

## Efforts ramping up to address climate change locally



The Village is taking steps to address the issue of climate change locally and ensure Oak Park is prepared for the anticipated impacts — both now and in the future.

Warmer and wetter winters, springs with heavy precipitation and hotter summers with longer dry periods are just a few of the ways climate change is expected to impact the Midwest, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The good news is residents can take steps right now to prepare for climate change and help reduce the community’s carbon footprint.

### Crafting a local climate plan

A Village-led initiative is underway to craft a *Comprehensive Sustain-*

*ability and Climate Action Resiliency Plan, or Climate Plan* for short.

The first step is gathering input from residents to help inform the community’s priorities for an equity-focused climate plan that paves the way to a carbon-neutral future.

All Oak Parkers are encouraged to offer feedback via an interactive platform at [www.oak-park.us/climateplan](http://www.oak-park.us/climateplan).

Site visitors may leave comments and share ideas, play a budget game to hypothetically decide how to invest in sustainability, share experiences and priorities via surveys and, most importantly, learn more about the complicated nature of climate change through resources to help understand the environmental

science behind global warming.

Input also may be shared via the dedicated email [ClimatePlan@oak-park.us](mailto:ClimatePlan@oak-park.us).

### Energy efficiency grants

In addition to long-range planning, the Village also offers assistance to property owners who want to take immediate steps to save money on utility bills and reduce their carbon footprint.

Grants of up to \$10,000 are available for energy-saving solutions like adding insulation, installing more efficient lighting, updating water heaters, thermostats and even installing solar panels.

More information about applying for assistance is available at [www.sustainoakpark.com](http://www.sustainoakpark.com) and via email to [sustainability@oak-park.us](mailto:sustainability@oak-park.us).

### About that permit...

Installing many home energy efficiency improvements require a Village permit. The permit process is entirely paperless and is managed online at [www.oak-park.us/villageview](http://www.oak-park.us/villageview). Email questions to [permits@oak-park.us](mailto:permits@oak-park.us).



## Meet Pawfficer Howie on Instagram

Pawfficer Howie, the officer wellness and community service dog for the Oak Park Police Department, has a social media presence on Instagram that showcases the important role he plays in the department and the community. Residents who follow [@pawfficer\\_howie](https://www.instagram.com/pawfficer_howie) will get a behind-the-scenes look at the life of the therapeutic service dog and receive public safety information from the Police Department through the voice of Howie. The 2-year-old Labrador/St. John’s Water dog has undergone more than 1,250 hours of service training to assist with officer wellness, help comfort victims following traumatic incidents and increase community engagement at public events. Howie resides at the Police Department and a rotation of trained

employees are responsible for his care. Pawfficer Howie can be reached at [pawfficerhowie@oak-park.us](mailto:pawfficerhowie@oak-park.us) or through his Instagram account [@pawfficer\\_howie](https://www.instagram.com/pawfficer_howie) at [www.instagram.com/pawfficer\\_howie](http://www.instagram.com/pawfficer_howie). In addition to Pawfficer Howie’s Instagram account, the Police Department also manages Facebook and Twitter pages. 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).

# 2022 budget focuses on COVID-19 recovery, vital infrastructure

The municipal budget for 2022 is one of recovery from the impacts of COVID-19, with particular focus on improvements to critical infrastructure that were delayed as revenue fell and resources were re-directed to address the immediate local needs caused by a worldwide pandemic.

Taking care of the public infrastructure essential to everyday life like roads, alleys and water and sewer systems is at the top of the list in 2022 funding. Much of the funding for these projects will come from federal dollars allocated to help local governments get back to delivering fundamental services.

Projects planned for 2022 include long-overdue repairs to the Village's three fire stations, upgrading parking garage technology, replacing the Village's aging vehicle fleet to incorporate electric vehicle options, and managing an urban forest of more than 18,000 trees on public property.

Oak Park's 2022 municipal budget also allocates resources to pursuing overall goals associated with sustainability. Long-term planning is underway not only to manage future impacts of climate change but also help residents pay for improvements to their homes that can reduce utility bills and reduce the community's carbon footprint.

Equity is in the 2022 budget, too. Funding is now in place to bring in a professional equity manager to view vital, yet routine municipal practices like hiring, purchasing and overall public policy making through the lens of equity and affordability.

