



DO WEST *of* CHICAGO

(Village of Oak Park Presentation)



Tourism Matters

- 113 million domestic and international visitors who spent a record \$48.5 billion in 2024 – an increase of 500,000 visitors and \$1.3 billion in spending from 2023
- Visitor spending directly generated \$4.7 billion in state and local tax revenue, according to Tourism Economics.
- In Illinois, every \$1 invested in destination marketing results \$74 in visitor spending



Mission Statement

Explore Oak Park and Beyond is the leader in promoting the unique communities, cultures, and experiences found in Chicago's western suburbs.



What we do and why!

Destination promotion is for the benefit and well-being of every person in a community. It is an essential investment to develop opportunities and enhance the quality of life for the people of a destination. What is our industry always pointing to? The jobs that are created, the local spending that is generated, the local tax revenue that is generated, and the economic activity that is generated. So, who is helped by this? Who is our customer? It is the residents of the communities we serve. A destination organization's customers are its residents: our families, friends, and neighbors. With unwavering dedication and a keen eye for detail, the Explore Oak Park and Beyond organization comprehensively crafts unforgettable journeys, connecting visitors with iconic Frank Lloyd Wright architecture, world-class museums, a diverse culinary scene, and much more.



How we do it!

Explore Oak Park and Beyond uses strategies to achieve awareness and positive impressions; brand development, management, and communication; promotion, marketing, sales, and visitor engagement. This also means that as the destination marketing organization, we have a bigger mission. Our sole mission is not to put “heads in beds.” Measuring hotel occupancy is a good measurement, but not the mission. Every visitor is important. Every impression is essential. Everything that allows a community to compete is necessary.



Rebranding Initiative

DO WEST *of* **CHICAGO**

The Process

WHO, WHAT, WHEN

REBRANDING GOALS

- Establish an adaptable brand identity that **resonates with diverse audiences** and supports the growth of all communities over time.
- Develop messaging that inclusively reflects the **unique characteristics and offerings of all communities**, from cultural landmarks to businesses to natural attractions.
- **Broaden perceptions** to accurately reflect the organization's coverage of the **entire Chicago western suburban area**, not just Oak Park.
- Secure **broad-based support and enthusiasm** from stakeholders across all 19 communities for the new brand identity.



The Themes

WHAT WE HEARD

THE CHALLENGE:

Confusion Undermined the Brand

- Many residents and visitors didn't understand what "Visit Oak Park" meant—especially since the destination includes many communities beyond Oak Park.
- Small businesses, partners, and media found it difficult to connect with a name that didn't reflect the region's full scope.
- **The name created unnecessary friction in collaboration, storytelling, and promotion.**

If the story is about a business in Brookfield, the article won't mention Visit Oak Park, because it's confusing.

Michael Marando

Massa is in Elmwood Park though.

Giovannina Chervinko

This is not in Oak Park.

It's in North Riverside, IL

Julia Maria Rooney

Not in Oak Park

Jim Verheyen Currie III

I thought they are in Riverside?

Margaret Gentry-Curcio

But that's not Oak Park.. here I was looking in oak Park where this clearing things up..

Jason Weidler

This tournament is in Forest Park, has nothing to do with VISITOAKPARK, NOTHING

THE INSIGHT:

Visitors Care About Information, Not Names

- The website performs well—not because of the name, but because of strong, search-friendly content.
- Only 7% of traffic comes from name recognition; **most visitors arrive via keywords tied to experiences.**
- When asked about the name, most visitors were indifferent—as long as the information was helpful.

People are familiar with Oak Park, confused that it's not just Oak Park, but ultimately don't care if it gives them the information they're looking for.

TOP KEYWORDS

- Al Capone's gravesite
- Bars near me sports
- Best thrift stores near me
- Best walking trails near me
- Body piercing shops near me
- Breakfast and brunch near me
- Breakfast oak park
- Brookfield zoo free day
- Brunch restaurant near me
- Byob restaurants near me
- Cheap brunch near me
- Elmwood park
- Forest park restaurants

THE OPPORTUNITY:

A Name that Reflects Our Collective Value

- Oak Park is a powerful anchor, but it's only one part of the story.
- The surrounding communities bring vibrancy, authenticity, and opportunity—together, they strengthen the brand.
- The new name, Explore Oak Park & Beyond, acknowledges that we are stronger together—and supports the organization's role as a trusted guide to the full region.

*Oak Park will remain the largest, most internationally recognized destination... **and** the communities that surround it are an asset to Oak Park.*



The New Brand

DRUMROLL PLEASE...

THE STORY

Just due west of Chicago, you'll find an area steeped in some of Windy City's greatest hits. It's the kind of place where internationally renowned architecture, myriad cultures, hundreds of miles of trails, and the best-of-the-best Italian beef all come together under the soft glow of vintage signs. You'll arrive in communities that grew up and around the train—places where legendary figures and gangsters called home or an escape. You'll explore destination-worthy shops, a smorgasbord of global cuisine, and streets that fill up with year-round cultural festivals, races, and holiday events.

Here, you'll discover some of the best things about this area have been preserved for you to sip, sample, and dive in. **Do more, just due west.**

LOGO



EXPLORE

OAK PARK

and Beyond

ILLUSTRATED MAP



The Campaign

TARGET AUDIENCES



**CULTURE &
HISTORY BUFFS**



**NATURE
ENTHUSIASTS**



**REGIONAL
FOODIES**



**FAMILY
DAYTRIPPERS**



DO WEST *of* CHICAGO

**DO WEST
OF CHICAGO**

· *Explore* ·
OAK PARK & BEYOND

**DO WEST
OF CHICAGO**

· *Explore* ·
OAK PARK & BEYOND


CAMPAIGN

Take your taste buds on a joy ride with some of the best cuisine around—from perogi to cannoli to high-end dining. Craving something more casual? Sample our beloved classics and a mix of diners, dives, and hot dog joints. Just be sure to hold the ketchup!



