



Meet the City's "New" Newsletter



VOTING PRECINCTS CHANGE

What are the changes, and how might they affect you?

MANY OF Oak Park's nearly 22,000 registered voters now reside in different precincts than did in past elections and will be casting their ballots at different locations. The

See CHANGES on page 3



How-to: Report Gas and Power Issues

The correct contact numbers for reporting problem events

WHEN SUCH serious and/or potentially dangerous situations as power outages and downed electrical lines occur it is important for residents to

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Now Accessible Through Website

[HTTP://WWW.CI.OAK-PARK.MI.US](http://www.ci.oak-park.mi.us)

THE TIMES they are changing and the City is no longer immune, in light of recent changes in and around the City, and the adoption of the new 2012-2013 fiscal year budget, it is only fitting to give an updated facelift to our beloved City newsletter. During the budgetary process, the City discovered a way to save money by changing the way we create and distribute this newsletter. The changes are cosmetic for the most part, including formatting and design, but also the way the newsletter is to be distributed. The newly renamed "Oak

Park Branch" newsletter, previously "Oak Park Report," is planned to be available via the City's website on a monthly basis, as well as quarterly through smaller printed versions to be included in the same envelope that your water bill arrives in. By doing this, the City hopes to keep residents better informed of City events, activities and happenings through these more frequent updates.

What can you expect to see in the "new" newsletter? The same info provided through the old "Report". You may also find info like construction updates,

See NEWSLETTER on page 2

Attention Residents!

Want a chance to have one of your photos included in the 2013 City calendar? We want to see your best shot from any of our city-sponsored events, recreation programs, or even an Oak Park 'scenic' photo. Please include details about your image!

Send to: OAKPARK@CI.OAK-PARK.MI.US



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NEWSLETTER

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upcoming elections, any changes in departments, as well as how and where you can interact with the City on the web. Have an idea that you think might incorporate well within this newsletter? E-mail your idea to: oakpark@ci.oak-park.mi.com

Further, while the City won't be delivering its previous quarterly publication to the residents,

the new "Branch" is user friendly and will print from any home computer onto 8 1/2 x 11 paper. If you don't have access to a computer or printer at home, you can visit the Oak Park Library and utilize the computer lab to view and print a copy there.

In addition to the Branch newsletter, residents can also stay up-to-date with City happenings by visiting the City's Facebook and Twitter social media pages (*info at right*).

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Resident action critical to rat control

Code Enforcement

SEVERAL OF the facts about the presence of rats in the community are just as unpleasant as the subject, itself. First of all, the despised rodents do, indeed, exist in Oak Park, just as is true throughout Oakland County and in communities all across the metro area. Second, the problem is not going to be completely resolved either here or anywhere else in the foreseeable future.

As veteran Code Enforcement Officer Kevin Jones puts it, "All municipalities in every metropolitan region are coping with rats on an ongoing basis. We have been more fortunate than many other places in this regard, but that doesn't mean the battle is over. To the contrary, rats are an enemy that isn't going to be wiped out here or anywhere else."

However, this does not mean that the community or the professionals who serve it are destined to lose the anti-rat campaign. Residents can protect their homes and properties and, by doing so, their families and neighborhoods from infestations of the rodents.

"They can't be eliminated from large populated areas, but they can be controlled to the degree that the threat they pose to health and quality of life in Oak Park will be minimized," Jones says. "The goal of controlling the problem is realistic. The key to achieving it is that residents can take common-sense steps that will effectively deny rats access to food and shelter."

"Certain 'starvation measures' will take away food sources which rats

typically depend on for survival."

He lists these experts' guidelines to help get rid of infestations and discourage new ones:



Don't provide feeding sources

✓ Proper storage of garbage and rubbish is the single most important factor in rat elimination and prevention. Tight-fitting lids are essential! Also, keep in mind that plastic bags are not rat-proof.

✓ Do not leave excess pet food sitting out or food supplies, such as dog or cat edibles, anywhere that rodents can reach them. If pets eat outside, wash their dishes daily.

✓ Make sure bird feeders are at least four feet from ground level.

✓ Thoroughly clean dog runs and pen areas every day. Rats will eat pet droppings.

Don't allow nesting areas

✓ Get rid of all unnecessary articles, junk and large rubbish items from your premises.

✓ Keep grass and weeds cut to levels that are not high enough to conceal rodents.

✓ Store firewood and lumber in racks that are at least 18 inches off the ground.

Jones warns that homes and other buildings need to be rat-proofed.

"Typically, rats can squeeze through a half-inch hole, climb both horizontal and vertical wires, and swim up sewer lines and floor drains and through toilet traps. They will find breaks in drain pipes. They are tough and determined to survive."

"You need to seal all holes and openings that are within three feet of the ground, especially those that are a half-inch or more in diameter. Be sure to use strong and durable materials that cannot be gnawed through."

Residents who are concerned that there might be rats on their property can check for some tell-tale signs, Jones says.

"Look for holes or fresh digging under concrete slabs, near garbage storage areas, along earth banks and near brush piles and similar places that can provide harborage. Note that rat droppings are black, shiny capsule-shaped, about three-quarters of an inch long and with blunt ends."