The 2022 budget is comprised of 35 funds and \$160.3 million in expenditures, excluding interfund transfers. Each fund is dedicated to a particular type of outlay, typically defined in state and local law, such as debt service, insurance, pensions and capital improvements.

The largest of these funds — the General Revenue Fund — supports most day-to-day municipal operations that are critical to quality of life in the community, including public works and public safety

services like roadway maintenance and emergency responses.

Nearly two thirds of all general fund allocations in 2022 will support the Police and Fire departments who are on call around the clock to protect and save lives.

Another 10 percent of all 2022 General Fund dollars will go to the Public Works Department, whose workers maintain the 100 miles of Village-owned streets, 500 alleys, 18,000 parkway trees, 7,000 lighting fixtures, 104 miles of water mains, 110 miles of sewer mains, eight miles of bicycle lanes and some 4,000 public parking spaces.

Other General Revenue dollars fund economic development, information technology and the Oak Park Department of Public Health, one of only a handful of state-certified municipal public health departments in Illinois.

Municipal expenditures from the General Fund are supported by a number of sources including property taxes, sales taxes, user fees, utility taxes and real estate transfer taxes.

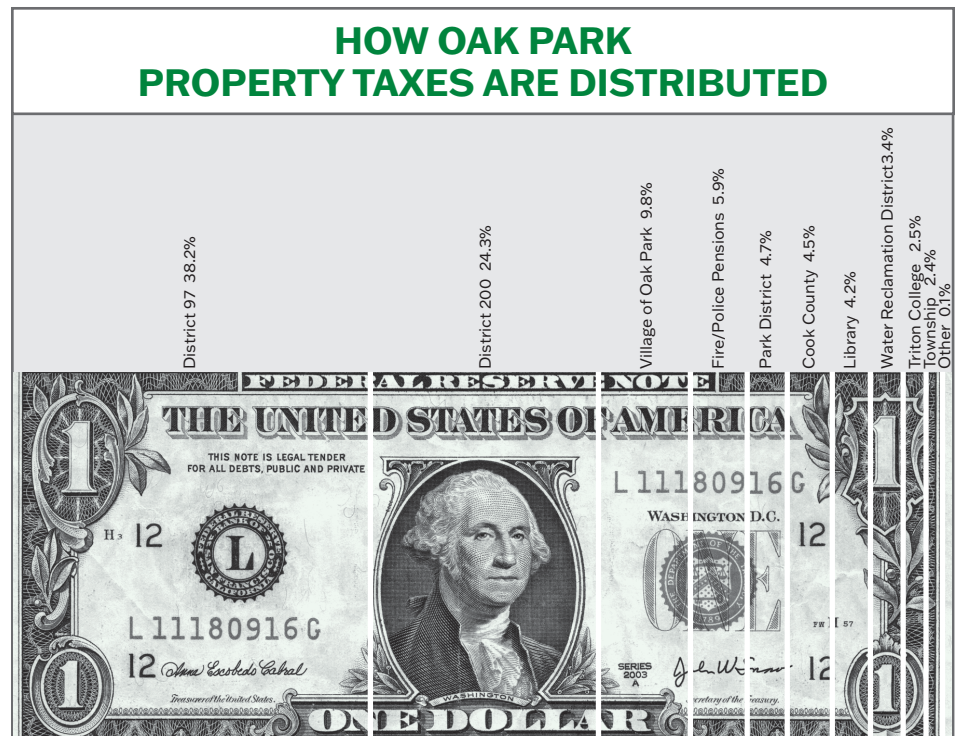
While property taxes will fund about 48 percent of General Fund expenditures in 2022, only 9.8 percent of an Oak Park property owner's tax bill goes toward funding

Village municipal services. State-mandated Police and Fire pensions comprise another 5.9 percent of the local property tax bill.

Most municipal fees, including parking, remained unchanged for 2022. However, water and sewer rates will increase in 2022, due in part to the rising cost of purchasing Lake Michigan water from the City of Chicago. Water rates will increase slightly to \$10.30 per 1,000 gallons used, up from \$10.10 in 2021. Sewer rates, which are also based on water use, are now \$2.95 per 1,000 gallons of water used, up from \$2.90. A share of water and sewer fees also help fund maintenance and improvements to the Village's water and sewer systems.