AD CREATIVE

Sample Creative for Billboard or Digital Ad



take your
TASTEBUDS
on a
JOY RIDE



LICKLE JAMAICA, MAYWOOD

**DO WEST
OF CHICAGO**

· Explore ·
OAK PARK & BEYOND

CAMPAIGN

Explore your wild side at the Brookfield Zoo — ranked among the nation's best wildlife parks — or escape into our hundreds of miles of trails running along the Des Plaines River. More into nightlife? Raise a glass at our many neighborhood taverns, Irish pubs, cocktail lounges, and tiki bars. If live entertainment is your thing, enjoy comedy or live music at venues that have more than a few stories to tell.



AD CREATIVE

Sample Creative for Billboard or Digital Ad



explore your
**WILD
SIDE**

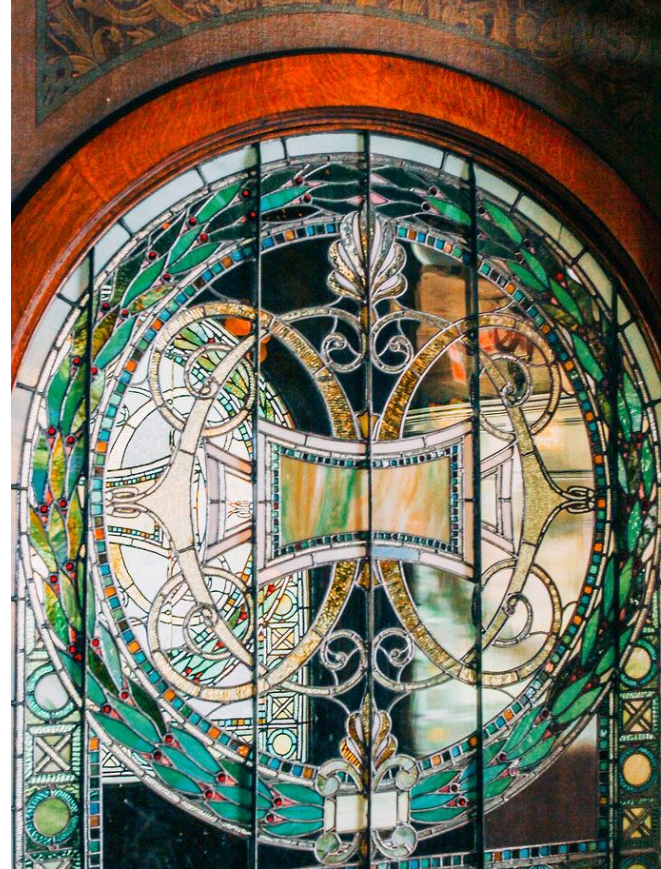
● HALA KAHIKI, RIVER GROVE

**DO WEST
OF CHICAGO**

· Explore ·
OAK PARK & BEYOND

CAMPAIGN

Dive into our world-renowned cultural experiences, which include the largest collection of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture in the world, a UNESCO World Heritage site, the birthplace of the Illinois Black Panther Movement, Ernest Hemingway's childhood home, and Al Capone's final resting place. While you're here, explore our local galleries and stores that feature one-of-a-kind artisanal goods. More into legendary lore? Sip from a "magical" water pump that is said to bring good fortune.



AD CREATIVE

Sample Creative for Billboard or Digital Ad



dive into our
WORLD-RENOWNED
cultural
EXPERIENCES

 PLEASANT HOUSE, OAK PARK

**DO WEST
OF CHICAGO**
• Explore •
OAK PARK & BEYOND



dive into our
WORLD-RENOWNED
cultural
EXPERIENCES

 **HIGGINS GLASS, RIVERSIDE**

**DO WEST
OF CHICAGO**
• Explore •
OAK PARK & BEYOND

CURATED CULINARY ITINERARIES:

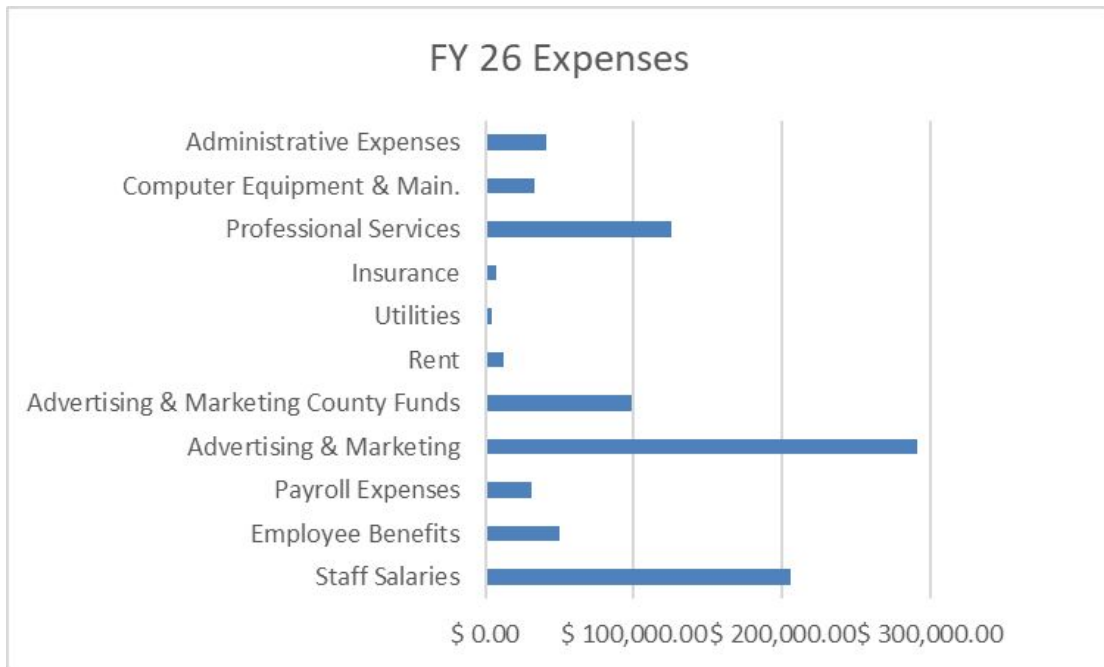
Taste Your Way Due West

- **Iconic Eats Tour** – Indulge in Chicago-style hot dogs (hold the ketchup!), legendary Italian beef, and deep-dish pizza with stops at some of the area's best-known spots.
- **Sweet Treats & Bakeries** – Savor delectable pies, pastries, and fresh-baked delights in the areas coziest cafés and bakeries.
- **Handmade & Homestyle** – From hand-rolled pasta to rich, comforting dishes, explore the best spots for fresh pasta and Italian cuisine.
- **Global Bites Tour** – Take your taste buds on a world tour with stops at renowned Caribbean and Asian eateries.



