



IX. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This chapter of the Plan sets forth Goals and Policies for economic development efforts in the City. The City has proactively focused on economic development, and has organizations and tools in place that will eventually aid in implementing aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. These organizations and tools are briefly described below, with additional information available in the May 2007 *Background Report*. The *Background Report* also contains a detailed summary of community demographics and recent market trends that informed the development of the Goals and Policies in this chapter.

The **Oak Forest Chamber of Commerce** is an organization that serves the City's business community, and will be a key partner in expanding the City's economic development efforts. Currently, the Chamber has more than 175 Oak Forest area professionals, businesses, organizations and government entities as members. The Chamber of Commerce office is located at the Oak Forest Municipal Center.

The **Oak Forest Business Retention Program** is a new program being undertaken by the City. Elements of the program include: surveying businesses regarding their needs, an ongoing visitation program, development of an "action plan" and an annual appreciation event.

A **Facade Assistance Program (FAP)** is presently offered for commercial businesses as an incentive to improve the appearance of buildings, landscaping and signage. The FAP is a matching grant program that permits landlords and lessees to apply for matching funding. Eligible projects include upgrades to signage, installation of facade materials and landscaping, and soft costs such as architectural/engineering costs and permit fees.





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The City has established three **Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Districts** to date (a map depicting these TIF Districts is included in the May 2007 *Background Report*). In addition, the City supports use of the **Class 8 real estate tax incentive** established by Cook County. Properties within Bremen Township are eligible for Class 8 because the township is one of five in Cook County that are targeted by the South Suburban Tax Reactivation Program.

GOALS AND POLICIES

The City of Oak Forest provides a strong economic development environment for residential, commercial and industrial development. The City's economic development Goals and Policies provide direction for maintaining overall economic health and diversity, building a stronger tax base and reducing the homeowner tax burden over time.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL #1

Achieve a diversity of commercial development that is organized to provide a broader range of goods and services within and beyond the community.

Policies

1. Maintain a range of retail and service commercial activities that meet the needs of residents and enhance and diversify the City's tax base.
2. Develop aesthetically pleasing and functionally well-designed retail and commercial shopping environments, by requiring high quality building design, landscaping, and site improvements.
3. Utilize planned new development in the Metra station area as a catalyst for attracting additional new commercial, office, and mixed use development within the vicinity.
4. Attract under-represented uses such as retail uses and restaurants that will both enable residents to "shop locally" for desired goods and services and encourage outside users to shop and dine in Oak Forest.





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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL # 2

Encourage development of industrial and employment uses at appropriate locations.

Policies

1. Ensure that new or expanded industrial and employment uses are concentrated in areas of similar or compatible uses.
2. Minimize the negative impact of industrial activities on adjacent land uses through appropriate planning and zoning, phasing out isolated industrial uses over time.
3. Require all new industrial developments to meet performance standards for noise, air, odor and other forms of environmental pollution.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL # 3

Actively market and provide incentives to attract new development and residents to Oak Forest.

Policies

1. Continue an ongoing business attraction/retention strategy to assist businesses.
2. Work collaboratively with the Chamber to market development opportunities and available incentives and programs for developers and business owners.
3. Promote efforts and activities to encourage residents to “shop locally” and to attract shoppers from outside the City.
4. Identify and prioritize economic strategies in conjunction with commercial property owners and managers and the Chamber of Commerce to ensure economic vitality and stability in all commercial shopping areas.