Waste collection for residential buildings with five or fewer units that are served by the Village's waste hauling contractor will not increase in 2022. The new vendor was selected through a competitive bidding process and will take over local services in April. A story about the new vendor appears on the last page of this newsletter.

Information on the budget process and copies of the Fiscal Year 2022 and past year's budgets are posted at [www.oak-park.us/budget](http://www.oak-park.us/budget).





## Help available to deal with nuisance wildlife

The surprisingly large numbers of wild animals that call Oak Park home typically keep to themselves. But as winter weather makes their search for food and shelter more difficult, the odds of coming into contact with a wild animal increase. Typically, the biggest problem in a dense, built-up community like Oak Park is the property damage wild animals can cause when seeking shelter. Squirrels gnawing a hole in the soffit to get into the attic and raccoons, skunks and opossums burrowing under decks, porches and garage foundations are among the more common nuisance issues property owners face. The best defense against these intrusions is preventing their entry and eliminating any outdoor food source.



**Be cautious, but don't run from a coyote...**As coyotes have made it clear they are at home in Oak Park, wildlife experts agree that simply seeing one does not necessarily constitute a problem or a dangerous situation. If a coyote approaches, they say do not run, but yell, stand up straight, clap your hands and wave your arms — or even throw something to scare it away. However, if a coyote is aggressive or shows no fear, move to a safe location and contact the Animal Control Division at 708.358.5680. Be sure to provide details including the date

and address where the interaction occurred. To discourage coyotes from being attracted to your property, limit the amount of bird and pet food left outside. Garbage also should be stored securely — even though coyotes are not likely to eat garbage, they may be attracted by the rodents that do. In addition, do not leave small pets, especially cats, outside unattended. A fence at least four feet high can help prevent entry into the yard.

**More information...**For extensive information on how to make property less vulnerable to nuisance wildlife in urban areas, as well contact info for local nuisance wildlife control professionals, visit [www.dnr.illinois.gov](http://www.dnr.illinois.gov) and use the search feature. For more information on dealing with nuisance wildlife in Oak Park, call 708.358.5486 or email [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us).

## Share the road

With an increase in the number of accidents involving vehicles and pedestrians or bicyclists, Police are reminding everyone that Oak Park is a busy urban environment where travelers must share the road and be aware of their surroundings. Everyone who uses Oak Park streets, whether driving, bicycling or walking, must stay focused and avoid distractions like talking on cell phones or wearing headphones. Anyone driving a car or riding a bike also needs to follow traffic safety rules like stopping at intersections. Pedestrians should cross carefully at marked crosswalks. Anyone who notices a problem area in their neighborhood should report it to their residential beat officer — visit [www.oak-park.us/rbo](http://www.oak-park.us/rbo) for contact information.



## Township News

**Caregiver support...**A new nine-week program to help caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia deal with stress is set for 10 to 11:30 a.m., Jan. 10 through March 14 — call 708.636.8850 to register. Those caring for individuals age 60 and older or with disabilities also can find help via a support group that meets online from 10 a.m. to noon twice each month. Call 708.383.8060 or email [seniors@oak-parktownship.org](mailto:seniors@oak-parktownship.org) for more information.

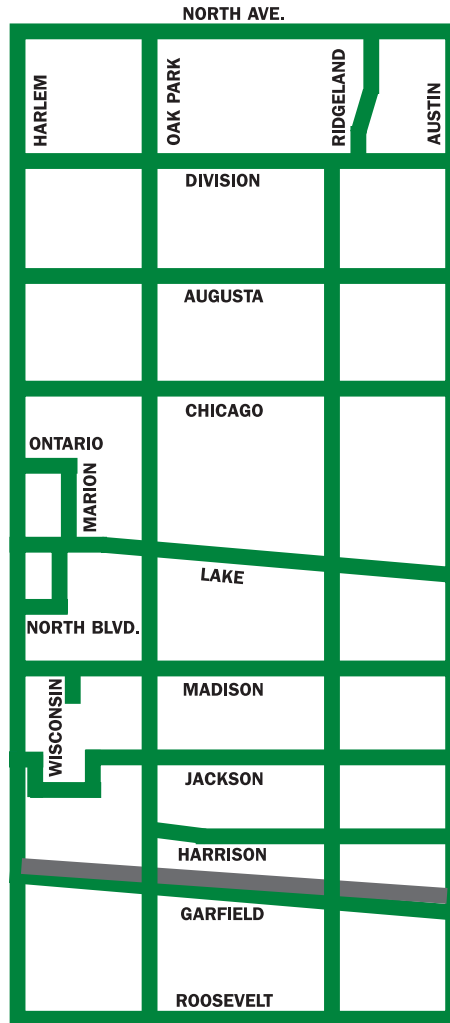
**Social services referrals...**Online referral network *The HUB* connects individuals with a broad network of local and regional agencies and institutions that offer free and reduced-cost social services, including senior and youth services, developmental disabilities, medical health care and behavioral/mental health services. The service is available around the clock at [www.healthconnectionhub.org](http://www.healthconnectionhub.org), where services are searchable by zip code.

