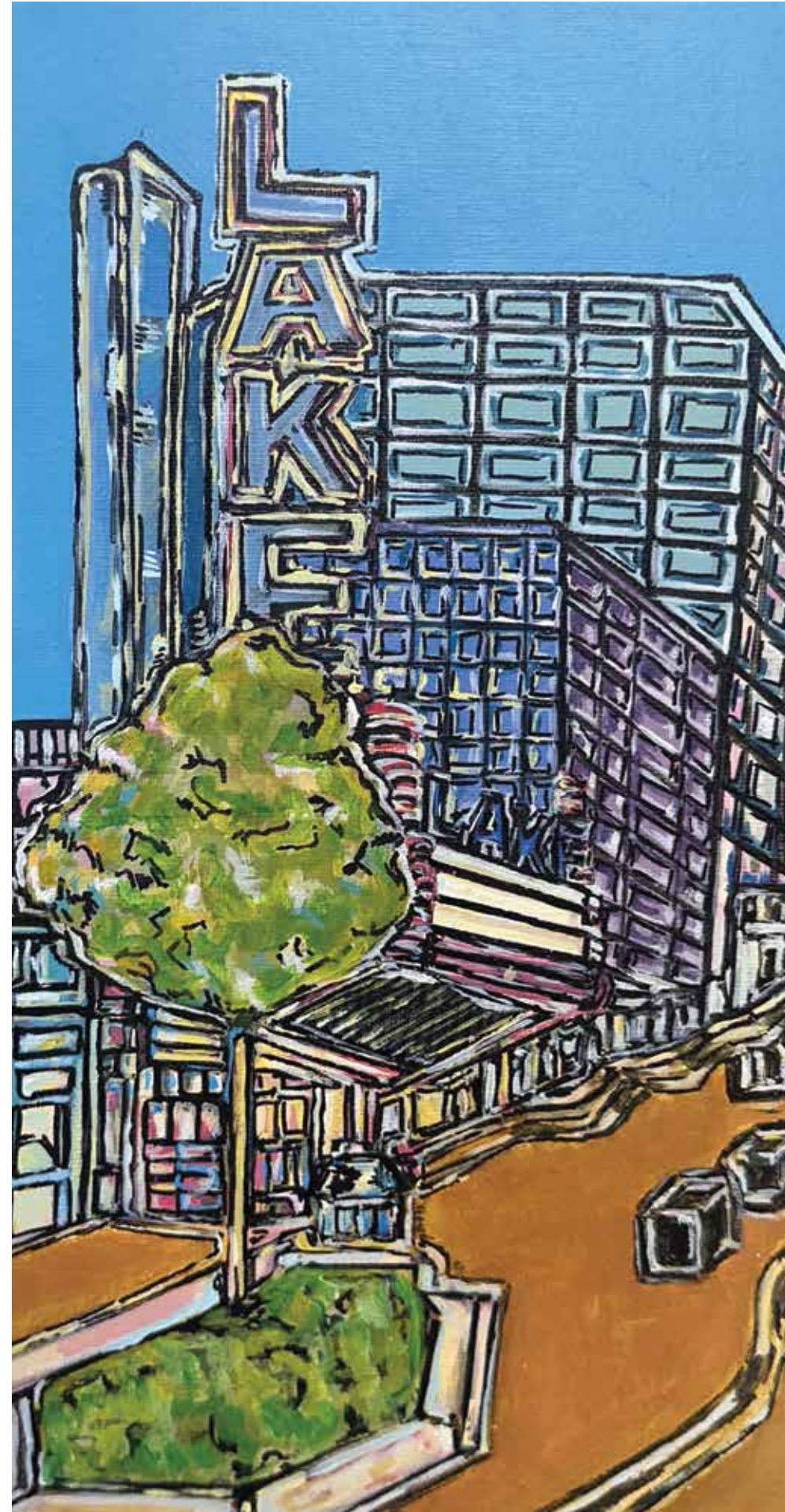
