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City of Highland Park

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

2017 – 2019

Business Development Goals

1. Promote and retain existing businesses.
2. Attract new business to the City.
3. Seek opportunities to rejuvenate and revitalize the City through strategic business development efforts.
4. Coordinate business development efforts with business districts, organizations, and regional and state partners.

This Business Strategic Plan ("Plan") sets forth an ambitious, yet achievable, strategic business development agenda for the City of Highland Park for 2017 - 2019.

The purpose of the Plan is to articulate a set of measurable strategies and actions to facilitate economic growth and new opportunities in the City.

This Plan identifies efforts to be made and strategies to follow to work with property owners, businesses, retailers, brokers, consultants and others for continued economic prosperity and enhanced vitality of the City of Highland Park. The Plan is intended to provide guidance and direction for business development efforts within the City.

The Plan was drafted with input from City staff, City Council, business owners and managers and business organizations. Special thanks to the City Council for their vision and direction, and the Highland Park Business & Economic Development Commission for their hard work and commitment to promote the City and improve the quality of life in Highland Park.

City Council

Mayor Nancy R. Rotering
Council members ~

Anthony E. Blumberg	Alyssa Knobel
Daniel A. Kaufman	Michelle Holleman
Alison Smith	Kim Stone

Business & Economic Development Commission

Chair Paul Miller	Vice Chair Paul Cox
Amy Amdur	Bill Dytrych
Doug Hart	Jeff Lichtman
Sheryl Oberman	

Staff Committee:

Ghida S. Neukirch, City Manager
Rob Sabo, Assistant City Manager
Carolyn Hersch, Business Development Manager
Joel Fontane, Community Development Director
Drew Awsumb, Community Development Deputy Director

About Highland Park ~



Twenty-five miles north of Chicago's Loop, the City of Highland Park is nestled among five miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, and near the center of the metropolitan area's most affluent residential markets. Highland Park is a thriving community with a diverse population of more than 29,000, a stable economic base, top-rated schools and university-affiliated hospital, and offering unique business opportunities in Lake County. It is home to Ravinia Festival, a world-class summer venue for performing arts, and a myriad of exciting special events, including the annual Port Clinton Art Festival held in conjunction with the Taste of Highland Park. Highland Park is easily accessible from Route 41, Interstate 94 and Interstate 294 and is served by PACE Bus and Metra train services. Highland Park's business community is diverse, with nine commercial districts conveniently located throughout the City. Highland Park businesses enjoy the benefit of an active Office of Business Development, Business and Economic Development Commission, Chamber of Commerce, Highland Park Downtown Alliance, Ravinia Business District SSA 17 Advisory Committee, and Briergate Business Association District Committee which together help to provide the enhancement of economic, civil, cultural and social interests.

Demographic information as well as the City's services and programs can be found on the City's web site at www.cityhpil.com.

This Strategic Plan sets forth the City's business development activities for 2017 - 2019. As updates are made, changes will be reported to the City Council and posted on the City's web site. This is an evolving document that will be modified as business trends change, business needs arise, and based on the vision of the City Council and recommendations set forth by staff.

Questions about this Business Development Strategic Plan can be directed to the Office of the City Manager at 847-926-1000 or email info@cityhpil.com.

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1. Conduct Business Outreach

- At least annually, meet with the largest employers and sales tax generators. Explore opportunities to retain these business and support their growth in Highland Park.
- Continue to conduct a business outreach program through the Business & Economic Development Commission. Commissioners will conduct a minimum of 20 on-site visits with locally registered businesses to gather feedback. Results of the interviews will be compiled and shared with the City Council. Any significant business concerns that may be addressed by the City will be added to the Plan.

2. Conduct Mayor's Council for Business Development Meetings with the Business & Economic Development Commission



BUSINESS RETENTION

Coordinate with property owners and work to retain businesses within the community by providing support, economic development incentives, and resources.

On a tri-annual basis, coordinate Mayor's Council for Business Development meetings in conjunction with the City's Business & Economic Development Commission to discuss opportunities that may enhance the community's business climate. Invitees will include local business owners, property owners, business development organizations and sister governments.

- Meetings will include thirty minutes for networking before the meeting and time for questions and answers at the end of the meeting.
- Staff will forward initiatives to the appropriate contact(s) for follow-up.

3. Host an Annual Business Summit in the Community

Coordinate an Annual Business Summit to meet with local business leaders to provide a status update on the City's Business Development activities, as well as to discuss strengths and opportunities for doing business in the community.

