DTOPBA attended monthly Street Outreach meetings and quarterly whole Coalition meetings. DTOPBA also assisted with updating and distributing outreach cards to DTOP businesses to increase awareness of resources for individuals experiencing homelessness. We look forward to continuing as a member of the Coalition and growing our engagement in 2024 as part of their new Communications and Advocacy Committee.

SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS 2023



The Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance aims to promote sustainable economic development by creating a sustainable and eco-friendly environment in its businesses and events.

- The DTOPBA Board of Directors formed a committee to develop a sustainability plan.
- Downtown Oak Park became a green-certified business with the Illinois Green Business Association (IGBA) in 2023.
- DTOPBA worked with local businesses to promote the use of environmentally responsible materials. During Thursday Night Out, restaurants were required to offer compostable containers.
- DTOPBA partnered with the Village of Oak Park to offer waste stations on Thursday Night Out, providing options for landfill, recycling, and composting.
- DTOPBA partnered with the Illinois Green Business Association to raise awareness of sustainable practices among businesses. IGA helps small businesses improve their performance through innovative sustainability practices.

GROUNDS AND MAINTENANCE

LANDSCAPING

DTOPBA contracted Woodlawns Landscape Company to install rich burgundy, orange/bronze, and dark rose annuals in the 94 containers throughout the district for the spring/summer season. These plants are chosen for their ability to thrive in both sun and shade. Additionally, Woodlawns filled all the planter beds on Lake Street and Marion Street with a unique mix of seasonal annuals and perennials, giving our district a beautiful and colorful appearance.

FALL DÉCOR

2023 was the first year we did a fall rotation in our planters. We contracted with Woodlawns Landscaping to fill our 94 containers with beautiful fall mums and cabbage.

SNOW REMOVAL

- During the winter, snow removal is a top priority for DTOPBA. In 2023 we signed another three-year snow removal contract with McAdams Landscaping. The contract is based on a percentage of snowfalls within a winter season; the less snowfall the less we pay. We were fortunate this past season to have had a light snowfall.
- DTOPBA contracts for snow removal along all sidewalks in our district and for the creation of “cut-throughs” along Lake Street, in snow embankments between parking stalls and curb lines, to further improve accessibility to pay terminals.

- DTOPBA plans for and budgets for complete snow removals every year. If there were a large snowfall during the holiday season, we would be able to remove all the snow to enable visitors to access the district.

HOLIDAY DÉCOR


- The district came to life once again this year as all the boxwoods on Lake Street and 18 trees on Marion, Westgate, and North Boulevard were adorned with alternating soft white and cool white LED lights.
- Seven large custom seasonal décor pieces from Artistic Holiday Decor were added throughout the district, creating a spectacular ambiance. As the trees were still unable to be lit with lights on them, we chose to do uplighting to all the trees along Lake Street.
- Winter greens, highlighted with white and silver birch branches, white vine balls with sugar cones, and berry spike white spray, were placed in 35 containers at all the main intersections of Downtown Oak Park. Additionally, evergreen boughs were added to the five raised planters located near Harlem on Lake Street.
- The Marion St. archway and 78 light poles throughout the district were decorated with Frazier fir roping and clear white LED lights.
- A total of 12 tall light poles on Lake St. were adorned with seasonal holiday decorations to add height to the festive atmosphere.
- New lighted orbs were added this year to all the trees on North Blvd. and at the entrance of Holley Court Garage.




WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA



SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

	Followers 13.4K	Industry Ave 3.6K
	Reach Breakdown Total 233,499	Up from 2022 20%
	From Organic 146,553	Up from 2022 100%

	Followers 6,516	Industry Average 5.3K
	Reach Breakdown Total 20,419	Up from 2022 4.3%
	From Organic 11,398	Up from 2022 100%

CONNECTING WITH DTOP RESIDENTS

We continued to build on our prior success by connecting to our ever-growing community of residents in our local high-rise buildings. Our efforts to network with property managers, promote our events on lobby and elevator screens, and distribute our monthly Around Town high-rise flyer with exclusive specials for the residents proved once again to be successful.



