



# PARK DISTRICT of OAK PARK

PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK  
Committee of the Whole Meeting  
John Hedges Administrative Center  
218 Madison Street, Oak Park, Illinois 60302

Thursday, March 5, 2026  
Directly Following the Continued Regular Board Meeting

## AGENDA

- I. **Call to Order/Roll Call**
- II. **Public Comment**  
*Each person is limited to three minutes. The Board sets a limit of 30 minutes for public comments.*
- III. **Parks and Planning Committee** – Commissioner Worley-Hood
  - A. FOPCON Annual Update
  - B. Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee (ESAC) Update
  - C. Oak Park Conservatory Annual Report\*
  - D. MOU West Cook TreeKeepers\*
- IV. **Administration and Finance Committee** – Commissioner Wollmuth
- V. **Recreation and Facility Program Committee** – Commissioner Lentz
  - A. IGA PDOP/D97 Summer Camp\*
  - B. Referendum Update
- VI. **New Business**
- VII. **Closed Session**  
Motion to convene into closed session for the discussion of performance of a specific employee of the Park District.
- VIII. **Adjournment**

\* Indicates information attached.

\*\* Indicates information to be provided before or at the meeting.

Update/Presentation indicates verbal report provided at meeting no materials attached.

The Park District of Oak Park welcomes the opportunity to assist residents and visitors with disabilities. If you need special accommodations for this meeting, please call (708) 725-2017 or via email at [karen.gruszka@pdop.org](mailto:karen.gruszka@pdop.org).

*In partnership with the community, we enrich lives by providing meaningful experiences through programs, parks, and facilities.*



# PARK DISTRICT of OAK PARK

## Memo

**To:** Kassie Porreca, President,  
Board of Park Commissioners

**From:** Patti Staley, Director of Horticulture/Oak Park Conservatory

**Cc:** Jan Arnold, Executive Director

**Date:** February 25, 2026

**Re:** Annual Oak Park Conservatory Report

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### Statement

The Oak Park Conservatory has prepared the 2025 Facility Operations Report for the Oak Park Conservatory. During 2025, the Conservatory celebrated its 96<sup>th</sup> birthday and made many great strides in our parks and in our conservatory.

### Discussion

The 2025 Facility Operations Report for the Oak Park Conservatory highlights the strengths of the Conservatory's operations. This report is a synopsis of planning and significant changes that occurred in operations for the Conservatory and the parks. The impact of data presented in the report also demonstrates future growth and innovations with respect to revenue generation, expenses, education offerings, visitation, sustainability, and collaborations.

### Conclusion

The 2025 Facility Operations Report for the Oak Park Conservatory helps to demonstrate the value of the facility to the Park District of Oak Park system, the Village of Oak Park, and surrounding communities. Patti Staley will be present at the March 5, Committee of the Whole Meeting, to present a summarized version of the report and to answer any questions the Board may have.

#### Park District of Oak Park

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## **FACILITY OPERATIONS REPORT**

**January to December 2025**

**Prepared by:**

Patti Staley

Director of Horticulture/Conservatory Operations

Park District of Oak Park

March 2026

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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The Oak Park Conservatory continued to demonstrate strong community engagement and mission-driven growth in 2025. With more than 32,570 visitors, attendance remained consistently above 32,000 for the fourth consecutive year, a sustained increase of nearly 40% since 2021. Expanded programming, diversified plant markets, enhanced rental capacity through the installation of a seasonal garden tent, and continued collaboration with the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory all contributed to another impactful year.

Beyond the Conservatory walls, staff continued to advance park landscape management across the District. Efforts remained focused on highly visible, high-impact areas, with more than 1,500 native plants and perennials installed to strengthen plant health, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability in our parks. In 2026, the District will mark 10 years since park landscape maintenance transitioned from an outside contractor to in-house management, reflecting a decade of expanding internal expertise and stewardship. The completion of the Natural Resource Management Plan and Urban Forestry Plan, along with the development of a forthcoming Climate Action Plan, will provide guiding frameworks to shape future landscape strategy, environmental resilience, and sustainability priorities.

Financially, the Conservatory maintained solid cost control across most expense categories while supporting revenue growth in rentals, plant markets, and retail operations. Although total expenditures were above budget due primarily to payroll allocation discrepancies between departments, operational spending remained stable, contractual repair costs decreased significantly, and materials investments aligned with revenue performance. Rental revenue exceeded projections, gift shop and plant market sales continued multi-year growth trends, and programs and special events generated more than 7,200 participant experiences.

Facility improvements, strengthened partnerships, professional staff development, and measurable sustainability initiatives further positioned the Conservatory as both a historic landmark and a forward-looking environmental leader within the District. The following report outlines key outcomes across visitation, financial performance, partnerships, programming, staffing, facility stewardship, and sustainability efforts that collectively reflect a balanced approach to community access, earned revenue generation, environmental stewardship, and long-term operational planning.