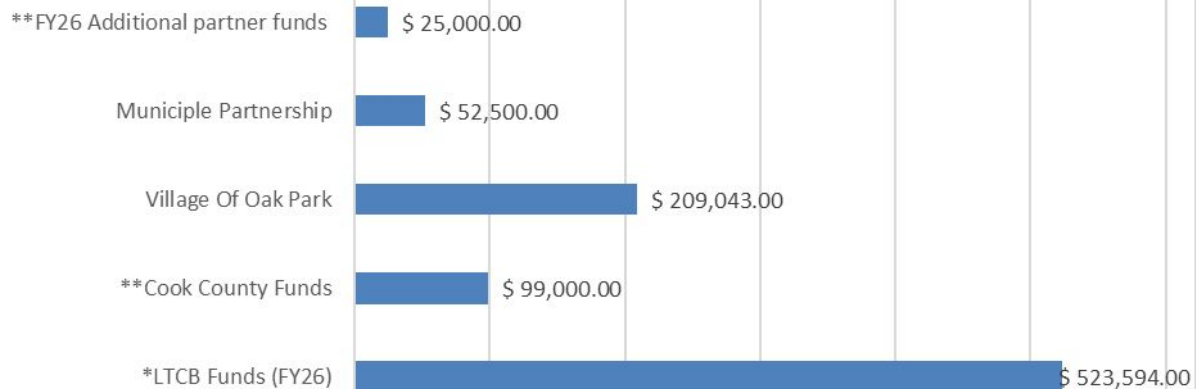
*Accomplishments and
Goals*

FY 26 Expenses:



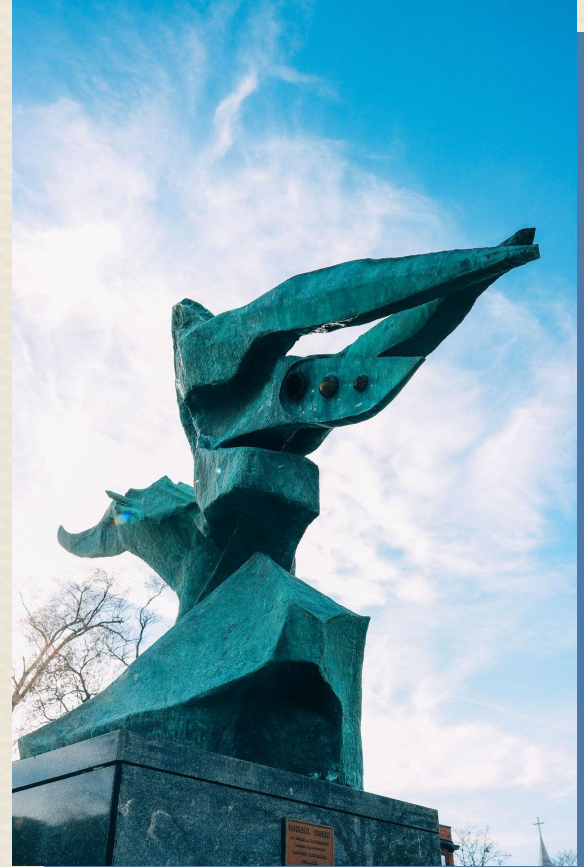
FY 26 Income:

income



New Initiatives: *2024 - 2025*

- New Brand with a name change
- New campaign development
- Website re-skin, which included a UX audit
- Hosted focus groups
- Created Itineraries
- Promoted Oak Park on the international “stage”



OUR IMPACT:

Proof That Great Content Pays Off

SEO Value Year over Year



SEO value = what we'd pay in ads to get the same traffic organically.

Most of our **web traffic** (68%) comes from unpaid search results.

High-ranking content drives steady, long-term results without paid ads.

Organic visitors are **more likely to convert**—especially for local businesses.

This is a clear return on investment—delivering big visibility gains without big ad spends.

OUR IMPACT:

Proof That Our Strategy Works

	SERP Keywords	All Keywords	Organic Traffic	Traffic Value in CPC	Value per \$1000	Traffic Efficiency	Value per \$1000	SERP Efficiency	Annual Revenue	Tax date
Oak Park	3,600	21,000	39,500	\$18,100	\$33	\$0.03322	\$3.03	\$0.0030	\$1,189,155	6/23
Choose Chicago	78,000	394,500	1,200,000	\$738,700	\$32	\$0.03215	\$2.09	\$0.0021	\$37,326,987	12/23
Enjoy Aurora	2,600	16,400	23,600	\$17,800	\$23	\$0.02253	\$2.48	\$0.0025	\$1,047,694	6/24
Discover DuPage	4,600	26,800	54,800	\$35,900	\$15	\$0.01456	\$1.22	\$0.0012	\$3,763,109	6/24
Chicago Northwest	5,600	25,900	34,800	\$16,700	\$10	\$0.00980	\$1.58	\$0.0016	\$3,550,757	6/24
Chicago North Shore	2,900	25,800	35,900	\$12,500	\$7	\$0.00707	\$0.57	\$0.0006	\$5,079,478	6/24
Chicago Southland	725	17,500	15,200	\$7,000	\$5	\$0.00502	\$0.24	\$0.0002	\$3,025,410	6/23
Heritage Corridor	1,700	6,200	5,000	\$2,700	\$1	\$0.00110	\$0.38	\$0.0004	\$4,526,702	6/24
Keyword and traffic data pulled from SEMrush using desktop as the device and the current state of Google Search engine (8/2/25)										
Annual revenue pulled from the most recent 990 tax filings										

Our SEO value grew by **582.8%** or 6 times that of FY2022

Our traffic value per revenue dollar (\$0.033, or \$33 per \$1,000 of revenue),

Our value beats all competitors, including Choose Chicago, despite our much smaller budget.

