



2016 Oak Park and River Forest  
Community Sustainability Report Card

**PlanItGreen**  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY



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# PlanItGreen

## Enhancing Quality of Life

PlanItGreen is a sustainability planning and implementation project that grew out of the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation's Communityworks initiative, designed to enhance the vibrancy and quality of life of Oak Park and River Forest. PlanItGreen is guided by the OPRF Community Foundation's Communityworks Guidance Team, its Advisory Board and the PlanItGreen Core Team, and is facilitated by non-profit Seven Generations Ahead. The project is the collective work of many community organizations, external partners, residents, businesses, and institutions. The plan supports the interests of leaders in engaging all levels of community to reduce their environmental footprint and advance common sustainability objectives. Phase 1 of PlanItGreen began in August, 2010 with the aggregation of baseline metrics on community resource use. Phase 2 included a multi-faceted community engagement strategy in 2010–2011 resulting in the Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest – complete with goals, targets, and strategies in each of nine sustainability topic areas including energy, waste, transportation, water, food, education, community development, open space and ecosystems, and green economy. The planning process culminated on June 23, 2011 with the release of the final plan. PlanItGreen completed its 5th year of implementation in 2016, and this 2016 report card is the project's third report card to date.

*“The use of our land has increasingly been of interest to the residents of both Oak Park and River Forest. The importance of bio-diversity to our health, increased population density near public transportation, and more opportunities for economic development within and near our borders all focus on how our land-locked space is best used. PlanItGreen’s goals for environmental sustainability ultimately address how we use all of our resources, including land. This report card illustrates the importance of individuals representing all facets of our community—taxing bodies, companies, places of education, nonprofits, houses of worship, residents—working together on a local level to drive impact and make change.”*

**-Kristin Carlson Vogen, President & CEO,  
Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation**

# Desired Outcomes

Thinking generations into the future, the communities of Oak Park and River Forest – through their commitment to sustainability – strive to become:

Communities that support diverse ecosystems with ample open space, abundant native flora, fauna, and pollinators, and use materials that pose zero threats to the health of our community members and ecosystems.

Communities that plan and act to adapt to the reality of climate change, and prepare for climate-related events.

Communities that source the majority of our food needs from local, sustainable and organic growers, increasing the health and well-being of our population and supporting local farmers, local community businesses, and the preservation of our ecosystems.

Communities that make all decisions through the lens of sustainability, incorporating environmental enhancement, economic development, social equity, and quality of life.

Communities that support all existing local businesses to thrive, reduce costs and reduce environmental footprints, while attracting new businesses focused on sustainable products and services.

Communities that reduce consumption of our precious global water resources, and find ways to harvest rainwater and reuse water for all non-potable water needs.

Communities that shift from a paradigm of “waste management” to one of “materials recovery”, and that ultimately produce zero waste.

Communities that successfully transition to a renewable energy economy, significantly reducing the impacts of global climate change.

Communities that are easy to navigate by foot, bike and public transit, and utilize non-polluting and non-greenhouse gas emitting vehicles toward restoring our climate’s natural balance.

Communities whose educational institutions integrate sustainability into every day learning, and whose children and adults experience sustainability as the new normal.

Communities that are socially, economically and environmentally connected and thriving, and that enjoy a good quality of life for all residents while consuming in such a way as to ensure the ability of all future generations to have the same resources, opportunities, and quality of life.

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# What is the Community Sustainability Report Card?

The Oak Park River Forest Community Sustainability Report Card provides a snapshot in time of progress against sustainability goals that were created over a ten-month community engagement process in 2010-2011. Baseline metrics – dating back to 2007 – were created and are being used as a basis of comparison to 2016 data that has been aggregated around energy and water consumption, waste reduction, and transportation. The report also includes activity highlights over the past year related to each of the plan’s nine topic areas and goals to provide the communities of Oak Park and River Forest with sample strategies and activities in the plan that are currently being implemented. Over time, the sustainability report card will illuminate trends, highlight successes and shortcomings, and ultimately help support decisions on future policies, strategies, and resource allocation that will drive achievement of the 10-year plan’s goals.

*“The PlanItGreen initiative is the only two-community sustainability plan and implementation project in the Chicago metro area. It’s a testament to the Oak Park and River Forest communities, and the leaders from our taxing bodies, major institutions, community organizations, businesses, faith-based congregations and residents to collectively pursue goals around environmental sustainability. In an era of backsliding on the federal government level, the importance of local community and state-wide implementation is even more critical. This report card is designed to cut through the noise and provide a transparent, data-based, top-level picture of how well we are doing, and whether we need to stay the course or change our tactics to achieve our common sustainability goals.”*

– Gary Cuneen, Executive Director, Seven Generations Ahead

# Trends & Metrics: Quick Glance

The Quick Glance below provides an assessment of our communities' progress in achieving goals within the Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest

**Thumbs Up: Exceeds Goals**  
**Thumbs Sideways: Met Goals**  
**Thumbs Down: Did Not Meet Goals**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Energy	Transportation	Education	Waste	Water	Food	Community Development	Economic Development	Open Space & Ecosystems
								
Renewable energy procurement at 4% is not on pace to meet the 2020 goal of 25%. Energy use decreases did not meet 2% annual reduction goal target.	Oak Park has decreased Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by 15% since 2007 and Divvy is here – and while trends are positive both communities have not met the plan's 3% annual goals around VMT and transit ridership.	Private schools joined zero waste efforts in 2016, while efforts in schools to integrate sustainability actions and classroom learning were evident. Community events with sustainability components increased, and the One Earth Film Fest grows and grows.	Total residential material generated has decreased by 19.5% in River Forest since 2007 and in Oak Park by 9.5%, though residential landfill diversion rates (recycling/composting) have not reached the Plan's original goal of 50% by 2015.	Oak Park saw a 2.3% drop in potable water use from 2014, and its water use reduction trend since 2009 has been 12%. River Forest for the first time in project history showed an increase in use (4%) though its use since 2009 has decreased by 8% - an average of over 1% per year. Institutional rainwater harvesting – led by PDOP, Dominican and Triton – is gaining steam.	Food recovery projects have increased the number of meals serving people in need, while school-based gardens and local, sustainable food options continue to abound.	Green alleys, storm water management projects, sustainability components in new zoning codes, and a new River Forest Sustainability Commission lead the highlights, while concerns over balancing green space with new development concerns some.	Major downtown developments and others close by will add over 2,100 new residents to Oak Park – and are prime examples of transit-oriented development and density that reduce reliance on automobiles and build local economies. New businesses with sustainability features complement these new developments to make for a strong surge for our local economy.	300 new native gardens in both communities are creating habitat connectivity for pollinators, which provides great ecological benefits and makes our communities more beautiful. Policies in relation to non-toxic chemical use are moving forward.

# Renewable Energy Procurement Lags Behind



## Goals

1. Increase renewable energy procurement to 25% by 2020.
2. Decrease overall energy use by 2% annually.
3. Reduce GHG emissions to 30% below 2007 levels by 2020 and 35% below 2007 levels by 2025.
4. Increase community solar energy projects for OP and RF institutions and residents.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Community-based efforts to stay ahead of the COP 21 US emissions reduction commitment of 28% below 2005 levels by 2025 are collectively not keeping pace. River Forest's kWh use did decrease by 1% from 2014, and its overall kWh use has decreased by 11% since 2007 – which is comparable to US greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 11.6% since 2007. Oak Park's kWh usage increased by less than 1% from 2014 to 2016, and it has decreased usage by 8% since 2007. With ComEd's renewable portfolio standard slipping to 4%, neither community is on pace to meet renewable

energy goals. Bright spots are present, with new energy efficient developments at Residences at Maple Place and District House; Austin Garden's geothermal heat pump and 19.6 kW solar array; Ridgeland Commons' 100.8 kW system reducing carbon emissions by 87,500 pounds a year; VOP's 99.45 kW Avenue Parking Garage Solar Array since 2012 saving 295 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>; and Dominican and Concordia participating in a Strategic Energy Management (SEM) project with Nicor, ComEd and consultant CLEARresult to address campus energy usage and energy saving opportunities.

OAK PARK	2007	2012	2014	2016
Therms	34,357,048	28,599,102	31,802,391	33,364,686
kWhs	353,700,838	400,477,682	324,441,404	325,026,738
Renewables % of kWhs	0%	48%	31%	4%
Renewables % of Total Energy	0%	15%	7.5%	1%
GHG Emissions (metric tons)	421,339	290,387	322,982	396,184
Per Capita GHG Emissions	8.24	5.57	6.20	7.56

RIVER FOREST	2007	2012	2014	2016
Therms	8,821,530	7,435,415	8,248,225	8,282,055
kWhs	100,998,700	96,843,338	90,786,783	89,907,758
Renewables % of kWhs	0%	0%	6%	4%
Renewables % of Total Energy	0%	0%	1.5%	1%
GHG Emissions (metric tons)	115,368	105,505	102,578	104,569
Per Capita GHG Emissions	10.35	9.40	9.15	9.3

*“The Residences at Maple Place - the first LEED-registered luxury condo building in western Chicagoland – represents a new standard in eco-effective living that utilizes state of the art mechanical system technology, eco-efficient design/construction practices, resource efficiency, and recycled and low-impact building materials, to create healthy, reduced carbon footprint, quality living for years to come.”*

**-Paul Zimmermann, Sales & Marketing,  
Altterra Development Group/JCS Construction**

## CHALLENGES AND WORK AHEAD

The brightest news is that the Future Energy Jobs Bill was recently passed, which reinvigorates IL's renewable portfolio standard and paves the way for community-scale solar projects. Triton College is considering an on-site solar array of up to 5 megawatts. VOP has set aside funds related to costs savings from community aggregation to support community solar or energy efficiency projects. The PlantGreen Community Solar Committee has been working on utility scale and smaller community solar projects – including those that would incorporate low-to-moderate income residents and non-profits. The Chicago Energy Benchmarking Ordinance and efficiency requirements for large energy consumers offer a potential model for replication in Oak Park and River Forest.