## **VISITATION**

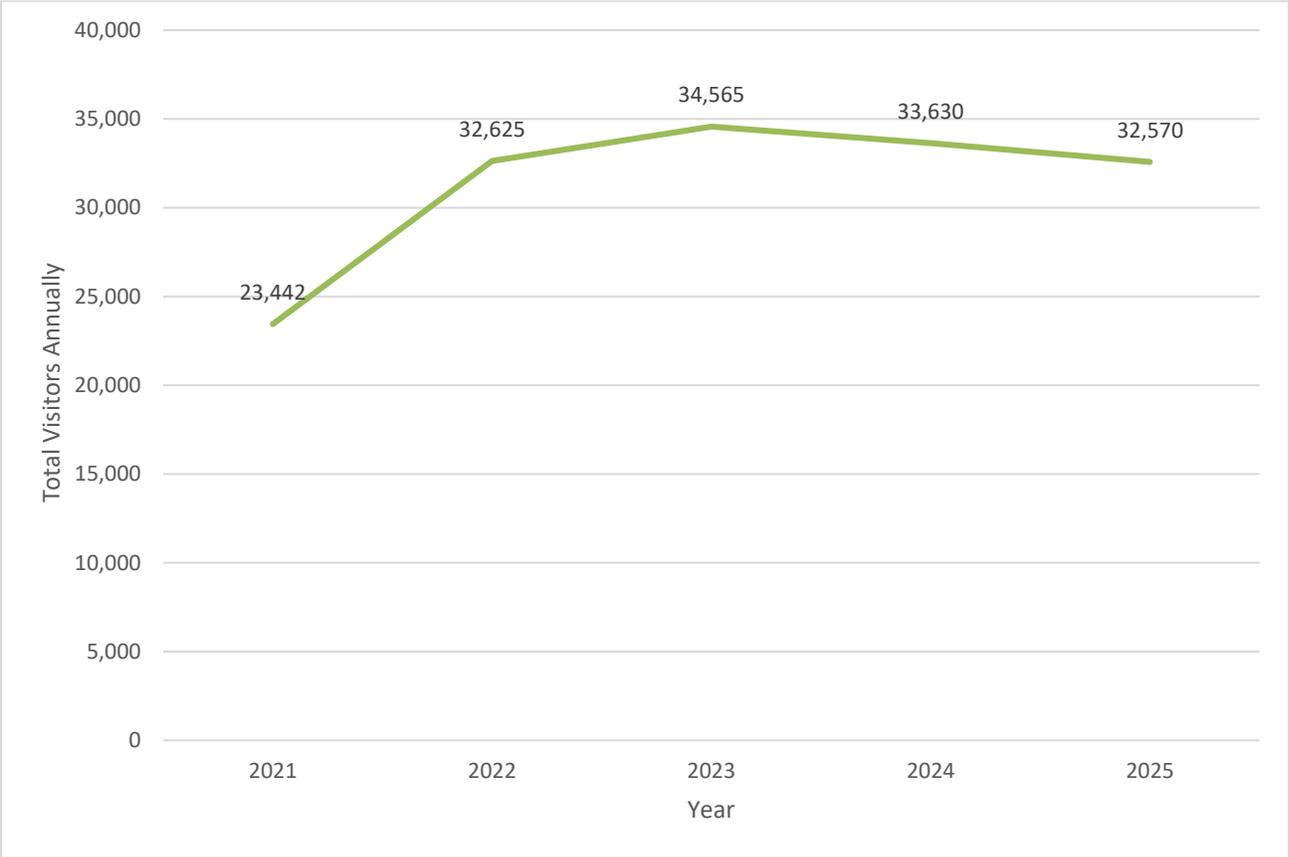
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### **Visitor Statistics**

The Oak Park Conservatory welcomed 32,570 visitors in 2025, a 3% decrease from 2024 (33,630). While slightly below the 2023 peak of 34,565, attendance has remained consistently above 32,000 for four consecutive years — a significant increase from 2021 (23,442) and an indication of sustained community engagement.

Seasonal trends remained consistent, with peak visitation occurring in the spring. April was the highest-attended month (3,637), followed by strong attendance in March and May. September recorded the lowest monthly total (1,929), with a rebound in October. Expanded special events, the return of the in-person FOPCON Plant Sale pickup, and a balanced mix of free and paid programming continued to support strong overall visitation throughout the year.

In 2025, to support the Conservatory’s ever-growing event numbers, a seasonal tent was installed in the Rubinstein Garden, expanding capacity for both community events and private rentals.



Year	Yearly Totals	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2021	23,442	392	1,679	2,597	2,803	2,308	2,606	2,001	1,832	1,247	2,223	1,520	2,234
2022	32,625	1,556	2,255	3,311	2,755	2,254	2,825	3,443	3,372	2,463	3,498	2,694	2,199
2023	34,565	2,413	2,584	3,633	3,376	3,094	3,986	3,359	3,159	2,796	2,175	2,113	1,876
2024	33,630	1,494	3,150	3,930	2,190	2,610	3,268	3,263	2,879	2,394	2,660	2,770	3,022
2025	32,570	2,176	2,593	3,342	3,637	3,235	2,814	3,092	2,954	1,929	2,535	1,959	2,304



## FINANCIAL REPORT

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### Expenses Categories

Total Conservatory expenditures in 2025 were \$477,322, representing an 11.78% increase over budget and a 7.4% increase over 2024 actuals. The overall variance is primarily attributable to wage allocation discrepancies, while several other categories were under budget.

#### Wages

Wages totaled \$270,762, which is 56.24% over budget and 34.58% higher than 2024. This variance is due to a misallocation of payroll expenses during the year. A portion of staff wages that should have been charged to the Parks & Properties budget was instead charged to the Conservatory budget. As a result, Conservatory wages appear significantly over budget, while Parks & Properties wages appear correspondingly under budget.

Wages remain the largest expense category overall and reflect the labor-intensive nature of horticulture operations, public programming, plant production, and facility management.

#### Contractual Services

Contractual services totaled \$28,773, coming in 50.81% under budget and 47.03% lower than 2024. The reduction reflects fewer unplanned repair costs compared to 2024, when HVAC and expenses were elevated. This also reflects contractual cleaning moving to be performed by District employees. This year-over-year decline demonstrates investment in replacement and maintenance as opposed to reactionary maintenance.

#### Materials & Supplies

Materials and supplies totaled \$75,376, which is 13.85% under budget but 13.96% higher than in 2024. The year-over-year increase aligns with expanded plant production and retail inventory to support strong gift shop and plant market revenue. Spending remained controlled relative to the budget while supporting revenue growth.