"Other typical evidence are 'runways' outdoors – narrow, beaten paths of earth free of debris – and greasy smear marks indoors, along walls and steps. Also, rats commonly gnaw on door ledges, corners, stored materials, wood and other items. The marks they leave are distinctive teeth scrapings."

Additional information can be obtained by calling the **Code Enforcement Division at 248-691-7457**.

CHANGES

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changes were mandated by a state law which became applicable after the 2010 Census was completed.

The Aug. 7 Primary will be the first conducted since Oak Park's revised precinct configuration and assigned polling places became official. As a result, there are now 10 City precincts, reduced from what for many years had been a total of 19. What had been 11 polling locations have been reduced by consolidation to 5.

The key language in the law requiring these adjustments declares that: "In the second year following each federal census, city and township election commissions shall divide precincts, not later than 120 days before the primary election next preceding the general November election in order that a precinct, as far as is practical, is not split between districts..." The districts referred to are congressional, legislative and county commissioner districts that were reapportioned to reflect information that was documented in the 2010 Census.

The City Clerk's Office followed this timeline in meeting all provisions of the law in advance of the Aug. 7 Election, which met the law's definition of "the primary election next preceding the general November election."

As the administrator of all elections held in Oak Park, the office is responsible for the training and assigning of precinct workers, in addition to the voter registration process, oversight of the Board of Canvassers, and the safekeeping and maintenance of voting equipment. Therefore financial relief for the City is among the benefits of precinct realignment and consolidation.

Fewer voting locations means that fewer election inspectors are now needed: the number is down from 100 workers to 60. As a result, the savings for Oak Park will be \$10,000-\$20,000 per local election and \$20,000-\$40,000 per state general election or presidential election.

Voter identification cards, which include each recipient's precinct number and polling location, were mailed to all registered voters the week of July 2 by the Clerk's Office.

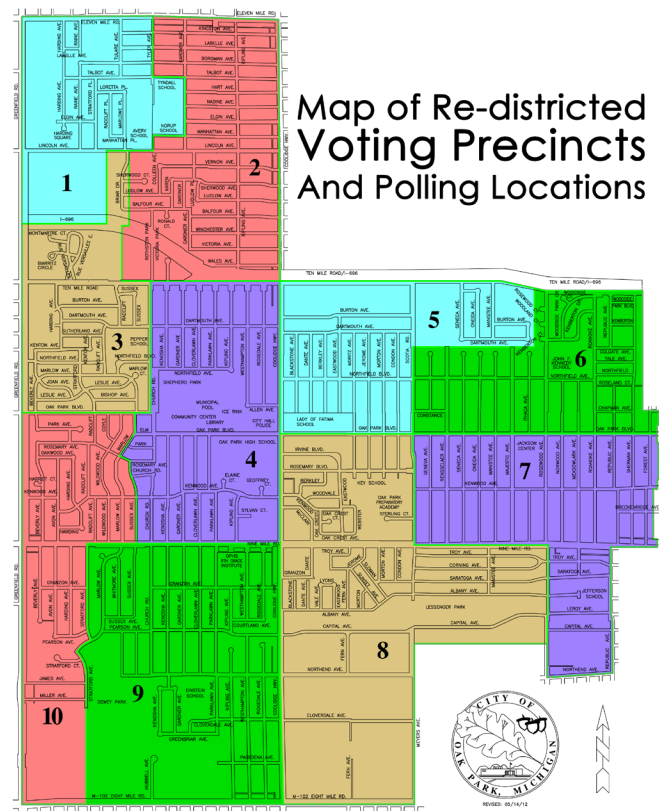
HOW-TO

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know the right numbers to call, and equally important for them to know which not to call.

That truth is why the Department of Public Safety (DPW) and the Department of Public Works have provided guidelines for reporting specific kinds of problems to the appropriate responders and/or for seeking further information from the correct authority. For example, Public Safety must be alerted to a disconnected power line in a neighborhood and will set up a perimeter around the loose live cable. However, the department has nothing to do with the repair process. That is solely the responsibility of DTE Energy, which is the correct contact point for citizens seeking progress updates.

NOTE: City officials have designated the Community Center as a public "cooling station" during hot weather power outages and a "warming station" during extreme cold-weather outages. Fresh water will be made available. Questions about this service should be directed to 248-691-7555 or 248-691-7447.

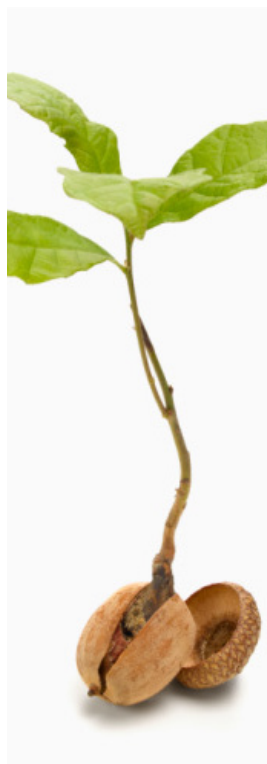


The newly-assigned polling locations addresses:

- #1-- NORUP JR. HIGH, 14450 Manhattan
- #2-- NORUP JR. HIGH, 14450 Manhattan
- #3-- PEPPER SCHOOL, 24301 Church
- #4-- PEPPER SCHOOL, 24301 Church
- #5-- OAK PARK PREPARATORY ACADEMY, 23261 Scotia
- #6-- JACKSON CENTER, 23561 Rosewood
- #7-- JACKSON CENTER, 23561 Rosewood
- #8-- OAK PARK PREPARATORY ACADEMY, 23261 Scotia
- #9-- COMMUNITY CENTER, 14300 Oak Park Blvd.
- #10-- COMMUNITY CENTER, 14300 Oak Park Blvd.

