



Dear Neighbors,

Olympia Fields has long been a Destination Community that has preeminence in the Southern Suburbs.

Olympia Fields is rich in history and home to award-winning architecture, highly desirable and affordable unique homes, and a sprawling office park. It is the safest and most beautiful community in the southern suburbs. In other words, “of course” Olympia Fields is the place to be. The newly completed \$150 million expansion to Franciscan St. James Hospital, the Olympia Fields Country Club and proximity to world-class transportation all

help to ensure that Olympia Fields remains the destination it has always been.

A key to ensuring that our future remains a bright one is to improve the efficiency of our government and grow a commercial tax base that will provide a balanced approach to ensuring a return on investment for the residents of Olympia Fields. We have secured real economic development that augments/supports a village-like atmosphere and positions us to take advantage of current and future trends in technologies. Olympia Fields remains the right place to attract young upwardly mobile families to share the vision, lifestyle and values that will enable Olympia Fields to remain a great place to live and raise a family, but also a great place to start and run a business in the new world economy that has been ravaged by COVID-19.

The Village history and vision have been clear and the following **guiding principles** are the rules under which your Village Administration now operates. I am proud to share with you the improvements, changes and plans that have been made during this administration.

Maintain & protect the beauty and charm of Olympia Fields: Our Greatest Asset

We have maintained the "Village Nature" of the Village of Olympia Fields. It has and will continue to always come first. This administration has not and will not sacrifice the nature of our image or property values for the interest of those who have not invested in our community or who are non-residents.

- New ordinances have been enacted to help strengthen and encourage local Homeowner Associations (HOA).
- Every year, we have increased the annual beautification budget. These funds have been used to enhance the beauty of the Village with seasonal banners, hanging flower baskets down Kedzie Avenue and at Village Hall and planters around the Village. At the January 20th Board of Trustees meeting, I introduced Resolution #2021-01, a resolution establishing a new annual Beautification Enhancement Program (BEP) with a maximum \$1,000 contribution available from the Village for each HOA to further enhance the beautification of each subdivision within our community. Details are available on the Village's website at <https://www.olympia-fields.com/372/Beautification-Enhancement-Program>.
- The Board of Trustees also approved a new cost-sharing program at the January 20th meeting to assist property owners that have experienced at least one backflow event in their basement during heavy rainstorms, involving sewage from the sanitary sewer system, with the installation of a backflow prevention system. Older homes built prior to 1970 in low areas may have experienced this issue. The details, rules and application process are available on the Village's website at <https://www.olympia-fields.com/373/Backflow-Prevention-Program>.
- The Pew Charitable Trust named Olympia Fields the #1 town in America to have 98% of its minority population own their homes. Please see the article on their website at <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/08/15/where-black-homeownership-is-the-norm>.
- The Planning and Zoning Commission, led by Trustee Bill Pennington and Chairman Victor Blackwell, have worked tirelessly to enhance our zoning ordinances to ensure that they meet or exceeded the number one guiding principle of maintaining the “Nature” of Olympia Fields.

- Over the past 32 months, Olympia Fields continues to be a thriving community. The Village issued 1,538 building permits for commercial and residential improvements. Our businesses and residents invested \$18,796,227 in rehabilitation projects.
- The sale-to-list price ratio in Olympia Fields is 100.03%. Olympia Fields has long been the place to be, but it is now a seller's market with more people looking to buy than there are houses on the market. Demand is forecasted to increase because of the strength and stability of our finances, long time reputation, and the small village nature of our community. The pandemic and the associated shift to work from home are contributors to those seeking an improvement in their quality of life.
- Housing values have increased 4% to 10.3%, depending on the size of the house, during the last 12 months.
- We enhanced our brand to "of course...Olympia Fields" to market our community and expand the concept of being the envy of the Southland.

Improve the efficiency of our government.

It is not necessary to grow our population and housing stock to balance our budget. Our highest priority is to protect the natural beauty and social-economic nature of our community, not the government that supports our Village. It has been a high priority to deliver best-of-breed local governmental services while controlling expenses and increasing the efficiency of our government. I am proud to say that the Village of Olympia Fields is in a premier position and is the envy of the surrounding neighbors. Municipal governments have been strained all over the country, not the Village of Olympia Fields. We have not been in a position where we were required to cut staff but instead have increased services, reduced water rates and lowered the village tax levy all while growing our cash reserves.