#### Utilities

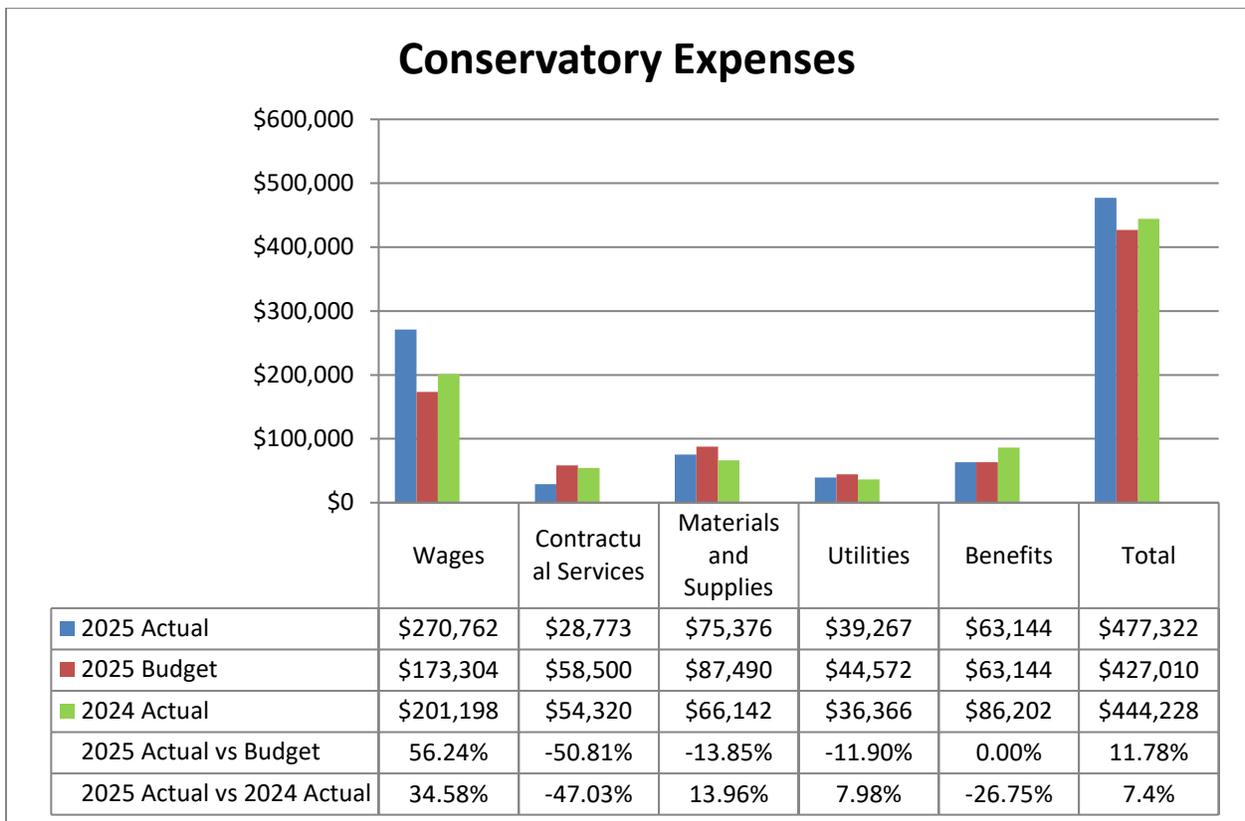
Utility expenses were \$39,267, finishing at 11.9% under budget and 7.98% above 2024 actuals. While energy costs increased modestly year over year, conservative budgeting and efficiency measures helped contain overall utility expenditures. Long-term capital improvements, including future reglazing and hvac improvements, remain part of the District's strategy to stabilize utility costs.

#### Benefits

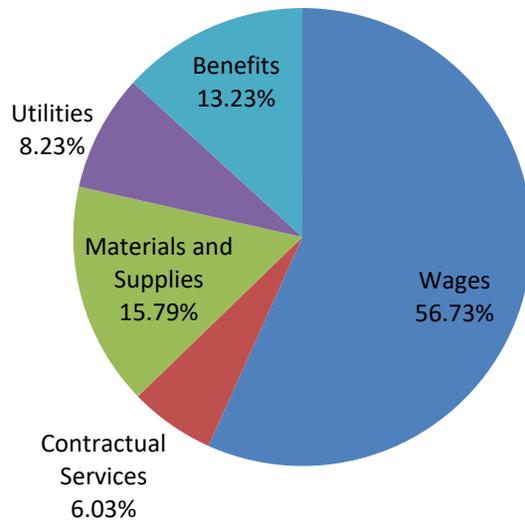
Benefits totaled \$63,144, consistent with budget and 26.75% lower than 2024, reflecting staffing structure changes.

## Financial Summary

Overall, the Conservatory maintained strong cost control in 2025, with most categories performing under budget. The increase in total expenditures is primarily the result of wage allocation discrepancies rather than operational overspending. Reduced contractual repair costs and controlled materials spending demonstrate improved operational stability while continuing to support program delivery and retail growth.



## 2025 Conservatory Expenses by Category



### Revenue Sources

In 2025, the Conservatory's primary revenue streams were rentals and gift shop/plant market sales, which were nearly equal in total contribution. Both categories performed strongly and reflect continued demand for facility use and mission-driven retail programming.

### Gift Shop & Plant Market Revenue

Gift shop revenue has grown 52% over the past five years, maintaining an average profit margin exceeding 50%, outperforming the typical 10–20% industry growth rate for garden-based retail operations. Strategic efforts in 2025 focused on expanding product availability and strengthening marketing, contributing to continued revenue growth.

Plant markets remain a key driver. Notable year-over-year increases included:

- Fall Mum & Bulb Sale: +25%
- Pollinator Perennial Sale: +13%
- Winter Greens Market: +7%

The Winter Greens Market continues to be the largest single revenue generator (\$33,543), followed by the Fall Mum & Bulb Sale (\$13,008) and Pollinator Perennial Sale (\$11,752). Additional specialty markets and plant sales, including the Succulent & Cacti Sale, Valentine's Market, and Winter Seed Sale, further diversified revenue while aligning with educational programming and free lectures.

Collectively, plant sales reinforce the Conservatory's sustainability mission while generating strong earned revenue.

## **Rentals & Facility Use**

Rental revenue exceeded budget projections by 25% in 2025. The addition of the seasonal tent in the Rubinstein Garden significantly strengthened the Conservatory's competitive position by eliminating the need for renters to secure outside tenting and increasing usable event space. Rental rates were adjusted to reflect this enhancement.

The Conservatory hosted 108 rentals with no cancellations, serving an estimated 3,800+ guests. Weddings (16), memorial services (13), birthday celebrations, private events, nonprofit gatherings, and corporate meetings demonstrate diverse community use. Demand for the Rubinstein Room remains strong and continues to limit availability for children's birthday party packages (26 hosted in 2025).