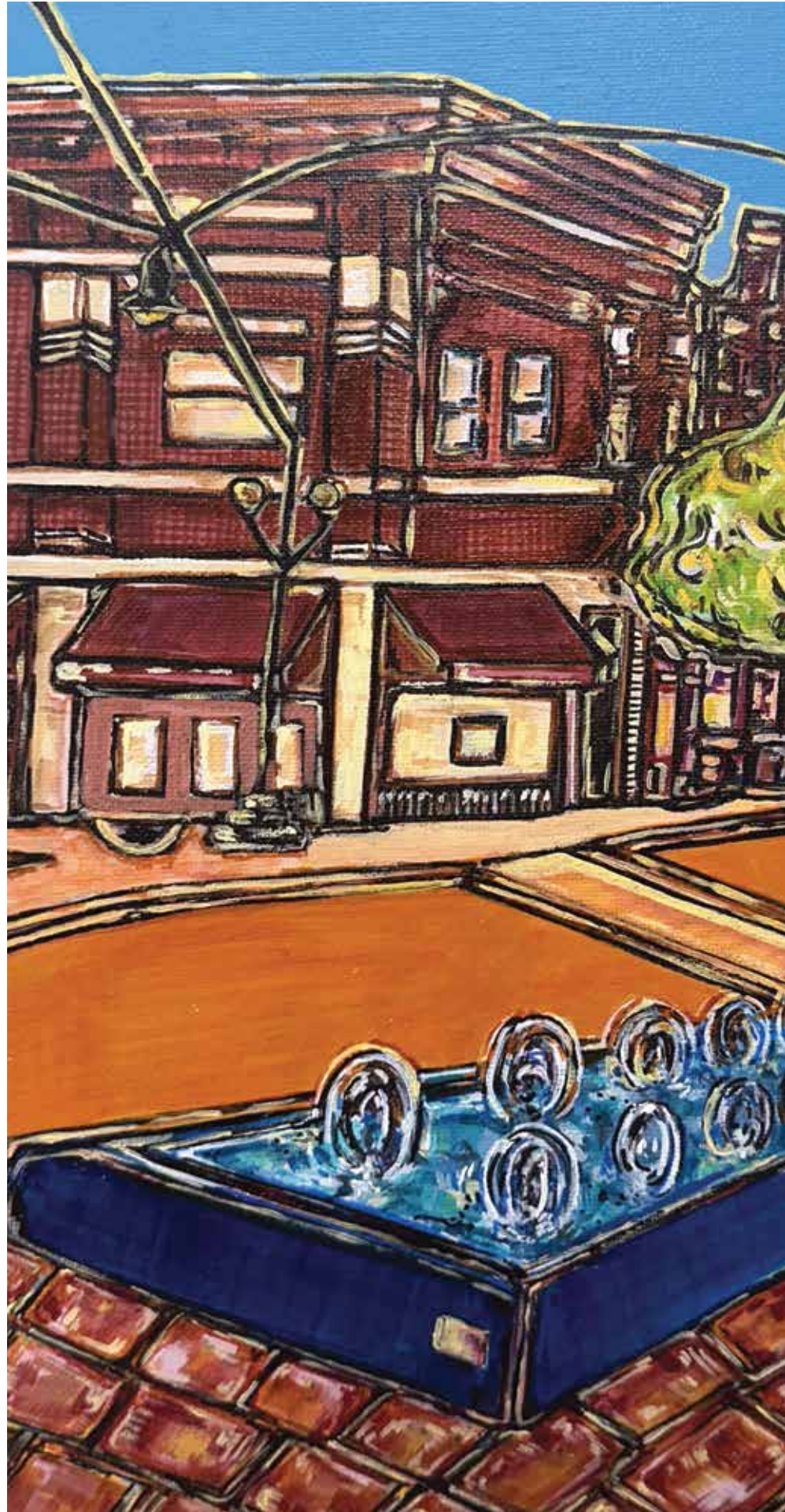


