

DISCOVER

Magazine



IN THIS ISSUE

- An update on property taxes
- Access South Cook
- The Aqua Center needs updates



**Veterans and
Park Forest**

Contents

- 4 **A Seat at the Table**
What Village officials are doing about property taxes.
- 8 **Saying Farewell to Park Forest**
Longstanding Village Manager Tom Mick announces his retirement.
- 11 **It Takes a Village**
A collaboration across area fire departments to better serve the south suburbs.
- 13 **What's in Store for the Aqua Center**
The Aqua Center is in need of critical improvements and may be out of commission for the '25 season.
- 16 **Celebrating Veterans and Park Forest**
The Village celebrated its veterans as well as its 75th Anniversary.
- 19 **The Woman Behind the Curtains**
Meet Community Relations Manager Evelyn Randle, the woman behind the scene of the Village's biggest events.
- 20 **Access South Cook**
The project bringing more affordable housing to Park Forest.
- 24 **Leafy and the Village's Website**
Meet Leafy the Village's new AI assistant and learn more about what updates are coming to the Village's website.
- 26 **The Continuation of Neighborhood Meetings**
A unique way to engage area residents continue in 2024-25.
- 29 **The History Between the Village and the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra**
The music of Mozart and Beethoven right here in your backyard.
- 32 **Investing in Park Forest**
The Department of Public Works continues to improve the Village's infrastructure.
- 36 **Snow and Ice Removal**
Everything you need to know about parking and plowing during the upcoming winter season.

Mayor's Message

To Park Forest, happy 75th anniversary!

And with that, the Village of Park Forest is well positioned to embark on a carefully planned drive towards being a powerhouse community of Chicagoland's South Suburbs, in preparation for our 100th anniversary.

To that end, back in February 2022, the Village Board met to review eight strategic goals that then were turned over to staff for the development of specific implementation steps. With these steps in place, I would like to use this Message to clearly share with you—the citizens who have chosen us as your community leaders—what your elected officials deem to be the best course for going forward.

The following are some of the many steps that we plan to utilize for implementation, including many that already have been put in place. I said “some” of the steps, for indeed it would be impossible to relate in the limited space of this article every one of the nearly 270 implementation steps that are planned or have taken place.

Goal #1 – To strengthen and enhance economic conditions to attract and retain businesses and employers to support a thriving local economy.

Goal #2 – To provide municipal services in a responsible and fiscally sustainable manner through continued collaboration, innovation, and regional leadership.

Goal #3 – To employ best practices to deliver high-quality services, maintain and develop infrastructure in an environmentally and fiscally sustainable manner.

Goal #4 – To mitigate effects of climate changes through management of Village resources, partnerships, and the natural environment.

Goal #5 – To continue to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of Village residents and property through the provision of excellent and innovative public safety services delivered with integrity and impartiality.

Goal #6 – To increase opportunities for engagement and maximize resources for all residents.

Goal #7 – To continue to develop public relations and innovative marketing and communications to promote Park Forest.

Goal #8 – To build upon the history of Park Forest and cultivate a culture that meets the future.



No doubt some of you will read these goals and think they sound very much like some goals the Village has had in the past, and indeed that may be the case. As the saying goes, 'Rome was not built in a day.' The Village Board recognizes that some community initiatives from the past are still incomplete, and even accomplished goals may require a fresh approach to meet current needs. If we are to build the community we desire for the next century, we may not only have to develop new concepts and ideas, but also reinforce some ideas and concepts that have been around for a while.

Therein lies the importance of implementation, for they have been developed with an eye to the future rather than a look backward. Every implementation step listed is intended to create a better Village not only for current residents but also for those who will be moving into our Village. It is the sincere intention of the Board and our staff to work in days ahead to ensure that Park Forest is able to celebrate its 100th anniversary with every bit of the pride that just marked our recent celebration of 75 years.

In the time since the Board approved our strategic goals back in February 2022, many of the implementation steps already accomplished now serve as the foundation for those yet to be met. Under our first goal, for example, the Village has provided funding and assisted in gaining outside financing for several new businesses that either already have opened or are planning to do so in the near future. These steps help to create an atmosphere that will aid in gaining even more commerce for our community. However, property taxes...

The Village of Park Forest did not raise your property taxes! In fact, four of the past seven years, we were at a 0% tax levy. And nearly a 0% tax levy for the other three years. Almost unheard of! This speaks loudly to our conservative and fiscal responsibility.

In light of this municipal fact, perhaps the most critical of our economic development strategies is to continue to work with Cook County and the State of Illinois to correct the property tax system as it relates to Park Forest and a number of South Suburban municipalities.

The implementation strategies already undertaken include numerous meetings with the Cook County Assessor, Cook County officials, our State Senator and State Representative to develop a program to right the wrong of an unfair imbalance in property taxes among some communities in south Cook County—in contrast to some located elsewhere. These implementation steps are now the base upon which legislation is being drafted that soon will be put before the General Assembly and Governor to correct things once and for all. And while there is much more work to be done, please note that the aforementioned meetings, before and amid this tax crisis, have garnered a notable and positive result:

Our Village's overall tax rate has gone from 46% to

23%. We hear your voice. We know your concerns. The fight continues!

The principal objective of the second goal is to find federal and state revenue, plus any other grants and/or outside funding, that can enhance our various municipal services. Much of the lobbying for this funding already has occurred through implementation steps taken so far, with some such funding already in hand.

Moving forward, various projects are being identified where local dollars could potentially offset paying for utility improvements, recreational facilities, road repairs, etc. Once again, we are building on what we've done so far in moving forward with more implementation strategies. As a matter of fact, what we are able to accomplish under Goal #2 will make it possible to meet some of the objectives for several other of our strategic goals.

Allow me now to address Goal #6, because it is one that is very important and is closely tied to one of the major reasons why I decided some years ago to seek elected office in Park Forest. As we all are aware, our community has changed greatly in the 25 years since we celebrated our 50th anniversary. Our population is different, our economic climate is different, and our housing needs are different. But what remains the same is the wonderful "spirit" of Park Forest and that is an invaluable resource that must be cultivated in order to survive and thrive. I sincerely believe no better avenue is open to us for doing so than by fruitful engagement of our citizens in our governing process.

For that reason, the very first implementation strategy listed for this goal was to increase our resident meetings and other direct contact with our citizens. After a four-year hiatus, our Neighborhood Meetings Program resumed in full force this year, with the Board and staff conducting six such meetings in 12 months. Never before done. These meetings were well attended, and what has been learned from residents has helped to create more strategies for citizen engagement as we move ahead.

Park Forest is not the Village Board's community, not the staff's community, but YOUR community! Your engagement is crucial to the continuance of Park Forest as one of the shining jewels of the Southland.

We enjoy a wonderful heritage as Park Foresters. And indeed, that heritage is the impetus for the Board establishing Goal #8, to make use of our history as we build for the future. We have met old challenges, we will face new challenges. So with this expression of hope, I say to you: Don't be weary in the well doing, when doing the good work!

On behalf of the Village Board and our staff, thank you for your support as we all work together for the improvement of our Village. Best wishes for the holiday season, however you may celebrate it.

A message from Mayor Joseph A. Woods

A Seat at the Table

Ongoing conversations with Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi

Understanding Your Property Taxes: Why They Seem So High and What Village Officials Are Doing?

Many Park Forest residents feel like they are shouldering more than their fair share of property taxes. You are not alone. Property taxes are essential for funding local services. The complex web of exemptions and assessment policies has shifted the responsibility. Over recent years, increased exemptions have reduced tax obligations for some homeowners, but not without consequences. This shift led to higher tax rates and raised concerns about equity in our community.

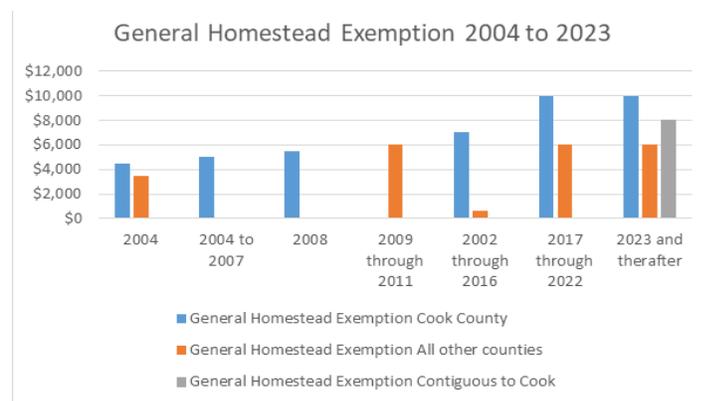
These policies impact you, your neighborhood, and the entire Village. Village officials' ongoing efforts to bring balance back to the system, ensure fairness, and ultimately maintain Park Forest as a vibrant, desirable place for all its residents and business owners are explained in this article.



