

RIVER FOREST

Proud Heritage • Bright Future

The Village of River Forest Newsletter | December, 2024



Collaboration Leads to Removal of CTA Water Tower

The Village is grateful for the partnerships that enabled the removal of the rusted, abandoned CTA water tower at the Harlem/Lake Green Line stop last month. For years, concerns were expressed about the structure's appearance and potential safety risks. Thanks to the leadership and support of the Village's Tri-Village Community representatives (villages of River Forest, Forest Park and Oak Park) and Illinois Senate President Don Harmon, the CTA finally prioritized and completed the removal of the water tower. Oak Park Village President Vicki Scaman, Forest Park Mayor Rory Hoskins and Village President Adduci personally appealed to the CTA President to expedite this project. Although funding challenges initially delayed progress, Forest Park Mayor Rory Hoskins and his Public Works team advocated for the CTA to move the project forward despite funding challenges. The Village looks forward to continuing the Tri-Village Community partnership to deliver meaningful improvements and solutions for our residents.



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From Village President Cathy Adduci

Dear River Forest residents,

I first want to acknowledge the tragic loss of Detective Allan Reddins, who was killed in the line of duty while serving the Oak Park Police Department. My thoughts are with Allan's loved ones, with members of the Oak Park Police Department, and our own police department who provided assistance during this terrible tragedy. Our Village's top priority is the safety of our residents, and our first line of defense is our team of brave first responders. This is shown by our continued investment in training and other law enforcement tools and initiatives to assist our department with investigations and crime deterrence. Read more on Page 3.

The removal of the CTA water tower last month is a perfect example of how partnerships and collaborations can benefit our community. A big thanks to Forest Park Mayor Rory Hoskins and his team for leading this effort! More information is available in the front page article of this newsletter.

The "Casual Conversations" that we started this year have been considered successful by the residents that have attended. We will keep track of the issues that are raised, as well as the outcomes addressed by the Village (see more in an article on page 4). We will continue to have these conversations through 2025 and beyond.

Lastly, the holiday season is a special time to connect with loved ones, celebrate traditions, and enjoy the magic of the season. You can see on the back page of this newsletter many holiday events that are taking place throughout the month. I also encourage you to Shop River Forest, and support our local businesses this holiday season. Our business community has so much to offer. You can find a listing of businesses in the Village [here](#).

As we embrace this joyful time and look ahead to 2025, I wish all our residents and your family a safe and happy holiday season!

Sincerely,

Cathy Adduci, Village President
Village of River Forest

Village Board Trustees



**Erika
Bachner**



**Kathleen
Brennan**



**Lisa
Gillis**



**Ken
Johnson**



**Robert
O'Connell**



**Respicio F.
Vazquez**

Village Clerk



**Jonathan
Keller**

To contact the
Village Board
to submit a
comment or
question, click the
button below

[Contact the
Village Board](#)

News Around Town

Remembering Oak Park Detective Reddins

The Village joins the community in mourning the loss of Detective Allan Reddins, a dedicated member of the Oak Park Police Department who tragically lost his life in the line of duty on November 29. Detective Reddins served with distinction and commitment, leaving an indelible mark on the safety and well-being of Oak Park and its surrounding communities.

For those wishing to offer support, a memorial fund has been established in Detective Reddins' honor. Contributions can be made to assist his family and provide resources to law enforcement initiatives he championed. Details about the fund can be found on the Oak Park Police Department's [website](#).



Police Department Investment Continues

The Village's primary goal is the safety and security of its residents, visitors and businesses. In addition to the brave and talented officers and support staff that serve and protect River Forest, the Village Board continues to invest in technology to assist with investigations and crime deterrence. At Monday's Village Board meeting, the Board will consider the purchase of additional Automated License Plate Readers. These assist officers in identifying when vehicles wanted for the commission of a crime are travelling through town. The Police Department regularly detects and takes enforcement action on license plate hits for cars that are wanted for serious crimes within the Village and throughout Chicagoland.

