

The Village of Oak Park Civic brand

DISCOVERY
REPORT



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KEEP OAK PARK

NEW **PROGRESSIVE**

FRESH **DIVERSE**

VIBRANT

SURPRISING

PROUD GROWING

PROGRESSING

UNIQUE **INTERESTING**

ACCESSIBLE

ENGAGING **CREATIVE**

SPECIAL



INTRODUCTION

In late fall of 2017, the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation, in concert with the Village of Oak Park and peer agencies, contracted Sasaki to undertake a branding project. The intention of the project was twofold: first, to align multiple stakeholders responsible for managing the Oak Park brand and, second, to develop a clear identity that resonates with potential investors, influencers, and residents.

The initial phase of the project focussed on developing a deep and nuanced understanding of the community.

To understand the spirit of a place requires the fine ear of a novelist as well as the rigor of a statistician—an approach shaped both by personal anecdotes and marketplace analysis. To that end, Sasaki’s discovery process relied on quantitative information such as demographic studies and qualitative information gleaned from multiple conversations with stakeholders and members of key audiences. Our sources were varied. OPEDC and other agencies supplied materials, such as annual reports, sales collateral, and event invitations, for a communications audit. Additionally, several reports, including the recently completed Oak Park comprehensive plans, provided background information. During an intensive two-day session in

Oak Park, we conducted three focus group interviews, an interactive stakeholder session, and a number of intercept and informal interviews with community residents and decision-makers.

In the report that follows, we have presented a summary of our learnings. They are organized into distinct sections that address the stakeholder session, focus group interviews, communications audit, and market analysis. These sections are meant to represent the information we encountered in as objective a way as possible. By contrast, the conclusion of this report begins to formulate a point of view by spotlighting what we found to be the most interesting, provocative, or germane themes. These will lay the foundation for subsequent phases of work.

TIMELINE



DISCOVERY AND DEFINITIONS

POSITIONING

February 2018

March 2018

April 2018



ALTERNATIVES

BRAND DEVELOPMENT



STAKEHOLDER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

During a two-hour working session, vocal Oak Parkers discussed and debated what makes their community special. Many voices are part of the following summary. We have condensed and synthesized a great deal in order to keep this document manageable. Still, we attempted to reproduce ideas with fidelity and deep respect for the generosity of community members who shared them.



GETTING TO POSITIONING

Session participants drafted initial positioning statements by first brainstorming Oak Park's audiences, competitors, and differentiators. A positioning statement is a clear and compelling statement for the way that you want your market to perceive your brand. Your positioning statement is an internal tool that enables you to maintain focus and align all decisions around it.

WHO IS OAK PARK'S AUDIENCE?*

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES

- Developers, business owners, small shop owners, restaurant owners
- Entrepreneurs, techies
- Renters, middle-income people ready to leave the city
- Older, educated people
- Millennials
- International visitors, such as those from Japan
- Educators, professors

PSYCHOGRAPHIC PROFILES

- People who want to invest in the community
- People who want to buy a home here; come to shop here
- Art and architecture enthusiasts
- Local residents and business owners, who seek a sense of identity and pride
- People who are aspirational, those who want something better for their families
- Businesses that want to experiment with new ideas
- Mission-driven businesses

*This list captures a wide-ranging stakeholder discussion; it is not, however, a synthesis or analysis. Target audiences will be subject to further discussion and will be refined in the coming phases, especially as the communications strategy is developed.

WHO ARE OAK PARK'S PEERS?

- Hyde Park and Evanston
- Berwyn, although in a limited sense because of weaker education, retail, and diversity
- Other “urban-feeling” suburbs with high-density, walkable districts and new housing
- Communities that espouse “progressive values”
- Naperville, LaGrange, Elmhurst

WHAT ARE OAK PARK'S UNIQUE DIFFERENTIATORS?

- Architecture
- Racial and ethnic diversity
- A mixture of a “cosmopolitan” and “neighborhood” characters
- We know our neighbors
- The kind of community that attracts college faculty
- Good schools
- Core values of equity and inclusion
- “Frank and Ernie”

WHAT ARE OAK PARK'S CHALLENGES?