This means Explore Oak Park and Beyond's **efficiency results in more website traffic** and SERP functions than surrounding DMOS, dollar for dollar.

Explore Oak Park and Beyond ranks #1 in efficiency

OUR IMPACT:

Proof That We Provide ROI

FY 2024 PR Results

- 974 placements
- Audience: 1.343 billion
- Unique visitors: 870+ million
- Publicity value: \$18+ million
- Ad value: \$5.8 million

Ad Value = this means if we had purchased 30-second TV commercial spots, we would have had to spend that amount to get what we received from our PR team

Publicity or exposure we were able to obtain with our PR team.

52% - TV

39% print/digital

9% radio.

For the Village of Oak Park the publicity value was \$10,979, 882 and the ad equivalency was \$3,653,612.

International Sales

Proof that marketing matters

In June 2025, we had the incredible opportunity to exhibit at the IPW trade show, thanks to an international grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

IPW, organized by the U.S. Travel Association, is the premier international inbound travel trade show in the U.S., a place where U.S. travel exhibitors connect with global and domestic buyers and media. This year, it welcomed 5,000 exhibitors and 1,800 media representatives, and tour operators.

We secured 27 appointments — 21 with tour buyers and 6 with media contacts.

We are following up with leads now. We would not have been able to make these contacts without attending this show.

This opportunity allowed us to host two FAMs.



Domestic Group Tour Sales

In 2024, Explore Oak Park and Beyond continued to engage with a group sales contractor. We created two new itineraries and a new sales sheet.

Trade Shows Attended:

- American Bus Association
- Heartland
- Circle Wisconsin

In 2026 our Goals are:

Attend key domestic travel trade shows

- Heartland Travel Showcase - 3/6-8/2026
- Circle Wisconsin - 4/19-21, 202

Strengthen follow-up processes, including leads to convert interest into booked group visits.

Expand relationships with tour operators, travel buyers and travel writers

Host one FAM tour



Website Traffic

- 279,287 website visitors
- Average 24.3K visits per month
- Total Sessions = 279,300
- Total New Users = 236,800
- 756,393 events - refers to the number of times a specific user interaction, or event, is triggered on our website. This metric helps us track user engagement and understand how users interact with different elements on our site.
- 1:51 average time per session
- Views per user = 2.3, which means a user visits our site and navigates to at least 2 other pages before leaving. This means our strategy is working.
- 83% of web traffic comes from blog content
- 62% of traffic is organic

Partnerships/Initiatives for FY 26

OPRF Museum Bus Tours - Hometown Legends and Black History

Co-hosted Oak Park's first Plein Air Festival with the Oak Park Area Arts Council, plan to grow this event each with different activations and events

Continue to grow Bite the Burbs in partnership with the Chamber

International Grant for translation of collateral

Diversify funding with guides, communities, and tourism assets

We plan to host two capacity building workshops for small businesses about AI

We are building out a co-marketing program to support community events

Utilize an app to create a region wide scavenger hunt





Thank You



Noemy Diaz
Administrative Office
Development Services Department
Village of Oak Park
123 Madison Street
Oak Park, IL 60302

Ms. Diaz:

Thank you for the invitation to submit Explore Oak Park and Beyond's 2026 budget request. Explore Oak Park and Beyond is grateful for the Village of Oak Park's partnership and support of the bureau's goals, programs, and work.

For FY 2026, Explore Oak Park and Beyond requests revenue funding from the Village's hotel/motel/short-term rental taxes totaling \$229,042, an increase from our FY25 request. The State of Illinois has confirmed that our Local Tourism Convention Bureau (LTCB) grant amount for FY 2026 will be \$514,689. The Illinois Office of Tourism only provides this grant to certified bureaus. Explore Oak Park and Beyond must have a local match to receive the LTCB grant. Without a local match of grant funds, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity would forfeit our total grant commitment for FY 2026.

Our proposed FY 26 total budget is \$1,019, 231, which includes our LTCB grant, our request from the Village of Oak Park for \$229,042, \$173,500 in Cook County Tourism Alive funding (last year for this funding), \$20,000 for an international grant and \$82,000 in community investment. Attached is our proposed operating budget for FY 2026.

With the funding Explore Oak Park and Beyond receives, we have supported the tourism and hospitality sector, as well as supported business districts and small businesses. Attached you will find accomplishments from FY 2024.

We plan to continue our relationship with a PR agency for earned media opportunities and have had great success in the last year, resulting in earned media totaling \$18M in publicity value and \$1,708,701 in ad value. Explore Oak Park and Beyond will continue to research, write, publish and advertise monthly content, including 12 blogs per month. In 202, we published a total of 176 blogs.

In FY 2026, it is our goal to continue the momentum of bringing back group tours to Oak Park. Explore Oak Park and Beyond exhibited in the U.S. Travel's [IPW](#) conference, June 14-18, 2025. IPW is the largest inbound travel trade show in the US with international and domestic buyers and media from 60 countries. Explore Oak Park and Beyond was in the Illinois aisle with the Illinois Office of Tourism and Convention and Visitors Bureaus promoting travel to Illinois. During the three day convention we had 27 appointments, 21 with tour buyers and six with media contacts. After the conference, we hosted two FAM (familiarization tours). The first tour, Innovation & Gardens, included 20 media personnel and 19 buyers (travel agents and tour operators). The second tour, Writers, Wildlife & Wonders, included 8 members of the media and 10 buyers.