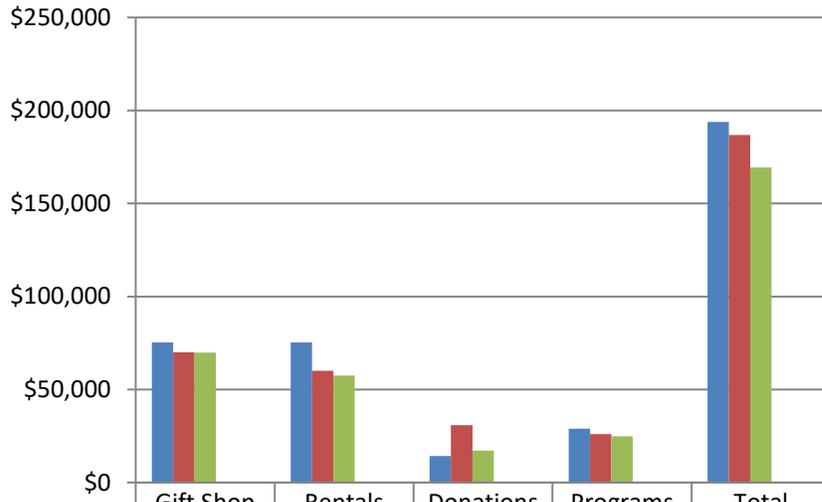
Additionally, 26 photography permits were issued, ensuring professional sessions did not interfere with daily visitor experience or private events.

## **Programs & Donations**

Program revenue exceeded budget expectations. While most Conservatory programs hosted by FOPCON remain free to the public, revenue-generating events, including Fright at Night, Candlelight Walk, Winter Greens workshops, and Uncorked, contributed positively to the operating budget. Additional "Sip & Shop" and workshop offerings are planned for 2026 to further leverage plant market traffic.

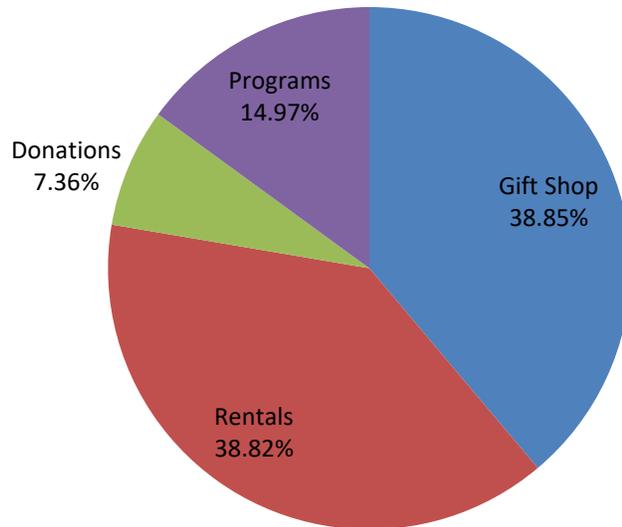
Donations were slightly below budget. A portion of this line reflects FOPCON contributions (12% of FOPCON revenue dedicated to the Conservatory). While funds are earmarked, they have not yet been drawn down pending identification of a larger future capital project.

## Conservatory Revenues



	Gift Shop	Rentals	Donations	Programs	Total
■ 2025 Actual	\$75,282	\$75,222	\$14,261	\$29,000	\$193,765
■ 2025 Budget	\$70,000	\$60,000	\$30,784	\$26,025	\$186,809
■ 2024 Actual	\$69,817	\$57,588	\$17,132	\$24,874	\$169,411
2025 Actual vs Budget	7.5%	25.4%	-53.7%	11.4%	3.7%
2025 Actual vs 2024 Actual	7.8%	29.4%	-9.3%	15.9%	13.0%

## 2025 Conservatory Revenues by Category



## **COLLABORATIONS**

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### **Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory (FOPCON)**

The Conservatory's primary community partner is the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory (FOPCON), which has supported the Conservatory for 38 years through volunteer engagement, educational outreach, and financial support. The partnership continues to strengthen public awareness of the Conservatory while providing meaningful operational and financial support.

In 2025, the Friends' annual plant sale, conducted collaboratively with the Park District, sold more than 8,000 plants, generating FOPCON \$59,157 in gross revenue and \$39,865 net. This event remains a significant community engagement and fundraising initiative.

### **Financial Contributions & Future Capital Support**

Under the PACT agreement, FOPCON earmarks 12% of its annual revenue for Conservatory-related projects. As of 2025, the following funds have been dedicated for future Park District-requested initiatives:

- \$17,041 (FY2023 revenue)
- \$18,900 (FY2024 revenue)
- \$19,331 (FY2025 revenue)

These reserved funds position the Conservatory to support future larger-scale capital improvements and historic restoration projects as they are identified and prioritized by the District.

In 2025, FOPCON also provided direct financial support for:

- Discovery Garden pump replacement
- Seasonal tent contribution
- Showroom enhancements
- Fall Fest sponsorship
- Beneficial biocontrols for plant production
- 50% cost share of the copier lease

### **Volunteer Impact**

FOPCON volunteers contributed over 4,000 hours in 2025 across plant care, education, special events, operations, and committee work, the equivalent of nearly 2.5 full-time employees. Volunteer engagement remains a valuable aspect of the partnership, directly enhancing programming capacity and horticultural care.

## **Partnership & Governance**

The Director of Horticulture and a Park District board member serve as liaisons to FOPCON, ensuring alignment between District priorities and Friends initiatives. In December 2025, the Park District and FOPCON renewed a one-year PACT agreement while continuing discussions toward a future long-term framework that balances financial sustainability, governance clarity, and shared goals.

## **PROGRAMS & SPECIAL EVENTS**

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In 2025, the Conservatory and FOPCON hosted programs and special events that generated more than 7,200 participant experiences, reflecting strong community demand and diverse engagement opportunities across age groups.

A mix of virtual and in-person programming expanded access and attracted new visitors. A new Lunar New Year celebration, presented in partnership with Brookfield Zoo, broadened cultural programming and drew 366 attendees. Expanded “take-and-make” offerings during the Winter Greens Market responded directly to increased demand.

Signature events remained major attendance drivers. Fall Fest drew an estimated 2,000 participants, while Fright at Night (531), Candlelight Walk (430), KidsFest (376), and Uncorked (401) continued to perform strongly. Early childhood and family-focused programs demonstrated steady engagement, including Story Time (400+), Toddler Exploration Time (350), and Discovery Garden Exploration Time (461).

Free community offerings remained a priority, including seven free nature and gardening programs (491 participants), the Shamrock Scavenger Hunt (275), Community Seed Exchange (100), Weekly Plant Help Desk (100), and Spring and Fall Plant & Tools Exchanges (93). Fee-based programs, such as our special events & Winter Greens Market workshops, helped to serve cost recovery goals.

Educational outreach also remained strong, with 49 tours serving more than 869 participants and 25 homes supported through the Quick Sketch Garden Design program.