- We are frugal and look for value, which can be hard for local businesses
- We want to be cutting edge, but are not taking the necessary risks
- We are not as economically and racially diverse as we say
- High taxes are a burden on moderate-income families
- Lack of entertainment and nightlife options
- Challenging boundary conditions and relationship with neighboring Chicago
- “Frank and Ernie”



INTERVIEW KEY TAKEAWAYS

As part of the discovery process, the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation convened three formal focus groups that reflect three key audiences of the civic brand: **real estate developers, business owners, and residents.** Through candid, wide-ranging conversations, participants offered insights into what they find attractive—and challenging—in Oak Park.

DEVELOPERS

Three real estate professionals with recent and in-progress projects in downtown Oak Park shared their experience with Sasaki. They were all optimistic about the development climate in Oak Park and indicated that their properties were successful. They emphasized that the major selling point is not Oak Park's history or schools or diversity, but its "urban experience," a quality that both encompasses and exceeds component parts. They also insisted that the new brand needs to be visible among institutional investors, who may not otherwise be as familiar with Oak Park's market as with nationally-recognized college towns.

- Targeting a sophisticated market: buyers and renters who have plenty of other options
- Buyers in District House are as likely to downsize from large exurban mansions as to move West from the city
- Buyers are attracted to strong commuter connections: not only to downtown but to suburban job centers
- Oak Park's downtown boasts a "micro-urban" environment—walkable, safe, amenity-rich, educated, and full of independent businesses—that make it a "college town without students"; its close peers are Ann Arbor, MI and Cambridge, MA.*
- The community is also attractive to newcomers because it prides itself on being inclusive and "welcoming"
- High taxes are overridden by the value of amenities, services, and public spaces

- The central proposition for selling and renting in Oak Park is that the community offers an “urban experience,” which is shorthand for other attributes, such as transit-oriented, pedestrian, amenity-rich, diverse, etc., and quality of life overall
- Although Frank Lloyd Wright or other notable residents aren’t mentioned by name in marketing materials, buyers and renters come with an expectation for high design and “well-crafted living”; Wright is just “icing on the cake
- Design is a value proposition, not a replica of a historic style
- Demand remains strong, but there are limitations: for instance, there’s not much of a market outside of downtown Oak Park
- Community is not visible to institutional investors; real estate developers would welcome a higher profile in the institutional investment community

*The “college town” theory is useful but limited. Demographically, the high level of education bears this out, as does anecdotal evidence regarding a high number of graduate and medical students who live in multi-unit residences. But the absence of a higher education institution within Oak Park’s boundaries means that the Village cannot support the types of uses generally found in college towns, e.g., hotels, sports, etc.

BUSINESS OWNERS

A group of four business owners discussed the successes and challenges of operating in Oak Park. From a small pastry shop to one of the region's most established microbrewery chains, businesses prosper in Oak Park when they develop intensely personal connections with the community, participating in its civic life. Yet, because the community is so intimately connected, people tend to be loyal, "tribal," and concerned about hurting people's feelings by taking their business elsewhere. Oak Park has aspirations of becoming a high-quality foodie and retail destinations, but needs to overcome a reputation for parochialism and frugality.

- Oak Park is urban and "funky"—a part of Chicago more than a suburban town
- Businesses that excel are part of the community, they are embedded in social, civic, and neighborhood life; belonging to the Chamber of Commerce, for instance, is important
- The "charm" of Oak Park is also its challenge: it can feel too sleepy for a vibrant retail climate
- Lots of people go to coffee houses during the day, which suggests a work-from-home population; but restaurants struggle in daytime hours
- Residents are given to hyper-local consumption: they tend to eat and shop a few blocks away from their houses; business districts within Oak Park feel disconnected and "tribal"
- Oak Park is not yet a foodie or retail destination; even residents, when they are looking for a special experience, venture into downtown Chicago

- There is an increase in higher-quality retail and restaurants, but they are challenged by residents who are loyal to older establishments
- The brand should market Oak Park as a whole, beyond hyper-local affiliations
- Small-town marketing tactics like coupon books and “citizen ambassadors” who take prospective residents around town, are viable approaches here
- Consumers are surprisingly frugal: even though they like independent stores, they flock to big-box retailers; price matters to people in Oak Park partly because they are family-oriented