International travel is on the rebound after COVID-19 and the state has opened new markets with more direct flights. Explore Oak Park and Beyond is positioned to take advantage of these opportunities. It is our goal to apply for our second International grant to continue marketing on an international level.

Last, we will continue to utilize analytics platforms designed for the tourism economy, Symphony Tourism Economy, and products like SEMrush to assist with data collection which helps our marketing strategies.

Enclosed is:

- o a report of 2024 accomplishments
- o the 2024 audit
- o 2026 Budget and YTD Actuals
- o List of Staff

I appreciate your consideration of Explore Oak Park and Beyond's calendar year 2026 budget request.

Sincerely,

Annie Coakley
Director
Explore Oak Park and Beyond
1010 Lake Street #114
Oak Park, IL 60301

Visit Oak Park
Preliminary Budget
July 1, 2025- June 30,2026

	FY 26 Preliminary Annual Budget
	July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026
Income	
Grants	
*LTCB Funds (FY26)	\$ 514,689.00
**International Grant	\$ 20,000.00
***Cook County Funds	\$ 173,500.00
Municipalities Dues	\$ -
Village Of Oak Park	\$ 234,043.00
Village of River Forest	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Riverside	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Franklin Park	\$ 5,000.00
Village of LaGrange	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Westchester	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Maywood	\$ 5,000.00
Village of LaGrange Park	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Broadview	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Hillside	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Brookfield	\$ 5,000.00
Village of North Riverside	\$ 2,500.00
**** FY 26 Additional Match Funds	\$ 25,000.00
Membership/Adv/Coop	
North Riverside Mall	\$ 2,500.00
Brookfield Zoo	\$ 2,000.00
Totals	\$ 1,024,232.00
Expenses	
Staff Salaries	\$ 205,775.72
Employee Benefits	\$ 49,470.00
Payroll Expenses	\$ 30,896.58
Advertising & Marketing	\$ 303,389.70
Advertising & Marketing County Funds	\$ 173,500.00
International Grant	\$ 20,000.00
Rent	\$ 12,000.00
Utilities	\$ 4,200.00
Insurance	\$ 7,000.00
Professional Services	\$ 125,000.00
Computer Equipment & Main.	\$ 33,000.00
Administrative Expenses	\$ 45,000.00
Reserve	\$ 15,000.00
Totals	\$ 1,024,232.00
Net Income	\$ -

* LTCB FY 26

** International Ggrant Preliminary Request

***County Funds

**** New Munciplaities/ Co Op Matching Funds Goals

Reported : Accrual Basis

Visit Oak Park
Budget vs Actual
Unaudited FY 25
Budget vs Actual

	Annual Budget	Year to Date Actual
	July 1, 2024-June 30, 2025	July 1-June 30 ,2025
Income		
LTCB Funds (FY25)*	\$ 523,594.00	\$ 523,594.00
Cook County Funds	\$ 29,500.00	\$ 29,500.00
International Grant	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00
LTCB2	\$ 91,000.00	\$ 91,000.00
**Oak Park ARPA	\$ 47,135.00	\$ 47,135.00
Village Of Oak Park	\$ 209,043.00	\$ 209,043.00
Village of River Forest	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Riverside	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Franklin Park	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of LaGrange	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Westchester	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Maywood	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of LaGrange Park	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Broadview	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Hillside	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Village of Brookfield	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
North Riverside Mall	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
Village of North Riverside	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 2,500.00
Great Rivers Tourism Bureau	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Brookfield Zoo	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,000.00
Misc. Income Annual Meeting	\$ 760.00	\$ 760.00
Totals	\$ 1,018,032.00	\$ 1,018,032.00
		\$ -
Expenses		
		\$ -
Staff Salaries	\$ 183,860.00	\$ 183,860.00
Employee Benefits	\$ 53,200.00	\$ 53,789.11
Payroll Expenses	\$ 30,896.58	\$ 30,911.99
Advertising & Marketing	\$ 324,495.42	\$ 326,426.90
Advertising & Marketing County Funds	\$ 29,500.00	\$ 29,500.00
LTCB2 Expenses	\$ 91,000.00	\$ 91,000.00
Oak Park ARPA Expenses	\$ 47,135.00	\$ 47,135.00
International Grant	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 46,850.00
Rent	\$ 17,985.00	\$ 17,985.00
Utilities	\$ 2,560.00	\$ 2,511.00
Insurance	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00
Professional Services	\$ 89,000.00	\$ 89,500.00
Computer Equipment & Main.	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00
Administrative Expenses	\$ 40,900.00	\$ 45,263.00
***Reserve	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 800.00
Totals	\$ 1,018,032.00	\$ 1,018,032.00
Net Income	\$ -	\$ -

**Remaining Oak Park ARPA Funds

***To be Determined ReseveS



Visit Oak Park

Financial Statements

Years Ended June 30, 2024 and 2023



To the Board of Directors
Visit Oak Park
Oak Park, Illinois

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of Visit Oak Park (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statements of financial position as of June 30, 2024 and 2023, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Visit Oak Park as of June 30, 2024 and 2023 and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of Visit Oak Park and to meet our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Visit Oak Park's ability to continue as a going concern within one year after the date that the financial statements are available to be issued.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements, including omissions, are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or



in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards*, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of Visit Oak Park's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about Visit Oak Park's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control related matters that we identified during the audit.