**Down  
town**  
**OAK PARK**  
BUSINESS ALLIANCE

1010 Lake Street, Suite 114  
Oak Park, Illinois 60301  
[downtownoakpark.net](http://downtownoakpark.net)



**Down  
town**  
**OAK PARK**  
BUSINESS ALLIANCE

ANNUAL REPORT  
2024

# A Letter from the President

May 2025

I've been thinking about what makes Downtown Oak Park a special place to live and work. For me, it all boils down to one word—community. According to Merriam-Webster, “community is a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.” As the Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance—how are we building community?

## Capturing Our Energy Through Branding

At our last Annual Meeting, we unveiled Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance's vibrant new brand identity. Our new logo captures our district's energy, spirit, and community. Since then, we've updated our marketing materials, from staff business cards to the DTOP website. Be sure to watch the stunning drone footage on our home page, which captures everything that makes our downtown so special, from our iconic architecture to the buzz of Thursday Night Out.

## Celebrating Our Community Through Promotions & Events

We added a caffeine and coffee tour to our event schedule, which brought out WGN TV Morning Show host Ana Belaval for a live segment. Downtown Oak Park is a district of diversity, and this year, we celebrated our merchants with a series spotlighting them, including Black History Month, Women's History Month, Gay Pride Month, and Hispanic Heritage Month.

## Empowering Our Members Through Continued Education

In the fall, we launched our Downtown Oak Park Business Academy in partnership with Triton College. We also held Marketing 101, a series of free courses for our members and their staff featuring branding, social media, and website strategies. The classes were designed based on feedback from our Merchant Advisory Committee.

## Building Our Community With A Strong Vision For What's Possible

None of this would be possible without the energy and dedication of our Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance team, led by our Executive Director, Shanon Williams. Their vision and commitment to seeing how we can continue to build community with a clear vision of what events and promotions will bring people here to live, to work, to dine, and to shop!

Susie Goldschmidt  
Board President  
Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance

# New in 2024

DTOP officially launched our new logo in May. Here are some brand assets that we updated with the logo.



Social media template



Dining directory card



Map and directory



High-rise flyer template



Facebook cover photo

## DTOP Gift Certificate Redesign



### NEW & IMPROVED!

Just in time for the 2024 holiday season, we updated our gift certificates! Now, the certificates are a cohesive marketing piece and a complete “gift” item, including the gift certificate, a gift card, and an envelope.

## Your Membership Matters

In February, we began our annual membership drive and registered 77 paid members. Our members receive so much bang for their \$50 membership fee! Along with voting rights at our annual meeting, our members receive:

- Awning & Sign Grant Program at a 50% discount
- Light Pole Banner Program at a 40% discount
- Continuing education at our DTOP Business Academy Classes for members and their employees

Additional perks include professional photography and videography services, inclusion in our DTOP gift certificate program, one-on-one marketing consulting meetings, and more!

### 2024 BY THE NUMBERS Banner Program



sponsored street banners with the new DTOP logo

### Awning & Signage Grants



participated in this program, and we awarded \$3,373 in grants



## New Program Alert

## DTOP Business Academy in Partnership with Triton College



In the Fall, our merchants sharpened their pencils and went back to school with marketing classes taught by Triton College. With the help of the Merchant Advisory Committee, we created a custom program for our small business owners titled Marketing 101, featuring the following sessions:

- Branding Skills
- Website Best Practices
- Social Media Strategies

Classes were free for our members and their employees, and ten dollars per class for non-members. We had close to 80 participants. Attendees included DTOP merchants, Village of Oak Park employees, and non-profit organizations, including the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce, Collab4kids, and the Oak Park River Forest Museum.



## Help for the Unhoused

DTOP Business Alliance worked closely with our merchants, the Village of Oak Park, and the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition. We assisted the Village of Oak Park in launching its “Make REAL Change, Not Spare Change” campaign, an initiative dedicated to fostering a safer, more compassionate, and resourceful community. This campaign is designed to support local businesses, educate the public, and promote long-term solutions to address homelessness while enhancing public safety and coordinating our community’s resources. We sat on a Community Panel hosted by the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition and the Village of Oak Park, the Oak Park Police, for a community question and answer session.



## Events & Promotions

### JAZZ THAW

We launched our 2024 event season with our highly anticipated free concert series, Jazz Thaw, in partnership with 90.9 WDCB. The event was held on Saturday, March 9, from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m., featuring live free music at 13 Downtown Oak Park locations. New to the festival was our Jazz Brunch on Sunday, March 10, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at three locations: Encore! by Little Gem, Crepas Culichi, and Lea French Cafe.