### Notes to Chart

\*Renewable energy mix data is taken from ComEd Environmental Disclosure Statement

\*GHG refers to greenhouse gas

# Divvy Comes to Oak Park; While the Madison “Complete Street” Project Moves Forward.



## Goals

1. 3% annual increase in public transit ridership (current goal).
2. 3% annual decrease in VMT.
3. Increase in Divvy ridership and shared car stations.
4. Increase the number of people biking and walking in Oak Park and River Forest.

*“The Village of Oak Park has a long tradition of encouraging safe cycling and walkability, including adoption of its first comprehensive bicycling plan in 2008, increased cycling information and infrastructure, and bringing Chicago’s highly regarded Divvy bicycle sharing service here. We also have worked to improve the community’s walkability with good sidewalks and signage, including creating safe walking routes to each of our neighborhood public schools. Our goal on the redevelopment of Madison Street is not only to attract new business investment, but also to calm vehicle traffic and make the area safer and more welcoming to all – especially bicyclists and pedestrians.”*

*–Cara Pavlicek, Village Manager, Village of Oak Park*

## HIGHLIGHTS

Oak Park’s Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) per household decreased by 3% from 2011 to 2015, and has decreased by 15% since 2007 – off the pace of the goal of 3% annual decrease. River Forest’s VMT per household increased by 1% from 2011 to 2015, and since 2007 has decreased by 2%. Chicago’s VMT per household, by comparison, has decreased by 15% since 2007. Bus ridership – tougher to track over time as routes have been discontinued – has decreased overall reflecting the trend in neighboring Chicago as well. Cheap gas prices, the emergence of Uber and Lyft, and safety perceptions on public transit may be factors in VMT and public transit ridership. Oak Park’s Walk Score of 76 is high (comparable to Seattle which is ranked 8th among

large cities in the U.S.), highlighting our community’s walking proximity to many businesses, schools, and other community amenities. River Forest’s Walk Score is 38, meaning that most errands require a car. Oak Park’s Transit Score is 61, reflecting the community’s strong public transit accessibility. To create further connectivity to transit and other amenities, the Village of Oak Park joined Chicago in installing Divvy bike stations (with 13 new stations supporting 120 bikes), and as of December 2016 has 357 members who have taken 7,838 trips within Oak Park; 469 trips from Chicago to Oak Park; and 495 trips from Oak Park to Chicago. The Village of Oak Park municipal fleet includes 12 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles, 16 hybrid vehicles, 34 bicycles and 1 electric car.

## CHALLENGES AND WORK AHEAD

PlanItGreen’s ambitious goals around VMT and transit ridership have not been met, though progress is evident. The biggest opportunity for increased biking and walking connectivity will be the construction of the Madison Street “Complete Street” project, designed to create dedicated bike lanes, reduce vehicle lanes, slow traffic, increase safety, and increase the walkability and community “feel” of Madison Street. This project will provide much needed economic development along Madison Street, and will provide a major anchor for bike lane and walking connectivity and address concerns about the ease and safety of biking in Oak Park – which some residents think needs improvement.

### CTA TRAINS GREEN AND BLUE LINES: OAK PARK

	2007	2009	2011	2012	2014	2016
Total Average Weekday	12,978	13,225	13,566	13,917	14,366	14,072
<b>Entries: Oak Park</b>						
% Change 2014-2016						-1.36%
% Change 2007-2016						8.43%
<b>Total Average Weekday</b>						
<b>Entries: System Wide</b>	514,256	537,403	579,861	601,049	619,426	631,810
<b>Annual % Change</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	0.1%	4.7%	3.7%	3.06%	2.00%
% Change 2007-2016						22.86%

\*Due to discontinued bus routes and alternative bus stops, calculating CTA and Pace Bus average weekday boardings has shown to be inconsistent and unreliable and creates inconsistencies from past data and thus is not included in this report. Metra data for 2016 Oak Park and River Forest boardings is not available.

### AVERAGE ANNUAL VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) PER HOUSEHOLD

	'07-09	'09-11	'11-13	'13-15	%Change '11-15	% Change '07-15	'07-15 Trend
<b>Chicago Metro Area</b>	13,994	12,892	11,830	11,914	0.71%	-15%	↓
<b>Oak Park</b>	15,464	14,779	14,175	13,775	-3%	-11%	↓
<b>River Forest</b>	18,021	17,515	17,529	17,665	0.78%	-2%	↓

\*The methodology of reporting VMT estimates has been revised to better account for miles traveled by newer vehicles that have not yet been inspected, and also account for changing numbers of households.