LIVING IN DTOP



2023 FINANCIALS

Income	Jan-Dec 2023
Special Service Area Funds	\$700,050
Program Income (Events)	\$149,828
VOP Plant Agreement	\$35,626
Holiday Lighting/Décor	\$5,000
Member Dues	\$3,950
Street Pole Banners	\$2,850
Interest	\$472
Miscellaneous	\$0
Total Income	\$897,776
Expenses	
Operating & Administration	\$354,694
Marketing	\$325,041
Grounds	\$207,470
Member Services and Programs	\$15,367
Total Expenses	\$902,573
Net Revenue	-\$4,797
Bank Balances as of 12/31/23	
Operating Accounts	\$16,930
Reserve Account	\$234,022
Snow Reserve Account	\$70,220
Total Cash	\$322,202



2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susie Goldschmidt, Merchant Director – President

Mike Fox, Owner Director – Vice President

Jeff Long, Merchant Director – Treasurer

Erin Payton, Owner/Merchant Director – Secretary

Frank Heitzman, Owner Director

Michelle Vanderlaan, Merchant Director

Tina Salerno, Merchant Director

Jimmy Chen, Merchant Director

Paul Beckwith, Owner Director

Mike Carney, Owner Director

Cam Davis, VOP Representative

Dave Schrodt, Legal Counsel

DTOP STAFF

Shanon Williams, Executive Director

Anna Kosowski, Marketing Director

Jayne Furlong, Events & Communications Manager

Jeff Eng, Finance Manager

2023 COMMITTEES

MERCHANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The MAC is comprised of merchant members and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors in general regarding marketing and promotional activities. This committee includes but is not limited to Merchant Directors and is overseen by the Marketing Director. This committee meets every other month.

Lita Selmon, Einnim

Jonathan Kaufman, Wells Street

David Fletcher, Wheel & Sprocket

Officer Michael Kelly

Erin Van Buskirk, JAYNE Boutique

Jimmy Chen, Poke Burrito

Nina McCaffrey, Polished Nails and Spa

Steve Qi, Sushi House

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Chaired by the Treasurer of the Board of Directors. The Finance Committee meets quarterly or as needed. 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

Jeff Long, Fitness Formula Club

Mike Fox, R.P. Fox & Associates

Susie Goldschmidt, Byline Bank

Paul Beckwith, Albion

GOVERNANCE/NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Governance Committee is responsible for increasing and sustaining the capacity of the board to provide the leadership necessary to achieve the organization’s mission. They take the lead and responsibility for board development, leadership

development and board assessment, board education and ensuring that the board is equipped with proper guidelines and structure to do its work most effectively.

This committee meets on an as-needed basis.

This Committee selects and recommends candidate’s for Directors and for Officers for the Downtown Oak Park Board of Directors.

Erin Payton, Nineteenth Century Club representative

Mike Fox, R.P. Fox & Associates

Dave Schrodt, Schrodt Law, DTOP counsel

Paul Beckwith, Albion

Susie Goldschmidt, Byline Bank

AD HOC COMMITTEES

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Committee

Members: Erin Payton, Susie Goldschmidt, Michelle Vanderlaan, Amelia Dellos

This committee will identify priorities, internal and external recommendations, and actions necessary to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in Downtown Oak Park.

2nd Floor Engagement Committee

Members: Mike Carney, Tina Salerno, Jayne Furlong

This committee is tasked with analyzing the role of 2nd-floor businesses in Downtown Oak Park. The district has a significant number of people who work on the upper floors during the day. These people spend their entire day here and have clients and customers who visit them for appointments. The committee aims to determine the most effective way to engage with this segment.

Sustainability Committee

Members: Jimmy Chen, Frank Heitzman, Jayne Furlong, Shanon Williams

This committee will develop a sustainability plan for DTOP in the short and long term with a clear vision, goals, and actions.



2023 NEW BUSINESSES

Smoothie King, 1010 Lake St.

Crepas Culichi, 1101 Lake St.

Sephora, 1145 Lake St.

Wild Fork Foods, 435 N. Harlem Ave.

sweetgreen, 1143 Lake St.

Beauty Method, 1016 North Blvd.

Vigo Coffee, 1010 Lake St., Suite 114

NYC Sugaring, 1112 Lake St.

Haarn Thai Bodywork, 1105 Holley Ct.

Color Me Bad, 1006 North Blvd.

Alazana Beauty, 169 N. Marion St.

Patrizio Batelli, 195 N. Marion St.

Pure Health Chiropractic, 191 N Marion St.

Kribi Coffee Albion, 149 Forest Ave.

Comedy Complex Comedy Club, 1128 Lake St. (Lower Level)

2024 NEW BUSINESSES

Big City Optical, 1100 Lake St.

MERCHANT MILESTONES

20+ Years

David King & Associates, Inc.

Tre Sorelle

Pumpkin Moon

Khyber Pass

Jerusalem Cafe - Oak Park

Scratch 'n Sniff

10 Years

Edible Arrangements

James Anthony Salon

The Little Gem

5 Years

Personalization House