“This is one of my favorite events of the year! And there is something for everybody, from straight-ahead jazz, Latin, Brazilian, jazz with vocals, to instrumental jazz. We purposely select bands to present a diverse selection of jazz styles. And it’s free!”

–Ken Scott, WDCB’s Director of Marketing & Fundraising



### CULTURAL CAFFEINE TOUR

This buzz-worthy event was held from April 22–28, featuring our coffee, tea, and caffeine scene as our restaurants and coffee shops featured a signature drink or item. We had 12 merchants offering drinks like Vigo Coffee’s MEXICAN CULTURE 101 LATTE with their authentic homemade Horchata recipe. Coffee lovers who tried five signature drinks had their passports stamped and won a coffee travel mug. Chicago’s very own reporter Ana Beval came out for a live Around Town segment on WGN morning news!



### SHOP SIDEWALK SALE

In partnership with our friends in the Hemingway District, we hosted our sizzling summer sales event at more than 25 retail locations on Thursday, July 18, through Sunday, July 21. This summer, we featured the Sip & Shop Bingo promotion on Saturday, July 20, which allowed shoppers to collect stamps for a chance to win raffle prizes.



### THURSDAY NIGHT OUT

This summer, the weekend began on Thursday in Downtown Oak Park. Thursday Night Out was held from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on June 6 through August 29 on Marion Street between Lake Street and North Boulevard. We welcomed RUSH OAK PARK as a co-sponsor of Thursday Night Out; they had a booth at two of our theme nights—Pride Night and Health & Wellness. The event featured al fresco dining with the purchase of dine-around booklets, four tickets for \$25, live music, and themed nights.



### TNO BY THE NUMBERS



YEAR	2024	2023	2022	2021
Books Sold	7,515	8,286	7,838	5,471
Revenue	\$187,875	\$207,150	\$195,950	\$109,420

### TNO Summer Theme Nights

**Kids Night (June 13):** Included school-aged musicians and activities from local family-focused organizations like Collaboration for Early Childhood.

**Pride Night (June 20):** Featured our Second Annual Pride Night, in partnership with the OPRF Chamber of Commerce. This event included a fair featuring local organizations providing services for the LGBTQIA+ community and drag queens handing out swag in collaboration with local businesses.

**Art Night (July 18):** Featured a pop-up market with local artists.

**Health & Wellness Night (August 15):** Self-care fair, including local businesses and organizations.

“Thursday Night Out is an Oak Park tradition that just gets better every year! We have planned a summer filled with delicious food from over 20 local restaurants, and the music lineup has something for everyone from Rock, Soul, R&B, Reggae, Jazz, Country, Latin, Celtic, and so much more!”

–Shanon Williams, Executive Director of the Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance

### OAKTOBERFEST

We celebrated our 32nd Annual Oaktoberfest celebration on Friday, September 13, from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m., and Saturday, September 14, from noon to 10 p.m. The free live music event drew in more than 23,000 people—the music line-up featured headliner Cracker. We had a selection of fall craft beer & ciders from local and international breweries. We secured sponsorship from Byline Bank, RUSH Hospital, and Advent in Oak Park for this event.

The Kids Root Beer Garden was held on Saturday, September 14, from noon to 5 p.m., featuring zucchini races, root beer floats, balloon twisting, and other family-friendly activities run by the Oak Park River Forest High School wrestling team.



“For more than three decades, Oaktoberfest launched the fall season here in Downtown Oak Park. We had a fantastic selection of beers, ciders, wines, and more. And the food, forget festival food! Our event highlighted seasonal favorites and international specialties from our local restaurants.”

–Shanon Williams, Executive Director of the Downtown Oak Park Business Alliance

# Holiday Events & Promotions

## SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

Small Business Saturday was on November 30, and we partnered with the greater Oak Park Community to kick off the shopping season. The Oak Park & River Forest Chamber created a holiday promotion—"Keep the Cheer Here!" We created a field marketing campaign called "The Cheer Squad." The squad went out to select businesses in each district, handed out free stuff, and captured social media content. Our merchants extended shopping hours and offered promos, flash sales, discounts, or gifts with purchases.