# Public and Private Schools Building Sustainability Step by Step



## Goals

1. Sustainable choices by residents, stakeholders and visitors become commonplace.
2. Each school integrates 21st century sustainability lessons into curricular and project learning.
3. Resident sustainability experts are integrated into community education.
4. Students are aware of and involved with PlanItGreen.

## HIGHLIGHTS

River Forest District 90's composting program in 2015-16 diverted 15,000 lbs. of compostable material, continued its "Waste-free Wednesdays", and worked with Green4Good on the Recycling Extravaganza. In addition to solar panels, D90 installed a 1,000 square foot "green roof" of growing plants at Lincoln Elementary School to reduce storm water runoff, moderate school temperature, and complement classroom science instruction. D90's other highlights include permeable pavement at the middle school; walking school bus and bike safety programs; energy efficient window systems; motion sensor lighting, phased-in conversion to LED lighting; Monarch butterfly waystations, native habitats, elementary school gardens; and science curriculum gardens at the middle school. Trinity, St. Giles, Ascension and Alcuin schools joined the zero waste schools ranks with diversion rates above 80% through recycling and composting initiatives and zero waste assemblies while implementing other eco-initiatives. Oak Park D97 has the largest whole-district zero waste initiative in the metro area, complementing projects including Lincoln's Outdoor Classroom and sensory/edibles/natives garden, Beye's leading 95.6% diversion rate, the Hatch Patch and more. Sustainability education at-large includes expansion of the One Earth Film Festival and Young Film Makers Contest; the new PlanItGreen Green

Guides program (education on composting, native gardens, recycling and energy efficiency); new "zero waste" events; the wildly successful Wild Ones annual conference; Lunch and Learns; green block parties and a Healthy Lawn, Healthy Family campaign in River Forest; and other events that make it hard to live in both communities without exposure to sustainable best practices.

## CHALLENGES AND WHAT'S AHEAD

PlanItGreen is exploring with schools the possibility of integrating a standards-based Zero Waste Curriculum to complement the zero waste practices. A next step forward could include a systemic "Green Ribbon Schools" criteria-based approach for schools that focuses on operations changes, curriculum and instruction, and creating a healthy school food and activity environment.

*"We want every school in D97 to be place where all members of the school community are engaged in hands-on, 21st century real-world experiences. So, when I hear our students describe what they have done with vegetable gardens or how their food scraps are used to make compost, I feel fortunate to have this partnership with PlanItGreen. We are creating a positive learning environment for all of our students, and helping them support sustainability practices."*

**–Dr. Carol L. Kelley, Superintendent,  
Oak Park Elementary District 97**

# Total Material Generated Decreasing; Diversion Rates Still Short of 50%



## Goals

1. Increase residential waste diversion to 50% by 2020.
2. Reduce overall materials generated by 1% annually.
3. Enact policies that drive toward zero waste and reduce waste at its source.

*“Residential diversion rates in the future will get accurate reporting for household hazardous waste, electronic waste and average pounds per household from the new At Your Door program. Our CompostAble program continues to expand and hopefully other haulers will begin to provide this collection for their customers in multi-unit buildings and businesses.”*

**–Karen Rozmus, Environmental Services Manager, Village of Oak Park**

## HIGHLIGHTS

Total residential material generated has decreased by 19.5% in River Forest since 2007 and in Oak Park by 9.5%. Oak Park’s 2016 Diversion Rate of 43.6% is getting closer to PlanItGreen’s overall 50% residential waste diversion goal, though River Forest’s 2016 Diversion Rate is at 31.4% and has slipped. Though non-residential aggregated data is not available, waste diversion and food scrap composting at schools, universities and hospitals is growing in both communities. All RF District 90 and OP D97 schools continue to compost, and four private schools (Trinity, St. Giles, Ascension, and Alcuin) have recently implemented food scrap systems to achieve diversion rates above 80%. Oak Park’s Residential Food Scrap Composting Program continues to grow

with 1,104 households participating (close to 10%) and 18 institutions, while RF’s curbside program in 2016 had 202 residents and diverted an estimated 20.5 tons of compostable material. River Forest’s annual Recycling Extravaganza was a big success again in 2016, and since 2012 has had 3,336 cars/walk-ups and has recycled close to 250,000 lbs. of goods. PlanItGreen provided strategy support for existing zero waste public schools; promoted recycling and composting on a residential level through Green Guides; and supported zero waste events including Thursday Nights Out, PDOP Summer Concert Series, and local running events.