Why Your Taxes Feel So High: The Impact of Property Tax Exemptions in Park Forest

The following table

shows a 20-year history of exemptions. In 2017, the Illinois General Assembly raised the general homestead exemption in Cook County to \$10,000.



By 2023, they extended similar increases to neighboring counties, raising the exemption to \$8,000. The number and types of property tax exemptions have also grown, potentially easing individual tax bills while shifting the burden to other taxpayers.

Expanded exemptions include:

- General Homestead (Homeowner)
- Senior Citizen Homestead
- Low-Income Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze





South Cook officials and Cook County Assessors officials group together for a photo in the Village of Park Forest's board room.

From left to right: Richton Park Village Manager Regan Stockstell, Park Forest Village Manager Tom Mick, Executive Director of South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association Kristi DeLaurentiis, Illinois State Senator Patrick Joyce, State Representative Anthony DeLuca, Park Forest Mayor/Village President Joseph A. Woods, Park Forest Trustee Erin I. Slone, Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi, Richton Park Village President Rick Reinbold, Park Forest Economic Development & Planning Director Sandra Zoellner

- Home Improvement
- Longtime Homeowner
- Persons with Disabilities
- Returning Veterans
- Veterans with Disabilities



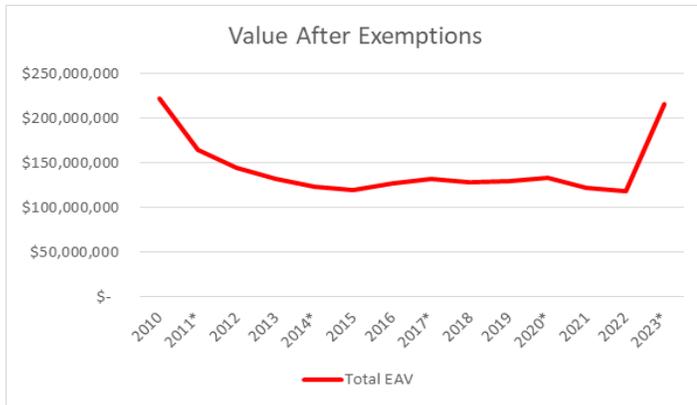
While exemptions lower taxes for some homeowners, they do not eliminate the need for public funding. Exemptions shift the tax responsibility, which affects the entire community. Over time, these shifts have led to higher rates and reduced funding for essential services like schools, parks, and infrastructure. In

2021, an investigation by the Chicago Sun-Times revealed that in Park Forest alone, 569 homes had zero property tax bills. This meant that \$2,789,604 of public service costs was redistributed to other taxpayers. This growing trend challenges Ben Franklin's often repeated quote, "...in this world, nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." While everyone benefits from local services, those with exemptions pay less, leaving others, both residents and businesses, to cover the shortfall.

The Equalized Assessed Value and Why it is Important?

With every address added together, Park Forest's total equalized assessed value in 2022 was \$118,862,836. Back in 2010, the total value was \$221,881,935. Despite every effort of Village officials to maintain value, the assessed value dropped 46%. That drop would be comparable to a tornado ripping through the community compounded by no one rebuilding. Today's value is \$215,805,187. That is a consequence of ongoing engagement by Village officials and others with the Cook County Assessor.

The value is still less than the 2010 value, but it is on the road to recovery.



Each year, over 20 years, Park Forest exemptions reduced the overall assessed property value by up to 45%. Exemptions reduced the Village’s value somewhere between \$30,000,000 and \$55,000,000 depending on the year. Other communities in Cook County do not lose as much value due to exemptions. The dramatic difference is due to the low values of property. A three bedroom, 1.5 bath home in Park Forest may sell for \$185,000 but is assessed at \$140,000. In other communities, the home may sell for \$245,000 and is assessed at \$185,000 or more. The exemptions impact is higher when the values are lower. Property values tend to be lower in rural and exurban Illinois. That is partly why the General Assembly set lower exemption values in the surrounding counties. Park Forest’s value are comparable to these communities, but contends with the exemptions afforded to Cook County.



The Impact on Your Tax Rate

Because property taxes fund public services, the total revenue (or tax levy) needed does not change even when exemptions reduce individual bills. Public services costs are the same in the Chicago metro area. Paving a mile of roadway in Park Forest costs the same as paving a road in another community. In Park Forest, where home values are lower on average than in other parts of Cook and Will Counties, the effect of these exemptions is substantial. The following example illustrates the impact value has on the tax rate:

How value impacts rate	Low Value and High Rate	Stable Value and Low Rate
Home Value	\$50,000	\$100,000
Assessed Value (10% of Home Value)	\$5,000	\$10,000
Equalizer is variable set by Dept. of Revenue (3.0027)	3.0027	3.0027
Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) = Equalizer x Assessed Value	\$15,135	\$30,270
Tax Rate	0.50	0.25
Tax Bill	\$7,567.50	\$7,567.50

When property values are low, higher rates are required to meet the necessary tax levy. Historically, Park Forest’s lower assessed values and high exemption rates have pushed tax rates to some of the highest levels in Illinois. As the above example shows, the higher rate and lower value did not produce a higher final tax bill. The bills are identical. Using the same formula as above, but including the homeowner’s exemption, the final tax bill is significantly different.

How value impacts rate	Low Value and High Rate with 1 Exemption	Stable Value and Low Rate with 1 Exemption
Home Value	\$50,000	\$100,000
Assessed Value (10% of Home Value)	\$5,000	\$10,000
Equalizer is variable set by Dept. of Revenue (3.0027)	3.0027	3.0027
Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) = Equalizer x Assessed Value	\$15,135	\$30,270
Tax Rate	0.50	0.25
Taxes Before Exemptions = Tax Rate x EAV	\$7,567.50	\$7,567.50
Homeowner Exemption (\$10,000 x Rate)	\$5,000.00	\$2,500.00
Tax Bill	\$2,567.50	\$5,067.50

Homeowners with the low value and high rate have a lower tax bill and contribute less to public services. To generate the same taxes as the original example, historically the tax rate increased. That system was unfair and adversely impacted homeowners of Park

Forest homes valued at more than \$185,000 and how some members of the business community viewed Park Forest. It is to everyone's benefit for values to be more consistent with values in other communities. It is okay to buy low, but the low sales price once carried through the taxation formula for decades erodes the stability of neighborhoods, commercial districts, and municipalities.

Business Impacts and Community Investment

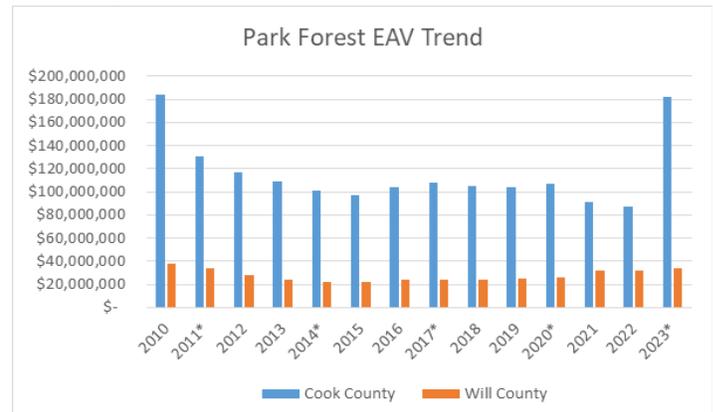
Higher tax rates do not just affect homeowners—they also discourage businesses from investing in Park Forest. When exemptions reduce the tax base, businesses bear a larger share of the obligation, making the area less attractive for new ventures and reinvestment by existing businesses. Buying low is beneficial for homebuyers, but if the values stay low and are further eroded by the exemptions, it is nearly impossible to attract retail and industrial developers to invest in a community where the community's property value is continuing to decrease and the rate increases.

Turning the Tide: Park Forest's Efforts to Restore Equity

During the pandemic, Park Forest saw rising demand for homes, with new residents drawn to the area's amenities and community spirit. Despite this, property values in the Cook County side of Park Forest continued to drop due to outdated assessments and an administrative policy decision by Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi to lower home values due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was not until persistent engagement from Village officials, General Assembly members, and local advocates that the Assessor's office began restoring property values in Park Forest and the south suburbs overall.

In 2024, after nearly four years of advocacy, property values in Park Forest began to recover, dropping the 2024 tax rate (based on 2023 values) from nearly

46% to around 25%. This shift is critical, making Park Forest more competitive for new businesses and homebuyers alike.



Park Forest's Continued Commitment to Fairness

Village officials are committed to advocating for all residents and business owners to ensure a fair and sustainable tax system. Current efforts include:

- Ensuring exemptions only apply to those who qualify.
- Monitoring state legislative proposals to prevent further exemption increases.
- Submitting all new building permit information to accurately account for property improvements.
- Supporting property values through proactive policies and opposing drastic valuation appeals.
- Advocating for a property tax floor to limit the number of properties with zero-dollar tax bills.
- Delivering quality public services within residents' means.