Guidelines for the community's most commonly experienced problem events:

- To report a **downed power line**, notify Public Safety by calling **9-1-1**.
- For all information about repair progress only call **DTE Energy at 800-477-4747** (www.dteenergy.com).
- To report a water main break, between 7:30 am and 4 pm Monday through Thursday call the DPW at 248-691-7497. During any other time period call **Public Safety at 248-691-7447**.
- To report a suspected gas leak, call **Consumers Energy at 800-477-5050** (web page is www.consumersenergy.com).



COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS

Tuesday, August 7

Primary Election

Polls will open at 7am and close at 8pm. Need to know where your polling location is? See page 3 of this newsletter.

Wednesday, August 8

Friends of the Library Mtg.

Join fellow community members to help provide support to the library in variety of ways.

Thursday, August 16

Recycling Commission Mtg.

Members aid DPW on projects, including ways to sustain and improve the

environment and quality of life in Oak Park.

Monday, August 20

City Council Mtg.

Council convenes at City Hall in the council chambers. Regularly scheduled meetings begin at 7pm. Find info via the City website: ci.oak-park.mi.us/

Thursday, August 23

Kickball Sign-Up Deadline

One of Oak Park's favorite past-times is back! Make sure to sign yourself or your team up by today!

Contact Recreation:
248-691-7555

Oak Park & Royal Oak Township Optimist Club present:

Back 2 School FUN DAY

in Shepherd Park @ Shelter #2

Sunday
August 26
Noon - 4pm

YOU could win!
Bikes & Helmets
Back Packs with
School Supplies

Play Games
Win Prizes
Fire Truck
Horses
Safety Lessons
Dancers
Free Refreshments:
Hot Dogs & Chips
Popsicles

Need more info? Call 248-968-1203



Scam Alert



Beware Phony Foreclosure "Rescues"

THROUGHOUT HISTORY there have been deceitful people who take advantage of others who are struggling with difficult problems. That's why it is no surprise that hundreds of thousands of Americans who are in danger of losing their homes because of the worst economic downturn in decades are being besieged by offers of help from fraudulent experts.

Foreclosure rescues and mortgage modification scams are rampant. The Public Safety Department is conveying this warning, and some important self-protection guidelines, to residents who may have been contacted by unscrupulous companies or individuals. Sources of this information include federal and state law enforcement and consumer advocacy agencies.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officials state that, "Scammers make promises they cannot keep, such as guarantees to save your home and/or lower your mortgage payment. Of course they charge fees for this 'help.' In order to enhance the perception that they are

credible, they will often pretend to have direct connections with mortgage services. They do not!

"Homeowners who feel vulnerable and even desperate because they are dangerously close to foreclosure need to know first of all that the federal government provides free resources for the kind of help they need. Reliable information about the **Making Home Affordable Program** can be obtained by calling **1-888-995-HOPE** (4673). Callers will be able to speak with HUD-approved housing counselors."

Authorities caution that mortgage scams can sound very persuasive and generally can be very hard to spot. One of the first things to watch out for is the use of impressive-sounding titles. Examples include "loan modification consultant," "forensic loan auditor," "mortgage loan auditor," "foreclosure consultant," "foreclosure prevention specialist," "mortgage consultant," and "short sale negotiator." Persons seeking assistance should disregard all such titles and focus on identifying the signs of a swindle.

Following are six red flags to watch out for.

- A company or person that asks for a fee in advance to modify, refinance or reinstate your mortgage: All too often in such cases the so-called expert will pocket your money and do little or nothing to help you avoid foreclosure.
- A "guarantee" to stop a foreclosure or get your loan modified: Nobody can legitimately make such a guarantee! Legitimate, trustworthy HUD-approved counseling agencies will only promise to try their best to help you.
- Advice to stop paying your mortgage and pay the counselor, instead: Never send a payment to anyone except your mortgage lender!
- Pressure to sign over the deed to your home or to sign a document before reading it: No legitimate housing counselor would ever pressure you to sign anything without being certain that you fully understand it.
- A company claims to offer government-approved loan modifications: That might be true, but it might be a lie. Before assuming either way, contact your mortgage lender.
- You are asked to release personal financial information on-line or over the phone: Only give this type of information to your mortgage lender or a counseling agency you have confirmed is HUD-approved.

Homeowners seeking mortgage assistance who believe they are the victim or target of a scam should file a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (1-877-382-4357).