Other Reporting Required by *Government Auditing Standards*

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated May 27, 2025, on our consideration of Visit Oak Park's internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of Visit Oak Park's internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering Visit Oak Park's internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

Sassetti LLC

Oak Brook, IL
May 27, 2025

VISIT OAK PARK
STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION
JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 227,048	\$ 118,957
Grants receivable	276,842	145,927
Prepaid expenses	6,117	6,117
Property and equipment	2,937	-
Security deposit	<u>675</u>	<u>675</u>
Total Assets	<u><u>\$ 513,619</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 271,676</u></u>
LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable	\$ 77,365	\$ 122,937
Deferred grant income	<u>413,485</u>	<u>56,000</u>
Total Liabilities	<u>490,850</u>	<u>178,937</u>
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions	<u>22,769</u>	<u>92,739</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>22,769</u>	<u>92,739</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u><u>\$ 513,619</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 271,676</u></u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

**VISIT OAK PARK
STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES
YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023**

	2024	2023
PUBLIC SUPPORT AND OTHER REVENUES		
Government and municipal grants	\$ 929,870	\$ 1,189,155
Interest	3	25
Other income	1,252	-
	<u>931,125</u>	<u>1,189,180</u>
EXPENSES		
Marketing and promotion	833,527	1,056,333
Management and general	140,391	168,138
Resource development	27,177	56,506
	<u>1,001,095</u>	<u>1,280,977</u>
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	(69,970)	(91,797)
NET ASSETS		
Beginning of year	<u>92,739</u>	<u>184,536</u>
End of year	<u><u>\$ 22,769</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 92,739</u></u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

VISIT OAK PARK
STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

	Program Services	Supporting Services		
	Marketing and Promotion	Management and General	Resource Development	Total
Salaries and wages	\$ 124,953	\$ 19,730	\$ 19,730	\$ 164,413
Payroll taxes	11,445	963	963	13,371
Employee benefits	29,997	4,736	4,736	39,469
Professional fees	-	99,629	-	99,629
Advertising and marketing	594,972	-	-	594,972
Information technology	29,880	7,470	-	37,350
Insurance	4,405	-	-	4,405
Meals and travel	5,677	-	-	5,677
Miscellaneous	-	3,701	-	3,701
Occupancy	8,154	1,748	1,748	11,650
Office supplies and postage	-	2,023	-	2,023
Subscriptions and dues	24,044	-	-	24,044
Telephone	-	391	-	391
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 833,527</u>	<u>\$ 140,391</u>	<u>\$ 27,177</u>	<u>\$ 1,001,095</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

VISIT OAK PARK
STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023

	Program Services	Supporting Services		
	Marketing and Promotion	Management and General	Resource Development	Total
Salaries and wages	\$ 102,818	\$ 21,988	\$ 21,988	\$ 146,794
Payroll taxes	6,157	2,536	2,536	11,229
Employee benefits	15,634	1,095	1,095	17,824
Professional fees	-	111,705	19,510	131,215
Advertising and marketing	615,720	-	-	615,720
Conference and training	-	590	-	590
Information technology	26,058	6,340	-	32,398
Insurance	-	5,724	-	5,724
Meals	-	-	6,411	6,411
Contributed assets	281,525	-	-	281,525
Miscellaneous	-	9,598	-	9,598
Occupancy	6,973	1,534	1,534	10,041
Office supplies and postage	-	4,713	-	4,713
Subscriptions and dues	1,448	1,458	3,432	6,338
Telephone	-	857	-	857
Total Expenses	<u>\$ 1,056,333</u>	<u>\$ 168,138</u>	<u>\$ 56,506</u>	<u>\$ 1,280,977</u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

VISIT OAK PARK
STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS
YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Change in net assets	\$ (69,970)	\$ (91,797)
Adjustments to reconcile net assets to cash provided by (used in) operating activities - (Increase) decrease in assets		
Grants receivable	(130,915)	(145,927)
Prepaid expenses	-	126,133
Increase (decrease) in liabilities		
Accounts payable	(45,572)	122,770
Deferred grant income	<u>357,485</u>	<u>(9,000)</u>
 Net Cash Provided by Operating Activities	<u>111,028</u>	<u>2,179</u>
Operating Activities		
 CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of equipment	<u>(2,937)</u>	<u>-</u>
 Net Cash Used in Investing Activities	<u>(2,937)</u>	<u>-</u>
 NET INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	108,091	2,179
 CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS		
Beginning of year	<u>118,957</u>	<u>116,778</u>
 End of year	<u><u>\$ 227,048</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 118,957</u></u>
 SUPPLEMENTAL DISCLOSURES:		
Cash paid for interest	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>
 Cash paid for income taxes	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>

The accompanying notes are an integral part of these financial statements.

**VISIT OAK PARK
NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023**

1. NATURE OF THE ORGANIZATION AND SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Visit Oak Park (the "Organization"), an Illinois not-for-profit organization, is the state-certified convention and visitors bureau for Western Cook County, representing the communities of Bellwood, Berkeley, Berwyn, Broadview, Brookfield, Elmwood Park, Forest Park, Franklin Park, Hillside, La Grange, La Grange Park, Maywood, Melrose Park, Northlake, North Riverside, Oak Park, River Forest, River Grove, Riverside, Schiller Park, Westchester and Willow Springs.

Basis of Accounting - The accounting records and the accompanying financial statements have been maintained and prepared on the accrual basis of accounting in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America ("U.S. GAAP").

Classification of Net Assets - Net assets of the Organization are classified as with or without donor restrictions depending on the presence and characteristics of donor-imposed restrictions limiting the Organization's ability to use or dispose of contributed assets or the economic benefits embodied in those assets.

Net assets without donor restrictions are for use at the discretion of the Board of Directors (the Board) and/or management for general operating purposes. The Board may designate a portion of these net assets for a specific purpose which makes them unavailable for use at management's discretion.

Net assets with donor restrictions consist of assets whose use is limited by donor-imposed time and/or purpose restrictions. The Organization reports gifts of cash and other assets as revenue with donor restrictions if they are received with donor stipulations that limit the use of the donated assets. When a donor restriction expires, that is, when a stipulated time restriction ends or purpose restriction is accomplished, the net assets are reclassified as net assets without donor restriction and reported in the statements of activities as net assets released from restrictions. There were no net assets with donor restrictions at June 30, 2024 and 2023 respectively.