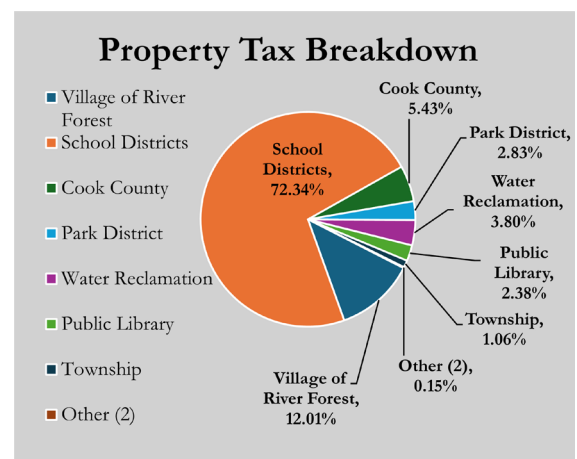
Last month, the Board approved the purchase of a solar powered mobile camera trailer that can be deployed in strategic locations, primarily focused on curtailing retail theft crimes. This trailer is funded by a grant from the Illinois Attorney General's Organized Retail Theft Grant funds.



Where Your Property Taxes Go

On Monday night, the Village Board will consider approval of a property tax levy increase of 3%.

Property tax increases are controlled by the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL), which limits the increase to match the previous year's Consumer Price Index (December 2022 to December 2023). The Consumer Price Index for the 12 months ending December 2023 rose 3.4%. The Village has worked diligently to be fiscally responsible in spending, while continuing to provide comprehensive services to the community. The impact on individual homeowners will vary, based on changes in individual assessed property values and other taxing body levies. The pie chart on the right shows which taxing bodies receive your collective property taxes.



Village Department News

Public Works

The Village Needs YOU to Ensure Water Quality & Safety

The Public Works and Engineering Department is working to ensure the safety and quality of our water infrastructure, and that it complies with the Lead Service Line Replacement Act, mandated by the State of Illinois.

If you have not already done so, please complete a survey (link below) so the Village can identify the material on your side of the water pipes - so that if lead exists, these lines can be replaced. Find instructions at this [survey link](#) - or scan the QR code.



The Village offers a **Lead Service Line Replacement (LSLR) Program** which provides partial funding for the removal and replacement of lead water services throughout River Forest. This Program applies to those properties that currently have lead water service and are working towards having this replaced. To learn more about the program, [click here](#).

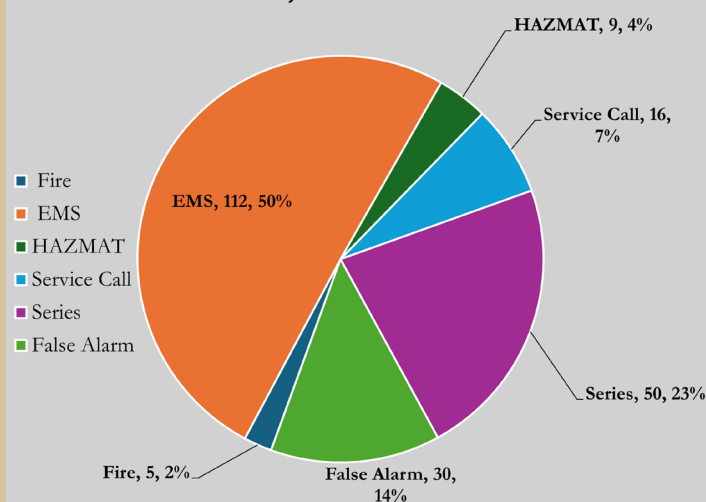
If lead is detected in your water service lines, view steps to reduce exposure and other information about this initiative [here](#).

Fire Department

Monthly Fire Department Reports

Each month, the Fire Department prepares a monthly report for the Village Board and residents to review department activities. This includes extensive information regarding call dates and response types, community events, training initiatives and inspections. In November, the Department responded to 230 calls. Nearly 50% of calls are for emergency medical service. The chart below shows the monthly calls broken down by incident type. The Department's Fire Prevention Bureau performed 58 inspections in November to ensure businesses and institutions remain in compliance with the Village fire code.