**Memory café...**Individuals living with memory loss and their caregivers have a safe online space to connect, and enjoy recreational and educational opportunities at *The Memory Café*. Online gatherings are set for 2 p.m., Tuesdays, Jan. 18 and Feb. 15. Call 708.383.8060 or email [memory-cafe@oakparktownship.org](mailto:memory-cafe@oakparktownship.org) for more information or to register. Volunteer opportunities are also available.

**Medical equipment to lend...**Medical equipment — including canes, walkers, shower chairs and wheelchairs — is available for loan free of charge for as long as needed through the Oak Park Township. Requests are filled on a first-come, first-served basis and all equipment is donated. Borrowers assume all risk and liability when using the borrowed equipment. To find out if a specific item is available, or to donate equipment, call 708.383.8005.

# Weather forecast key to parking when it snows

The Village has specific rules that govern parking when it snows — rules that are enforced seven days a week, including holidays. Residents are urged to monitor local forecasts and plan accordingly. When snow exceeds two inches, all parking is prohibited on the main streets posted as snow routes. Parking on other streets is restricted to one side from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. in residential areas and from midnight to 8 a.m. in designated commercial districts, the side determined by the date. Park on the even-address side of the street on even dates and on the odd-address side on odd dates. To find out if snow-related parking restrictions are in effect, call 708.358.7669 for a recorded message. Residents who sign up at [www.oak-park.us/notifyme](http://www.oak-park.us/notifyme) will be alerted via text, email or automated call. Efforts also are made to post timely information to the Village's social media sites — [www.facebook.com/vopnews](https://www.facebook.com/vopnews) and [www.twitter.com/vopnews](https://www.twitter.com/vopnews). The snow emergency parking rules and a list of frequently asked questions also are posted at [www.oak-park.us/snow](http://www.oak-park.us/snow).



Snow Route Map

## Sidewalk shoveling required...

Property owners who shovel their sidewalks are doing more than making it safer for pedestrians of all ages — they also are complying with the law. Village ordinance requires snow and ice to be removed from the public sidewalk within 24 hours following any snow, sleet or freezing rain. Being a good neighbor is important, too, so property owners are urged to assist those who may need help clearing a sidewalk. And remember to clear the crossing ramps to ensure safe travel by individuals with disabilities, especially those in wheelchairs who face extraordinary challenges navigating snow-clogged sidewalks. For more information on the shoveling requirement or help resources, call 708.358.5700 or email [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).

## Ask for identification

If you receive an unexpected visit from someone claiming to be an employee of the Village who wants to enter your home, ask to see their official identification. The official ID card features the employee's photo, name and the Village logo on the front. Use the same procedure if someone claiming to be an employee of a utility company, such as Nicor or ComEd, wants to come in your home — ask to see an official ID. If in doubt, call the Police non-emergency number, 708.386.3800. If you feel threatened, call 911.

Clip and Save ✂






### Who to Call

Dial Direct (area code 708)

Village Hall	<a href="http://oak-park.us">oak-park.us</a>
TTY	711
Adjudication	358.5630
Development Customer Services	358.5420
Business Services	358.5425
Neighborhood Services	358.5410
Housing	option 1
CDBG	option 2
Property complaints	option 3
Permits & Inspections	358.5430
Planning	358.5440
General questions	option 1
Historic Preservation	option 2
Zoning	option 3
Finance	358.5460
Utility Billing Inquiries	358.5478
Fire (nonemergency)	358.5600
Human Resources	358.5650
Job Hotline	358.5650
Mayor & Trustees	358.5784
Police (nonemergency)	386.3800
Crime Tip Hotline	434.1636
Public Health	358.5480
Animal Control	358.5680
Public Works	358.5700
Parking	358.7275
Village Clerk	358.5670
Village Manager's Office	358.5770

