FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2023
Contact: Liz Holt, Executive Director
(708) 613-0550 (O) or (630) 747-4422 (C)
lholt@oprfchamber.org
oprfchamber.org

The Economy, Family Life, and Competition Top issues for Businesses in Oak Park and River Forest

Oak Park, IL – The Oak Park & River Forest (OPRF) Chamber of Commerce has released its third annual list of the Top 10 Concerns facing its local business community. This list was compiled with feedback from member businesses and the Chamber's Board of Directors, and highlights the key pain-points local entrepreneurs have in running their businesses.

"We all anecdotally understand the issues facing businesses," said Board President, Darien Marion-Burton. "To see it codified and confirmed by our membership and board members makes it more real." While each business sector has its own independent issues, this year's list highlighted challenges that are common to all businesses: the impact of long hours on family life, cyber security concerns, and the fear of an economic recession. The complete list is below:

1. The Economy
2. Family life & Personal Impact
3. Competition
4. Employees & Staffing
5. Local Government Issues
6. Public Safety
7. Supply Chain issues
8. Local concerns
9. Covid-19
10. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Concerns surrounding employees & staffing, supply chain issues and Covid appeared in past years and are still on business owners' minds. "Covid is still a reality and there is a nervousness that remains," reminds Mr. Marion-Burton. "Will there be further shut-downs and what would another "pivot" look like? We are not all out of the weeds."

New issues that have made an appearance on the list include public safety, fear of recession, and more direct competition in the community. "Competition in a crowded field is a real concern for many local businesses," says Chamber Board Vice President, Rob Guenthner. "Coming out of the last three years, the market is flooded with new, innovative businesses, as well as larger chains leveraging their corporate R&D to pivot to new marketing and brick & mortar strategies. Differentiating themselves and retaining loyal customers in a quickly changing landscape is hard."

Absent from the list this year was mental health, which did not feature as a stand-alone concern, as it did in 2021 and 2022. “We know that one’s mental health underlies all aspects of running a business,” said Chamber Executive Director, Liz Holt. “Owning and operating a business these days is tough, and it takes its toll on family and personal lives. The Chamber continues to be committed to supporting the individuals in a business, as well as the business itself. That is where our Affinity Groups come in, to support business owners. Finding one’s tribe, and leaning on them for support, is critical to facing these challenges."

The Chamber’s Advocacy committee will shortly begin to meet with local stakeholders in both Oak Park and River Forest to explore how this Top 10 list can be used as a jumping off point to better support local businesses. “Helping to mitigate these concerns, deeply listening to business owners, and intervening early to support them is critical to the continued recovery of our vibrant local business community,” adds Liz Holt. “That’s what our Chamber is all about.”

The Chamber’s Top 10 list also featured prominently in the recent podcast recording of a local election year conversation with candidates for Village Trustee in Oak Park. The recording can be found on the Chamber website.

You can also find the full list of 2023 concerns, a description of each issue, and Top 10 lists from past years, on The Chamber website.

About the Chamber: The mission of the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce is to work for the success of all local businesses and organizations by cultivating an energized, connected and resilient community. We believe that all who live and work locally have the opportunity to thrive in our historic Villages. The Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1905 and continues today as a 501(c)6 non-profit organization.
prfchamber.org

###

Liz Holt
Oak Park and River Forest Chamber of Commerce
(708) 613-0550
lholt@oprfchamber.org