Collectively, these efforts reflect a balanced strategy of revenue generation, free community access, educational impact, and new partnership-driven initiatives.

## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

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The Oak Park Conservatory team serves a dual role: managing daily Conservatory operations while overseeing landscape maintenance and tree care across 25 parks and facilities. Staff advanced the District’s core values, particularly sustainability, while delivering a welcoming, high-quality visitor experience to more than 32,000 annual guests.

The Conservatory is supported by four full-time staff (Director of Horticulture, Horticulture Supervisor, Greenhouse Supervisor, and Landscape Technician), along with part-time and seasonal team members who support customer service, rentals, greenhouse production, and park landscape operations. Two additional seasonal employees assisted with summer park maintenance.

All staff-maintained CPR/AED and First Aid certifications and completed required District and PDRMA trainings in 2025. Full-time Conservatory staff actively serve on District committees, including Sustainability, Innovation, DEI, and the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Committee.

## **2025 Highlights & Professional Achievements**

### **Director of Horticulture – Patti Staley**

- Oversaw Conservatory operations and park landscape maintenance, including natural areas at Lindberg, Austin Gardens, Field Park, and the Taylor wetland
- Managed FY2025 Conservatory budget
- Coordinated major events and plant markets, including Fall Fest, Fright at Night, Candlelight Walk, Winter Greens Market, Valentine Market, Succulent & Cacti Sale, and Mum & Bulb Sale
- Served as PDOP liaison to ESAC and chaired the staff Sustainability Committee
- Collaborated weekly with the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory (FOPCON)

### **Horticulture Supervisor – Jen Suszek**

- Directed Park landscape maintenance and district-wide tree care
- Managed the Memorial Tree Program
- Planned Arbor Day and Maple Sugar Fest
- Maintained arborist certification and obtained Illinois Pesticide Applicator License
- Member, Sustainability Committee

### **Greenhouse Supervisor – Dusan Lepojevic**

- Oversaw Conservatory collections and production greenhouses
- Supervised plant care volunteers
- Supported special events and plant sales
- Earned associate degree in Horticulture (highest honors), College of DuPage
- Member, DEI Committee

### **Landscape & Conservatory Staff**

- Maintained Park natural areas and assisted with tree planting and pruning
- Supported Conservatory collection care and major events

- Attended professional development, including Landscape Illinois Conference
- Obtained Illinois Pesticide Operator Licenses
- Participated in Innovation Committee initiatives

### **Customer Service Team**

- Coordinated 63 rentals, 26 birthday parties, and 22 photography permits
- Managed Adopt-a-Parrot and Daffodil Memorial programs
- Greeted and assisted more than 32,000 visitors
- Supported special events and plant markets

## **FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS**

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Following the completion of significant capital and historic restoration projects in 2023-2024, this year focused on targeted infrastructure improvements that protect our assets and maintain the Conservatory's facility.

The following facility improvements were completed in 2025:

- Facility door replacement
- Tuckpointing of the Conservatory structure to support long-term masonry preservation
- Discovery Garden water feature pump replacement
- Rubinstein Room flooring and office renovations
- Installation of a seasonal tent in the Rubinstein Garden to enhance program and rental flexibility

The District is well-positioned to balance maintenance, capital project, and historic restoration needs for the facility. Looking ahead, staff continue to evaluate and prioritize future historic restoration and capital projects needs to ensure the long-term sustainability of this historic landmark facility while continuing to enhance visitor experience and operational efficiency.

## **SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES**

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In 2025, the Oak Park Conservatory advanced district-wide sustainability through measurable environmental impact, community engagement, and long-term planning.

- **Solar Production:** Generated 24.1 MWh of clean energy — equivalent to planting 289 trees.
- **Urban Forestry & Tree Care:** Developed a District-wide Urban Forestry Plan; planted 62 new trees; conducted dormant pruning on 494 trees across six parks; and installed educational "I'm New Here" signage to promote awareness of new and memorial trees.
- **Native & Pollinator Support:** Grew and installed more than 1,500 native plants and perennials across parks; sold 700+ pollinator plants, fully offsetting the cost of pollinator

installations; redesigned and expanded a pollinator garden at Cheney Mansion; and planted 3,600+ tulips and daffodils.

- **Water Conservation:** Utilized drip irrigation systems to improve water-use efficiency.
- **Waste Reduction & Reuse:** FOPCON volunteers sanitized and reused plastic plant containers weekly; seasonal plant and tool exchanges collected additional pots for reuse; and 15% of single-use plastic pots were replaced with USDA-certified biodegradable CowPots during the annual plant sale.
- **Community Education & Engagement:** Hosted an Arbor Day event with Village and community partners; provided three staff sustainability “Lunch & Learn” trainings; offered park and natural area tours; and served more than 100 residents through the weekly Free Plant Help Desk.
- **Access & Community Gardening:** Installed accessible pathways to support future community vegetable gardens.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect a comprehensive approach to renewable energy, urban forestry, waste reduction, water conservation, habitat expansion, and environmental education, reinforcing the Conservatory’s leadership in sustainability across the District.

## **LOOKING FORWARD – 2026**

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In 2026, the implementation of innovations and sustainability initiatives is well underway and expected to have a positive impact on how we serve the community.

The following are projects, initiatives, and procedural improvements that the Oak Park Conservatory will be investigating, evaluating, and implementing in 2026: Continue facility door replacement & tuckpointing, HVAC improvements, Rubinstein Garden bluestone patio resetting, installation of new raised vegetable beds at Cheney Mansion community garden prescribed fire to maintain our park’s natural areas.



# PARK DISTRICT of OAK PARK



## Memo

**To:** Jake Worley-Hood, Parks and Planning Committee  
Park Board of Commissioners

**From:** Patti Staley, Director of Horticulture/Oak Park Conservatory

**Cc:** Jan Arnold, Executive Director

**Date:** February 25, 2026

**Re:** Memorandum of Agreement – West Cook TreeKeepers

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### Statement

The Park District of Oak Park has received a Memorandum of Agreement with Openlands and the West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter to formalize a partnership Tree stewardship in our parks.

### Discussion

Under this agreement, Openlands provides program structure, training resources, and volunteer tracking support; West Cook TreeKeepers lead stewardship and education efforts, and the Park District provides authorization, coordination, and in-kind support of tolls, mulch, facilities, and outreach. The agreement establishes a three-year term (with extension option), includes no financial obligation beyond each party's own expenses, and may be terminated by either party with 30 days' written notice.