November 2024, Fire Incident Breakdown



2024 Casual Conversations Recap

Thank you to everyone that attended the Village's latest Casual Conversation on November 23 at the River Forest Library. This quarterly event enables the Village to invite in person conversations with residents about their ideas, feedback and/or concerns. Below are some examples of issues that were brought up, and the Village's response to them:

- ◆ Residents in attendance who were not aware of, or had not signed up for the Watersmart portal to monitor water usage were provided with a way to access this portal. You can learn more about the benefits of Watersmart through a brief video [here](#). If you haven't signed up, use the [QR code](#) on the right to register!
- ◆ Concerns about speed limit and traffic control signage were shared, and the Village has since installed and repaired signs at locations throughout River Forest.
- ◆ Feedback was shared on sight line concerns for pedestrians, and the Village is currently evaluating intersections to ensure they are safe for those who walk through the Village.
- ◆ Questions about snow causing safety concerns at sidewalks near curbs were asked, and Public Works is now developing a plan to address snow removal and maintenance moving forward this season.
- ◆ Due to concerns raised about speeding in the area of Monroe and North Avenues, Public Works has placed a traffic monitor at this intersection to evaluate the conditions.



More information about future Casual Conversations will be shared in upcoming communications, including the Village's weekly E-newsletter and social media channels.

Want to Learn About River Forest's History?

The holidays are a time of nostalgia, tradition and reminiscing.

In July of 2005, journalist Doug Deuchler wrote an article in the Wednesday Journal about the history of River Forest. It depicts the landscape of the Village beginning in the mid-19th century, and gives a historic journey through the 1960's.

Deuchler discusses how River Forest's history is steeped in transformation, from a wooded frontier to a suburban haven. The Village's thick woods and prairies attracted settlers after a cholera outbreak in Chicago in 1837. The area gained accessibility in 1842 with the planking of Lake Street, enhancing stagecoach travel. By 1880, River Forest became an independent municipality. To read this article in its entirety, click [here](#).

Village Board & Commission Updates

The Economic Development Commission met on Wednesday, December 4 and discussed its 2025 meeting schedule (generally, the first Wednesday of each month). There was also an update provided by Darien Marion-Burton, the Executive Director of the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce. This included plans for the 2025 Memorial Day Parade, and continued discussion of the proposed TIF District Façade Improvement Grant program, which would provide assistance to businesses looking to enhance their facade and overall appearance. The Commission's packet can be found [here](#).

Development Review Board

On November 7, the Development Review Board convened to discuss two pre-filing applications;

- ◆ River Forest Park District – Constitution Park: The Park District is proposing the redevelopment of Constitution Park, including a new playground with universally accessible equipment, a new bathroom shelter and the replacement of the sand volleyball courts.
- ◆ River Forest Tennis Club: The River Forest Tennis Club is proposing to add tennis court lighting to their facility.

To review the pre-filing application information for these two applications, please visit [this website](#). The review is an early step in the Village's Planned Development review process. There will be several public hearings on both projects prior to consideration of approval by the Village Board.

Sustainability Commission

At the December meeting of the Village of River Forest Sustainability Commission, the Commission reviewed and discussed resident feedback from the recent community survey and recommendations from the Climate Plans created for the Village by the University of Illinois Chicago. The Commission discussed ways to promote bicycling as a mode of alternative transportation, through promotion of the [Village Bicycle Plan](#), expanding bike parking facilities in the community, and adopting best practices for bicycle friendly communities. The Commission reviewed resident survey input on Electric Vehicle adoption within the Village and discussed plans to expand the number of EV Charging Stations in the community. The Commission also proposed finding ways to recognize households and blocks that have taken sustainable action and share these successes with the broader community.

Want to Get Involved?

Volunteer to Serve
on a Village Committee



Scan the QR Code
to Learn More

Sustainability

Sustainable Holiday Ideas from Around the Globe

The Sustainability Commission wants to inspire residents with two unique green ideas from across the globe that are perfect for the holiday season. These creative practices from England and Japan show how small changes can make a big environmental impact.