### We also implemented the following promotions:

- Created a Small Business Saturday web page with special offers
- Launched a social media campaign featuring employees and their favorite items at their stores and restaurants.
- Handed out Small Business Saturday bags with freebies and promoted live social media content.



Sample social media content featuring our members.

## DTOP Social Media Highlights November/December

Our holiday social media efforts for Small Business Saturday, the Cookie Walk, and Home for the Holidays performed extremely well.

	Reach	Views	Interactions	Followers
49.2% increase in views 89.9% increase in visits	32K	56.3K	680	13.5K
121.4% increase in views 97.6% increase in follows	15.6K	99.9K	1.4K	7.1K

## 2024 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

The interactive holiday gift guide was made with Simplebooklet and featured over 60 gift ideas from 25 DTOP merchants! We promoted it in our community email, DTOP website, and on our social media channels.



## WINTERFEST/COOKIE WALK

Winterfest was held on Saturday, December 6, and included 29 participating merchants. Our Cookie Tin sales were \$13,980. Santa visited all the way from the North Pole, and he had Heritage Chorale to serenade him. Wise Cup Coffee offered free hot cocoa. Our sponsor, Byline Bank, hosted The Juliet Trio. Families enjoyed a free screening of ELF at the Lake Theatre.



## HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

On December 20, shoppers enjoyed free horse-drawn carriage rides, a visit with Santa, and free hot cocoa at Vigo Coffee, Crepas Culichi, Wise Cup, and Kribi Coffee throughout the district!



## HOLIDAY GIFT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM BY THE NUMBERS



## SHOPPER'S REWARDS BY THE NUMBERS

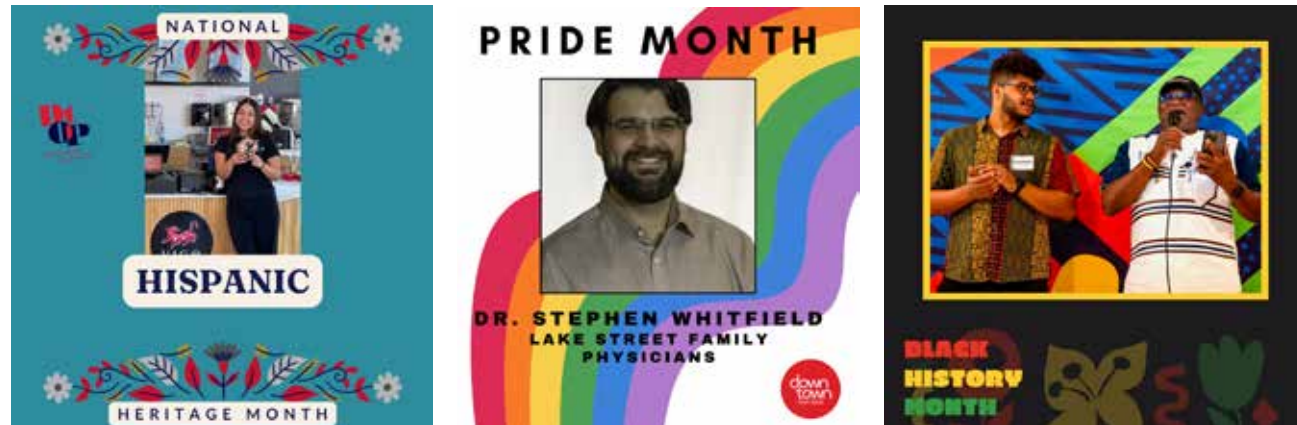


## 2024 Promotions

Downtown Oak Park is a district of diversity, and this year we celebrated our merchants with a series spotlighting them! Last year, we highlighted the following months:

- Black History Month – February
- Women’s History Month – March
- Gay Pride Month – June
- Hispanic Heritage Month – September & October

We featured 16 DTOP members and merchants with photos and interviews on our Around Town webpage, social media channels, and community email.