### Recommendation

This partnership strengthens volunteer engagement in our parks, expands tree care efforts, and supports long-term urban forest sustainability within our parks.

### Park District of Oak Park

218 Madison Street ▪ Oak Park, Illinois 60302 ▪ ph: (708) 725-2000 ▪ fx: (708) 383-5702 ▪ [www.pdop.org](http://www.pdop.org)

## **MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT WITH PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK, OPENLANDS, WEST COOK TREEKEEPERS**

This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is made effective as of [DATE], by and between PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK, a special purpose government located in Cook County, Illinois, Openlands, (OPENLANDS), an Illinois not-for-profit land conservation organization, and leadership members of West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter (TKS), (Parties) upon the following terms and conditions. This MOA, signed PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK, TKS, and OPENLANDS, acknowledges that each signatory is committed to the Chapter elements listed below.

### **Overview**

*Openlands is expanding its TreeKeepers® program through Openlands TreeKeepers® Chapters allowing the use of the name and registered trademark, program best practices and models, and coordination of TreeKeepers and their local park district. TreeKeeper Chapters aims to increase local public involvement in long-term tree stewardship through community, tree care events, and education. Chapter members will work with the park district to identify local concerns, decide priorities, advocate tree preservation and tree care, promote education in the community, and organize workdays.*

The goals are to develop a Chapter that results in:

- a significant and sustained increase in engagement with park districts and municipalities (measured, for example, by number of volunteers, number of volunteer hours; number of trees mulched, pruned, etc.)
- TreeKeeper Chapters becoming leaders in diverse tree stewardship activities in their communities.

### **Openlands' Intention for West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter operating in Oak Park:**

Openlands has created and taught the Openlands TreeKeepers program since 1991 through which it has trained over 2,000 people to become citizen stewards of the urban forest. Openlands believes that trees can be the entryway to connect people to a long-term passion for the environment. This connection leads to stewards advancing their studies of trees and the environment, leadership in the communities where they live by engaging their fellow neighbors in hands-on work and education and using their skills to advocate for trees with their local governments.

### **PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK Intention for West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter**

The PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK plants trees each year on parkland and hopes to work with residents to care for new and existing trees. By partnering with Openlands and offering support to TKS, PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK intends to serve as a critical link fostering leadership to sustain the Park District's trees by supporting TKs development as tree experts, stewards, and advocates.

## **TKS Intention for West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter activities with PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK**

The TKS are leading on-the-ground stewardship and advocacy to improve the vitality and sustainability of their Park District's trees. By offering opportunities for education, coordinated events with PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK, and stewardship, TKS will be able to serve as a critical link fostering leadership to sustain the region's trees and educate their fellow citizens.

### **Duration**

This MOA shall govern the parties from [DESIRED DATES OF TERM, TYPICALLY 3-YEAR INTERVALS] and may be extended upon written agreement by the representative of both parties

### **Termination**

Failure to comply with this MOA will result in termination of the Openlands West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter program with PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK and TKS. In addition, either party may terminate the MOA upon 30-days written notice.

### **Funding**

Each party shall be responsible for its own expenses.

### **Responsibilities and Obligations**

#### OPENLANDS' Role:

- Share the current toolkit for TreeKeeper Chapters.
- Openlands will help support outreach with West Cook TreeKeepers by providing information about TKS in the TreeKeepers Newsletters.
- Openlands will work with TKS and PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK on Openlands Volunteer Management Software (CERVIS) to create events, register volunteers, and track their hours.
- Reconnect with TKS and PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK at an appropriate number of meetings per year to review the plans, best practices, potential grants, and any changes to the Chapter and this agreement.

#### PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK Role: As a supporting partner of West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter, PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK will:

- Permit TreeKeepers to steward trees and lead volunteers in public spaces; activities including mulching, pruning, planting, inventorying, and other activities as appropriate.
- Support TreeKeepers activities with mulch, tools, and facilities as appropriate.
- Help support outreach and information about the TKS Chapter on PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK 's website and social media as appropriate.
- When referring to Openlands TreeKeepers or TreeKeepers in any public relations and/or documentation or materials, TreeKeepers will need to be referenced at least once with the name "Openlands TreeKeepers®" with the Registered trademark symbol.
- PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK does not have the authority to share the

Openlands TreeKeepers name and materials with any organization that is not also a supporting partner of Openlands' TreeKeepers without Openlands prior written approval.

TKS Role: As a supporting partner of West Cook TreeKeepers Chapter, TKS will:

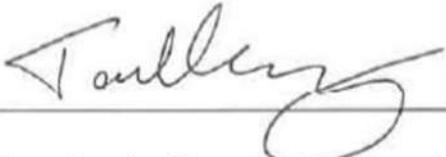
- Inform Openlands of general activities and events for Openlands to promote and support.
- Plan events based on guidance received from PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK.
- Share TKS cumulative volunteer hours and number of events on a monthly basis and/ or through CERVIS.
- When referring to Openlands TreeKeepers or TreeKeepers in any public relations and/or documentation or materials, TreeKeepers will need to be referenced at least once with the name "Openlands TreeKeepers®" with the Registered trademark symbol.
- TKS does not have the authority to share the Openlands TreeKeepers name and materials with any organization that is not also a supporting partner of Openlands' TreeKeepers without Openlands' prior written approval.

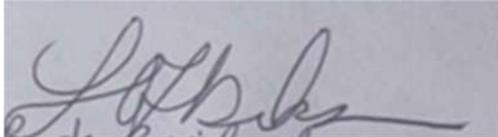
**Notice**

Any notice given by either party to the other pursuant to the provisions of this MOA is deemed to have been given when deposited in the U.S. Mail addressed to the other party at the address stated below or at such other address as each may designate by written notice to the other This MOA supersedes all prior or contemporaneous offers, negotiations and agreements (whether oral or written) between the Parties.