Our community deserves an equitable property tax system where everyone contributes fairly to fund public services that benefit us all. With these ongoing initiatives, Park Forest is working to ensure a balanced approach to taxation that preserves the Village's value and quality of life.



For questions regarding the Economic Development & Planning Department contact Director Sandra Zoellner at 708-283-5623 or email szoellner@vopf.com.



ED&P Dir. Sandra Zoellner and Mayor Joseph A. Woods



Village Manager Tom Mick and Mayor Joseph A. Woods



Trustee Erin I. Slone and ED&P Dir. Sandra Zoellner

Longstanding Village Manager Tom Mick set to retire

After 30 years of dedicated service to local government, Park Forest Village Manager Tom Mick announced his plans to retire this summer.

Mick emailed all Village staff on June 20 to share that the time had come for him to focus on his family.

"I believe the time is right to refocus my priorities toward my family and other endeavors," Mick said in the email. "It has been my pleasure to work with each and every one of you. Over the years, I have been very lucky to get to know the vast majority of Village employees on a personal level."

Following his service in United States Marine Corps, Mick began his government career in 1995 as an administrative intern for the Village of River Forest. A year later, he became the assistant to the director of public works in north suburban Glencoe. In 1998, Mick joined the Village of Park Forest as the assistant to the village manager. He was promoted to assistant village manager in 2001. He assumed the role of village manager in January 2005.

Since becoming village manager, Mick has collaborated closely with the board of trustees to ensure that Park Forest maintains a merit-based work culture and avoids cronyism.

"The Village of Park Forest has a unique and diverse culture that is based on its professional council-manager form of government," Mick said. "Furthermore, the Village is a place where resident input, transparency, and civic engagement are very important."

Mick mentioned that a succession is in the works to identify the best candidate to take over as the



village manager. the organization's operations and will uphold its values.

Mayor Joseph A. Woods said Mick's retirement is bittersweet, as he will be missed.

However, Woods said

he's excited for what lies ahead for Mick.

"Park Forest has been well served by Manager Mick for more than two decades," said Woods. "Selfishly, I would love for him to continue because of the wealth of experience that he brings to the position."

Woods continued, "However, from several conversations I have had with him, I recognize that Tom has made this decision of his own volition based on his conclusion that the time is right for him to enjoy the benefits of retirement with his family."

Woods expressed gratitude for working alongside Mick, going on to call Mick one of the most respected people in his field.

"I often receive comments from elected officials at various levels about how well Tom understands local government and about how effective he has been not only in service to Park Forest but also to our entire south suburban region," Woods said.

Woods added over the last year he's learned much from Mick.

"What comes with a wanting to do the best I can as mayor/village president of Park Forest, is a fervent desire to glean as much information from one among those who knows his or her profession without question," Woods said. "Thus, having him by my side as we lobbied for millions of funding dollars in Springfield and Washington D.C., Tom Mick has proven to be that one."

Woods continued, "So, as we celebrate our 75th anniversary as a village, we too celebrate the service of a man dedicated to his community for just over a quarter of a century."

Woods reiterated that he wants residents to know that Mick isn't going anywhere anytime soon, as his retirement date is June 20, 2025.



village manager. He reassured the community and village staff that the aim would be to find someone who understands

Utilizing the latest technology to combat crime

You may have noticed a tall black pole with a surveillance camera and a solar panel at the top around Park Forest and be curious about its purpose.

The Park Forest Police Department has formed a partnership with Flock Safety, an innovative company known for developing cutting-edge software that transforms standard surveillance cameras into advanced License Plate Reading (LPR) cameras. As part of this initiative, nine of these specialized cameras have been strategically installed throughout the Village, with one additional camera ready to be activated soon.

Chief Brian Rzycki highlighted the importance of the Flock Safety cameras, noting that while LPR technology is not a new concept within the field of law enforcement, Flock maintains an extensive and dynamic database. This database records detailed information about vehicles, including their color, make, model, and distinctive identifiers such as decals and stickers. Such information is invaluable in the investigation and resolution of criminal cases.

"The most significant advantage of LPR technology is its capacity to bolster public safety," Rzycki explained. "By quickly identifying stolen vehicles or those associated with criminal activities, officers can take immediate action, significantly increasing the likelihood of apprehending suspects. Furthermore, many victims or witnesses of crimes can provide a description of the vehicle involved; however, they often struggle to remember the exact license plate number as the vehicle speeds away."

Rzycki elaborated on how officers and detectives can utilize the Flock database effectively. When presented with a detailed description of a suspect vehicle, they can search for nearby cameras that may have recorded relevant footage. This process aids investigators in pinpointing the vehicle's identity and helps them make quicker progress in their



cases. Through this advanced technology and collaboration, the Park Forest Police Department aims to enhance community safety and improve response times during incidents.

Rzycki noted that there isn't sufficient data to support a reduction in crime or to determine precisely how often the Flock Safety cameras have assisted in investigations. However, he emphasized multiple times that the Flock camera system has successfully identified offending vehicles and has played a crucial role in many investigations that led to arrests.

These Flock Safety cameras play a vital role alongside the police department's body cameras and the Private Security Camera Incentive Program. Together, these tools enhance the capabilities of Park Forest police officers, allowing them to carry out their responsibilities with greater effectiveness and efficiency.

"We want to be as proactive as possible regarding public safety," Rzycki said.

Earlier this year, the Park Forest Police Department launched this program, which offers eligible residents and business owners a rebate of up to \$200 for purchasing a security camera. Since the program's inception, 22 individuals have applied, and 15 have been approved. Rzycki expressed his desire to see more community members participate in the program.



For questions regarding the Park Forest Police Department contact Chief Brian Rzycki at 708-748-4701 or email brzycki@vopf.com.

Welcoming new public safety members, promoting others

During an oath of office ceremony in August, the Village of Park Forest sworn in several public safety members and promoted a few others.

Officers Tashianna Holt and Andrew Schwartz are the newest members of the Park Forest Police Department. Holt, a Chicago native, graduated from Kennedy King College with an associate's degree in criminal justice. She continued her education at Chicago State University and earned her bachelor's degree in criminal justice. A mother of three who enjoys basketball and football, Holt loves spending time with her family and watching sports. Before joining the Park Forest Police Department, she worked as an officer for two years with the Cary Police Department.



Officer Tashianna Holt

Schwartz the other new addition to the police department is a Frankfort native who attended Providence Catholic High School before receiving a bachelor of science in history and social sciences teaching from Illinois State University. He worked in education for several years before transitioning to law enforcement.

Now a 13-year veteran, Schwartz is a certified traffic crash reconstructionist through Northwestern University and has led the investigation of over 500 automobile crashes, including nearly 100 serious personal injury or fatal crashes. When he's not protecting and serving, he's an avid golfer who loves spending time with his family and friends.



Officer Andrew Schwartz

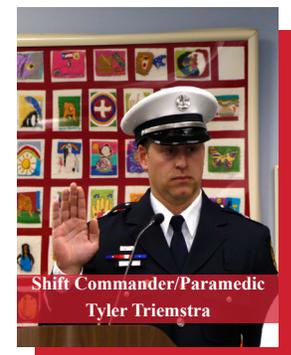
Edward Bush is the Park Forest Fire Department newest firefighter/paramedic. His journey started when he was a manager at Culver's. There, he learned how much he enjoyed helping others and grew interested in the fire service. Bush began his career in the fire service with the Phoenix (IL) Fire Department through an in-house program. He earned his basic

certification as a firefighter. He then went on to EMT school, which allowed him to help people while working at Elite Ambulance Service for the next three years. Bush completed paramedic school in August 2022 and secured a job with Bud's Ambulance Service to continue improving and perfecting his skills. Shortly after, he joined the Richton Park Fire Department and then joined the Park Forest Fire Department.



Firefighter/Paramedic
Edward Bush

The Park Forest Fire Department also promoted two members to new roles. Tyler Triemstra, a native of Beecher, Illinois, graduated from Beecher High School and joined his hometown fire department in 2008. He also worked with the New Lenox Fire District before being hired full-time as a firefighter/paramedic with the Park Forest Fire Department in 2011. He doubles as the Park Forest Firefighters' Pension Board president and serves the department's union board. Triemstra was promoted to shift commander/paramedic.



Shift Commander/Paramedic
Tyler Triemstra

James Baum also joined the Park Forest Fire Department in 2011. Baum worked in several local fire departments before joining the PFFD. He's obtained 28 state fire marshal certifications, including peer fitness instructor, watercraft technician, fire inspector, and fire investigator. Baum is also an instructor for the Prairie State College Fire Academy and an active Combined Agency Response Team member. Baum was promoted to shift commander/paramedic.