RESIDENTS

Four residents representing a range of ages, backgrounds, and lifestyles offered thoughts about the reasons they moved to Oak Park—and have chosen to remain here. Each participant had a deeply and passionately personal connection to the community, even though not all were originally from the Chicago region. Among the top attributes of Oak Park, they cited racial and ethnic diversity and strong community pride. They were concerned with affordability as a challenge for young people and families who may be moving to neighboring suburbs.

- Schools are a major attraction; however, there remains an achievement gap between white and African-American students. More support systems are needed
- The tech crowd is moving in; more people seem to be working from home
- Oak Park is a community that cares—neighbors care about their streets and their blocks
- There are divisions among different parts of Oak Park; strong neighborhood identities predominate
- The community is family oriented; however, more single and young people seem to be part of it
- Library, after-school programs, public green spaces are a big part of the residential culture—and attraction

- It's one of very few communities in the Chicago region that is racially integrated; middle-class African American families seek to come here
- “Community feel” combined with “city vibe”
- Some aspects of living in Oak Park are problematic: parking, tax burden, lack of entertainment, parochialism

OTHERS

Many other people generously offered comments and insights. These included John Harris, project partner and longtime Oak Park resident; David Pope, former president of the Village; Jan Parr, lifestyle editor at Crain's Chicago Business; staff of the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation; and a number of business people, residents, and municipal employees that Sasaki encountered during its time in the Village of Oak Park.

- A brand should not be serving any individual entity; rather, it's for, and representative of, the entire Oak Park community
- Oak Park is a “come as you are” place: everyone is welcome, regardless of lifestyle preferences, income levels, etc.
- Businesses are increasingly attracted to multicultural, diverse communities
- Housing is cyclical, as are housing preferences
- “Cultural literacy” is a defining characteristic of Oak Park, where people understand the history, design, and culture of the community
- Oak Park continues to develop the creative class through arts venues and school programs