### EMERGENCIES 911

Park District	<a href="http://www.pdop.org">www.pdop.org</a>
Administration	725.2017
Customer Service	725.2000
Building & Grounds	725.2050
Business Operations	725.2015
Public Library	<a href="http://www.oppl.org">www.oppl.org</a>
Main Library	383.8200
Maze Branch	386.4751
Dole Branch	386.9032
School District 97	<a href="http://www.op97.org">www.op97.org</a>
Administration	524.3000
School District 200	<a href="http://www.oprfhs.org">www.oprfhs.org</a>
Administration	383.0700
Township	<a href="http://www.oakparktownship.org">www.oakparktownship.org</a>
Senior Services	383.8060
Youth Services	445.2727
General Assistance	383.8005
Assessor Services	383.8005
Mental Health Board	358.8855
Transportation	383.4806

-  [oak-park.us/enews](mailto:oak-park.us/enews)
-  [facebook.com/vopnews](https://www.facebook.com/vopnews)
-  [instagram.com/oakparkil](https://www.instagram.com/oakparkil)
-  [twitter.com/vopnews](https://www.twitter.com/vopnews)
-  [youtube.com/vopnews](https://www.youtube.com/vopnews)

## Veteran named Fire Chief

**O**ak Park Fire Department veteran Ronald Kobyleski has been named the new Chief. A member of the Oak Park Fire Department since 1985, Chief Kobyleski has held every rank available in the Oak Park Fire Department, including Interim Chief, Deputy Chief,



Battalion Chief and Training Officer. He also is certified by the state Fire Marshal as an Advanced Fire Officer and Training Program Manager, and has studied architectural design and building construction. More information about the Fire Department is posted on the Village website at [www.oak-park.us/fire](http://www.oak-park.us/fire).

## Workshops planned for non-profits seeking federal grants

**N**on-profit organizations that serve Oak Park and are interested in applying for federal *Community Development Block Grant* (CDBG) funding are required to attend one of two virtual workshops hosted by the Village. Workshops are scheduled for 3 to 4 p.m. on Jan. 25 and from 11 a.m. to noon on Jan. 26. Attendance at one of the workshops is required to apply for funds during Program Year 2022, which runs from October 2022 through September 2023. The workshops will provide details about the application process, including an overview of required documents, timelines and reporting requirements. For more information, call 708.358.5410, email [grants@oak-park.us](mailto:grants@oak-park.us) or visit [www.oak-park.us/cdbg](http://www.oak-park.us/cdbg).

## COVID-19 News

**Vaccines effective, widely available...** COVID-19 vaccines continue to be highly effective in reducing risk of severe disease, hospitalization and death. All Oak Park residents ages 5 and older are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Children under 18 can only receive the Pfizer vaccine and must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Vaccinations are free, regardless of insurance or immigration status.

**Boosters recommended...** Public health officials recommend that everyone age 16 and older get a COVID-19 booster dose. Individuals who received the Moderna and Pfizer vaccine should get a booster at least six months after their second shot. Johnson & Johnson vaccine recipients should get a booster shot two months after their initial shot. Public health experts report seeing reduced protection against mild and moderate disease over time, and the latest guidance around booster shots was made in response to this waning of the efficacy of the vaccines along with the emergence of the Omicron variant.

**Ways to get vaccinated...** COVID-19 vaccines are widely available through most national pharmacy chains and healthcare providers. A range of vaccination options in and around Oak Park are posted on the Village website at [www.oak-park.us/vaccine](http://www.oak-park.us/vaccine) along with the latest local vaccination information. Individuals can also find a COVID-19 vaccine by visiting [www.vaccines.gov](http://www.vaccines.gov), texting their ZIP code to 438829 or calling 1.800.232.0233. Oak Park residents who need assistance getting a vaccine can contact the Oak Park Department of Public Health by emailing [covid19vaccine@oak-park.us](mailto:covid19vaccine@oak-park.us) or calling 708.358.5499.