- Provide businesses relevant information on changes or opportunities in the business landscape.
- Provide business owners potential initiatives or tools to grow their business.
- Solicit feedback on these initiatives and provide the results in the business development e-newsletter.



4. Enhance the City's Image as the First Stop for Business

- On a bi-annual basis, April and November, include information in the City's newsletter, the Highlander, promoting the City as a resource for businesses. In addition to the bi-annual information, include information bi-monthly to educate the public about business in Highland Park.
- On a bi-weekly basis, include information in the electronic business newsletter promoting the City as a resource for local business.
- Q1 2017, integrate the Business and Economic Development Commission Facebook page with the City's page as time has proven that one page has better reach. On a weekly basis, utilize the City's Facebook page to promote local businesses and publicize the City as a resource for businesses.



5. Evaluate Opportunities for Businesses to Collaborate on New Special Events

Explore new events to attract visitors and residents to places of business. Encourage similar and complimentary businesses to work together to produce such events.

6. Explore Website Development Grants for Small Businesses

Encourage businesses to enhance their retail business by developing an online presence to support their sales.

7. Coordinate Annual Business License Mailing

Organize an annual business licensing and information packet for businesses to simplify license invoicing and payments.

- The packet may include applications and forms for: Business Registration, Restaurant Licensing, Liquor Licensing, Outdoor Dining and Display Licensing, Alarm Permit and Business Incentives.

8. Serve as Ombudsman for the Business Community, Business Associations, and Business Interest Groups

Through on-going communication with local business, support business needs by responding to inquiries and providing resource information. Resource information includes, but is not limited to, small business loans, marketing recommendations, media contacts, special event permit guidance and sign information. The City's graphic image delineating the responsibilities of the various business development organizations will be included on the City's web site and promoted via the e-newsletter on a bi-annual basis. The information is attached to this Strategic Plan for reference.

9. Promote the City's Sales Tax Rebate Program to Existing Businesses

The goals of the Sales Tax Rebate Program are as follows:



- Stimulate sales tax growth and create jobs in Highland Park by incentivizing retail businesses to locate or expand in the City;
- Preserve existing level of sales tax revenues to ensure budget sufficiency; and
- Protect the interests of the City and its citizens with a thorough and objective review of such requests.
- Promote the City's Sales Tax Rebate Program featured on the City's website, in the bi-weekly Business

Development e-newsletter and the annual business registration packet. Prospective applicants are encouraged to thoroughly read the Sales Tax Rebate Guidelines and Application. All applicants are required to submit a completed application along with a non-refundable application fee to the Office of Business Development for review and processing.



10. Promote the City's Façade Improvement Program to Existing Businesses

The City of Highland Park recognizes the importance of independent merchants to the City's image and tax base. The goal of the Small Business Façade Improvement Program is to provide assistance and incentive to property owners and local businesses to improve the look and functionality of their property and place of business. The Program is available for use by small business operators and commercial property owners citywide.

- Include information pertaining to the City's Small Business Façade Improvement Program in the annual business registration packet, bi-weekly newsletter and on the City's website.



11. SCORE - Counselors to America's Small Businesses

Counselors to America's Small Business (SCORE) is a non-profit association dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of small businesses in the U.S. SCORE provides free business counseling, workshops, and low cost management consulting. They also provide templates for business plans, advice on how to develop a business plan and obtain a business loan. SCORE counselors can help the entrepreneur start a business or a small business owner grow their business and prosper. In 2010 the City brought SCORE workshops and their mentoring program to the Highland Park Public Library. In 2016, the City worked with SCORE to develop no cost options for onsite social media training. The City will continue this program in 2017.

12. Promote Business Openings, Business Expansion and Relocation News



- Use all modes of communication to promote business in the community including the Business Development and City e-newsletters, the Highlander, Facebook and Twitter.
- On a quarterly basis, issue communication to brokers and real estate professionals information about new leases to promote local business and opportunities to do business in Highland Park.

13. Explore Marketing Opportunities Through Mainstream Media

In 2017, examine options to promote commerce in Highland Park through radio, television and web advertising.

1. Conduct Outreach to Attract Business to the Community

- Contact desired businesses to promote the City as a place to do business.
- Provide leads to real estate professionals and property owners to negotiate lease or sale terms.

2. Promote Available Commercial Property within the Community

- Maintain a list of available commercial property in the community.
- Ensure available property information is easily accessible on the City's web site and promoted to interested parties.