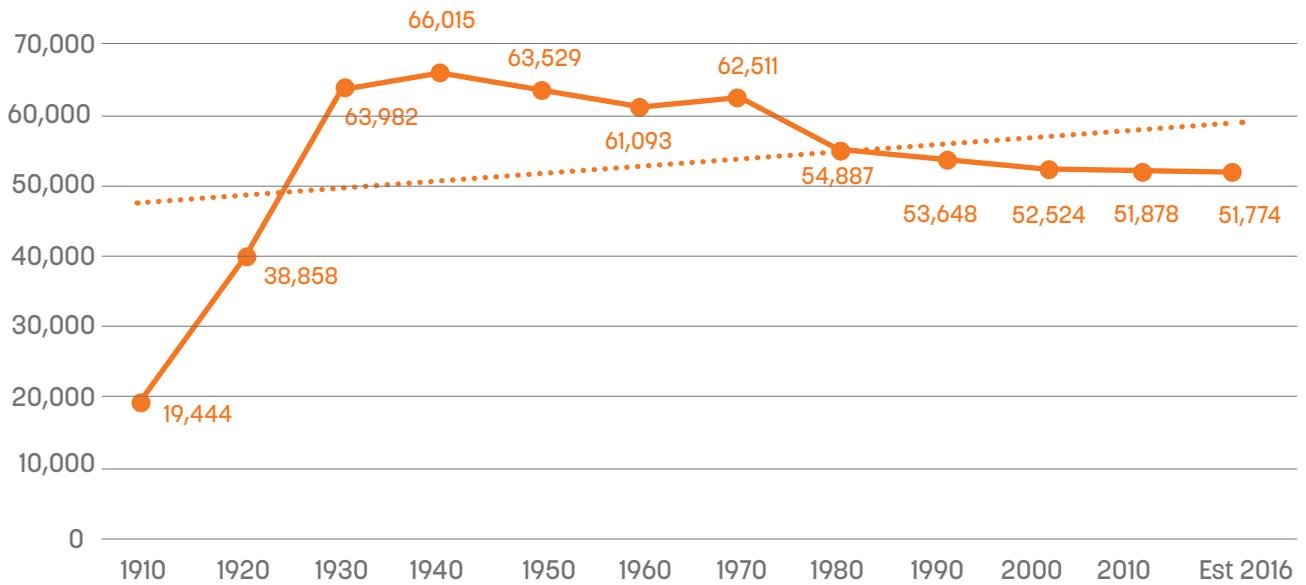
OAK PARK TRENDS & MARKET REVIEW

Population Trends: Stability and Diversity

American Community Survey estimates suggest a small decrease in Oak Park's population over the past five years. Per the 2010 US Census and American Community Survey for 2012-2016, Oak Park has decreased from 51,878 residents to about 51,774 residents. Although the population of Oak Park is far from the height of its population boom, the Village's population is starting to level off with signs of growth on the very near horizon.

Diversity is central to Oak Park’s cultural and historical identity. The mix of housing types, access to transportation, schools and proximity to Chicago, makes Oak Park the natural choice for a wide mix of people. As expressed in the 2010 census, Oak Park quite closely reflects the race/ethnicity breakdown of Cook County but in a smaller and more integrated community.

OAK PARK POPULATION (1910 TO 2016) SOURCE: 2010 CENSUS AND 2012-2016 ACS



National and regional trends are helpful indicators for changes in population demographics. Young professionals between the ages of 25 to 34 are a particularly transient group of people that are known to change jobs for professional development and upward mobility and are not rooted in place the same way previous generations are. These same young professionals that in the 1990s and 2000s moved en masse to cities for proximity to cultural and professional values and networks are now trending towards suburbs for a variety of other reasons, the largest of which is affordability and a look to the future—towards home ownership and/or starting a family.

According to a recent study by real estate think tank RCLCO, between 2010 and 2015, millennial populations in Chicago’s suburbs grew by .8%. Further reinforcing this migration into the suburbs is a parallel out migration from the city. Millennial populations living in Chicago decreased by 1% in the same period. Nationally, millennial populations living in cities peaked in the mid-2010s, and are perceived to be leaving cities for more affordable housing options.

ACCOLADES AND ASPIRATIONS

As part of the discovery and analysis phase of this process, we heard many perspectives as to what makes Oak Park unique. We wanted to research a few of those superlatives and accolades to both understand what statements have merit and where there are opportunities for Oak Park to aspire to any number of goals.

ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE PLACES IN THE CHICAGO REGION

Oak Park has long been a progressive and forward thinking community, as noted in a commitment from the Village Board in 1973 to invest in a diverse community that is accepting of all people.

“...Creating a mutually respectful, multicultural environment does not happen on its own; it must be intentional. Our goal is for people of widely differing backgrounds to do more than live next to one another. Through interaction, we believe we can reconcile the apparent paradox of appreciating and even celebrating our differences while at the same time developing consensus on a shared vision for the future.”

This commitment is reiterated as a statement in comprehensive plans, throughout the strategic plans of the school district and the mission and values of the Park District of Oak Park. The commitment is also explicitly expressed in an almost 30% minority firm participation rate in the Village alone or the rate of homeownership among people of color.

CityLab highlighted Oak Park’s efforts to maintain and grow an inclusive community as a mission that is forty years in the making. Rob Breymaier of the Oak Park Regional Housing Center was quoted in the article saying

“In Oak Park, the community chose to embrace diversity and more importantly to embrace integration and inclusion. As a result, Oak Park has prospered and our diversity is an asset, while Ferguson appears to be struggling.”

BEST PLACE FOR TECH PEOPLE TO LIVE

Nationally, STEM, or Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, is one of the fastest growing job sectors in the country. The industry has already grown by 24.4% between 2005 and 2015, five times more than any non-STEM employment. The implications of the STEM industry's low unemployment rates and high salaries are that cities with STEM industries and jobs, like Chicago's growing West Loop will also see significant growth in residential and supporting developments and economic development for the city and region.

Source: 2017 STEM Job Growth Index; RCLCO and the US Census Bureau.