**AGREED AND ACCEPTED:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Park District of Oak Park, Executive Director, Jan Arnold

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date  
Openlands Director of Forestry, Tom Ebeling

  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2/19/2026  
West Cook Certified TreeKeeper, Laura Derks Date



# PARK DISTRICT of OAK PARK



## Memo

**To:** Sandy Lentz, Recreation and Facility Program Committee  
Board of Park Commissioners

**From:** Maureen McCarthy, Deputy Director of Recreation

**Cc:** Jan Arnold, Executive Director

**Date:** February 24, 2026

**Re:** D97/PDOP Summer Camp Intergovernmental Agreement

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### Statement

There has been a tradition of excellent cooperation between Elementary School District 97 and the Park District of Oak Park, and we desire to continue and to enhance that tradition. In order to best continue this tradition of cooperation, The Park District and School District are partnering on a summer camp initiative for families of children in grades 1 – 5 who receive free and reduced lunch.

The Park District will provide up to two weeks of day camp for free for reduced lunch families. The Park District will utilize our financial assistance program that allows families a discount based on their free or reduced lunch status. The School District will pay the remaining portion of the fees. D97 contributed \$28,367 in 2025 and the PDOP contributed \$26,123 from the financial assistance fund.

### Discussion

Staff from each District met to review IGA. We believe this program will assist some of our most vulnerable families with needed summer camp programs. We expect to serve families we have not served in the past and hope relationships are built that encourage further participation with Park District programs and services.

### Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board of Commissioners approve the attached D97/PDOP Intergovernmental Agreement for summer camp services for summer 2026.

## **INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT**

**THIS INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT** (“Agreement”) is made and entered into this 27th day of January, 2026 between the Park District of Oak Park, an Illinois municipal corporation (hereinafter referred to as the "Park District") and the Board of Education of Oak Park Elementary School District 97 (hereinafter referred to as the “School District”) (also collectively referred to as the “Parties” and individually as “Party”).

### **RECITALS**

**WHEREAS**, the School District and the Park District are units of local government as defined in Article VII, Section 1, of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, and public agencies as that term is defined in Section 2 of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act, 5 ILCS 220/2; and

**WHEREAS**, Article VII, Section 10, of the Illinois Constitution of 1970 provides units of local government to contract or otherwise associate among themselves to obtain or share services and to exercise, combine or transfer any power or function in any manner not prohibited by law or by ordinance and to use their credit, revenues and other resources to pay costs related to intergovernmental activities; and

**WHEREAS**, the Illinois Intergovernmental Cooperation Act (5 ILCS 220/1 *et seq.*) further provides any power or powers, privileges, functions, or authority exercised or which may be exercised by a public agency of this State may be exercised, combined, transferred, and enjoyed jointly with any other public agency of this State; and

**WHEREAS**, the Park District has an established and robust Summer Camp program that consists of multiple options and offerings for children to attend age-appropriate summer camp programs of varying interests and lengths; and

**WHEREAS**, the Parties desire to provide for the cost-sharing of summer camp fees for the School District's students in grades K-4 who qualify for the free and reduced-priced meal program to attend two weeks of camp of their choosing;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, in consideration of these recitals and the terms and conditions of this Agreement, and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged by the Parties, the Parties agree as follows:

1. **INCORPORATION OF RECITALS.** The above recitals are incorporated into this Agreement.
2. **COST SHARING.** The Park District agrees to pay up to 75% of camp fees for eligible K-4 School District students, to be determined based on individual student’s level of eligibility for the free and reduced meal program, for the School District’s students to attend

two weeks of summer camp of their choosing. The School District agrees to cover any remaining costs associated with eligible students' camp attendance over the aforementioned two week period.

**3. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY.** In order to be eligible for the cost sharing provisions under this Agreement, students must be eligible for the Free and Reduced Meal Program. The Parties acknowledge that disclosing a student's eligibility for the Free and Reduced Meal Program without parental or legal guardian's consent is prohibited by 7 CFR 245.6(i) and agree to abide by the disclosure requirements under the National School Lunch Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 1751 et seq.

The Park District shall obtain written consent from the student's parent or guardian for the School District to disclose a student's eligibility for the Free and Reduced Meal program through verification with the School District by including the following language in the PDOP Financial Assistance 2026 application:

**I agree to allow Oak Park School District 97 to disclose my child's eligibility for the Free and Reduced Meal Program to the Park District of Oak Park for the limited purpose of verifying financial assistance eligibility.**

**I further understand that if I consent to this disclosure, neither the Oak Park School District 97 nor the Park District of Oak Park will share this information with any other entity or program.**

**I understand that refusing to allow Oak Park School District 97 to disclose my child's eligibility will not affect my student's eligibility to participate in the Free and Reduced Meal Program or the Park District of Oak Park Financial Assistance program.**

**If I refuse to consent to this disclosure, I may attach documentation confirming eligibility for the Free and Reduced Meal Program to this application.**

The Park District shall not use this information for any purpose other than for which it has obtained prior written consent from the student's parent or legal guardian or for any other purposes contained outside this Agreement. Prior to the School District confirming a student's eligibility, the Park District shall provide the School District with documentation signed by the student's parent or legal guardian so that the School District can confirm proper consent was provided.

**4. FURTHER ACTS.** Each party shall, at the request and expense of the other, execute and deliver any further documents and do all acts and things as that party may reasonably be required to carry out the true intent and meaning of this Agreement.

**5. NO THIRD PARTY BENEFICIARIES.** This Agreement is not intended to confer any right upon any third party who is not a Party to this Agreement.

6. **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR.** The Parties acknowledge that each is an independent contractor and that the Park District alone retains control of the manner and means of conducting its summer camp program activities in furtherance of this Agreement. The Park District, as well as any persons or agents it may employ, are not employees of the School District, and neither this Agreement nor the administration thereof shall operate to render or deem either Party hereto the agent, partner, or employee of the other.

7. **TERM AND TERMINATION.** The term of this Agreement shall commence on the date of the last Party to sign this Agreement and shall continue until August 31, 2026 unless terminated in writing by both Parties. If any Party breaches the terms of this Agreement and fails to cure said breach within thirty (30) days of a receipt of a written notice of breach, then this Agreement shall terminate as to the breaching Party immediately thereafter but shall continue in full force and effect, to the extent applicable, as to the non-breaching Party. A Party who has provided such notice of termination shall not be entitled to any refund or reimbursement for any costs paid pursuant to this Agreement and shall be responsible to pay any and all cost obligations under this Agreement through the effective date of the termination. Either Party may terminate this agreement for any reason by providing sixty (60) days notice to the other Party.