## Women’s History Month Case Study

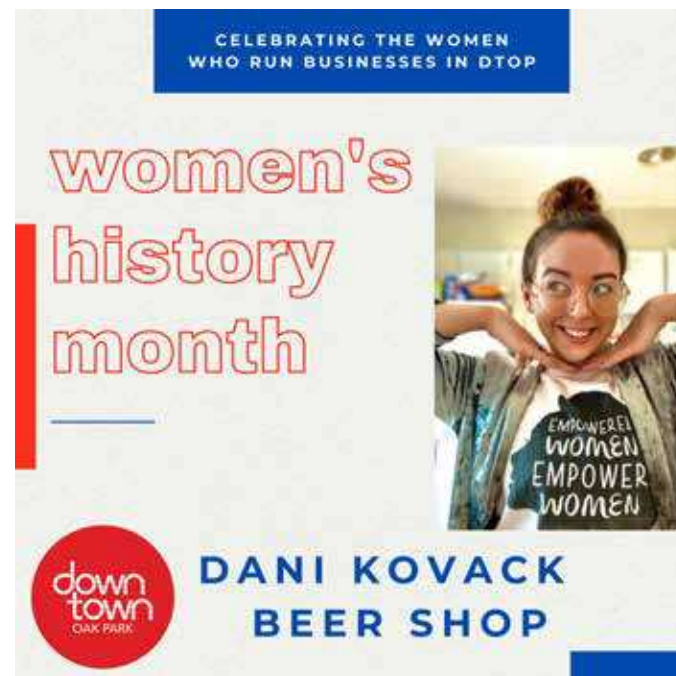
Women’s History Month 2024 by the Numbers

- 43% open rate DTOP Celebrates Women’s History Month by Celebrating Our Women in Business email
- 13K reach and was up 54% on Facebook
- 390 content interactions and was up 18.9% on Facebook
- 3.8K reach and was up 49% on Instagram

Source Constant Contact Report March 18, 2024 and Meta Business Suite March 15–31, 2024

“Community is what makes downtown Oak Park, and the Beer Shop is committed to building community through the love of its customers. We are pretty obsessed with our guests. I’ve worked here since its 2015 opening, and I can tell you that whenever the door opens, it feels like a sitcom living room where people you know and love are just stopping by all the time.”

–Dani Kovack, Owner of Beer Shop



## Community Engagement

### 2024 DTOP Sculpture Walk presented by Oak Park Area Arts Council

You may have noticed a massive smiling cicada on Lake Street in front of the Lake Theatre, a blossoming blue metal flower in front of Chase Bank, or flying red wings in front of Trader Joe’s.

Our district was one of the first areas to host the Sculpture Walk, and we had 14 sculptures lining our streets!

“The Sculpture Walk adds to the energy, beauty, and FUN of the Downtown Oak Park District! We selected Downtown Oak Park because it is such a successful business district.”

–Camille Wilson White, Executive Director of Oak Park Area Arts Council



## Community Partnerships

We are committed to partnering and supporting local organizations throughout the year through events and sponsorship opportunities.



## Sustainability Efforts 2024

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 in 2023 to develop a sustainability plan.
- Downtown Oak Park became a green-certified business with the Illinois Green Business Association (IGBA) in 2023.
- DTOP worked with local businesses to promote the use of environmentally responsible materials by requiring restaurants to offer compostable containers during Thursday Night Out.
- DTOP partnered with the Village of Oak Park to offer waste stations at Thursday Night Out, providing options for landfill, recycling, and compost. Throughout 14 Thursday Nights, we were able to divert 60% of waste from the landfill.
- DTOP partnered with the Illinois Green Business Association to raise awareness of sustainable practices among businesses. IGBA helps small businesses improve their performance through innovative sustainability practices.
- DTOPBA staff is a member of the PlanItGreen Core Team.

## Grounds and Maintenance

### Landscaping

- DTOP contracted Woodlawn's Landscape Company for summer plantings that went in the second week of May. 94 containers and 9 beds on Lake and Marion were filled with beautiful green and white annuals. These plants are chosen for their ability to thrive in both sun and shade.
- The Village of Oak Park invests annually in landscape improvements for trouble areas within Downtown Oak Park. This year, the Village replaced all the shrubs and perennials in the four beds at Westgate and Marion.