One dilemma many face is choosing between a real or artificial Christmas tree. A fake tree is more of a long-term solution, but these trees are made of non-biodegradable materials and also take up storage space. A real tree is festive but creates waste if discarded after the season. In London, there's a clever alternative: you can rent a tree! With millions of trees ending up in landfills annually, this eco-friendly solution costs about the same as buying a cut tree. It's as simple as rent, water, and return.



Meanwhile, Japan offers a centuries-old tradition perfect for reducing holiday waste: furoshiki, or wrapping cloths. Originating 1,200 years ago to protect valuables, these reusable cloths became popular for wrapping and carrying items. Today, they're a stylish, eco-conscious alternative to disposable gift wrap. Unlike ribbon and non-recyclable wrapping paper, a furoshiki is tied creatively around a gift and returned to the gift-giver for future use. Want to try it? Look for fabric remnants in your sewing stash or visit the [Economy Shop in Oak Park](#), where you'll find affordable cloth in all sizes and patterns. It's a sustainable, beautiful way to wrap gifts - that also supports local charities at the same time!

Organizations Serving River Forest



Township

To learn more about Township programs and services, click [here](#), visit the River Forest **Community Calendar**, or email **Supervisor John Becvar**.

Community Center Pickleball for Seniors



Pickleball at the Community Center - Tuesdays and Thursdays

Senior Pickleball social and open play is presented by the River Forest Township, River Forest Community Center and River Forest Park District on either Tuesday mornings (8:15-10:30 a.m.) or Thursday afternoons (1-3 p.m.). These six week-long events are for all players of all skill levels; players will be paired together based on playing ability. There will be an emphasis on senior beginner and intermediate play to help develop players' skills and love of the fastest growing sport in the USA. **Register today!**

First Installment Tax Bill Due in 2025

First installment property tax bills for next year are expected to be mailed out on time with an approximate due date of March 1, 2025. You can plan for and calculate your first installment tax bill - simply multiply the total tax bill paid in 2024 by 55%. Exemptions are only reflected on the second installment tax bills with an estimated due date of August 1. Exemption Applications will be mailed out during the first quarter of 2025. Follow [this link](#) to the **Cook County Treasurer** website to view your tax history.

MARIA PAPPAS COOK COUNTY TREASURER

Payments Exemptions Refunds Seniors Understanding Your Taxes Tax and Scavenger Sales Foreign Language Brochures Forms About The Office News and Press Videos

Click here to see
Where Your Money Goes

Informational Videos

ENGLISH SPANISH POLISH CANTONESE MANDARIN ARABIC

Pappas Studies

- The Few Decade for the Many: Referendums and Voter Turnout
- Tax Year 2023 Bill Analysis
- Pappas Portal - the newsletter
- Fiscal 2021 Debt Report
- How Wealthy Investors are Making Millions Exploiting Illinois' Property Tax Law
- Maps of Inequality
- Additional Studies

Your Property Tax Overview

- See how your tax bill changed
- View taxing district debt attributed to your property
- Search \$111 million in available property tax refunds
- Search \$54 million in missing senior exemptions going back four years
- Change your name and mailing address

Pay Online for Free

- Use your bank account to pay your property taxes with no fee

More Ways to Pay **Avoid the Tax Sales** **Downloadable Forms**

riverforesttownship.org - 708-366-2029 x11

Park District

Winter/Spring Registrations Open December 16th

The River Forest Park District has opened registration for winter/spring classes and events are now open for River Forest residents. Non-resident registration opens on Monday, December 16. [CLICK HERE](#) to view the Fun Guide! "The River Forest Park District is our residents' place for fun and community."



rfparks.com | 708-366-6660

Library

Visit the [calendar](#) to see everything happening at the Library. There are events and activities for all ages. Below are some highlights:



Sunday, 12/15, 2-3 p.m., Holiday Cookie Exchange, Adult:

The holiday season is the perfect time of year to bake cookies and share them with others. Bring a batch of homemade cookies, along with the recipe you used, for other attendees to taste and take home. The Library will provide cookie tins for taking cookies home, and will serve hot chocolate to make the day even sweeter! **Registration required.**