## CHALLENGES AND WORK AHEAD

While total material generated shows a positive downward trend, residential diversion rates have not met the project’s goal. To move beyond 50%, both communities will need to take a harder look at the types and volumes of materials entering landfills, and develop additional strategies that chart a path toward 50% diversion and beyond – which they will do through zero waste community planning in 2017.

### WASTE – RESIDENTIAL DATA

Oak Park	2007	2012	2014	2016
Material Diverted (Recycled & Composted)	35.6%	37.9%	37%	43.6%
Total Material Collected (tons)	20,783	16,329	17,153	18,779
% Reduction: Total Material Collected	9.5% reduction from 2007 to 2016			
Per Capita Tons Material Collected	.40 tons	.31 tons	.33 tons	.36 tons

### WASTE – RESIDENTIAL DATA

River Forest	2007	2012	2014	2016
Material Diverted (Recycled & Composted)	39.2%	44.5%	33%	31.4%
Total Material Collected (tons)	4,867	4,404	4,101	3,917
% Reduction: Total Material Collected	19.5% reduction from 2007 to 2016			
Per Capita Tons Material Collected	.43 tons	.39 tons	.37 tons	.35 tons

\*Oak Park population for 2015 is 52,287; River Forest population for 2015 is 11,199.

# Aided by New Projects, Water Use Reduction Trend Continues



## Goals

1. Reduce consumption of potable water.
2. Use less potable water for landscape and lawn watering, toilet flushing and other non-essential potable water uses.
3. Increase the use of water-efficient technologies.

*“The Park District of Oak Park - as part of its overall commitment to sustainability - added three rain water cisterns since 2015 that collect water for irrigation and added native plantings to our flower beds to assist in water conservation. These initiatives help reduce water costs as well as preserve our most precious natural resource, water.”*

**-Jan Arnold, Executive Director,  
Park District of Oak Park**

## HIGHLIGHTS

Oak Park saw a 2.3% drop in potable water use from 2014, and the water use reduction trend since 2009 has been 12%. River Forest for the first time in project history showed an increase in use (4%) though its use since 2009 has decreased by 8%. The Park District of Oak Park installed rain water harvesting cisterns at Longfellow Park (9,000 gallons) and Austin Gardens (1,500 gallons) to use for irrigation and mitigate against flooding, while Triton College installed a 2 million gallon cistern that it uses for irrigation. These cisterns complement Dominican’s long-time rain water harvesting cistern that saves 2-4 million gallons of water a year, and perhaps points to an emerging trend to integrate water harvesting technologies within major institution buildings. VOP installed new smart meter register heads throughout the

water system; testing pumping station meters to ensure accurate reporting of water usage; completed a water rate study to provide alternatives for the Village to consider to develop full cost pricing; distributed over 1,400 rain barrels; and commissions bi-annual water system leak surveys. Concordia cites changes in Sodexo practices, aerators, reduced watering of grass, and the fixing of leaks as key contributors to their reduced water usage.

## CHALLENGES AND WORK AHEAD

In light of the 2 trillion gallons of potable water that were lost this past year in the U.S. and the grade “D” rating given by the American Society of Civil Engineers on the state of water

infrastructure nationally (citing 100 year old mains and pipes and frequent breaks and leakages), local communities will need to address these problems and help secure future water supply. Throw in climate change and the fact that water is currently undervalued according to many experts, rate adjustments toward full cost pricing will likely play a role in usage moving forward. Both communities have a tremendous opportunity to incorporate new technologies and systems and avoid using potable water for lawn care, gardens, and flushing toilets. Leak detection and repair will continue to play a role in conserving water. Native plantings that require less water will also support water conservation efforts, while increased green infrastructure installations including porous paving, bioswales, green roofs, and compost amended soil will reduce storm water runoff and flooding potential.

## WATER CONSUMPTION (IN GALLONS)

Oak Park	2009	2012	2014	2016
Total Community	1,685,205,000	1,665,982,000	1,514,921,000	1,481,114,000
Residential	1,118,725,000 (66%)	1,120,274,000 (67%)	996,701,000 (66%)	822,889,000 (55%)
Comm/Industrial/Public	566,480,000 (34%)	545,708,000 (33%)	518,220,000 (34%)	490,771,000 (33%)
Gallons Per Resident	32,626	31,974	29,096	28,327

  

River Forest	2009	2012	2014	2016
Total Community	481,800,000	448,831,000	366,671,901	380,822,052
Residential	343,830,000 (71%)	374,025,967 (83%)	290,909,942 (79%)	data not available
Comm/Industrial/Public	137,970,000 (29%)	114,805,194 (17%)	75,761,959 (21%)	data not available
Gallons Per Resident	43,164	40,006	32,709	34,005

\*New 2016 data figure:

Non-revenue water (fire, public works, leakage, etc.) – 12%

\*\* Decrease of 2.3% in water use from 2014 to 2016

\*\*\*Decrease of 12% in water use from 2009 to 2016

\*Non-revenue water – 12.8%

\*\*Increase of 4% in water use from 2014 to 2016

\*\*\*Decrease of 8% in water use from 2009 to 2016

# Food Recovery and Helping People in Need Growing Steadily



## Goals

1. Increase the volume of local, sustainable and healthy food procurement.
2. Use more public, private and institutional land to grow more food, particularly for those in need.
3. Increase the amount of food scrap amended compost used on landscaping and gardens.
4. Reverse the obesity trend and grow healthier children.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Local, sustainable food continues to surge nationally, and within our communities. The Sugar Beet Food Co-op finished 2016 with over \$3 million in sales and 28% growth leading to profitability. Large markets from Whole Foods to Pete's Fresh Market to Jewel are offering varying levels of local and organic food. Both communities host CSA hubs (Sandhill Family Farms, Genesis Growers, Geneva Lakes Produce, Cedar Valley Sustainable, and Angelic Organics to name a few) which supply "subscriptions" of boxes of food in season from local farms, and you can still buy organic meat and eggs in a backyard market at the Buzz Café from Wettsteins Organic Farm. 2016 marked the 41st season for the Oak Park Farmers Market, which is one of the best farmers markets in Chicagoland. Sodexo at Concordia University estimates that 20-30% of its purchases are from a local source depending on seasonality and availability. The OPRF Food Pantry distributed 8,417 meals through its "Surplus Project" food recovery program, working with co-founder Rush Oak Park Hospital, Dominican University, Riveredge Hospital, and OPRF-HS. Ascension Church's garden program grows food on-site and acquires garden food from parishioners to supply close to 13,000 lbs. of food since 2012 to St. Martin de Porres Church food

pantry in Austin. The Hatch Patch – one of many school food gardens in OP and RF – harvested 285 lbs. and donated 111 lbs. to the OPRF Food Pantry and celebrated its 10th Anniversary with 450 parents and kids. Establishments including Novo, Carnivore, The Buzz Café, Robert Morris' Eyrie Restaurant, Oak Park Brewing, Munch and others offering local, sustainable fare continue to provide options to residents.

## CHALLENGES AND WHAT'S AHEAD

Congregations and schools can join Ascension, Hatch and others in growing food for consumption and supporting people in need, while school gardens offer children hands-on learning about growing and eating healthy food. The Surplus Project's links to regional food recovery efforts bode well for potential expanded initiatives that connect OP and RF institutions. And with indoor vertical farms on the rise, could Oak Park or River Forest get in the game?

*"In the years Ascension parishioners have been gardening together, we have found the rewards of helping our west side food pantry neighbors St. Martin de Porres and strengthening our own bonds of community."*

**-John Owens, Ascension Community Garden Organizer**

# River Forest Creates Sustainability Commission



## Goals

1. Create sustainable development criteria to guide development decisions.
2. Amend local codes and ordinances through the lens of sustainability.
3. Promote development projects that adhere to sustainability criteria.
4. Reduce flooding using sustainable strategies in relation to major storm events.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The River Forest Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve a formal Sustainability Commission – on par with economic development, planning and zoning - which will advise the board on environmental policies and practices. The Village of River Forest (VRF) moved forward with the installation of permeable pavers on the West Thatcher Avenue commuter parking lot and the Quick Avenue alley to handle storm water surges and reduce flooding. The Village of Oak Park (VOP) wrapped up its Green Alley project, which used \$763,327 from an IL EPA “IGIG” grant to support a total investment of \$1,357,875. Modeling determined that the project would result in a 25% reduction in phosphorus and nitrogen, a 66% reduction in sediment, and a 39% reduction in storm water runoff annually. VRF’s \$484,169 in IL EPA “IGIG” grant to reduce pollution in waterways from storm water and reduce localized flooding allowed it to reconstruct 34,800 square feet of alley space within five alleys with permeable pavers, enabling an estimated 164,350 gallons of storm water to infiltrate into the ground. VOP made zoning ordinance revisions with community input that created Environmental Performance Standards and provisions for solar panels, wind turbines, rain gardens, and bioswales – and regulations for chicken coops and bee hives. The Planned Development regulations broadened green building certifications to include LEED, Green Globes and other criteria and certification systems.

## CHALLENGES AND WHAT’S AHEAD

Oak Park’s density ratio continues to rank high at 11,124 residents per square mile (and will increase with new downtown developments). Density allows for efficient use of community resources, and in Oak Park is accompanied by major public transit systems that reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to individual automobiles. The surge of new developments in Oak Park has raised concern among some about striking the right balance between new development, density, open space and preserving the natural character of the community. The proposed 18-story luxury apartment building at 1000 Lake Street has been opposed by the Park District of Oak Park Board, raising concerns about its impact on the vegetation, solar panels and aesthetics at Austin Gardens.