Shift Commander/Paramedic
James Baum

A collaboration across area fire departments

The Park Forest Fire Department has recently expanded its capabilities by joining the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) 24 this year in collaboration with the Richton Park and Matteson Fire Departments.

This strategic partnership aims to significantly enhance the emergency response services provided to the Village's residents and businesses.

Deputy Fire Chief Mark Cotrano provided insights into this new initiative, highlighting that MABAS 24 comprises 23 fire departments from the south suburban region of Cook County, Illinois. The primary objective of this system is to ensure a seamless and efficient response to emergencies. Suppose a resident of Park Forest or the surrounding areas calls 911. In that case, the mutual aid framework ensures that no single fire department becomes overwhelmed during peak times or when multiple incidents occur simultaneously. This collaboration improves response times and bolsters overall safety and service for the community.

"This move is largely considered a business decision beneficial to our residents and comes after the consolidation of dispatch centers Southcom and E-com," Cotrano said. "The departments associated within the E-com dispatch are all members of MABAS 24, which is a larger organization than our previous division of 27, we can expect the ability to have faster and better support during larger incidents as well as times of high volume calls."

Cotrano emphasized that the majority of residents likely won't notice any significant changes in the services they receive, which have always been reliable and consistent. However, he highlighted that, behind the scenes, operational

improvements have been implemented that enhance efficiency and streamline processes, ultimately benefiting the overall service delivery.

Earlier this year, Cotrano experienced firsthand the advantages of being part of MABAS24 during a crisis—specifically, when a freight train derailment occurred in the nearby community of Matteson on the border of Park Forest. The incident involved nearly 25 train cars coming off the tracks, prompting an immediate and coordinated response from multiple emergency departments.

Thanks to the collaborative framework established by MABAS24, local departments such as those from Matteson, Park Forest, and Richton Park were able to effectively manage their routine emergency calls while also responding to the derailment. This capability was made possible through the assistance of additional personnel from surrounding communities, ensuring that both emergency and regular services remained uninterrupted during a critical time.

"We are a full-service fire department," Cotrano said. "Our calls range from handling house fires to performing well-being checks and responding to emergencies like heart attacks. If we receive several calls in an hour, we are at our maximum capacity. However, under MABAS24, one of our neighboring agencies can step in to assist, ensuring that residents continue to receive services."



Park Forest Fire Department urges fire safety this winter

As temperatures drop, the risk of house fires increases. Park Forest Deputy Fire Chief Mark Cotrano urges residents to prioritize fire safety and check heating systems to prevent dangerous incidents this winter.

Cotrano highlights several common causes of winter-related house fires that residents should be aware of. These include the improper use of candles, kitchen fires often resulting from unattended cooking, and malfunctions in heating systems.

With the colder weather, many households increase their use of HVAC systems, electric blankets, fireplaces, and portable heaters. If these appliances are not properly cleaned and regularly maintained, they pose a significant risk of igniting a fire.

Additionally, overloading power circuits can pose a significant risk. Deputy Fire Chief Cotrano emphasizes the importance of maintaining air filters in heating appliances.

"Make sure your air filter is cleared, cleaned, or replaced every three months," Cotrano said. "If you haven't taken care of this yet, now is the perfect time to start up your heater and confirm that it's operating safely and effectively." By following proper maintenance guidelines and being aware of potential fire hazards, residents can help ensure their homes remain safe and secure during the winter season.

Cotrano also emphasized the importance of being vigilant about the risk of dryer fires in homes. He pointed out that lint traps can accumulate significantly over time, which poses a serious fire hazard if not cleaned regularly. It's essential for homeowners to clean these traps after every use and to periodically inspect and clean the dryer vent to ensure proper airflow.

In addition to dryer fires, Cotrano highlighted

the dangers of carbon monoxide, particularly in homes equipped with natural gas appliances such as furnaces, water heaters,

and stoves. These appliances can emit this colorless, odorless gas if not functioning properly. He stressed the critical need for a functioning carbon monoxide alarm in every household, recommending that these alarms be installed on each level of the home and near sleeping areas to provide an early warning to residents. Exposure to carbon monoxide can lead to serious health issues, with symptoms ranging from mild, such as headaches and dizziness, to severe, including difficulty breathing and neurological damage. Awareness of these symptoms is crucial, particularly during the winter months when heating systems are in heavy use.

Cotrano also offered safety tips regarding the use of space heaters and fireplaces. He urged families to maintain a minimum clearance of three feet around these heat sources to prevent any flammable materials, such as blankets, furniture, or curtains, from igniting. Additionally, regular checks of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are essential to ensure they are functioning correctly and can effectively alert residents in case of an emergency.

Lastly, Cotrano recommended that every household establish a fire escape plan, ensuring that all family members are familiar with the safest exit routes and have designated meeting points outside the home. By implementing these straightforward safety measures, residents can significantly reduce their risk of fire incidents and help ensure their homes remain safe and secure throughout the winter months.



Aqua Center needs critical improvements, may close for '25



The Park Forest Aqua Center may close for the 2025 summer season to undergo much-needed renovations. Kevin Adams, the Director of the Department of Recreation, Parks & Community Health, stated that the renovations will address various infrastructural issues related to the pools, including repairs to piping and concrete. The objective is to resolve long-standing leakage problems.

While the primary focus is on repairing the facility, Adams noted that they also plan to introduce new features to attract more members.

“We’re considering adding shade structures throughout the facility and a splash pad,” Adams explained. “Incorporating a splash pad into the Aqua Center not only modernizes the space, but it also creates a sense of excitement. Splash pads are now standard features in most new aquatic facilities, and I believe they are essential for keeping our facility relevant for families in the future.”

To fully understand the necessary repairs and

gather ideas for enhancements to the Park Forest Aqua Center, the department sought approval from the Park Forest Board of Trustees to fund a feasibility study. An assessment by a contractor revealed extensive issues, with estimated repair costs ranging from \$300,000 to \$500,000.

To select an architectural firm for the study, Adams issued a Request for Qualifications to architects prequalified by the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). Four pre-qualified architectural firms submitted proposals, with Williams Architects from Itasca, Illinois, providing the lowest valid proposal of \$34,000. Adams highlighted that Williams Architects has a robust portfolio, having worked with over 375 agencies on recreation and aquatics facilities. Funding for the feasibility study will come from the department's professional services fund.

In September, the board approved Adams' request, and Williams Architects has since begun the study. In early October, staff met with representatives from the architectural firm, who toured the facility for hours to prepare for the next steps in the study.

Although no definitive decision has been made regarding the 2025 season, Adams cautioned the public that the likelihood of operating next season is still slim. As the study progresses, staff will keep residents updated on its developments.



2025

SOMONAUK PARK

Resident Only

PARK PERMIT 3-DAY ONLY PRE-SALE

MONDAY
FEBRUARY 3
9AM-7:30PM

TO

WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 5
9AM-4PM

The Park Forest Recreation, Parks and Community Health Department will hold a Resident's Only Park Permit 3-Day Only Pre-sale on Monday, February 3, 2025 to Wednesday, February 5, 2025. The event is held to allow Residents a first come, first serve opportunity to secure their preferred Park Forest Park Pavilion at Central Park, Somonauk Park or Logan Park.

Starting Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 9am Park Permit rentals will be open to the public.

Please bring a State ID to verify residency.

Please note that individuals are restricted to one picnic date per person, one super cooker and one picnic kit during pre-sale dates. Full payment is due at time of reserving a permit. No phone orders.



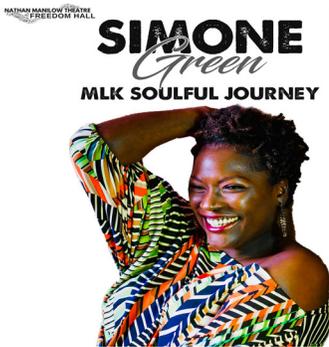
708-748-2005



350 Victory Drive, Park Forest, IL

Coming soon to Freedom Hall

Where every seat is a great seat!



JAN 20 2025
Simone Green is a native of Little Rock, Arkansas, and is a graduate of the University of Iowa with a degree in Sociology. While at the University of Iowa, Green was a member of the popular band Shade of Blue in Iowa where she opened for renowned artists

like the late “Queen of Blues,” Raheem DeVaughn, Koko Taylor, George Clinton & the P-Funk All Stars, and Jazz legend Joe Lovano, Maceo Parker, and Roy Haynes.



APRIL 5TH 2025
The members of Los Chicos del 512 came together for one reason and one reason only: to bring the magic of Selena to old and new fans worldwide! Since the group’s inception in 2014, they have successfully

done that. Having sold out venue after venue and with performances for the Chicago Bulls and the United States Marine Corps in Okinawa, Japan, Los Chicos del 512 are on fire!