Oak Park is one of the first communities on the outskirts of Chicago that has a direct line to the emerging West Loop and boasts urban density in its walkable downtown and access to diverse housing stock which appeal to families, empty nesters, and young professionals that enjoy the appeal of a bucolic urban center with all of the amenities they can access in the city for a portion of the price.

Chicago is also ranked as the number one city for foreign direct investment, an accolade that the city has enjoyed for the past five years, according to a 2017 report from IBM.

The city is actively pursuing companies like Google, Amazon and other STEM-focused corporations that might invest in space. Mayor Rahm Emanuel explained it this way, "Why are companies moving their headquarters or their major operations to Chicago, is because they see the talent, the transportation, the training, the transparency, and the technology, and we are willing to invest in those things."

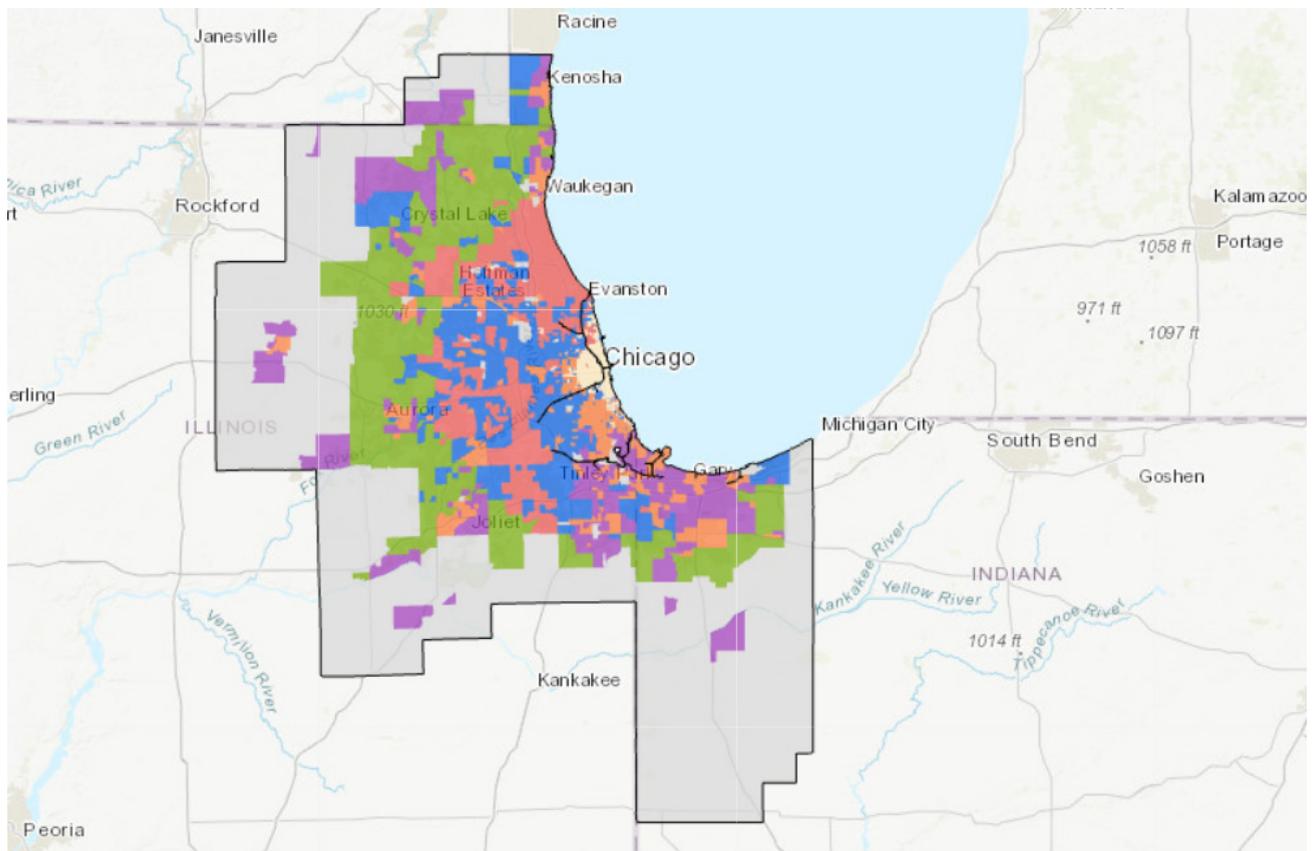
MOST URBAN SUBURB

As affordability continues to be a barrier for homeownership, a the country is trending towards high density suburban cores and low density urban cores. Oak Park, which is both a gateway suburb of Chicago and a “high density suburb”, embodies many of the characteristics of a city ripe for population growth.

