

## A PROPOSAL FOR A VIRTUAL & INTEGRATED LOCAL BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM

Submitted To  
The Village of Oak Park

November 13, 2020

### Program Preface

Small businesses are more than an important part of Oak Park's local economy; they are part of our social fabric, creating living neighborhoods in the Oak Park community. They help create our unique character, employ our neighbors and friends, and bring economic growth to the village. The COVID-19 crisis and required closures have hit these businesses especially hard. With an uncertain future and hardship stretching into 2021, local businesses have reached out for assistance. While ultimately the ability to survive the pandemic depends on numerous public health and economic factors, there are some common efforts through which local businesses may benefit.

Oak Park is a caring and generous community that follows public health guidance related to COVID-19. While residents are shopping online and ordering carryout more these days, many residents would like to help but don't quite know where to start. A cohesively themed campaign promoting the idea of safely shopping locally in person, virtually or through curbside pickup, and avoiding the big box stores this holiday season and beyond, is the first step in generating a community-wide awareness and understanding of the difficulties faced by local businesses, especially our restaurants and small retailers.

At the request of the Village of Oak Park, where Prescott Group is based and its principals live, we submit a phased and themed campaign to address this critical community need and economic crisis.

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## **Campaign Rollout**

### **November 28-29**

Small Business Saturday, November 28, is a great target to soft launch the program identity in an initial phase. We can follow public health guidance to shop local, online and use curbside delivery options at Oak Park retailers and restaurants. Promotional materials can be provided village-wide to targeted businesses to drive a following to the proposed website and generate anticipation and excitement around the effort.

Rollout tactics include:

### **In-Store Items**

- Stickers / counter signs / window decals / bag inserts
- Businesses would be encouraged to add the website to receipts and point it out to customers.
- Creation of program fact sheets that employers can use to explain the program to their employees to facilitate promotion to customers.

### **Social Media**

- Establish a social media presence (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to take advantage of efforts that are already happening by individual businesses and coordinate with other grassroots efforts.
- Share and promote through local community groups and Village electronic communications tools.

### **Website**

*Note: Given time constraints, partial completion of the main landing page is expected by November 28.*

A simple website would provide a place to resource and cross-promote existing initiatives. Comment at the Village Board meeting indicated there were numerous programs without one central location for consumers to access. This would provide that singular resource for businesses and residents.

Content would include:

- A message about the importance of local community support of restaurant / retail and could tell the story behind the Village's ongoing (and previous) efforts to support business.
- Links to existing programs: Holiday Shopper's Reward Program in DTOP, Shop Local Gift Cards through the Chamber of Commerce, and the Carry Out Oak Park through OPEDC.
- Individual gift card section for those businesses that offer them. These would redirect to their own payment processing systems, but would be collected here on

one page, to be shared and promoted as a whole with the idea of “one-stop shopping” for residents interested in paying forward or holiday gift card shopping.

- List/links to any special promotions (i.e., if done earlier, this page could have provided listing of restaurants offering Thanksgiving catered meals).
- Similar to the Giving Tuesday national campaigns, a media room would provide downloadable graphics and suggested marketing ideas for the campaign for businesses to use on their own social media pages, or emails to customers.
- Village would purchase social media boost to drive traffic to the website.

### **Promotional Programs**

There are three Promotional Program options for consideration, each of which could be stand-alone promotions or work together in a phased-in implementation:

#### **Promotion Program 1: Spend Local Win Local Drawing (December 5 – January 15)**

A drawing would generate excitement and energy among participants. Our proposed program would be a village-wide effort, organized within neighborhood districts to emphasize the feeling of community and local shopping. Both the entry item and the prize item would generate immediate funds to targeted businesses.

In this program, customers would submit pictures of receipts (\$25 or more, limit 10 individual entries per week) via a dedicated email. Businesses would be grouped by district so local neighborhood shopping would be encouraged, and the village-wide reach would be achieved. Online and carry-out/delivery receipts would be accepted.

Weekly drawings would take place and 1-2 winners would be selected from each business district. The winner would receive a \$100 gift card (paid by VOP) to the particular business represented by the receipt. This would be a win-win, encouraging visits to multiple businesses in the community, and the awarded prize would go directly back into the business community.

Promotion would be made via resident email campaigns, social media, local advertising and printed tags and stickers (provided to businesses) which would be attached to in-store purchases and carry-out receipts. This would not require additional effort on the part of merchandisers to join or register with an outside program.

Program components and considerations are as follows:

Fees:

- No participation fees to businesses, they would be asked to help promote with provided program materials.
- Management/promotional costs would apply.

Program:

- For every receipt (\$25 purchase or more), the shopper is awarded one entry within the promotion business district where that purchase was made; 10 entries/week per individual are allowed.
- Receipts need to be emailed to a dedicated mailbox to be verified.
- Drawings are made weekly for a total of six weeks; winners receive a \$100 voucher or gift card back to the business from the winning receipt.
- Program duration would be six weeks, with the following options:
  - 11 winners per week = 66 total winners receiving a \$100 prize = \$6,600 VOP investment
  - 22 winners per week (one each from restaurant and retail businesses) = 132 total winners receiving a \$100 prize = \$13,200 VOP investment

Considerations:

- A way to enter without purchase must be offered.
- Redemption of the voucher/gift card may prove difficult for businesses that don't already offer gift certificates.
- Strong promotional efforts will need to be made to encourage participation.
- Legal review by the Village attorney is strongly recommended.

**Promotion Program 2: Back-a-Business (January)**

A second promotional phase is designed to encourage grassroots support of Oak Park businesses in 2021, after the holiday shopping season revenue has dropped off. By this point, it's expected that a growing following on social media will have been established which can be leveraged to focus primarily on customer loyalty programs and support.