FEB 15 2025
Join Peter Jordan for a candlelit Jazz tribute to the life of the great soul and R&B singer Luther Vandross. A true artist, performer, and technician, Jordan is a gifted composer. His original music has been featured on the daytime soap opera

“Days of Our Lives,” the Emmy-award winning talk/comedy “Saturday Night Live,” and the Warner Bros. animated TV series “Batman Beyond.”



APRIL 19 2025
Better Together is a diverse collective of top-tier musical talents with a mission to unite people through incredible music and positive vibes. Audiences at Freedom Hall have adored their sold-out

performances, showcasing the music of icons like Al Jarreau and Ray Charles and the vibrant sounds of Chicago Jazz, Blues, and Soul. Don't miss the chance to experience the enchantment.



MARCH 1 2025
Deacon Blues was born in the twelfth year of the 21st century. Eleven stellar Chicago musicians, composers, and educators share a unique passion for the Becker/Fagen repository, better known as Steely Dan.

Deacon Blues has structured their live repertoire to encompass a broader range of Steely's prolific material, including rarities and repertoire from Steely's 1991 reunion prototype, The New York Rock and Soul Revue.



MARCH 15 2025
An American R&B and funk band led by singer Al Hudson was popular in the late 1970s and most of the 1980s. The group's most successful record was "Cutie Pie," which reached number 4 on the Billboard Soul Singles chart and 61 on the pop chart in 1982.

NATHAN MANILOW THEATRE
at
FREEDOM HALL

Celebrating Veterans and the Village of Park Forest

On a chilly, overcast Saturday in November, hundreds of community members gathered at Central Park in Park Forest for a poignant tribute to the brave men and women who have selflessly served in the nation's armed forces. Hosted by the Park Forest Veterans Commission, the event drew families, local officials, and veterans themselves.



As the day unfolded, nearly 50 dedicated volunteers proudly lined Central Park's walking path, holding flags that represented the various branches of the armed forces, from the Army to the Marine Corps. This display of patriotism and solidarity created a vivid backdrop against which families, veterans, and local officials welcomed the landing of a historic Vietnam-era helicopter, known as a Huey.

It was one of the most anticipated events of the day. This striking aircraft landed gracefully in the midst of the park, capturing the attention and admiration of the crowd. The sound of the helicopter's blades cutting through the chilly air added to the emotional weight of the day, serving as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made by those who have served in the military.

"It's essential to show appreciation to veterans because they have made significant sacrifices by serving their country, often putting their lives on the line to protect our freedoms," shared Village Manager Tom Mick, who's also a veteran.

The helicopter participated in three ceremonial landings at Central Park. One of the standout participants in the honor flights was Army Veteran Eddie Durham, an extraordinary 102-year-old veteran of World War II and area resident, who had the an opportunity to experience the thrill

of riding in the helicopter once again, surrounded by his family. Durham's journey began as a young sharecropper in Greenville, Mississippi, where he worked the land with a mule and plow. He enlisted in the United States Armed Forces and learned to drive a truck, eventually achieving the rank of tech corporal and serving as a machine gunner. His service encompassed several pivotal campaigns, including the Rome-Arno, North Apennines, and Po Valley. After the flight, Durham engaged with a news reporter, expressing deep gratitude for the opportunity to participate in such a meaningful event, emphasizing how it reignited memories of his service and the bonds formed during those crucial years.

The historic relationship between Park Forest and veterans is an enduring one, and many residents agree that the two are virtually synonymous. In his book, "America's Original GI Town," author Gregory C. Randall delves into this connection, detailing the origins of the Village as a community specifically created to house veterans returning from World War II. Following the war, there was a growing concern nationwide about the housing crisis affecting returning servicemen and women, along with relocated defense workers and their families. In response to this urgent need, planners began revisiting designs inspired by the garden city concept popularized in the early twentieth century, recognizing the desperate need for well-planned, ready-made communities tailored to accommodate those who had served their country.

This planning led to the establishment of Park Forest as the nation's first planned community designed explicitly for veterans returning from World War II.

Following the events at Central Park, over at Freedom Hall, the 75th Ad-Hoc Committee wanted to celebrate the Village's 75th anniversary and provide a documentary viewing which showcased Park Forest's history.

The screening offered attendees a comprehensive understanding of the community's roots and its pivotal role in providing homes





Village Board members pose for a photo with 102-year-old WWII Veteran Eddie Durham and his daughter.

for veterans and their families. Jane Nicoll, an archivist and active member of the 75th Ad-Hoc Committee said, "To preserve history, it's essential to teach it, ensuring its legacy endures."

Nicoll elaborated on the documentary screening, which featured contributions from local and national historians, including selected segments from "OH! Park Forest: A Work in Progress." This video encompassed interviews with prominent figures such as Philip M. Klutznick, who served as the President of American Community Builders, a company known for building the majority of the housing stock in Park Forest. The documentary also highlighted testimonies from several early residents.

Among the speakers in the video was Don DeMarco, an early resident of the Village, who recounted his experiences alongside Myrtle Martin, recognized as one of the first Black women to reside in the area. Together, they discussed significant milestones related to the integration of Park Forest and the challenges and triumphs they experienced.

"Throughout the events on Saturday, a considerable amount of history was shared

and documented," Nicoll said. "We hope this will equip both current community members and future generations with a deeper understanding of the Park Forest of today. Additionally, we aim to foster a sense of appreciation for our community's heritage, especially since Park Forest holds a distinguished place in the Smithsonian Institution. The Village of Park Forest is engraved in the narrative of American history."

As the day's activities reached their conclusion, Nicoll said the spirit of community and gratitude resonated strongly. She added, she hopes attendees departed with a renewed sense of connection to their shared history, determined to keep the legacy of their veterans alive for generations to come.



The biggest night in Park Forest

Roughly 15,000 attendees flocked from various neighborhoods across the South Suburban and Chicagoland area to participate in a day and night event filled with nonstop music and a variety of vendors from food, jewelry, clothing and more.

This event is held on the last Saturday in June since 2018. Park Forest proudly hosted its annual House Music Night on the Village Green, which has become the highlight of the year for many local residents and visitors alike.

Community Relations Manager Evelyn Randle who served as the event's host, expressed her excitement about the continued growth and success of House Music Night. She noted the vibrant atmosphere, with performances from talented DJs and musicians that energized the crowd throughout the evening.

However, Randle also acknowledged the need for enhancements in more safety measures and expansion moving forward, stating that plans are in place for next summer to ensure a secure and enjoyable experience for all attendees.

"We didn't have any reported incidents during House Music Night," Randle said. "At the same time, parking was a major issue. People parked everywhere, legally and illegally. So, looking ahead to next year, we will make some changes there."

Randle emphasized that while the event itself will be free for all attendees, there will be charges for parking, which is a necessary consideration due to the increasing popularity of the event, along with safety measures. Currently, they have structured the parking fees as follows: attendees who choose to prepay for parking will be charged \$20, while those who opt to pay on the day of the event will face a higher fee of \$40.

This pricing strategy aims to encourage pre-

booking and help manage the flow of vehicles on the day of the event. As she prepares for this year's



festivities, Randle highlighted that the event is continuing to expand, prompting efforts to recruit a broader range of vendors. This recruitment process includes associated fees, which help cover the costs of organizing and managing a diverse vendor lineup. Growth brings more cost, therefore the goal is to keep the cost down, as much as possible, without taking away from the event.

House Music Night's history debuted in 2018 on the Village Green. Originally conceived as a more compact event, it started at 6 p.m. and concluded at 11 p.m. However, due to its growing popularity and positive reception, it has transformed into an all-day and night celebration that attracts a larger audience.

Randle specifically credited DJ Lil' John, a well-known figure from Chicago's WSRB/106.3, as her invaluable partner in curating the house music experience. She remarked on their collaborative relationship, stating that he is always available to provide insights and recommendations for new and talented DJs to enhance the event's lineup. This partnership ensures that attendees experience fresh and exciting music throughout the celebration.

"Next year, I am optimistic that House Music Night could draw a crowd of close to 20,000 people," Randle shared. "If we experience ideal weather conditions, coupled with a robust promotional campaign and a diverse array of vendors offering food and merchandise, I can certainly envision a lively atmosphere with approximately 20,000 attendees enjoying the festivities on the Village Green and throughout the DownTown." Randle announced that House Music Night is set for Saturday, June 28, 2025.



The woman behind the curtains

In Park Forest, signature events like the Sunset Soiree, House Music Night, and the Resident Appreciation BBQ play a vital role in the local culture.

Evelyn Randle, recently promoted to community relations manager, is at the forefront of these efforts. With 15 years of experience, she has a strong background in community engagement, having worked with civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Push Coalition.

Randle's passion for giving back drives her to create memorable experiences that foster belonging and camaraderie among residents. Her commitment to excellence ensures the success of these cherished community celebrations, prioritizing residents while also welcoming outside guests.