3. Attend the International Council of Shopping Center (ICSC) Deal Making Show

Attend the annual ICSC deal making show to promote available property in the community, network with retailers, real estate brokers, lenders, developers and other real estate professionals.

4. Host a Commercial Real Estate Roundtable

- In Q1 2017, host a roundtable meeting for real estate brokers and property owners to learn about trends in the regional and local real estate market, their needs, and needs of their clients and identify growth opportunities within Highland Park.
- Summarize feedback from the roundtable and develop an Action Plan to modify the City's processes, as resources allow.
- In Q4 2017, check-in with the roundtable attendees at the Business Summit to discuss implemented modifications to the City's processes and obtain their feedback on the success/impact of those changes.



BUSINESS ATTRACTION

The City of Highland Park has all the assets necessary to help business succeed.

Promote benefits of business in Highland Park and assist business with site selection efforts.

- In Q4 2019, host a roundtable meeting for real estate brokers and property owners in conjunction with the Business Summit to continue the discussion regarding trends in the regional and local real estate market, their needs, and needs of their clients and identify growth opportunities within Highland Park.

5. Conduct a Follow-up Survey of Development Services Roundtable Participants

In Q4 2017, survey attendees of the 2016 Development Services Roundtable to obtain on-going feedback regarding the City's processes.

6. Host a Biennial Development Services Roundtable in Conjunction with the Business Summit

In Q4 2018, to maintain open lines of communication with developers, host a new Development Services Roundtable in conjunction with the Business Summit. Participants will be able to provide feedback on their customer service experience as part of developing/building in the City of Highland Park. Participants will be able to address the entire development process, including permit application, the board and commission process, plan review, inspections, and permit issuance. A key emphasis will be on the customer service environment across all of phases of the process related to a variety of factors including City personnel, the accessibility of information, and the clarity of application and consideration process and administrative processing.

7. Review the City's Fee Schedule for Businesses

- Evaluate the City's fee schedule for starting and maintaining a business in Highland Park to be the most competitive destination for starting a business.
- Explore a fee escalator for the 2018 Business Registration to discourage late payments and reduce the need for follow up and number of citations.

1. Support and Serve on Local Business District Boards

- As appointed by the Mayor with concurrence of the City Council, City representatives - one elected official and one staff person - will serve on the Downtown Highland Park Alliance Board as voting members to support and advance the mission, vision and strategies of the Alliance. City representatives will also attend meetings to support the Ravinia Business District Advisory and Briergate Business Association District to assist in advancing the Districts' Special Service Areas. Reports from meetings will be provided to the City Council.
- The City will continue its membership in the Central Business District Property Owners Association (POA) in 2017 and 2018. City representatives will review and discuss maintenance, special projects, and capital improvements projects as identified in the City's budget and capital improvement plan. Property owner needs will be considered as part of the City's budget process. New projects will include a funding plan for the maintenance and capital improvements. The City will also explore funding alternatives in an effort to advance the business district improvements and make recommendations to prioritize the City's capital improvement plans for the CBD.

LOCAL & REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Enhance local and regional partnerships to bring new investment to Highland Park and the region.

2. Serve on the Highland Park Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

One elected official and one staff member will serve as ex-officio members on the Board of Directors for the Highland Park Chamber to serve as a liaison between the two organizations. Updates on City activities and programs, and Board dialogue shall be provided to each respective board/council.

3. Serve in a Leadership Capacity on Lake County Partners to Advance Economic Development Efforts in the Region

Lake County Partners is a non-profit economic development corporation working to maintain economic vitality and quality of life in Lake County by creating and retaining quality jobs, stimulating capital investment, pursuing economic diversity and improving the County's business climate. City staff serves on the Board of Governors of Lake County Partners to represent the best interests of Highland Park and to carry out the mission set forth herein.

City staff will also support initiatives coordinated by the Mayor with Lake County municipalities to advance public-private partnerships for the betterment of Lake County.

1. Conduct Quarterly Meetings with Government Partners to Share Information and Discuss Collaboration Efforts and Opportunities

On a quarterly basis, the City will communicate with representatives of government partners in an effort to maintain open lines of communication and work together to advance business interests to benefit the community.

2. Maintain Information for the Nine Business Districts in Highland Park on the City's Website

Business information on the City's website will be updated for each district, as needed. A site map identifying the subject area will also be available on the City's web site.

3. Coordinate with the Highland Park Hospital and Ravinia Festival as notable destinations to enhance communication and promote local business.