According to a recent ULI housing study, gateway metro areas like Cook County, tend to host a large number of high-value suburbs close to the downtown, with housing values subsiding as you move further from the city center. It is within these metro areas that established high-end suburbs, like Oak Park, boast median home values that are 20 percent higher than in established high-end suburbs located farther out.

Chicago’s share of population by suburb type skews highest towards “stable middle-income” suburban communities, the highest among national metropolitan statistical areas, followed by Houston with 41% of the population living in suburban middle income communities. About 53% of Chicago metro residents lie in stable middle-income suburban communities, followed by 12% in economically challenged and in urban communities. 11% live in established high-end suburban, 8% live in greenfield communities, and 4% in rural communities.

- Established high-end suburb
- Stable middle-income suburb
- Economically challenged suburb
- Greenfield lifestyle suburb
- Greenfield value suburb
- Urban
- Other: rural, parks, military, airports, institutional uses, etc.



Source: ArcGIS Online Suburb Atlas (Login required to view regional scale); RCLCO.

STABLE MIDDLE-INCOME SUBURBS

Stable middle-income suburbs are highly diverse—they are communities where minorities typically account for over one-half of the population of stable middle-income suburbs, though levels of diversity in these communities are trending down. Some of these communities gentrified into higher-end suburbs based on proximity to high-end suburbs that are unaffordable, an increase public transit options, and demand for housing expansion in metro regions.

Within this study, Oak Park is identified as a stable middle-income suburb. According to the study, “Areas that historically have been racially integrated often struggle to maintain that integration, though some communities, such as Oak Park, Illinois, and Shaker Heights, Ohio, have made valiant efforts to counteract that trend.”

A SCHOLARLY NEIGHBORHOOD

In many conversations with Oak Park stakeholders, the subject of education came up frequently. Unsurprisingly, Oak Park was touted as having one of the best school districts in the country, an accolade that has been reinforced by outside organizations and publications consistently. Another concept is slightly more surprising and begs a deep dive into the employment sectors of Oak Park’s residents. On a number of occasions, Oak Park was identified as a “college town without students” that boasts a number of residents employed in colleges or universities. A review of employment sectors to that level would require a comprehensive analysis of employment trends in Oak Park. For the purposes of this branding exercise, the consultant team reviewed NAICS data from County Business Patterns collected in 2015 and the most recent American Community Survey, 2012-2016.

This broad sector analysis identifies educational services, and health care and social assistance (30.6% or 8,271 residents employed) as the largest employment sector for Oak Park’s residents, followed by professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (20.5%) as a the second largest industry which employs 5,545 residents of the village. The full sector breakdown and margin of error is available here:

Employment Sector	Estimate	Margin of Error	Percent	% Margin of Error
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	27,018	+/-620	100%	(X)
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	19	+/-21	0.10%	+/-0.1
Construction	572	+/-146	2.10%	+/-0.5
Manufacturing	1,690	+/-239	6.30%	+/-0.9
Wholesale trade	687	+/-174	2.50%	+/-0.6
Retail trade	1,879	+/-228	7.00%	+/-0.8
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	906	+/-164	3.40%	+/-0.6
Information	953	+/-166	3.50%	+/-0.6
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	2,184	+/-269	8.10%	+/-1.0
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5,545	+/-484	20.50%	+/-1.7
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	8,271	+/-559	30.60%	+/-2.0
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	1,983	+/-275	7.30%	+/-1.0
Other services, except public administration	1,373	+/-199	5.10%	+/-0.7
Public administration	956	+/-194	3.50%	+/-0.7



INSIGHTS

Among the many ideas included in this document, the following stood out: either because they were especially memorable or meaningful, or because they were so frequently mentioned. These insights offer a snapshot of the community's ambitions and aspirations. They encapsulate recurring themes. And they lay a foundation for agreement among stakeholders.