"Simply put, the residents of Park Forest deserve the very best," Randle said. "So when I put on an event, I want to ensure it's one that people will enjoy and appreciate."

Sitting at her desk well past 5 p.m., Randle is immersed in planning events for 2025 at Village Hall. Her role involves organizing 35-40 gatherings each year, from small community meetings to large-scale celebrations like House Music Night, which attracted over 15,000 attendees.

Her method is collaborative; she draws on strong relationships with local vendors and engages community members to gauge their preferences.

"First, I outline the main events for the year,"



Randle shared. "A clear layout is crucial before diving into details."

Next, she reaches out to local resources like food trucks and DJs to secure commitments early, ensuring her events foster community connection and celebration.

Sometimes, unforeseen circumstances, like unpredictable weather, force Randle to cancel events. Despite her careful planning, some factors are beyond her control. To address this, she proactively informs residents about any changes. She noted that is why RSVPing for events, even if they are free, is crucial, as it helps keep registrants updated on last-minute adjustments.

This year, Randle has embraced a new role with her promotion, taking on the management of Dining on the Green, a versatile event space located in the vibrant heart of DownTown. The venue serves as a focal point for the community, available for rental for a variety of occasions, from intimate birthday celebrations to grand weddings.

As Randle reflects on her extensive career with the Village, she expresses a sincere desire to be remembered as someone dedicated to providing the very best for Park Foresters.

"I truly find comfort and a sense of accomplishment when residents approach me to share how much they enjoyed an event," Randle shared. "It's not about seeking praise or recognition for myself; rather, it's about the fulfillment that comes from knowing I am contributing positively to a community that has given me so much throughout my life. Without any doubt, I most definitely have to thank all my regular supporters and volunteers within and outside the community. Though it has been many, I have to give a special shout out to: Monray Larry, Ella Jones, my Commission on Human Relations members unspoken, Park Forest Golden Girls, Board members and many more... Thank you for your continued support in my day to day task."



Affordable homes in Park Forest

The Village of Park Forest is thrilled to unveil the Access South Cook development, an affordable housing initiative that reflects the Village's commitment to fostering an inclusive and sustainable community. Led by Home First, LLC, a subsidiary of IFF, this innovative project aims to introduce affordable housing choices for residents, while concurrently serving as a catalyst for local economic progress.

Development Overview

In DownTown Park Forest, Access South Cook is currently under construction and will offer 44 rental units. These units will include 24 one-bedroom and 20 two-bedroom apartments. All first-floor units will be fully accessible to provide crucial support for individuals with mobility challenges. Each unit will feature modern amenities such as central air-conditioning, in-unit laundry, energy-efficient appliances, and quality finishes. Leasing is expected to begin in late 2025, with the first building slated for completion in February 2026 and the full project completion by June 2026.

A Strategic Fit with Village Planning Goals

The current project aligns directly with the housing and economic development strategies set forth in the Village's Housing Plan and Comprehensive Plan. The Access South Cook initiative is anticipated to act as a driving force for upcoming residential and commercial expansion, drawing in developers to make additional investments in the region. Situated in close proximity to essential amenities like retail establishments, dining



options, and a farmers market, the project is poised to be a significant and beneficial asset to the community.

Community Benefit

The economic impact of upcoming construction initiatives such as Access South Cook goes far beyond the realm of housing. The general contractor is committed to recruiting local workers, which will contribute to job creation during the construction phase. Moreover, the community building that is being constructed will serve as a shared space for local organizations and agencies, cultivating a sense of community engagement and fostering collaboration. In addition to the direct economic advantages, this project will also help alleviate the pressing need for affordable housing. The vast majority of the housing units will be priced for households with incomes up to 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI), ensuring that these homes are accessible to working families, veterans, seniors, individuals with disabilities, and others. Furthermore, the development will welcome housing choice vouchers, thereby expanding housing opportunities for low-income residents.

Sustainable and Inclusive Design

Access South Cook is committed to environmental sustainability and inclusivity. The development is being constructed with Enterprise Green Communities standards, featuring innovative storm water management systems, energy-efficient appliances, and all-electric heating and hot water services. The green space and universally designed, accessible units ensure the development caters to residents of all abilities. The development will also support pedestrian access to and from the Village Green, along Orchard Drive, and within the DownTown.

Public Infrastructure and Engagement

The project includes significant public infrastructure improvements, such as new sidewalks and connections to Village Green, enhancing the walkability and livability of the area. Community members will also benefit from the shared use of the community

building, reinforcing the project's integration into the broader Park Forest community. As construction progresses, the Village and the development team will continue to provide regular updates to the community. For now, you can follow developments via the flyer linked in this newsletter or visit the project's information page.

Who is on the Development Team?

The Access South Cook Development Team consisted of three main partners. The sponsor/owner of the project was Home First, LLC a subsidiary of IFF, with headquarters in Chicago. The architect for the project was WJW Architects with offices in Chicago, Illinois. Lastly, the general contractor for the development is Blackwood Group and Crane Construction.

About the Developer

Home First, LLC is a developer specializing in affordable and supportive housing projects. Their focus is on creating accessible housing solutions, particularly for individuals with disabilities, veterans, and seniors. Home First, LLC collaborates with various partners such as the Illinois Housing Development Authority, local governments, and financial institutions to secure funding through a combination of tax credits, loans, and grants. Their projects adhere to high environmental standards, with many receiving certifications such as National Green Building Standards or Enterprise Green Communities. Home First, LLC has completed numerous successful developments across Illinois, including the Access West Cook, Illinois Accessible Housing Initiative, and the Community Living Initiative.

How the Project was Financed

The project was financed through a many different funding partners. They included PNC Bank, First Merchants Bank, the Illinois Housing Development Authority, ComEd, the Illinois Department of Human Services, and IFF. Leasing information will be available in late 2025.



Written by Economic Development & Planning Assistant Director Andrew Brown. Questions? Call 708-748-1112 or email abrown@vopf.com.





PEOPLE WHO CARE [LIVE] HERE

Fires happen, even in the winter. Help the Park Forest Fire Department by adopting a fire hydrant this winter. All you have to do is shovel a three foot space around your nearest fire hydrant. Doing so makes the hydrant readily available for crews just in case there is an emergency near by.

The Village of Park Forest has 864 fire hydrants in town that need to be shoveled throughout winter to aid the Park Forest Fire Department in their fire fighting needs. Next time you are out shoveling take some time to clear out space around your nearest hydrant and show the fire department that

WE CARE.

World-renowned cyclist Lael Wilcox sets new world record

World-renowned ultra-endurance athlete Lael Wilcox, known for her cycling feats and record-setting times, came through Park Forest on Sept. 11 around 5 p.m.

Wilcox was on the final leg of her attempt to set the world record for the fastest woman to circumnavigate the globe by bike.

Beginning her journey in Chicago's Grant Park in May, Wilcox completed 18,125 miles in 108 days across four continents and 22 countries. Upon completing her attempt, she was received at Grant Park by family, friends, and the Illinois cycling community.

To get to Grant Park in downtown Chicago, Wilcox had to pass through the Village of Park Forest, traversing several miles of Old Plank Road Trail.

Old Plank Road Trail is one of the oldest rail-to-trail conversions in the country. It stretches from



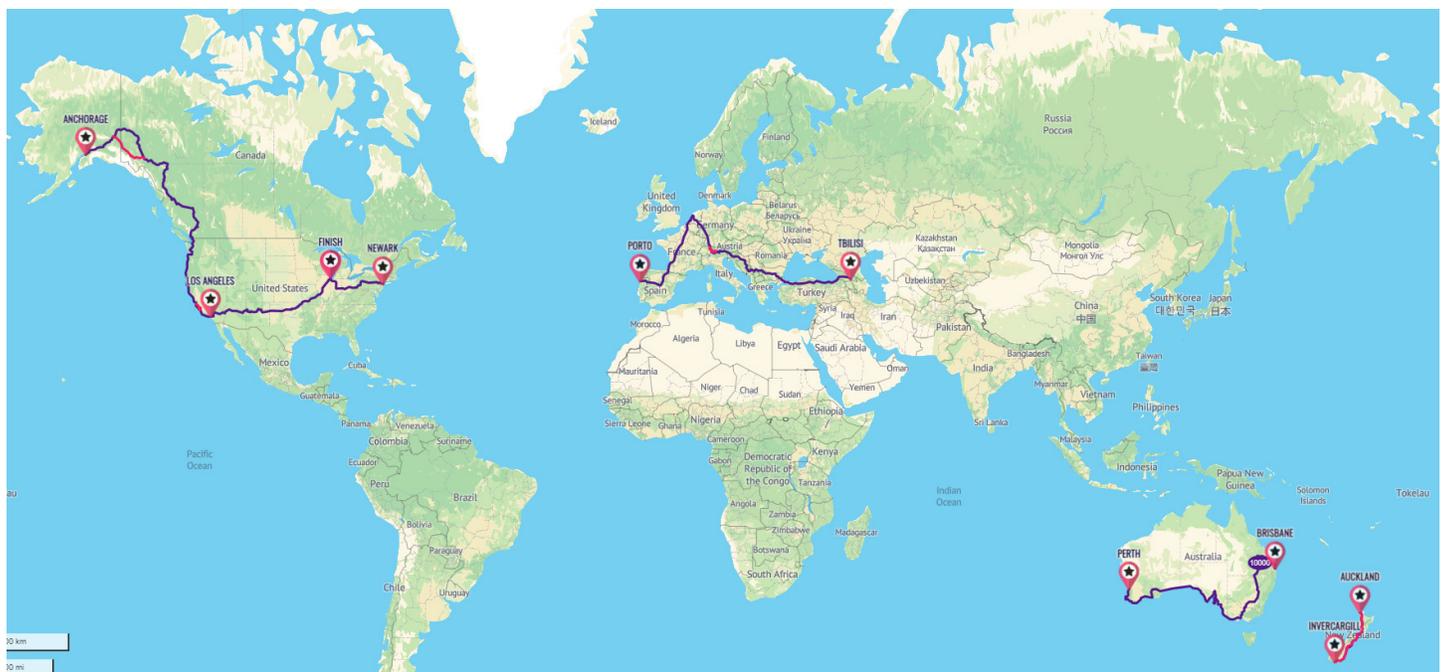
Chicago Heights to Joliet and connects to forest preserves in Will and Cook Counties.