Revenue Recognition – The Organization generally measures exchange revenue based on the amount of consideration the Organization expects to be entitled for the transfer of goods or services to a customer, then recognizes this revenue when or as the Organization satisfies its performance obligations under a contract, except in transactions where U.S. GAAP provides other applicable guidance. There were no material exchange transactions during the fiscal years 2024 and 2023, respectively.

The Organization considers a contribution conditional if an agreement includes a barrier that must be overcome and either a right of return of assets or a right of release of a promise to transfer assets exists. Indicators of a barrier include a measurable performance related barrier or other measurable barrier, a stipulation that limits discretion by the recipient on the conduct of an activity, and stipulations that are related to the purpose of the agreement. Contributed income may include gifts of cash, collection items, or promises to give. Contributions of assets other than cash are reported at their estimated fair value. Contributed income that must be used to acquire long-lived assets are recorded as contributions with donor restrictions and grants until the assets are acquired and placed in service.

VISIT OAK PARK
NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023

Government and Municipal Grants – Conditional grants from governments and municipalities are recognized eligible expenditures, as defined in each grant contract, are spent. Amounts received in advance of expenses incurred are included in deferred grant income. Expenditures under government contracts are subject to review by the granting authority. To the extent, if any, that such review reduces expenditures allowable under these grants or contracts, the Organization records the disallowance at the time final assessment is made.

Grants Receivable – Receivables consists of government and state grants and other unconditional receivables that are carried at original pledge, invoice, or voucher amount. Management monitors the collection of pledges and grant receivables monthly and amounts are written off when deemed uncollectible. Recovers of receivables previously written off are recorded when received. Management believes that no allowance for doubtful accounts is necessary for the years ended June 30, 2024 or 2023. All amounts are due within one year.

Cash and Cash Equivalents – For the purpose of the Statements of Cash Flows, the Organization considers all cash accounts, which are not subject to withdrawal restrictions or penalties to be cash equivalents.

Property and Equipment - Property and equipment have been recorded at cost if purchased or at fair value at the time of donation if received as a gift. The Organization capitalizes property and equipment over \$1,000 that have a useful life of more than one year. Depreciation and amortization of property and equipment is provided over the estimated useful lives of the respective assets on a straight-line basis. Costs of maintenance and repairs that do not improve or extend the useful lives of the respective assets are expensed as incurred.

Advertising Costs - Advertising costs, except for costs associated with direct-response advertising, are charged to operations when incurred. The costs of direct-response advertising are capitalized and amortized over the period during which future benefits are expected to be received. Organization has no costs associated with direct-response advertising. Advertising expense for the fiscal years ended June 30, 2024 and 2023, was \$594,972 and \$615,720, respectively.

Donated Services – The Organization records contributions of donated services that create or enhance financial assets or that require specialized skills that are provided by individuals possessing those skills that would typically need to be purchased if not provided by donation. When such contributions are received, they are recorded at their value in the period received.

Functional Allocation of Expenses – The cost of providing various programs and other activities have been summarized on a functional basis in the Statements of Activities and in the Statements of Functional Expenses. Expenses directly identifiable as marketing and promotion, management and general, or resource development are fully allocated to those respective categories. Salaries and wages, payroll taxes, employee benefits and occupancy are allocated on the basis of estimated time and effort spent by the employees.

Income Taxes - The Organization is exempt from federal income taxes under the provisions of Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code. Management believes that it did not engage in any unrelated business activities; thus, no provision for income tax has been provided for in the financial statements. The Organization's Forms 990, Return of Organization Exempt from

**VISIT OAK PARK
NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023**

Income Tax, are subject to examination by the IRS, generally for three years after they were filed.

Use of Accounting Estimates - The preparation of financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosure of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and reported amounts of revenues and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Adoption of New Accounting Standard - In June 2016, new guidance was issued to change the accounting for credit losses. The guidance requires an entity to utilize a new impairment model known as the current expected credit loss ("CECL") model to estimate its lifetime "expected credit losses" and record an allowance that presents the net amount expected to be collected on the financial assets. The CECL framework is expected to result in earlier recognition of credit losses. The standard was adopted on July 1, 2023 and did not have a material impact on the financial statements.

Subsequent Events – The Organization has evaluated subsequent events through May 27 2025, which is the date the financial statements were available to be issued.

2. CONCENTRATION OF RISK

The Organization received approximately 56% and 77% of its revenues from Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity agency during the years ended June 30, 2024 and 2023, respectively, and 82% and 100% of grants receivable at June 30, 2024 and 2023, respectively were attributable to the same agency. The Organization received 31% and 23% of its revenues from Village of Oak Park during the years ended June 30, 2024 and 2023, respectively and 13% and 0% of grants receivable were attributable to the Village of Oak Park at June 30, 2024 and 2023, respectively.

The Organization relies on this concentration of governmental and municipal funding, thus is subject to the effects of a significant change in the economy and/or changes in government funding.

3. CONTINGENCIES

The Organization has received significant funding from one State of Illinois agency. The disbursement of funds under State contracts generally requires compliance with terms and conditions specified in the agreements and may be subject to audit by the grantor agency. Any disallowed claims resulting from such audits could become a liability of the Organization. However, in the opinion of management, liabilities resulting from disallowed claims, if any, will not have a material affect on the financial position of the Organization at June 30, 2024.

4. REVOLVING LINE OF CREDIT

The Organization maintained a \$30,000 revolving line of credit with Forest Park National Bank and Trust Company. The revolving line of credit matured on January 10, 2024 and was not renewed. The line had a variable interest rate equal to 1.5% over the prime rate and was

**VISIT OAK PARK
NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023**

secured by the business assets of the Organization. The Organization did not utilize this revolving line of credit during the fiscal years ended June 30, 2024 and 2023.