- We have redesigned the website to make it easier to review information. The redesign was necessary to deliver greater clarity and search capability to our residents. The Report a Concern Citizen Request Tracker System was implemented with the goal of a 24-hour response and 72-hour resolution. To better serve our citizens, processes have been put into place for more public access to department heads. Complaints are discussed at staff meetings to ensure problems are resolved as quickly as possible.
- The website is dynamic in that it has links to constantly changing valuable data. Olympia Fields does not have a health department, but our website is integrated into the county and state departments of health, as well as the CDC to ensure that our Village is up-to-date on all related COVID-19 information.
- Complete transparency is available via the Village website, you can view everything from agendas & minutes from all public meetings to how your money is spent is readily available. All of the Village's Financial Reports including independent certified audits, annual budgets, and Open Gov, an interactive financial transparency platform, is available for your review. Our Municipal Code of Ordinances and Total Compensation Reports are available on the Village's website at <https://www.olympia-fields.com/179/Village-Financial-Reports>.
- Department Heads meet every two weeks to discuss issues and implement plans to address improvements to our community.
- New hours have been implemented at the Village Hall improving communication and service with the community (M,T,W, F from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. daily and Thursday from 8:00 a.m. – 6 p.m.).
- Our newly appointed Treasurer, Stan King is a resident of Olympia Fields and former Senior VP and Auditor at Northern Trust. He has assisted in the revamp of our processes.
- We have enhanced our ability to keep the residents informed by expanding the Village reverse 9-1-1 system to better inform of weather alerts, safety issues and road closures. We now have a database of nearly 2,000 telephone numbers and email addresses. For the first time, the Village has a Village-wide Emergency Plan.
- There has been NO NEW DEBT added in the last four years. At the December Board Meeting, the Trustees voted to reduce the total Village levy on your property taxes. The Village's allocated share of property tax bills is about 11%. We have done our share to lower taxes.
- Your effective water rates have not increased in five years. Public Works has significantly reduced water leaks. We have reduced or eliminated all outstanding or uncollected debt from back-owed fees for water bills that were under-billed. As a result, the Village was able to grant a 10% across-the-board reduction in water rates. We also granted another reduction of 10% for 2 months to promote handwashing during the early months of the pandemic.
- We have been working with Homewood, Flossmoor and Chicago Heights to develop an alternative source to Lake Michigan water that will further contain future water expenses. This potential solution will provide greater flexibility as the financial realities of the pandemic have a greater impact on Chicago's loss of revenue due to the pandemic.

- The pandemic has delayed the final rollout of the meter replacement program. Public Works will complete the exchange of the final 300 homes as soon as practical. These meters aid in monthly billing and will provide real-time leak detection by providing more accurate tracking of water usage 24 hours a day. If you are using water in the middle of the night, you probably have a leak and are paying more than you should. The completion of this project coupled with a monthly full-page water bill will show more timely, actual water usage, rates and historic water usage data for trend analysis to help save you money.
- For the last 18 months, a Village newsletter was included in each water bill to keep residents informed. Past newsletters can be found on the Village's website. Effective immediately eNewsletters will be sent electronically on a monthly basis.
- In October 2020, the Village converted to a new online water bill pay system with added features such as: auto-pay, email reminders, pay-by-phone and pay-by-text. Since the conversion, more than 45% of Village residents have paid their water bills online. In February, residents will also be able to use online bill pay for fees associated with Building Permits.
- New spending and approval policies have been implemented including local procurement and M/WBE practices. During the pandemic, sales tax revenues have increased... buy Olympia Fields works!
- We implemented new financial policies to ensure that all bills are now paid AFTER services are rendered, not in advance as done by the previous administration.
- To ensure better accountability and service, employees are now being given annual performance evaluations.
- A Five-Year Capital Projects Plan has been developed by the staff and this administration based on mutually agreed to requirements, projections and feedback from residents. For the first time ever, the plan is completely funded by excess reserves in all of the Village's existing funds. All future projects on the five-year horizon can be implemented without borrowing any money. This includes about 3 miles of new pavement and swale regrading to be completed this summer:
 - 207th Street from Western Avenue to Promethian Way
 - Arcadian Drive from Parthenon Way to Attica Road; Attica Road from Arcadian Drive to Ionia Avenue and Ionia Avenue from Arcadian Drive to Attica Road
 - Greenwood Drive from 207th Street North to the dead end
 - Vienna Wood Subdivision (Strauss Lane and Danube Way)
 - Oakwood Drive from Country Club Drive to Brookwood Drive
 - Exmoor Road
- The Village's fund balance policy requires five months or 40% of expenses to be held in reserve. As of our January 2021 Board of Trustee meeting, the projected year-end fund balance will exceed 70% of expenses in reserve. These new total surpluses are projected to continue to grow. Good fiscal management has enabled these kinds of improvements in all of our Proprietary Funds in spite of continued pressure on revenues due to state legislation imposing fees and revenue reductions on local governments and the COVID-19 pandemic. Financial details are available on the Village's website at <https://www.olympia-fields.com/179/Village-Financial-Reports>.