8. **INDEMNIFICATION.** Each Party shall indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the other Parties from all claims, demands, causes of action, losses, liabilities, damages, penalties, fines, and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees and court costs, which are incurred by another Party, but only to the extent arising from the indemnifying Party's breach of this Agreement or negligence.

9. **SCOPE OF LIABILITY.** The Parties acknowledge that the School District's sole responsibilities under this agreement are to share the cost of summer camp program fees for eligible students and to verify students' eligibility for the Free and Reduced Meal Program. The Park District shall not hold the School District liable for any injuries, losses, damages, or claims incurred in during its administration and operation of summer camp programs.

10. **NO ASSIGNMENT OR DELEGATION.** Each Party represents and warrants that it has not and will not assign, sublet or transfer any rights or obligations under this Agreement. Nothing herein shall be construed as creating any personal liability on the part of any officer or agent of any public body that may not be a party hereto, nor shall it be construed as giving any right or benefits hereunder to anyone other than the Park District and the School District.

11. **ADVICE OF COUNSEL AND UNDERSTANDING OF AGREEMENT.** The Parties each understand their right to discuss all aspects of this Agreement with their legal counsel and have done so if desired. The Parties acknowledge that they have carefully read and fully understand all provisions of this Agreement.

12. **BINDING EFFECT AND INTERPRETATION.** The Parties intend this Agreement to

be legally binding. This Agreement shall bind and inure to the benefit of the Parties and their legal representatives, successors and assigns. The provisions of this Agreement are severable and no provision shall be affected by the invalidity of any other provision. This Agreement has been jointly drafted by the Parties, and in the event any court determines any provision of this Agreement to be ambiguous, the ambiguity shall not be construed against any Party.

13. **COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS.** The Parties shall comply with all federal, state, county and municipal laws, rules and regulations that apply to the performance of each party's respective obligations under this Agreement.

14. **AMENDMENTS AND MODIFICATIONS.** This Agreement may be modified or amended from time to time by the authorized representatives of the Park District and the School District, provided, however, that no such amendment or modification shall be effective unless reduced to writing and duly authorized and signed by the authorized representative of the Park District and the authorized representative of the School District.

15. **SAVINGS CLAUSE.** If any provision of this Agreement, or the application of such provision, shall be rendered or declared invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, or by reason of its requiring any steps, actions or results, the remaining parts or portions of this Agreement shall remain in full force and effect.

16. **CAPTIONS AND SECTION HEADINGS.** Captions and section headings are for convenience only and are not a part of this Agreement and shall not be used in construing it.

17. **NON-WAIVER OF RIGHTS.** No failure of either Party to exercise any power given to it hereunder or to insist upon strict compliance by the other Party with its obligations hereunder, and no custom or practice of the Parties at variance with the terms hereof, shall constitute a waiver of either Party's right to demand exact compliance with the terms hereof.

18. **NOTICES, INVOICES AND COMMUNICATIONS.** All notices, invoices or other communications under or in respect to this Agreement shall be in writing and sent by United States mail, personal service or by electronic transmission to the persons and addresses indicated below, or said persons designees who shall be designated in writing pursuant to this Section, or to such addresses and persons as either party hereto shall notify the other party of in writing pursuant to the provisions of this subsection:

**TO THE PARK DISTRICT:**

Jan Arnold  
Executive Director  
Park District of Oak Park  
229 Madison St.  
Oak Park, Illinois 60302  
Fax: (708) 725-2000

**TO SCHOOL DISTRICT 97:**

Patrick Robinson  
Interim Superintendent  
Oak Park ESD 97  
260 Madison St.  
Oak Park, Illinois 60302  
Fax: (708) 524-3000

Email:

Email: [probinson@op97.org](mailto:probinson@op97.org)

With a Copy to:

Robbins Schwartz  
Attn: Matthew J. Gardner  
190 South LaSalle Street, Suite 2550  
Chicago, IL 60603-3410

Mailing of such notice as and when above provided shall be equivalent to personal notice and shall be deemed to have been given at the time of mailing. Notice by electronic transmission shall be effective as of date and time of electronic transmission, provided that the notice transmitted shall be sent on business days during business hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Chicago time). In the event electronic notice is transmitted during non-business hours, the effective date and time of notice is the first hour of the first business day after transmission.

19. **CONFIDENTIALITY.** In connection with this Agreement, the Park District or the School District may provide the other Party with confidential information regarding eligibility for free or reduced meal programs or other such information that a Party may deem confidential. The receiving Party agrees to: (i) treat and to obligate its employees or agents to treat as confidential all such information; (ii) not to disclose any such information to any person, company or corporation or use the same in any manner whatsoever without first obtaining the other Party's written approval; (iii) not to disclose to the other Party any information obtained from a third party on a confidential basis unless written permission is received from such third party to disclose such information; (iv) limit the exposure of confidential information to only those employees with a need to know. Nothing in this Section shall limit or restrict a Party from producing such information if required pursuant to a court order, subpoena, or valid Freedom of Information Act request. The Parties will coordinate and cooperate to address any legal objections or response to such court order, subpoena, or Freedom of Information Act request.

20. **ENTIRE AGREEMENT.** This Agreement sets forth all the covenants, conditions and promises between the parties. There are no covenants, promises, agreements, conditions or understandings between the Parties, either oral or written, other than those contained in this Agreement.

21. **GOVERNING LAW AND VENUE.** The laws of the State of Illinois shall apply to the interpretation of this Agreement. Venue for any action taken by either the Park District or the School District to enforce the terms of this Agreement shall be in the Circuit Court of the Cook County, Illinois.

22. **BINDING AUTHORITY.** The individuals executing this Agreement on behalf of the Parties represent that they have the legal power, right, and actual authority to bind their respective Party to the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

23. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** The effective date of this Agreement as reflected above shall be the last date that it is executed by one of the Parties as reflected below.

24. **COUNTERPARTS; FACSIMILE OR PDF SIGNATURES.** This Agreement shall be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be considered an original and together shall be one and the same Agreement. A facsimile or pdf/email copy of this Agreement and any signatures thereon will be considered for all purposes as an original.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be signed by their duly authorized representatives on the dates set forth below.

**PARK DISTRICT OF OAK PARK**

**OAK PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT 97**

\_\_\_\_\_  
By:  
Its: Executive Director

*Patrick CL Robinson*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
By: Patrick Robinson  
Its: Interim Superintendent

Date: \_\_\_\_\_, 2026

Date: **Feb 17, 2026**, 2026