Wednesday, 12/18, 3:30-5:30 p.m., Free Spirit Siberian Sled Team, Grades K-4: Learn about Siberian Huskies while experiencing a little about the sport of mushing in this awesome winter program! The event will be held both indoors and outdoors, so please dress accordingly. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet and greet the Huskies during the program. **Registration required.**

riverforestlibrary.org | 708-366-5205

Organizations Serving River Forest



Oak Park and River Forest
High School



Roosevelt
Middle School



Willard
Elementary School



Lincoln
Elementary School

District 90



Band Director Mr. Brek Hufnus Honored as Teacher of the Month by WGN

Mr. Brek Hufnus, Band Director at District 90 Schools, was honored as the Teacher of the Month by WGN TV Chicago. In his 31st year of service at Roosevelt Middle School, Mr. Hufnus teaches instrumental music on all band instruments to students in grades 4-8 and directs three levels of concert and jazz bands. Congratulations to Mr. Hufnus, who was nominated by student Lauren Leibundguth.



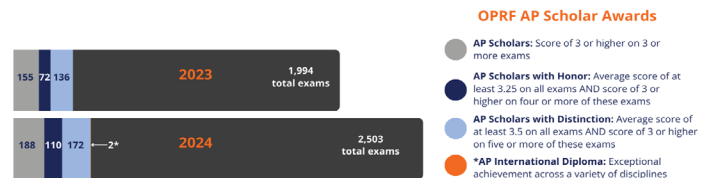
Roosevelt Girls Cross Country Wins 4th Place at State

The Roosevelt Girls Cross Country team competed against 110 schools and captured a 4th place finish in the Division 3A State Championship with Head Coach Ms. Louisa Starr and Assistant Coaches Ms. Tammy Highfill, Mr. Alex Mendralla, Ms. Meg Navolio and Mr. Bob Zimmer.

District 200

AP Scholar Awards Increase 30%

The number of Oak Park River Forest High School (OPRFHS) students excelling on their Advanced Placement (AP) tests rose dramatically last year, with 30% more earning prestigious AP Scholar Awards in 2024 compared to 2023. In all, 472 Huskies out of the 1,118 who took AP tests in 2024 received awards.



In addition, OPRFHS earned a spot on the College Board's Advanced Placement School Honor Roll for the second year in a row. Only 30% of eligible schools made the honor roll, which debuted in 2023, to recognize schools for their work creating AP programs that are delivering results while broadening access for students.

AP courses are the most rigorous high school classes that students can take. The courses, which are created by the College Board, provide a college-level curriculum. Students who score high enough on their AP exams can earn credit at U.S. colleges and universities.

The College Board has 40 different AP classes available, and OPRFHS offers 27 of them. Senior Liam O'Connor, who took eight tests and earned the AP Scholar with Distinction, credits OPRF faculty with helping him excel. "I am really grateful for all the great teachers I had last year, because they did an amazing job preparing me for my AP tests."



Library Holiday Cookie Exchange



Sunday, December 15 at 2 p.m.
River Forest Public Library



Light Up the Night– River Forest
Saturday, December 21, 2024
(Rain, Wind Date–Sunday, December 22)



TRINITY

**SANTA
BREAKFAST**

**SATURDAY
DECEMBER 14TH**

9:00AM - 12:00 PM

www.trinityhs.org/santa

December
Fun In
River Forest



A Trans-Siberian Light Show



December 28 at 8:30 p.m.
Cernan Earth & Space Center



RIVER FOREST

Proud Heritage • Bright Future

Follow the Village on
Social Media



Sign Up For Email and Alerts



River Forest Events



Village Contact Information

Village Administration
708-714-3563

Village Administrator
Matt Walsh

Finance Department
708-714-3524

Director Rosemary McAdams

Fire Department
708-714-3560
Chief Tom Gaertner

Public Works
708-714-3551

Director Jack Bielak

Police Department
708-714-3540
Chief James O'Shea

Emergency
Services
Dial 911

400 Park Avenue River Forest, IL 60305

708-366-8500

708-366-3702 (fax)

Monday 8 a.m.– 7 p.m.

Tuesday- Friday 8a.m.– 4:30 p.m.