The trail offers Park Forest residents the opportunity to enjoy nature by walking or biking while experiencing unique bits of

American history along its mile markers. It provides outdoor excursions and connects to neighboring towns like Olympia Fields and Frankfort, creating an environmentally friendly means of travel.

Residents can access the trail via several thoroughways in Park Forest and Chicago Heights. There is a parking lot on the east side of Western Avenue just after Sesto Park, and an additional parking lot is located at Logan Park on Orchard Drive.

Wilcox, known for dreaming up a new adventure while in the thick of a current one, told bystanders at Grant Park that she does not know what is to come but is looking forward to whatever it may be.



Wilcox's route around the world.

Village Website updates and AI integration

In the fall of 2023, the Village of Park Forest undertook an initiative by distributing a comprehensive survey aimed at gathering residents' opinions and insights regarding the current state of its website. This engagement effort was complemented by in-depth internal discussions involving staff members and board members, all of which led to a unified conclusion: a complete redesign of the website was essential to better serve the community.



The survey results and subsequent conversations highlighted a strong agreement among staff, board members, and community residents about the direction for the redesign. There was a particular emphasis on two crucial elements: first, enhancing the website's user-friendliness to ensure that it is accessible and easy to navigate; second, improving its aesthetic appeal to create a more inviting online presence for users.

To facilitate this ambitious project, the Village has partnered with Civicplus and Citibot, two organizations that specialize in municipal website solutions and digital engagement tools. These collaborations have set the stage for significant advancements towards achieving the collective goals identified by residents and leadership alike. The newly redesigned website is anticipated to launch in early 2025, bringing a host of improvements and features aimed at better meeting the evolving needs of the community.

In the interim, the Village has introduced Leafy, an interactive AI chatbot designed to assist residents in navigating the current website efficiently. Leafy is operational 24/7, providing immediate customer service to residents by answering their inquiries and guiding them to relevant information quickly, ensuring

that they have a helpful resource at their fingertips.

When the new website goes live, residents can expect a range of enhanced features designed to improve their online experience. The homepage will be updated to present a fresh, modern look while incorporating easy-to-access buttons that lead to the most frequently searched topics. Additionally, dynamic visual elements, including videos and photographs from recent events held in Park Forest, will be featured prominently, showcasing the vibrant community life. Quick links to the Village's various social media accounts will also be made available, allowing residents to stay connected with community happenings and announcements. Transparency is a priority, and residents can look forward to new features that enhance the flow of information from the Village to the community.

James Guirguis, the Communication Specialist for the Village, expressed his enthusiasm about the website redesign, stating, "Changing the Village's website allows residents to see something familiar through a new lens while meeting their needs." He further noted, "By adopting AI in tandem with the Village website updates, the Village is positioned to take full advantage of this innovative technology, enhancing the way staff can provide services to residents."

The anticipated enhancements to the Village of Park Forest's website in 2025 will not only address the specific changes that residents, board members, and staff desire but will also reflect the community's values and priorities. Meanwhile, Leafy, the AI assistant, is already available on the Village's website, providing valuable assistance and support to residents as they navigate the current online resources.





Chat with Leafy! The Village's Virtual Assistant at villageofparkforest.com

ASK QUESTIONS

GET ANSWERS

FIND INFO

Neighborhood Meetings continue into 2025

This year, the Village of Park Forest re-established its Neighborhood Meeting Program, suspended for four years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Launched in 2004, the program aims to enhance communication between Village leadership and residents.

Assistant Village Manager Jason Miller highlighted the program's importance, stating that it provides another opportunity for residents to voice their questions and concerns and learn more about what is happening in the community.

"Park Forest places a great value on communication and engagement," Miller said.

"In addition to the Village Board's Monday night meetings each month at Village Hall, a more relaxed Board meeting is held every first Saturday morning to better accommodate busy weekday schedules and those who wish to have more informal dialogue. The Neighborhood Meeting Program aims to make even more convenient resident engagement with Village leadership."

Each neighborhood meeting is attended by all of Park Forest's elected officials and department heads. Topics commonly discussed include infrastructure needs, area taxes, business development, Village ordinances, public safety, and programs and events.

"Years ago, there was a thought that possibly going into various pockets of the community and holding meetings just steps from someone's home might lead to more deciding to come out, and that has proven to be true," Miller said.

On average, Neighborhood Meetings attract 30 to 50 attendees. Nearly 200 residents attended the six meetings held in 2024 at locations that included Somonauk Park and Freedom Hall.

Although it was on hold for some time, Miller said that the Neighborhood Meeting Program is officially back in full swing, with more meetings to come next year.

"Residents who were not invited to a Neighborhood Meeting in 2024 should keep an eye out for a mailer on when one is scheduled in their area in 2025. I strongly encourage people to come out to listen or to share their perspectives, to ask questions, and, if nothing else, to meet those who are serving the community so that if a time comes when they have a question or concern, there is some level of familiarity with those who can help."

For more information on Neighborhood Meetings, including upcoming meeting dates, visit villageofparkforest.com/neighborhoodmeetings.



Board members take notes while residents share their thoughts and concerns during a Neighborhood Meeting at the newly renovated Somonauk Nature Adventure Park.

CODE RED™

Emergency Communication Made Easy.

The CodeRED Emergency Notification System is an ultra high-speed telephone communication service designed to deliver emergency messages and distribute information considered to be important in all or specific areas of the Village. This system allows the Village to telephone targeted areas across Park Forest or the entire Village within minutes. It then delivers a pre-recorded message describing the situation to you directly or an answering machine in the affected area. When necessary, you will be given specific instructions which may require immediate action on your part. If you see 866-419-5000 displayed, you will know the call was from CodeRED. If you would like to hear the last message delivered to your phone, simply dial the number back. Residents interested in receiving CodeRED notifications should visit the CodeRED page on the Village website to enroll. Visit villageofparkforest.com/CodeRED or call Village Hall at 708-748-112 to enroll or to receive assistance with enrollment.



Receive emergency alerts via phone, text, and email. Scan with your phone to sign up!




Yellow Recycling - Green Carts - Recycling is picked up every other week. Pick up days are marked in yellow.

Blue Yard Waste - Blue Carts - Yard waste is picked up weekly on Tuesday from April 1 - November 25.

Holidays are marked with **purple** squares. Pickups that fall ON or AFTER the holiday will be delayed one day that week ONLY.

JANUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

APRIL						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MAY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

JULY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

AUGUST						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

SEPTEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

OCTOBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Neighborhood canvassing and what it means for you

As the winter season approaches, the Building Department is gearing up to commence residential street canvassing for code enforcement.

Code Enforcement Manager Eshe McGee emphasized that the primary objective is to ensure compliance with local codes and ordinances. During this period, McGee and the team of inspectors will conduct street canvassing to identify and address common property maintenance violations.

McGee outlined that these violations may encompass issues such as chipping or flaking paint, missing address numbers, or the presence of dead and dying trees. She also acknowledged the challenges posed by cold weather and snow, recognizing that it may take time for those in violation to rectify some of these issues.

In an effort to ensure compliance with property regulations, McGee said the approach involves informing individuals about any necessary fixes and providing them with sufficient time to address any violations. Property owners will receive a violation notice, which will clearly outline the specific violation and provide a deadline for compliance, known as the



Fasica board in disrepair

violation abatement date. The abatement date will be determined based on the nature of the violation.