### Fall Décor

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

### Snow Removal

- Snow removal is a primary responsibility of the members of Downtown Oak Park. In 2023 we signed a 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.
- DTOP 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.
- DTOP plans for and budgets for complete snow removal 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

- For the first time in over three years, we successfully lit the trees on Lake Street.
- Alternating red and white lights adorn every other tree throughout the district, including Lake, Marion, and North Boulevard.
- Two large holiday decorations were installed at the entrance of the Holley Court Garage on Marion Street, along with lit spheres hanging from the trees.
- Holiday-lit spheres were also hung from the archway, adding an interesting new element to Marion Street.
- A total of 41 pots will be filled with greens, red dogwood branches, and pine cones.
- The flower beds at Lake and Harlem have been filled with greens, and the DTOP sign at the intersection of Forest and Lake featured three large holiday trees illuminated with red and white lights.



## Website & Social Media

### Where is our website traffic coming from?



### Social Media Engagement

Platform	Followers	Industry Ave	Reach Breakdown Total	Up from 2023	From Organic	Up from 2023
Facebook	13.5K	3.6K	237.8K	30.9%	211,449	44.3%

Platform	Followers	Industry Average	Reach Breakdown Total	Up from 2023	From Organic	Up from 2023
Instagram	7,462	5.3K	36,955	115.5%	28,080	100%

Source Meta Business Suite January 1 through December 31, 2024.

## 2024 Financials

Income	Jan-Dec 2024
Special Service Area Funds	\$725,000
Program Income (Events)	\$140,040
VOP Plant Agreement	\$37,168
Rent (Visit Oak Park)	\$11,000
Holiday Lighting/Décor	\$0
Member Dues	\$3,850
Street Pole Banners	\$2,625
Interest	\$437
Miscellaneous	\$159
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$920,279</b>
Expenses	
Operating & Administration	\$401,275
Marketing	\$349,589
Grounds	\$190,671
Member Services and Programs	\$17,805
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$959,339</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>-\$39,061</b>
Quickbook Bank Balances as of 12/31/24	
Operating Accounts	-\$4,907
Reserve Account	\$241,630
Snow Reserve Account	\$72,313
<b>Total Cash</b>	<b>\$309,035</b>

### DTOP Staff

Shanon Williams, Executive Director  
 Amelia Dellos, Marketing Director  
 Jayne Furlong, Events & Communications Manager  
 Jeff Long, Finance Manager