THE PLACE THAT PROGRESSES

To say that Oak Park is progressive may be accurate, but it isn't enough. The Village continues to evolve, to redefine itself to meet the needs of new residents, businesses, and visitors. It is not only progressive in the sense of its political leanings; rather, it is progressing in the sense that it is continually reviewing—and renewing—its values.

MISSION-DRIVEN BUSINESSES (FOR A MISSION-DRIVEN COMMUNITY)

Businesses that prosper in Oak Park are aligned with the values of the community. As more and more consumers in the US are driven by the social value of brands, Oak Park's multicultural population offers a beneficial climate for socially-driven brands.

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Oak Park's micro-urban environment balances cosmopolitan attributes such as diversity and density with the comforts of the suburbs. As city centers become crowded and less affordable, Oak Park is an alternative: both for people who move out from the city, and those who move towards it.

WELL-CRAFTED LIVING

Without having to explicitly name famous residents, Oak Park already embodies a reputation for high standards of design excellence. As importantly, investors, businesses, and residents have all come to expect—and demand—those standards. Maintaining and advancing this reputation for excellence is a key differentiator of the community.

HOME OF CREATIVITY

As a recent ad campaign noted, Chicago’s “creative class lives here.” But that need not mean that the Village is a bedroom community: on the contrary, it not only houses, but cultivates and inspires creative people. Through public amenities, arts venues, school programs, and an active public realm Oak Park can continue to be a place where creative people live and creative enterprises flourish.

BEYOND TRIBALISM

Again and again, Oak Parkers describe the village as intimate, small, approachable, and tightly-knit. The sense of community is a virtue to be preserved. But it challenges Oak Parks’ ability to articulate its role in broader market, demographic, or cultural contexts—or to express a common interest. A successful brand will be optimistic and forward-looking: one that goes beyond internal concerns and conversations to claim a stake for Oak Park as a regionally and nationally competitive place.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX: STAKEHOLDER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



Welcome to Iowa City, Coralville and North Liberty, where curiosity is cultivated and thoughtfulness is a way of life.

A City of Literature that is home to aspiring writers and avid readers, this curious collection of communities sits tucked into the seam of a rich riverbed winding through Iowa's lush land. The gold dome of a historic state capital beckons from the rolling hills of the University of Iowa. Downtown, deep thinkers debate over a pie shake and pancakes while poets pack out the state's oldest independent bookstore.

Iowa City is a collection of communities with an array of intriguing attractions.

VILLAGE OF OAK PARK BRAND KARAOKE

IOWA CITY, IA

The campaign's clever messaging can be a draw—or a distraction. Emphasizing the puzzling, curious, and strange facets of Iowa City is appropriate for a college town. But do people “get it” or simply give up on the riddle? And are the questions provocative and relevant enough to cause potential visitors stop and ponder them? The community wants visitors to remember the campaign, but it may be remembered for the wrong reasons: confusing and overworked.

APPENDIX: STAKEHOLDER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

In the heart of South Carolina, tradition and tomorrow pair perfectly in Columbia. It's a modern city where stately buildings buzz with new business, and centuries-old sites give rise to fresh perspectives. It's a creative hub that's fed by university and capital city communities—all this in the midst of surrounding natural beauty. With dynamite shopping, food and tons to see and do year round, it's the real Southern hot spot that will leave you looking forward to what's next.



VILLAGE OF OAK PARK BRAND KARAOKE

COLUMBIA, SC

Columbus is placing a new emphasis on “authenticity” in this approach to branding. The language of the campaign is intensely focused on the qualities that make this town “real”, “authentic”, and “true” South. The visual approach is bold and modern; however, the visual language does not clearly support the Southern message. The capital “C” makes a strong mark, but it evokes a collegiate feel conflicts with the message of the brand.