5. CONDITIONAL GRANTS

Conditional grants are grants that include a specific condition in order to earn the revenue. Conditional grants are not recorded in revenue until the condition of the grant is met (generally, when service is provided). The Organization has approximately \$170,000 in conditional contracts from the Village of Oak Park and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity at June 30, 2024. These grants are available to be used in subsequent fiscal year on qualifying expenses.

6. LIQUIDITY AND AVAILABILITY

The Organization regularly monitors liquidity required to meet its operating needs and other contractual commitments. For purposes of analyzing resources available to meet general expenditures over the next 12-month period, the Organization considers all expenditures related to its ongoing activities as well as the conduct of services undertaken to support those activities to be general expenditures. The Organization's financial assets available within one year of the most recent Statements of Financial Position date for general expenditures are as follows:

	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 227,048	\$ 118,957
Grants receivable	<u>276,842</u>	<u>145,927</u>
Total financial assets available to management for general expenditure within one year	<u>\$ 503,890</u>	<u>\$ 264,884</u>

7. LEASE COMMITMENTS

The Organization leased office space on a one-year lease expiring January 31, 2024. Monthly rent under this agreement was \$814. Effective February 1, 2024, the Organization entered into a new month-to-month lease agreement for \$1,000 per month. The lease may be terminated by either party with 30 days notice. Total rent expense for the fiscal years ended June 30, 2024 and 2023 was \$11,650 and \$10,041, respectively.

8. CONTRIBUTED ASSETS

As part of a grant received from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Organization received funding to build electric car charging stations along historic Route 66 and installed the stations. During the year ended June 30, 2023, the Organization transferred these assets to the City of Berwyn as contributed assets within the Statement of Functional Activities.



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL
REPORTING AND ON COMPLIANCE AND OTHER MATTERS BASED ON AN AUDIT OF
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOVERNMENT
AUDITING STANDARDS

To the Board of Directors of
Visit Oak Park

We have audited, in accordance with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, the financial statements of Visit Oak Park (a nonprofit organization), which comprise the statement of financial position as of June 30, 2024, and the related statements of activities and cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements, and have issued our report thereon dated May 27, 2025.

Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered Visit Oak Park's internal control over financial reporting (internal control) as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of Visit Oak Park's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of Visit Oak Park's internal control.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented or detected and corrected on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies, and therefore, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that have not been identified. However, as described in the accompanying schedule as item 2024-001, we identified certain deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be a material weakness

Report on Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether Visit Oak Park's financial statements are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not



express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Visit Oak Park's Response to Findings

Government Auditing Standards requires the auditor to perform limited procedures on Visit Oak Park's response to the findings identified in our audit and described in the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs. Visit Oak Park's response was not subjected to the other auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and, accordingly, we express no opinion on the response.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the organization's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the organization's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

Sassetti LLC

Oak Brook, Illinois
May 27, 2025



Finding – 2024–001 Limited Internal Controls over Financial Reporting

Type of Finding: Material weakness in internal control over financial reporting.

Condition: As a result of audit procedures performed, significant audit adjustments were made to correct misstatements that had a more than inconsequential effect on the Organization's financial statements. A formal review of cash, receivables, refundable advances and accruals needed at year end was not in place.

Criteria: Management is responsible for maintaining a system of internal controls over the preparation of financial statements including all required footnotes that are free of material errors and are in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (U.S. GAAP). This includes preparing and/or thoroughly reviewing U.S. GAAP based financial statements to ensure they are free of material misstatement, retaining documentation of entries made and maintaining proper internal controls to ensure reconciliations are completed, maintained and accurate.

Context and Cause: There were a considerable number of accounting adjustments needed as part of the audit process.

Significant adjustments include:

- Adjusting accounts receivable for duplicated entries.
- Revenue on conditional governmental grants was not recognized as allowable expenditures were incurred. Adjustments were needed to reduce revenue to actual expenditures related to conditional governmental grants.
- Cash accounts were not reconciled timely, partly due to bank transition issues.

In addition, there is no financial close process in place to review year end accruals are complete and accurate.

Effect: Inaccurate financial reporting could adversely affect the decision-making process for the management of the Organization.

Recommendation: Advances should be recorded as deferred revenue and conditional grants may only be recognized to the extent eligible expenditures have been incurred. Revenue that is not spent should be paid back to the state or a spend-down plan must be agreed to with the state.

There are no documented financial close procedures. Each balance sheet account should have a related reconciliation which agrees to the trial balance at year-end. There should be a financial close checklist indicating the steps performed and a review of the checklist by a member of the Board or management. This will help ensure the completeness and accuracy of the financial statements. There is no review of balance sheet account reconciliations, in particular deferred revenue and accruals.



May 27, 2025

Sassetti LLC
2107 Swift Drive Suite 210
Oak Brook, IL 60523

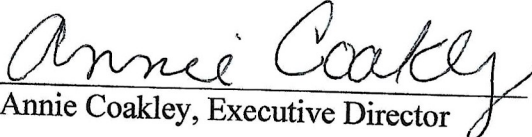
Findings – 2024-001 Limited Internal Controls over Financial Reporting

Type of Finding: Material weakness in internal controls over financial reporting

Corrective action: As of August 2024, Visit Oak Park has a new Bank (Byline Bank) to ensure bank statements are received monthly to ensure cash are reconciled in a timely matter. Accounting Software have been unlinked from automatic bank transaction to avoid duplicate entries. Management has worked with the Accounting Software Program Specialist to remove the expenses and revenues that were prerecorded for future dates.

With the new GATA System for Grants. Advances will be recorded as deferred revenue and conditional grants will only be recognized at the extent eligible expenditures have been approved by the state's grants manager. This will ensure the grant related information is recognized in the correct period.

The Finance Committee will revise and properly document financial close out procedures with a checklist to ensure proper allocation of income and expenditures. The Finance Chair will sign off the financial close checklist indicating the steps performed to ensure completeness and accuracy of the financial statement.


Annie Coakley, Executive Director

Date 5.27.25