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Business News

Volume 18

Fall 2025

Message from the Mayor



Let me tell you something you already know: *operating a small business in Park Forest, or anywhere else for that matter, is not an easy task!*

During my time in local government – serving on the Library Board, then as a Village Trustee, and now as Mayor / Village President – I've seen businesses come and go.

And for those that have failed, it hasn't been because of a lack of enthusiasm, business acumen, or hard work on the part of the owners and operators. In fact, many of them were among the hardest working folks I've ever met.

The truth is, the climate for business in America has changed dramatically in the last quarter of a century. People now drive miles away to some mega-store. Others prefer the convenience of using their phones to make online purchases of goods—delivered to their front doors. Local banks increasingly are things of the past, also due primarily to the internet. It's a different world from the one in which you and I grew up!

When I speak with those who were around when the Park Forest Plaza was the flowering center of commerce for the entire far south suburban region, they bemoan the fact that all those businesses no longer are around, and they long for the "good ol' days."

But, you know, when I talk with some of the people who once operated businesses in Park Forest, the tone is a little different. What they tell me is that it was the **customers** who disappeared first, and then – because of fewer shoppers – that the businesses were forced to close their doors. What they say is, "shop local" was a great slogan but not much more!

So, let's be realistic. The Village Board and staff do not have the magic wand for the return of a successful business climate in our Village. But we do know that you deserve as much assistance as possible.

SEE **MAYOR**, Back Page

Business Breakfast

At the recent Business Breakfast, Park Forest entrepreneurs gathered for a morning of connection and fun. Attendees played a lively game called *Deck of Discovery*, where drawing special cards gave DownTown business owners the chance to share insights about themselves and their companies.

The next business breakfast will be held on **December 4th**, and will be a State of the Village Address, featuring new and current Village officials.

■ *Arika Rogers, Administrative Assistant II & Business Licensing*

New DownTown Businesses & Grand Openings!

Shop Local First!



Mission 007
Youth Service
316 Forest Blvd. 2nd Fl
(708) 940-2883
www.mmission007.org



Imishe Massage
Massage Services
218 Forest Blvd, 2nd Floor
(630) 294-7381
www.imishemassage.me



Swanqee
Clothing Boutique
301 Main St.
(708) 416-8860
www.swanqee.com

New Commercial and Home-based Businesses

Evince Junctions
Web Development and
Marketing Services
(708) 821-4448
www.evincejunctions.com

**Tiki's Ribs & Tips
Smokehouse**
Caterer
64 Lester Rd.
(219) 440-4671
tikisribstips@gmail.com

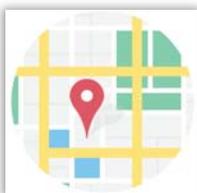
Imperceptible Healing
Mental Health and
Holistic Therapies
288 Main St.
(312) 802-2442
mia_foote23@yahoo.com

Charlene Speaks
Coach, Speaker, and Traveling
Consultant
(619) 244-2839
charlene@charlenewaddell.com

Tacos Los Camaradas
Food Truck
Indianwood & Lester Rd.
(773) 414-9631
loscomaradasrestaurant@gmail.com

For a full business list, visit <https://www.villageofparkforest.com/BusinessDirectoryii.aspx>

Point Me in the Right Direction



Business owners generally rely on signage to identify their business location. Another place for business owners to convey information about their business is on their website. This online presence becomes synonymous with the location.

Consequently, customers have become as reliant on what they find online as they find at the actual location. What are your services and hours of operation? What is your contact information? What are the directions to your business?

A reliance on GPS and navigation tools to provide directional information can often be frustrating for business owners. When YELP, Yahoo, Google or MapQuest among other online navigational tools is incorrect, your valued customer is sent on a wild goose chase.

Have you ever heard from a customer or vendor that they couldn't find you? If so, how did you resolve that challenge? If you're willing, could you share how you resolved that challenge with Village staff. Contact Sandra Zoellner at 708-283-5623.

■ Denise Williams-Harvey, Economic Development Advisory Group member

Access South Cook



Access South Cook continues to make strong progress as one of the most anticipated new housing developments in Park Forest and probably the South Suburbs. Leasing interest has been significant, with more than 600 parties already signing up! This enthusiasm highlights the strong demand for high-quality, accessible, and energy-efficient rental housing in the region. With leasing scheduled to begin in November 2025, both new and current residents have shown great interest in living DownTown Park Forest!