*“Since the start of our partnership with the Parks Foundation in 2014, the sustainability committee has worked hard to make reduce, reuse and recycle watchwords in our village. Now, this effort has become part of village governance, and we are so looking forward to see what the Sustainability Commission can do to help us build a healthier, greener community.”*

**–River Forest Village President Catherine Adduci**

# Transit-Oriented Developments and New Businesses Strengthen Local Economy in Oak Park



## Goals

1. Support existing businesses in greening their operations.
2. Attract new businesses that incorporate sustainability into operations, products and services.
3. Increase the procurement of products and services produced in a sustainable way.
4. Build a strong local economy and increase resident purchases of local products.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Oak Park development has seen a lot of activity lately, including two Transit-Oriented Development projects in downtown Oak Park that will usher in an additional 2,100 residents – Elevate and Vantage. Elevate Oak Park—a mixed-use development seeking LEED Certification—will span two blocks and add 28,365 square feet of new retail space and 270 luxury apartments. Vantage includes 21-stories of apartments, a Rooftop Terrace, bike storage, a Fitness Center and several lounge areas. The developments are models of suburban transit-oriented development, situated in Oak Park’s walkable downtown district with easy access to the CTA Green line, Metra commuter rail, and eight Pace and CTA bus lines. The District House – a new Oak Park development seeking LEED certification - achieved a 95% landfill diversion rate for the demolition waste from the Tasty Dog building and sent materials from the demolition to recycling centers, separation facilities and reused both on and off-site. The project is incorporating green roofs and solar shades, Energy Star furnaces, and Wi-Fi-linked thermostats, and is utilizing low-VOC paints, green label plus carpets and dual-flush toilets while being located blocks away from the Metra and CTA. The Residences at Maple Place – LEED-certified and eco-efficient – feature high efficiency low-e windows & patio doors, 95% efficient furnace, Fresh Air Exchange System, no VOC paints, and walking distance to major public transit. Novo, Sugar Beet Co-op, Carnivore, Amore

de la Terre, Oak Park Brewing Company, Kinslagher and The Beer Shop are among the recent newcomers to Oak Park’s local business scene that incorporate sustainability elements in their operations and products. They complement among others “old guard” businesses that are Illinois Green Business certified, including The Buzz Café, Bead in Hand, Beyond Properties (eco-broker), Eyrie Restaurant, Greenline Wheels, River Forest Chocolates, and Majamas.

## CHALLENGES AND WHAT’S AHEAD

The goal of providing resources to local businesses to reduce costs while using resources efficiently will be a future project focus. With more residents and local businesses coming on board, the outlook for increased local spend in Oak Park is bright. Opportunities exist in River Forest and Oak Park to seek and attract new sustainable businesses – including in solar and wind energy, energy efficiency, and indoor vertical farm and food production. Local and sustainable procurement policies for village taxing bodies is another element of work ahead.

*“Oak Park’s new downtown developments are examples of our efforts to build near transit and increase density – key tenets of sustainable urban development that combined with other sustainability features enable our community to grow efficiently and sustainably.”*

**–John Lynch, Executive Director, Oak Park Economic Development Corporation**

# 300 New Native Plant Gardens Create Habitat Connectivity for Pollinators



## Goals

1. Establish 500 native plant/butterfly gardens as part of the Oak Park-River Forest Native Garden Corridor, including public buildings with landscaping.
2. Establish Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Non-Toxic policies and practices at all major Oak Park and River Forest institutions.

## HIGHLIGHTS

West Cook Wild Ones' annual conferences continue to draw 250-300 attendees, and along with workshops, plant sales, and Monarch Garden Kits have led to 300 new native gardens since 2014. The Rush Oak Park Hospital Healing Garden and Brooks Middle School "Sanctuary" Garden are examples of institutions working with Wild Ones to launch pollinator gardens. The Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) set a high bar with multiple sustainability projects at its facilities, including Austin Gardens' rain gardens, native grasses and plants, solar panels, geothermal system, rainwater cistern, efficiency measures, and 500 sq. ft. green roof. The River Forest Park District completed year one of its new 2016 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy, with applications of organic fertilizer, aerations, 200 hours of weed removal, and a goal to not use chemicals. Oak Park was named Illinois' first municipal arboretum through an application submitted by VOP and PDOP to the Morton Arboretum that documented 130 species among 21,000 trees on land owned by both entities. A new tree inventory was created ([www.oak-park.us/maps](http://www.oak-park.us/maps)) where Oak Parkers can research their trees by entering an address. Healthy Lawn, Healthy Family was launched in River Forest. Tracking of IPM/non-toxic policies and practices among major institutions shows that 8 of 18

have policies and 11 of 18 are implementing non-toxic practices. PDOP partnered with Openlands and the Morton Arboretum to save hundreds of 200- to 300- year old oak trees as part of the Heritage Oak Propagation Program, and VOP worked with Rain Ready to support eco-effective storm water management practices. Both mayors signed on to the Mayors for Monarchs Pledge, and VOP recently voted to support state legislation to re-establish the right of local home rule governments to adopt pesticide restrictions on public and private land within their jurisdiction.