- The City Manager or designee shall attend the quarterly Highland Park Hospital Community Advisory Committee meeting to exchange information with hospital administrators and community leaders.
- On a quarterly basis, City representatives including City Council, City Manager's Office, Business Development, Police, Fire personnel will communicate with representatives of Ravinia Festival to discuss opportunities to enhance collaboration and support.
- Explore opportunities to enhance communication between the City and its community partners, and to provide business information to employees and guests.
- In coordination with appropriate staff, review opportunities to promote the pedestrian linkage from the Hospital to the Central Business District; and from Ravinia Festival to the Ravinia Business District.

COMMUNICATION

Enhance communication interaction and participation among the City council, staff, residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders.

4. Update Branded Promotional Materials

- On a monthly basis, update the City's Business Directory featuring all registered businesses in the community.
- On a tri-annual basis, update the Dining Guide and City Guide featuring shopping, dining and services in the community.
- Coordinate with appropriate parties to distribute the Guides in government facilities where the public congregates, such as the Library and Park District, Highland Park Metra stations, hotels, places of worship, and other strategic locations.
- Update and continue to promote local event and meeting places on the City's website.
- On a monthly basis, list new businesses and recognize existing businesses in increments of 25-year milestones in the Highlander.



6. Provide a Weekly Business Development Report to the City Council & Staff

Via the Weekly Report announce business openings, closings and other relevant information.

7. Pursue Replacement of Static Business Directories to Electronic Message Boards in Well-Designed Kiosks Located Strategically throughout the Central District



Staff is working with the Ratio Design Group to create new sign kiosks for Central Avenue. The kiosks are intended to have LED electronic displays and are designed to be consistent with the proposed downtown gateway, wayfinding streetscape and arcade concept plan presented in 2016. Specifically, the stone base and brick elements of the kiosks reflect the design of proposed gateway signs. Staff is considering four design options. A final design recommendation is anticipated Q4 2017.

- Four new kiosk locations have been identified for the redesigned kiosks. The City's existing four kiosks are currently located on Central Avenue west of the railroad tracks. For the proposed new kiosks there will be two new locations east of the railroad tracks: one at Central & St. Johns and one at Central & Sheridan. A preliminary concept design for the proposed kiosks is provided in the image to the right.

1. Review the Pedestrian Oriented Shopping Overlay (POSO) in the Central Business District

Evaluate the POSO, its delineation, the uses it permits, its applicability and develop amendments as appropriate. Present proposed amendments to the City Council for consideration.

2. Briergate Business District TIF Feasibility Study and Redevelopment Plan

In 2016, the City of Highland Park issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified consultants for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Feasibility Study and Redevelopment Plan for the Briergate Business District. The purpose of the proposed TIF would be to encourage property redevelopment in a thoughtful manner to revitalize the subject area, benefit all taxing bodies, provide for economic development, job growth and improve the quality of life in the community. The budget for the TIF project is \$40,000.

An interview team, comprised of representatives of the City, School Districts 112 and 113, the Park District, and an interested resident met with representatives of both consulting firms. As a result of the interviews, the team unanimously agreed Camiros would be the preferred consultant. In addition to qualifying as the lowest responsible proposer offering the most comprehensive services below budget, Camiros is familiar with the community, they have a deep understanding of the project goals and substantial experience with similar projects. Camiros was also the consultant for the 2005 Ravinia TIF Redevelopment Plan and Project.

In January 2017, a Professional Services Agreement with Camiros was approved by the City Council. The TIF feasibility report and redevelopment plan are expected to be completed in Q3 2017.

POLICY

CONSIDERATIONS

Review practices and policies to enhance the quality of life and economic health of the community.

1. Provide Information to Developers about Development and Redevelopment Opportunities in the Community

Identify sites for potential development and redevelopment as well as lots that may be assembled for this purpose. Provide developers with code requirements and property owner contact information, where permitted, to encourage development as viable properties come available.

2. Assist with Repositioning of Renaissance Place



Coordinate with the property owner to assist in marketing and attracting viable uses to the property. Subject to a letter of intent with the property owner or conditional lease. Meet with property owner to consider amendments to the Planned Unit Development to accommodate the new business use(s) and to reposition a portion of the retail (the Saks Building) to other uses such as residential or other commercial.

DEVELOPMENT, REDEVELOPMENT & REPOSITIONING OPPORTUNITIES

Promote opportunities for development of sites in the community to enhance the economic vitality of the subject area.