Protect Village of Olympia Fields' property values with an economic development program that is consistent with future lifestyles and the new economy business models.

This administration has taken advantage of every practical resource working with our Economic Development, Community Relations and Planning & Zoning Commissions to ensure that we have been able to maintain our preeminent role in the Southern Suburbs.

- We have a program to acquire land at no cost to the Village for future development. When Olympia Fields owns the land, we control our own destiny regarding development.
- We enhanced the Economic Development Commission, adding more members with business backgrounds. Chairman Mike Lewis, a retired Executive VP BMO Harris Bank and RTA board member and Phil Paige, owner Paige Transportation and board member of Old Plank Trail Community Bank, are just a few members of the EDC.
- We have rezoned the hospital campus to create a Medical District with Franciscan St. James Hospital as a trusted healthcare provider.
- We completed a Village economic development market study and needs assessment which will assist with attracting appropriate businesses.

- We stopped the growth of projects that residents did not want, and do not add to real economic development growth or meet guiding principle number one...maintain the nature of the Village of Olympia Fields.
- We explored the potential, justified and are pursuing the development of a hotel and banquet facility for Olympia Fields.
- We are using multiple developers rather than one "preferred" developer which increases the opportunity for success.
- Options are still under consideration for the redevelopment of the Jewel Plaza.
- During the last three years, 27 new businesses have called Olympia Fields home. During the pandemic, two new restaurants, a hair salon and the Chicago Southland Convention & Visitors Bureau were welcomed to the Village. Batter and Berries from Lincoln Park has committed to late spring. A new first-class service station on the corner of Governors Highway and Lincoln Highway has begun construction.

Other changes and improvements that have been made include:

Built a high-performance management team.

- Cynthia Saenz is the Village Administrator with over twenty years as the Village Finance Director and Office Manager.
- Betty Zigras is the Finance Director with fourteen years in governmental finance.
- Retired Judge Drella Savage has been appointed Village Clerk.
- The Police Department was reorganized to be more efficient, put more resources on the streets of Olympia Fields and reduced the risks associated with SWAT, undercover activities and task forces in other communities. Olympia Fields Police Department is singularly focused on protecting Village residents and businesses.
- Acting Chief Scott Morgan and Sergeant Derrick Blasingame together have over 50 years of service in Olympia Fields, now head-up the police department.
- Purchased new hybrid vehicles to cut maintenance costs and the implementation of a new "in town only" policy related to the use of the police fleet has reduced fuel usage by more than \$80,000.
- These changes and increases in efficiency will net approximately \$500,000 in savings or 12% in future police budgets.

Maintaining the nature of the Village of Olympia Fields is our highest priority and it will order our steps in pursuit of economic development. We will continue to deliver the best of breed governmental services while controlling expenses. This administration will continue to take advantage of every practical resource, leveraging our Economic Development, Community Relations and Planning & Zoning Commissions to ensure that we will be able to maintain our preeminent role in the Southern Suburbs.

Thank you for your support!



Sterling M. Burke
President, Village of Olympia Fields