## CHALLENGES AND WHAT'S AHEAD

Residential chemical use continues through private lawn care companies, and work to limit use of harmful chemicals through education and policy are the next steps ahead. The project will work to add more major institutions to the list of IPM/Non-Toxic policy holders.

*"As more people have become aware of the benefits of planting natives, such as increased populations of birds and pollinators, water conservation, and reducing the impact of climate change, we have witnessed a groundswell of support for this movement that's resulted in a wildlife corridor of more than 300 gardens in Oak Park and River Forest."*

***–Pamela Todd, Co-founder, West Cook Wild Ones***

# Oak Park and River Forest Sustainable Snapshots



## Energy—The Residences at Maple Place

The Residences at Maple Place is the first LEED Registered building of its type in western Chicagoland, utilizing best practices and groundbreaking technology to make it the most energy efficient multi-unit condo development in Oak Park.



## Waste—RF Curbside Food Scrap Collection

During the first year of River Forest's residential curbside composting service, 20.5 tons of organic material was diverted from the landfill.



## Community Development—Village of RF Parking Lot

The west part of River Forest has had flooding issues, which this lot was designed to address to improve infrastructure and storm water management.



## Transportation—Divvy

During its first year of implementation, Oak Park's DIVVY Bike System claimed over 350 active Oak Park members traveling about 8,200 trips within Oak Park and to or from Chicago.



## Water—Austin Gardens

Austin Gardens Environmental Education Center has solar panels and harvests rainwater through a cistern, diverting it for toilet flushing and irrigation of the children's garden.



## Economic Development—Oak Park Brewing Company

The Oak Park Brewing Company features antibiotic and hormone-free meat, solar-thermal panels and water re-capture for cooling in the brewing process.



## Education—D90 Green Roof

Lincoln School installed a 1,000 sq. ft. green roof in the summer of 2015 to improve energy cost savings, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and connect learning to the classroom.



## Food—All Ages + All Abilities Garden

The All Ages and All Abilities Garden – a project of Oak Leyden, Sugar Beet and the OP Park District at Cheney Mansion - has raised and donated more than 1,200 lbs of produce to the OPRF Food Pantry.



## Open Space/Ecosystems—Rush Oak Park Hospital's Healing Garden

The Rush Oak Park Hospital's Healing Garden took root on September 11th, containing native plants for pollinators and a beautiful place for visitors.

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# Aligning With Regional Goals

## Looking Toward the Future

The intention of PlanItGreen and this 2016 Community Sustainability Report Card is to drive change towards creating a sustainable and healthy Oak Park and River Forest – change that aligns with broader regional goals. The Sustainable Chicago Action Agenda and the CMAP GO TO 2040 Plan (metropolitan Chicago’s first regional plan in over 100 years) incorporate strong, regional goals that correlate to PlanItGreen goals and strategies. GO TO 2040 – now in the process of broadening through the ON TO 2050 Plan - addresses transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality of life issues, many which overlap with goals and strategies in the Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest. GO TO 2040 also specifically recommends that local

governments and communities implement policies to conserve water, manage storm water, and increase energy efficiency – key elements of the PlanItGreen platform. The Greenest Region Compact II – informed by PlanItGreen and other community plans across the metro area – represents another strategy reference point with which to align. Moving forward, PlanItGreen will use this report card to sharpen strategies and enroll leaders in further implementation and reporting – with an eye toward influencing “apples to apples” metrics across Chicago metro area communities in the hope of advancing regional collaboration and measurement that furthers our individual community and regional sustainability goals.

## Get Involved

### Contact [act@sevengenerationsahead.org](mailto:act@sevengenerationsahead.org) to:

- Join the PlanItGreen mailing list and access newsletters
- Attend events and participate in implementation teams
- Support PlanItGreen financially
- Make inquiries about the project

### Visit [www.sevengenerationsahead.org](http://www.sevengenerationsahead.org) to:

- Access the Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest
- Access the 2012, 2014 and 2016 Oak Park and River Forest Community Sustainability Report Cards

## Community Sustainability Report Card 2016 Acknowledgements

### Report Card Funding

Communityworks - Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation

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### Special Thanks

**Kristin Carlson Vogen**, President and CEO, OPRF Community Foundation

**The Communityworks Advisory Board** – and Co-chairs David Pope and John Houseal

### The OPRF Community Foundation Board

**CMAP** for their data aggregation support

**PlanItGreen Core Team** for its ongoing commitment and implementation

**Oak Park and River Forest Institutional Leaders** for their ongoing commitment and implementation