Special Service Areas

A Special Service Area is a taxing mechanism that can be used to fund a wide range of special or additional services and/or physical improvements in a defined geographic area within a municipality. The City will work with property owners and businesses in the following areas within the community to encourage community vibrancy:

- Central Business District – In November 2013, the City Council renewed the Central Business District Special Service Area (SSA) Number 16 effective January 1, 2014 for a three year period. The SSA was not extended for another three-year period 2017 – 2019, as property owners elected to utilize the balance of the existing funds through May 2018. In mid-2017, property owners will revisit re-establishment of the SSA. The primary purpose of the SSA is to improve the economic vitality



of the Central Business District. Embracing collaboration with businesses, property owners and the City of Highland Park, the Alliance encourages local spending, investment, tourism, and a sense of community through promotion of the Central Business District. In 2017, the budget levy was discontinued.

The Downtown Highland Park Alliance, a public/private partnership managing the SSA, is comprised of property owners the City is committed to working diligently to continue to enhance the business climate in the Central Business District and the community overall.

Regular progress reports will be provided to property owners and business owners regarding infrastructure improvements, maintenance efforts, business retention and other activities planned within the CBD.

COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

Promote economic vitality of the City's business districts.

- Briergate Business District - In December 2013 the City Council approved Special Service Area 18 to fund physical improvements in the Briergate Business District and marketing. The estimated cost of the improvements is \$3.6 million. The City's portion of the estimated cost is \$3.2 million. The annual budget/levy is \$40,000 over a ten year period, totaling \$400,000. Annually, \$10,000 of the \$40,000 is dedicated to district marketing and events. Collection began January 2014 and will continue through 2024. Improvements will include vegetation maintenance, business signage, and reimbursement for wayfinding signs, wayfinding sign maintenance, lighting, landscaping and parking. The City will collect the funds and manage the SSA. The Briergate Business Association District (BBAD) will serve as the organizing entity responsible for advancing the Briergate Business District's core goals and to work with the City to address parking needs in the district. If the municipal budget allows, and if the City Council approves the \$3.6 million project, the work will commence in 2025. The City will continue to explore grant opportunities to fund the improvements prior to 2025.



- Ravinia Business District - In December 2013, the City Council approved Special Service Area 17 to fund marketing and events in the Ravinia Business District. In December 2016, the City Council approved renewal of SSA 17 for three years through 2019. The three-year SSA annual budget/levy is \$90,000. Costs include marketing, events, banners and expanded beautification. The Business Development Manager administers the SSA and manages contractors. The Ravinia Business District SSA 17 Advisory Group comprised of property owners serves as the organizing entity to advance the Ravinia Business District's core business development goals.



Questions regarding this Business Development Strategic Plan

847-926-1000 or info@cityhpil.com.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ROLES

City

- Assist property owners and brokers to promote available property by maintaining an available property list on City's website
- Support business with permit process
- Manage municipal code
- Oversee zoning and development regulations
- Manage event permit process
- Support commerce by producing and distributing the City Guide, Dining Guide and maintaining an online Business Directory

BEDC

- Appointed volunteers by the City
- Recommend policy changes to City Council
- Research and consider new regulations to support business and enhance the community
- Coordinate with 9 business districts via Mayor's Council for Business Development meeting;
- Host an annual Business Summit
- Sit on RBDAG and BBAD
- Opine on Business Awards programs
- Conduct business outreach

Downtown Highland Park Alliance (SSA 16)

- Market and promote the CBD
- Lead contact for CBD communications efforts
- Amplify the messages of the CBD Businesses
- Provide special event grants to businesses in the CBD

Chamber of Commerce

- Promote members and the community to residents, visitors, relocators and businesses locally, regionally, and digitally
- Provide access to resources and marketing for business development
- Offer educational and professional programs for all businesses
- Provide opportunities for connections, partnerships, leads and referrals to members
- Advocate on business issues with City, State, and Federal agencies

Property Owner

- Tenant recruitment
- Negotiate lease or property sale
- Manage and maintain property
- Adhere to City/State property regulations

Ravinia District SSA 17

- SSA 17 approved 2017 - 2019
- Market and promote the RD to residents and visitors locally, regionally, and digitally
- Lead contact for RD communications
- Develop and manage special events in RD

Ravinia TIF District

- Ravinia TIF District approved 2005 - 2023
- Streetscape design, an identity plan, and infrastructure improvements

Briergate District SSA 18

- SSA18 approved 2014 - 2024
- Infrastructure improvement
- Market and promote the BD to residents and visitors locally, regionally, and digitally