



Fall Leaf Collection Program

Overview and Alternatives

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Presentation Overview

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Public Works staff pushing a leaf pile to the street corner for collection

Background – Program History

- At the Board meeting on November 20, 2023, Trustees expressed concerns with the current Fall Leaf Collection Program model in regards to safety, sustainability, and costs. Public Works staff was directed to explore program alternatives and present to the Board in 2024.
- Since 1994, the Fall Leaf Collection Program has been provided as a 6-8 week joint operation between the Public Works Department and the waste hauler hired by the Village for residential refuse, recycling and yard waste/compost services. Prior to 1994, the Fall Leaf Program was performed entirely by the Public Works Department.
- In April 2022, the Village entered a 5-year contract with Lakeshore Recycling Systems (LRS) to provide residential refuse, recycling, and yard waste/compost services. The Fall Leaf Collection Program continued with the same program model throughout the 2023 season.

Background - The Village's Role

- For the duration of the six-week Fall Leaf Collection program, the Public Works Streets Division utilizes three trucks fitted with equipment for pushing leaves.
- Village employees work overnight to push the piles of leaves raked by residents into larger piles near corners to be collected by the hauler the following day.
- The Village is responsible for setting the collection schedule, developing and sharing all outreach and educational materials, enforcing parking restrictions and nuisances, and providing street sweepers for cleaning leftover leaves from curbs after the program is complete.
- Throughout the program, Public Works staff coordinate weekly meetings with the hauler to discuss routes/scheduling, operations, customer service, safety, and staffing.



Large consolidated leaf pile ready for collection during the 2023 Fall Leaf Collection Program

Background - The Hauler's Role

- The Village's contracted hauler is responsible for picking up the large leaf piles that are pushed by the Village overnight. The hauler typically has three leaf crews in town daily collecting the corner piles according to the schedule set by the Village.
- The collected leaves are first taken to the LRS transfer station in Maywood, and later hauled to the Whole Earth Compost facility for processing.
- The hauler provides daily summaries on the leaf collection status to the Environmental Services Manager and reports the total weight of leaves collected at the end of the program.



2022 Fall leaf collection set to begin...

The annual fall leaf collection program is scheduled for **Oct. 31 - Dec. 9** with six pickups planned for each section of the Village. Residents should rake leaves into the street at least 18 inches from the curb **the day before** the scheduled pickup dates indicated on the map. Leaves raked into the street will be pushed into piles by Public Works crews during the night to reduce impact on traffic and parked cars. Leaves will be collected the following day. Residents who miss a scheduled pickup date should keep their leaves on the parkway until the night before the next scheduled pickup. Sweepers will be scheduled to run at the end of the collection program to clean up residue. Cooperation is essential to the success of this operation, so please follow these simple rules:

- Consider composting or using the leaves as garden mulch as an alternative to raking.
- Rake leaves out the day **before** the scheduled pickup date.
- Leaves only -- do not add brush, grass clippings or yard waste.
- Do not park on or near a pile of leaves, which can hinder leaf removal operations. Heat from a car also could ignite the leaves.
- Rake leaves onto side streets whenever possible. Try to avoid major thoroughfares where piles of leaves might create traffic hazards.
- Do not rake leaves into or close to **cul de sacs or traffic diverters**. The equipment needs room to operate.

- Do not rake leaves into or close to bus shelters or bicycle racks.
- Keep catch basins clear of raked leaves to avoid flooding.
- Inform landscape services of the leaf collection schedule.
- Obey all parking restrictions. Regulations will be strictly enforced.
- Dampen piles after raking to avoid leaves being blown by the wind.
- Drive carefully. Leaves are slippery when wet and large piles may hinder visibility.
- Drive cautiously - crews will create safe work zones and close intersections for a few minutes while removing large leaf piles.

For more information call 358.5700 or email publicworks@oak-park.us

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| NORTH AVE. | |
| WEDNESDAY Nov. 2 Nov. 9 Nov. 16 Nov. 23 Nov. 30 Dec. 7 | THURSDAY Nov. 3 Nov. 10 Nov. 17 Nov. 24F Dec. 1 Dec. 8 |
| Last day to rake is Tue. Dec. 6 | Last day to rake is Wed. Dec. 7 |
| SOUTH BLVD. | |
| TUESDAY Nov. 1 Nov. 8 Nov. 15 Nov. 22 Nov. 29 Dec. 6 | MONDAY Oct. 31 Nov. 7 Nov. 14 Nov. 21 Nov. 28 Dec. 5 |
| Last day to rake is Mon. Dec. 5 | Last day to rake is Sun. Dec. 4 |
| ROOSEVELT RD. | |
| 2022 FALL LEAF COLLECTION SCHEDULE | |

Current Conditions and Challenges

Below are common concerns and challenges that have been reported by residents, Village staff and LRS:

- **Safety Hazards** – Vehicle fires, equipment damage, impaired visibility for motorists and pedestrians, clogged storm drains/flooding, fly-dumping/contamination, illegally parked cars, inaccessibility at crosswalks, and children playing in piles. The hazards associated with the current program model have been confirmed by the Village’s Vision-Zero consultant to introduce significant risks to the community.
- **Enforcement** – Oak Park residents living in single-family homes (with 5 or fewer dwelling units) pay for fall leaf collection services as part of their refuse bill (\$2.42/month per household for 2024). Multi-family properties, commercial buildings, and institutions do not financially contribute to the program cost; however their leaves are collected as well. This is nearly impossible to enforce due to the inability to identify the violating party after the leaves have been consolidated into piles. Landscaping companies are also known to fly-dump their leaves from other communities into the Village piles for collection, thus increasing hauling, disposal, and labor costs.
- **Sustainability** – Greenhouse gas emissions from gas-powered vehicles/equipment, and few residents mulching their leaves to naturally compost on their property.
- **Costs and Operations** – Overtime pay for Village employees working additional hours to push leaves into piles, fuel and equipment maintenance, hauling and disposal fees, and street sweeping costs.

Leaf Collection Alternative - Background

Upon receiving direction from the Board, Public Works staff conducted the following activities to prepare the presentation:

- Held two planning meetings with our contracted residential hauler LRS.
- Reviewed case studies of leaf collection programs in 154 Illinois municipalities, and found that only 11 communities utilized the Village's current program model.
- Engaged with the Village's Vision Zero consultant to obtain high-level comments on the existing program through a safety lens.
- Met with Village staff from other departments that will be impacted by making changes to the Fall Leaf Collection Program (Police, Development Services, and Neighborhood Services).
- Tracked the historic duration of collection, associated costs, and tonnage of leaves collected throughout the current program model.

| Year | Weeks of Collection | Tons of Leaves Collected | Average Tons/Week | Amount Paid to Hauler |
|------|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 2023 | 6 | 2196.17 | 366.03 | \$193,200.00 |
| 2022 | 6 | 2016.84 | 336.14 | \$184,000.00 |
| 2021 | 6 | 1497 | 249.50 | \$189,577.00 |
| 2020 | 6 | 911.81 | 151.97 | \$189,577.00 |
| 2019 | 8 | 2201.54 | 275.19 | \$212,463.00 |
| 2018 | 8 | 1813.13 | 226.64 | \$207,281.00 |
| 2017 | 7 | 2111.4 | 301.63 | \$202,225.00 |



Leaf Collection Alternative – Bagging Program

After careful consideration of Board Goals, Public Works staff and our residential hauler LRS, propose an alternative 6-week Bagging Program, where residents may place an unlimited number of un-stickered landscape bags of leaves in the parkway for collection on their designated collection day.



Landscape bags full of leaves ready for pickup in the parkway in Franklin, TN

Bagging Program – Expected Benefits

This alternative would directly address the concerns and challenges seen with the current program model, while leading to additional improvements that have been identified through the evaluation process:

- No changes in program cost to the Village or residents, LRS will honor the current rates per our agreement for the remainder of the contract (March 2027).
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions from elimination of overnight leaf pushing and number of gas-powered vehicles/equipment required for current operations.
- Decreased labor costs due to fewer overtime hours/employees required for pushing leaves.
- Increased opportunity for reallocating Village staff to other imperative work.
- Decreased leaf volume associated with enforcement and exclusion of multi-family and commercial buildings, institutions, and landscaping companies.
- Further waste reduction from encouraging residents to mulch their leaves and compost them on site.
- Safer, cleaner, and more accessible streets, sidewalks, and crosswalks.
- Fewer blocked storm drains and flooding incidents.

Bagging Program – Expected Challenges

- **Compliance and Enforcement**

- Code revisions may be needed to ensure clarity and compliance.
- Cross-departmental collaboration and an updated process will be required to properly identify, track, and enforce violations.
- Temporary need for additional enforcement staff on weekends and off-hours during the transition.

- **Education and Outreach**

- Awareness is key for this transition to be successful!
- Development of a focused communication plan will be necessary to avoid confusion, hazards, and operational disruptions.
- Short-term costs of educational materials and marketing strategies during the transition.

- **Financial Burden**

- Residents will be required to purchase paper landscape bags with this program model, but green yard-waste stickers will not be required.
- Public Works staff is investigating bulk pricing in the case that the Village decides to provide complimentary bags as part of the transition.

Board Direction

The Board may direct Village staff in the following ways:

- 1) Maintain the status quo and proceed with the current Fall Leaf Collection Program model;
- 2) Take next steps to adopt the Bagging Program model and move forward with the transition; or
- 3) Pause to collect public input on the Fall Leaf Collection Program via the Engage Oak Park platform to further inform the Board's decision.