

PROCLAMATION

National Small Business Week

May 3 – 9, 2026

WHEREAS, National Small Business Week, officially recognized in the United States beginning in 1963, honors the vital role of small businesses in creating jobs, growing the economy, and anchoring our communities; and

WHEREAS, small businesses continue to serve as the engine of the American economy, employing approximately 62 million workers and contributing \$6 trillion in annual economic activity; and

WHEREAS, data analysis by *Capital One Shopping* has determined that, by shopping at local small businesses, \$68 out of every \$100 spent remains in that respective community; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago metropolitan area is home to more than one million small businesses, constituting 99.6% of all businesses in the region, including more than 30,000 veteran-owned, 420,000 minority-owned, and 450,000 woman-owned businesses; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Oak Park is home to twelve (12) defined and distinct business districts, each offering a unique experience for residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Oak Park is committed to ensuring a diverse, equitable, inclusive, and business-friendly environment with opportunities for entrepreneurs and workers of all backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, the strength of Oak Park's small business ecosystem is supported by dedicated community partners, whose leadership and longstanding commitment have helped local businesses access critical financing, navigate economic challenges, and remain connected to the broader community; and

WHEREAS, during National Small Business Week, the Village of Oak Park, in partnership with the Oak Park–River Forest Chamber of Commerce and Dominican University's Brennan School of Business, is hosting a series of free events designed to support, empower, and connect local entrepreneurs, including sessions focused on women- and minority-owned businesses, small business funding and finance, starting a business in Oak Park, and access to university research and entrepreneurship resources; and

WHEREAS, these programs provide meaningful opportunities for business owners to engage with experts, build connections, and access actionable tools to start, sustain, and grow their enterprises; and

WHEREAS, access to capital remains essential to small business success, and in 2026, local financial institutions are providing Small Business Administration (SBA)-guaranteed loan programs in Oak Park, including SBA 7(a) loans for working capital and business expansion, SBA 504 loans for long-term investments such as real estate and equipment, and SBA Express lines of credit for timely access to operating funds; and

WHEREAS, these SBA-backed programs offer flexible financing options to support entrepreneurs at various stages, from start-up to expansion, and complement additional local lending resources available through Oak Park-based financial institutions; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Oak Park continues to invest in the success of its business community through targeted financial assistance, including Business Assistance Grant Programs that support commercial façade improvements, interior upgrades, climate-ready investments, and fire safety enhancements, helping local businesses remain competitive and resilient; and

WHEREAS, the Village has extended application deadlines for key business assistance grants through December 31, 2026, providing flexibility for businesses to make improvements in advance of or during upcoming infrastructure investments; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Oak Park has delayed the Renew the Avenue project in the Hemingway Business District to 2026 to ensure fiscal responsibility and competitive bidding, while continuing to support affected businesses through extended grant opportunities and proactive maintenance efforts ahead of construction; and

WHEREAS, the Village's Office of Economic Vitality continues to foster partnerships that expand access to capital, education, and technical assistance, strengthening Oak Park's business ecosystem and ensuring long-term economic resilience; and

WHEREAS, the Village of Oak Park, through its Office of Economic Vitality, is hosting free business educational programming for existing and prospective Oak Park businesses during National Small Business Week; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Vicki Scaman, President of the Village of Oak Park, and the Board of Trustees do hereby proclaim **May 3–9, 2026, as NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK** and encourage all people to support small businesses and celebrate their many achievements.

DATED this 5th day of May 2026.

Vicki Scaman, Village President

ATTEST

Christina M. Waters, Village Clerk