### 2024 Committees

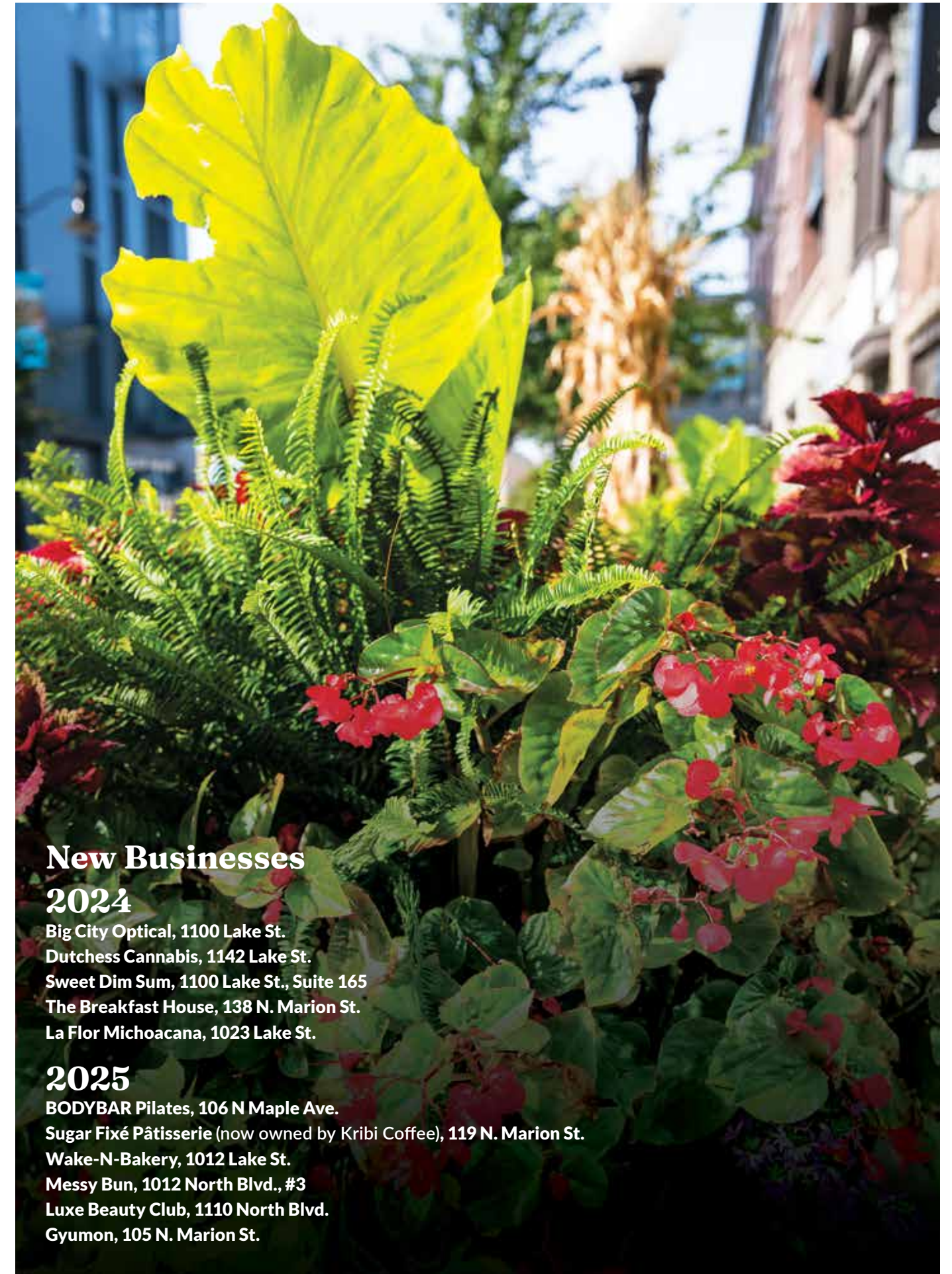
**Merchant Advisory Committee** (standing)  
 The MAC is comprised of merchant members and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors in general regarding marketing and promotional activities. This committee includes but is not limited to Merchant Directors and is overseen by the Marketing Director. This committee meets every other month.  
 Jonathan Kaufman, Wells Street Popcorn  
 Vicki Vasconcellos, Cignot  
 Officer Michael Kelly, Village of Oak Park Police  
 Alena Baklashev, JAYNE Boutique  
 Nina McCaffrey, Polished Nails and Spa  
 Shivangi Sandal, Wise Cup

**Finance Committee (standing) 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  
 Mike Carney, Heitman  
 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 candidates for Directors and Officers for the Downtown Oak Park Board Business Alliance Board of Directors.  
 Mike Fox, R.P. Fox & Associates  
 Mike Carney, Heitman  
 Dave Schrodt, Schrodt Law, DTOP counsel  
 Paul Beckwith, Albion  
 Susie Goldschmidt, Byline Bank

**Ad Hoc Committees**  
**2nd Floor Engagement Committee**  
**Members:** Mike Carney, Tina Salerno, Amelia Dellos, 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.



## New Businesses 2024

- Big City Optical, 1100 Lake St.
- Dutchess Cannabis, 1142 Lake St.
- Sweet Dim Sum, 1100 Lake St., Suite 165
- The Breakfast House, 138 N. Marion St.
- La Flor Michoacana, 1023 Lake St.

## 2025

- BODYBAR Pilates, 106 N Maple Ave.
- Sugar Fixé Pâtisserie (now owned by Kribi Coffee), 119 N. Marion St.
- Wake-N-Bakery, 1012 Lake St.
- Messy Bun, 1012 North Blvd., #3
- Luxe Beauty Club, 1110 North Blvd.
- Gyumon, 105 N. Marion St.