Once finished, Access South Cook will provide centrally located housing near retail, restaurants, civic offices, and a farmers market, enhancing both convenience and community connectivity. The first building is expected to be completed in early 2026, with the entire development slated for completion later next year!

■ *Andrew Brown, Assistant Director of Economic Development & Planning*

Holiday Toy & Giveaway Drive

This holiday season, Community Relations Manager & Commission on Human Relations is hosting a Toy & Giveaway Drive to bring joy to local children and families. We invite businesses like yours to donate toys, gift cards, or monetary support; every contribution goes directly to families in need.

We understand most of our partners are small businesses, so in return we're offering ways to showcase your business (bag stuffers, postcards, and more) while making a difference.

Donations can be dropped off at Village Hall, Evelyn Randle, Community Relations Manager, 350 Victory Drive, 2nd Floor, or pick-up can be arranged. Thank you for helping us spread holiday cheer in our neighborhood! Questions? Call, 708.283.5621 or email erandle@vopf.com.



■ *Evelyn Randle, Community Relations Manager*

RFQ/P for Park Forest TOD Released!

The Village of Park Forest is excited to announce an outstanding opportunity for developers. We have issued a Request for Qualifications and Proposals (RFQ/P) for the redevelopment of a prime, approximately 12-acre, Village-owned site adjacent to the 211th Street Metra Station.

This is a two-round process designed to identify a short list of qualified and innovative development teams to partner with us on a landmark Transit-Oriented Development (TOD).

You can find the full RFQ/P document on the Village Website: <https://www.villageofparkforest.com/bids.aspx?bidID=359>. We encourage you to review it and consider submitting your qualifications. The deadline for Round 1 submissions is **5:00 PM CDT on October 17, 2025**.

If you or your team have questions, please submit them via email to Sandra Zoellner at szoellner@vopf.com by the **October 3, 2025 deadline**.

We would be grateful if you would share this opportunity with your professional networks or any other developers you know who might be interested in this project.

■ *Andrew Brown, Assistant Director of Economic Development & Planning*



VILLAGE OF PARK FOREST

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Village of Park Forest

Economic Development Advisory Group

Phillip Perkins
Chair
Andrew Gladstone
Vice Chair

Lane Cameron
Sheryl Franklin
Kelly Smith
Michele Smith
Anita Vanarsdale
Denise Williams-Harvey

Trustee Erin Slone
Board Liaison

Sandra Zoellner
Staff Liaison & Secretary

Discusses Economic Development Issues in the Village.

Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. in Village Board Conference Room
The Public is Welcome!

Want to be Included in the Business eBlast?

Send Us Your Business Promotions, Events, Launching New Website, Celebrating an Anniversary, etc.

Our eBlast Reaches Over 1400+
Send a PDF or jpg to: arogers@vopf.com

Cost? It's FREE!

MAYOR Cont'd from page 1

Regarding property taxes, we continue to work closely with the Cook County Assessor and others in county and state government to bring about the changes necessary for your tax bills to be fair and equitable. It should not be the case that what you pay in property taxes is more than what big-box retailers, with ten times the amount of space, pay in suburbs where commerce is thriving. I am committed to seeing the current system in Cook County changed.

Our residents need to understand that if we can have more successful businesses in town, we will have more revenue coming in from commercial property tax, and an increase in sales tax revenue. Both would mean less dependence on taxes paid by our current small businesses and homeowners to fund needed Village services. So, every place I go, the message I deliver is "shop local because it's in your best interest." Much more is to be gained by shopping locally!

Park Forest's image as a place for fun family events is growing as nearly 30 new outside vendors registered to participate in our special events—vendors from Chicago, Richton Park, Olympia Fields and Matteson to name a few. The DownTown has more than 70 businesses between five buildings, across two floors. Most recently Swanqee, Imishe Massage and Mission 007. The professional culinary kitchen incubator at Poppin Plates has two new caterers. The Village provides a business map and QR code, quarterly in the water bill; and on the VOPF website, there is an up-to-date searchable business directory.

So, I'm not going to tell you everything is rosy, *because it ain't!* But I will tell you that your current Village government is committed to doing the best job we can to make your business a success. Maybe that hasn't always been the case in the past, but it certainly is today. As I write this the Feds are cutting interest rates to increase spending ability for both businesses and their consumers alike. Better days are coming, and we (the Village Board, Village staff, and Village residents) are here to help support your business!

Because Park Forest Works, Park Forest Grows!


Joseph Woods, Mayor of Park Forest