APPENDIX: STAKEHOLDER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



Everyone is familiar with the “it” cities in the South. They’re on every list. Columbus is ready to break into that list. We’re not a backwater. We’re a city of 250,000 strong. Our downtown—wait, our Uptown—thrives day and night. Brick and steel buildings of the past now make up our renovated 21st century skyline. Instead of an urban river you’re afraid to touch, our Chattahoochee invites you in. Our arts and cultural entertainment surprise. Our world class museums inspire. Outdoor activities abound. Government and business work together to make it happen. We believe in big, bold ideas that impress while revering our past. That’s why, around every corner, Columbus proves, “We do amazing.”

VILLAGE OF OAK PARK BRAND KARAOKE

COLUMBUS, GA

Columbus is placing a new emphasis on “authenticity” in this approach to branding. The language of the campaign is intensely focused on the qualities that make this town “real”, “authentic”, and “true” South. The visual approach is bold and modern; however, the visual language does not clearly support the Southern message. The capital “C” makes a strong mark, but it evokes a collegiate feel conflicts with the message of the brand.

APPENDIX: STAKEHOLDER SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



At the Center of Life in Chicago, Berwyn is in close proximity to anything you want to do in the Chicago area, including great access to Chicago sports events like the Blackhawks, Bears, Bulls, White Sox, Cubs and Fire. Berwyn is just minutes away from downtown Chicago and neighbors the Chicagoland communities of Oak Park, Forest Park, Riverside, La Grange, and Brookfield.

Explore the many reasons Berwyn is the perfect spot to visit and live. But don't wait—Berwyn won't be Chicago's best-kept secret for long!

VILLAGE OF OAK PARK BRAND KARAOKE

BERWYN, IL

The brand and associated campaign is targeting a “hipster” market with a retro look and feel. In appearing retro, or “old school”, the campaign builds on the community’s more affordable housing stock and bohemian entertainment venues. The tagline asserts that the community’s lifestyle is urban – “nothing like a suburb.” Its overemphasis on the urban, hip, and gritty is intended to differentiate the brand from upscale or polished suburban neighbors.

EXCERPT OF THE ENVISION OAK PARK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

POSITIONING

Oak Park is a destination for innovators and entrepreneurs attracted by the village's location, employment base, and proactive approach to working with business owners. Visitors come from all over the region, facilitated by easy access to public transportation and attracted by diverse shops, restaurants, historic buildings, cultural events and other attractions. Oak Park's economic health and vitality has allowed municipal leaders to build and grow local environmental sustainability initiatives, putting it at the forefront in the region and serving as a model for other communities to follow.

VALUES

DIVERSITY

All actions should result in a community that is welcoming and accessible to all people, supportive of integrated social and physical interaction, and respectful of different lifestyles and opinions.

URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

All actions should advance Oak Park's mission to be a community that minimizes the impact of urban development on the environment, enhances active and healthy lifestyles for all residents, ensures social justice for every citizen, and maintains locally-based stability over time.

RESPECT FOR OAK PARK'S HISTORY AND LEGACY

All actions should recognize and celebrate what was granted to us by previous generations, and consider the lasting impacts of today's actions and decisions on the future citizens of Oak Park.

COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

All actions should support strong relationships between all governments, residents, institutions, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, neighboring communities, and local, regional and state agencies to ensure that resources, policies and programs respond in an efficient and transparent manner to issues within the Village and those that extend beyond its borders.

THRIVING NEIGHBORHOODS

All actions should support the maintenance and enhancement of Oak Park's neighborhoods. All portions of the community—neighborhoods, open spaces, institutions, and commercial areas—help define quality of life in Oak Park. However, the village's neighborhoods play a primary role in defining community character, supporting diversity and accessibility, and fostering an engaged and integrated citizenry.

KEY PHRASES

- Architectural integrity and preservation
- Innovative environmental design
- Urban fabric
- Embrace creativity
- Arts, culture, diversity
- Cultural literacy
- Integrate arts into education, lifelong learning
- Sustain and broaden diversity
- Foster inclusiveness
- Foster equal opportunities for academic achievement
- Civic engagement and pride
- Bolstering participation
- Bridge generation gap

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