**Slowing the spread...** Layering proven COVID-19 mitigation strategies remains key to limiting the spread of the highly contagious virus, public health officials say. Community spread of the virus remained high in Oak Park for much of the fall, but adhering to the following recommendations can help contain the virus during the winter months:

- Get vaccinated
- Wear masks indoors and in crowded outdoor settings
- Maintain social distance
- Choose outdoor spaces when possible
- Stay home if you are feeling sick
- Test at the sign of any symptom
- Quarantine and isolate when necessary
- Willingly participate in contact tracing
- Increase air flow and ventilation in shared spaces

For the latest information about COVID-19 in Oak Park, visit [www.oak-park.us/covid19](http://www.oak-park.us/covid19) or email [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us).

## Two chances to recycle holiday trees

**H**oliday trees will be collected the weeks of Jan. 3 and 10 from residential properties of five or fewer units served by the Village refuse hauling contractor. Be sure to remove all decorations and stands, and place the tree in the regular collection area before your regular collection day during these two weeks. If your regular collection point is in an alley, be sure to place the tree in the alley and not in the parkway in front of your residence. Since the trees are mulched at a licensed composting facility and used for soil enrichment, please do not leave them in plastic disposal bags or they will not be collected. Wreaths and garlands cannot be collected for recycling because they contain wire — place them in the trash container. For more information, call 708.358.5700 or email [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).





View with a smartphone camera.



Village of Oak Park  
Village Hall  
123 Madison Street  
Oak Park, Illinois 60302-4272



Village President Vicki Scaman

Trustees

Susan Buchanan Lucia Robinson  
Chibuike Enyia Jim Taglia  
Ravi Parakkat Arti Walker-Peddakortla

Village Clerk

Christina M. Waters  
Interim Village Manager Lisa Shelley

Residential Customer Local  
Oak Park, Illinois

Postal Carrier  
Pre-Sort

Presort  
Standard  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 26  
Oak Park, IL  
Postal Carrier

## Village hires new waste hauler

**F**or the first time since the 1990s, the Village has contracted with a new garbage hauler. On April 1 Lakeshore Recycling Systems (LRS) will take over the weekly collection of trash and recycling for residential properties with five or fewer units. Collection dates and rates, which appear on quarterly water bills, will remain unchanged in 2022. The various related services will remain largely the same as well, with compost, electronic and hazardous waste, yard waste, bulk items and fall leaf collection all included in the new



contract. LRS will contact residents by mail in mid-January with instructions for selecting their new refuse and recycling carts. More specifics about the transition will be available prior to the delivery of new refuse and recycling carts in late March. Waste Management will remove its refuse and recycling carts when its contract ends on March 31. The decision to change haulers was driven by costs after a competitive bid process demonstrated a substantial increase in 2022 for staying with the same vendor. For more information about refuse and recycling collection in Oak Park, visit [www.oak-park.us/refuse](http://www.oak-park.us/refuse), email [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us) or call 708.358.5700.

## Police News

**Sign up for updates...**Residents interested in receiving timely and informative neighborhood updates from their police residential beat officer are invited to sign up for monthly newsletters that provide helpful, practical information via email, the content tailored to the neighborhoods they serve. RBOs also hold regular meetings in their neighborhoods — or zones — to discuss issues, report on crime trends, provide crime prevention tips and answer questions. The meetings currently are held virtually due to COVID-19. More information about each officer, as well as a map of the zones and how to sign up for email, is available at [www.oak-park.us/rbo](http://www.oak-park.us/rbo).

**Safe venue for transactions...**The 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. Social distancing and a mask are required. 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).



## Pete's breaks ground on Madison Street

**C**onstruction of a new Pete's Fresh Market has begun on what was vacant Village-owned property on the north side of Madison Street, east of Oak Park Avenue. The 46,000 square-foot grocery store replaces a former used car dealership at 640 Madison St. and adjacent parking lots. Once open, the development is estimated to generate about \$587,000 in real estate taxes and \$546,000 in sales taxes annually and employ 140 to 180 workers. The Village of Oak Park began assembling the land parcels in 2001. Jupiter Realty Company was selected through a competitive bid process to manage the Pete's Market development. Work began with relocating underground utilities that serve the site and the surrounding neighborhoods. Actual construction of the main facility is expected to begin in the spring. The new store could be open to the public by late next year. For more information on development in Oak Park, email [development@oak-park.us](mailto:development@oak-park.us).