The following are conceptual ideas that would need additional detail before implementation:

- Encouraging posting and reviews of favorite businesses with potential opportunities for social media contests that highlight favorite businesses in each district.
- Local Round Up in January where shoppers are encouraged to "round up" their purchases as a direct contribution to businesses. Social media push to encourage participation when in local stores. Joint effort and widespread campaign would help businesses to "make the ask."
- Mobilization and website sign-up of neighborhood blocks, groups of friends or community organizations that could be utilized to energize efforts for take-out or ordering online days. Suggestions could be made to include a virtual component, such as a group of friends who would have their ZOOM meeting catered locally. Posting these examples would help others see potential efforts.
- Use of website pages to feature seasonal and special events (i.e., Super Bowl catering, Valentine's shopping specials, virtual St. Patrick's Day, etc.).
- Videos upload campaign on social media (virtual Day in our Village concept)

### Promotion Program 3: Community Digital Gift Cards (BOGO February)

A Community Digital Gift Card program could be implemented through an external provider platform. The idea would be to drive gift card sales during the non-holiday season (beginning 2021). A BOGO offer would give the purchaser an additional gift card with the purchase of the first. VOP would subsidize the fees and the extra gift card amount. Parameters for expiration dates, and number of gift cards available are able to be customized. Gift cards are good for “upselling” since generally people will spend over the amount of the gift card.

Program components and considerations are as follows:

#### Fees:

- Each card incurs a \$1 + 5% of card value on purchase (this would be covered by VOP so card buyers pay face value)
- Normal Mastercard processing fee applies for merchants on redemption
- Management/promotional costs would apply

#### Program:

- Online purchase of a digital gift card which could be used at participating businesses.
- Buyer would purchase a \$25 card and receive an additional \$5 gift card.

#### Considerations:

- While expiration can be set on the bonus portion, the original cards don't expire meaning money may not be spent immediately. However, if the \$5 card had a short expiration date it would encourage using both cards together.
- Merchants need to sign up and register for the program and be able to receive Mastercard payments. While registration is free, it's one more thing that busy retailers may not have time to manage. We would help facilitate and educate to encourage enrollment. Participation would need to be established prior to launch of the program.
- The Chamber of Commerce is already offering a Shop Local Gift card program. Branding and promotion would help differentiate the two programs, but in the end, whether purchased through the Chamber or through the Village program, the money still returns to local businesses.

## Campaign Theme Concepts

### Theme 1: Start Here! Oak Park.



The focus in Theme 1 is about starting in Oak Park when it comes to spending, as opposed to the “big box” or Amazon shopping. Additionally, it supports the website focus of being the one place to “start” to find out about local business support and initiatives.

Messaging that comes off this theme:

- It starts with us (you)
- Start Now. Start Today. Start Local.
- Shop Here. Buy Here. Grow Here.
- We can start something.

Domain availability:

Start-Here-OP.com  
Start-Here-OakPark.com

Also available are starthereop.com and starthereoakpark.com which would be registered to the program and redirected to the above. Without hyphenation, Start Here tends to read as a “there.”

## Theme 2: Keep Your Roots Local



The overall campaign theme speaks to grassroots support for local engagement to support our community businesses. The graphic underscores how local roots grow into something larger and speaks to coming together in building one concerted effort with love for the community.

This particular theme could stand alone or be used in conjunction with Theme 1 as a supportive campaign graphic.

Domain availability:

[KeepLocalOP.com](http://KeepLocalOP.com)

[KeepLocalOakPark.com](http://KeepLocalOakPark.com)

## **Budget Estimates**

For all printing and other services, Prescott Group will make every effort to use local vendors.

### **Campaign Rollout (November/December)**

**\$44,300**

#### **Design Development**

- Logo/theme development, extension to social media graphic formats
- Creation of artwork for in-store items
- Website development and content creation includes hosting fees, domain registration with upkeep and maintenance for 6 months, with additions enhancements as program develops.

#### **Business Relations**

- Business participation engagement
- Initial email contact to introduce program and educate business owners on implementation
- Distribution of materials
- Business support / customer relations as it relates to questions and comments about program

#### **Social Media (December - March)**

- Account setup and graphics creation
- Social media strategy development to include calendar of specific posts, targets, audiences
- Management and monitoring of social media platforms for proper response
- Engagement with other social media groups

#### **Printing/Paid Media/Earned Media**

- Window decals
- Bag stuffers
- Stickers
- Lake Theater Marquee (Nov 23-30)
- Wednesday Journal/Oak Leaves
  - Print ad
  - Online ad
  - Sponsored content



**Spend Local Win Local Drawing (December/January) \$23,700\***

- Program administration and business engagement to assure participation
  - Promotion to residents via social media advertising and through businesses
  - Printing and materials
  - Coordination of entries, weekly winner selection:
    - Gift card prize cost: option 1 **\$6,600\***
    - Gift card prize cost: option 2 **\$13,200**
- Note: This money goes directly back to the business community with purchase of prize cards*

**Back-A-Business (January) \$9,750**

- Social media engagement for additional contests
- Website promotions/advertising
- Community outreach for loyalty programs
- Printing and materials

**Community Digital Gift Cards (BOGO February) \$27,825\***

- Program administration / Business engagement & education
- Business technical support for inclusion on web platforms
- Promotional materials, social media advertising
- VOP card sponsorship:
  - 2,500 total cards (fees + \$5 extra/card) **\$18,125\***
  - 5,000 total cards (fees + \$5 extra/card) **\$36,250**

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