For instance, violations related to overgrown grass or improper garbage container placement must be rectified within seven days, while other violations, such as chipping paint or missing address numbers, allow 30 days for compliance.

McGee reiterated that the goal isn't to ticket residents or generate revenue but to ensure the community's upkeep.

"Oftentimes people negatively think of code enforcement," McGee said. "However, our role is to create a sense of pride in the community by improving property values and the appearance of neighborhoods. Additionally, we aim to keep neighborhoods safe by ensuring that buildings are well-maintained and meet safety standards."

McGee said if you have any questions about street canvassing or would like to know more about the Building Department to contact them at: 708-503-7703



Roof in disrepair



Fencing in disrepair



Tall grass violation



Park Forest's very own Philharmonic Orchestra

The Village of Park Forest and the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO), which was originally founded as the Park Forest Orchestra, share an intertwined history that traces back to the formative years of the Village itself.

Incorporated in 1949, Park Forest emerged as a pioneering planned community in the post-World War II era, attracting residents looking for a suburban lifestyle. Just five years later, in 1954, the Park Forest Orchestra was established, marking a significant cultural milestone for the community. Over the decades, both the Village and the orchestra have evolved, continually enhancing the region's cultural landscape.

This year was considered by many particularly special as both entities marked notable anniversaries: the Village of Park Forest celebrated its 75th anniversary, while the orchestra commemorated its 70th anniversary. These milestones served as a testament to their enduring legacy and contribution to the arts. Barbara Sturges, the Immediate Past Board President of the IPO, highlighted the profound and longstanding connection between the Village and the orchestra, emphasizing how they have mutually supported each other through various stages of development. This partnership has fostered a vibrant arts community that continues engaging and inspiring residents and visitors alike.

"Back in the day, there wasn't the abundant variety of entertainment options that we enjoy today," Sturges remarked, reflecting on the origins of local music initiatives. "The Park Forest Orchestra was established at the community level, comprised entirely of volunteer musicians. It all began with a dedicated group of individuals who were passionate about creating their own music and providing entertainment within the community."

As the years progressed, Sturges explained that the members of the orchestra began to contemplate how

they could elevate the orchestra to a more professional status. One pivotal moment came when she was

approached by Robert Taylor, a fellow member of her church, who shared his vision for growth and wanted to see the orchestra flourish. In 1978, this collaborative spirit led to the reformation of the organization into a professional chamber orchestra, which started performing in Park Forest and quickly gained recognition for its quality performances. By 1982, in an effort to better reflect its broader regional aspirations, the orchestra adopted a new name.

Today, the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO) calls DownTown Park Forest its home. The orchestra, which now boasts 69 talented musicians, performs at the Ozinga Chapel located on the campus of Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights. Violinist Brian Ostrega, a Chicago native, observed that since the onset of the pandemic, one of the organization's key missions has been to introduce orchestral music to those who may not be familiar with it.

"COVID changed a lot of things for us," Ostrega noted. "We found ourselves performing at local farmers' markets and community events as a way to raise awareness and promote IPO's name within the area. Considering our location in Park Forest, we felt a strong desire to contribute positively to the wider community and engage with our neighbors."

Ostrega firmly believes that providing greater exposure to orchestral music is essential for fostering interest and encouraging people to get involved. Over the past few years, the IPO has developed partnerships with the Village of Park Forest, allowing them to perform at various events such as Main Street Nights, further solidifying their presence in the local community. He emphasized that the connection between Park Forest and the IPO is not only significant but continues to grow stronger as they collaborate and engage with the community over time. This ongoing relationship illustrates the orchestra's commitment to being an integral part of the cultural fabric of the area.

Visit ipomusic.org and purchase tickets for as little as \$20.



Upcoming Events

Dec. 14, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Park Forest Winter Holiday Market

Celebrate the holiday season at the Park Forest Holiday Market. Enjoy holiday shopping, reindeer petting, photo ops, and get the chance to meet Santa. Questions? Contact Village Hall at 708-748-1112.

Dec. 26 - Jan. 18

Holiday Tree Recycling

Recycle your holiday trees responsibly. Recycled trees are turned into mulch and used for local parks. To recycle your trees, drop them off in the Aqua Center parking lot. For more information, contact Sustainability Coordinator Carrie Malfeo at 708-503-9372 or by email at cmalfeo@vopf.com.

Feb. 1, 1-3 p.m.

Black History Month Program

Join the Commission on Human Relations as the Village celebrates its south suburban history with laughter, music, and historical facts. You want to take advantage of this one! For more information, call 708-283-5621 or email erandle@vopf.com. This event is free to attend!

February

Black Entrepreneur Month

Come check out and support the Village's local Black-owned businesses all month long. There will be a variety of businesses, vendors, and food choices. Grab a map and take an adventure throughout the DownTown for participating businesses. The Village will have raffles, baskets, gift cards, and prizes. For more information, call 708-283-5621 or email erandle@vopf.com.

March 14, 7-11 p.m.

Jazz, Wine & Chocolate

The Commission on Human Relations has a few things up its sleeve for this event. Come out and enjoy live music, taste various wines, and close it out with a selection of chocolates. There will be a few activities and time to mingle with other partygoers. Grab your tickets in 2025. Group rates are available for ten or more. Tickets are \$25 per person or \$40 for couples. For ticket information, call 708-283-5621 or email erandle@vopf.com.

Dining
Banquets, Weddings, Meetings & Events
on the
Green

Event
Rental Space

Our Services:

- Banquets
- Meetings
- Repasts
- Birthday Celebrations
- Weddings
- Special Events
- Baby Showers
- and much more....

Call for a showing and quote today, 708.283.5648!

Dining on the Green, 349 Main Street, Park Forest, IL 60466



Showing commitment to keeping Park Forest green

In early 2024, Park Forest was awarded a Illinois Community Canopy grant amounting to \$15,000. This funding was made possible through a collaborative effort with Trees Forever, an organization known for its dedication to promoting tree planting and maintaining urban forests. As a result of this partnership, the Village has received over 100 new trees that will be strategically planted throughout various locations within the community.

The initiative is spearheaded by the Department of Recreation, Parks & Community Health, which was responsible for applying for and successfully obtaining the grant on behalf of the Village. In preparation for the winter season, the department has already begun the process of planting a total of 109 trees. The majority of these trees—95 in total—are being planted in parkways, which are the strips of land between the sidewalk and the street. The remaining 14 trees are earmarked for placement within local parks, enhancing the green spaces that residents enjoy.

Kevin Adams, the Director of Recreation, Parks & Community Health, emphasized the importance of this initiative by stating, "Having additional trees will significantly contribute to making Park Forest a better place to live for our residents and enhance the community's overall environment."

Adams further highlighted the numerous benefits associated with tree planting, calling it "one of the

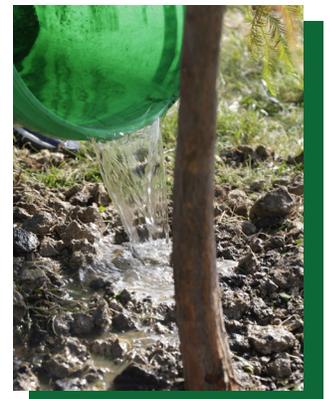


easiest and most sustainable ways to positively affect the environment." Trees play a vital ecological role by producing oxygen, improving air quality, enhancing the climate, conserving water, preserving soil health, and providing habitats for diverse wildlife.



One of the critical advantages of planting trees is their ability to combat climate change. Trees act as natural carbon sinks; during the process of photosynthesis, they absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere, sequestering carbon within their biomass—specifically their wood and root systems. This natural mechanism effectively mitigates the impact of carbon emissions on global warming.

In alignment with broader environmental goals, the initiative to plant these new trees reflects Park Forest's commitment to its Climate Action and Resilience Plan. As part of this strategic framework, the Village has set an ambitious target of reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 26 percent by the year 2025. This tree-planting program is a crucial component of that strategy, demonstrating a proactive approach to environmental stewardship and community resilience.



Investing in Park Forest

Forest Boulevard Reconstruction

The condition of Village roadways is often a topic of discussion for many residents. Forest Boulevard is the road most inquired about and has been a top priority for the Department of Public Works for many years. Back in 2018, the Village requested funds from Cook County to look at the feasibility of reconstructing Forest Boulevard. It was then that the Village was awarded \$252,000 in the form of “Invest in Cook” Funding for a Phase 1 Engineering Study. V3 Engineering Consultants was brought on board to initiate the work. As the engineering study progressed, it was clear that there were many significant financial challenges. However, it was discovered that there were also just as many opportunities for significant improvement. Concepts that improved intersection design, drainage, accessibility, and aesthetics were all reviewed by Village staff and Village residents at public meetings and community events.

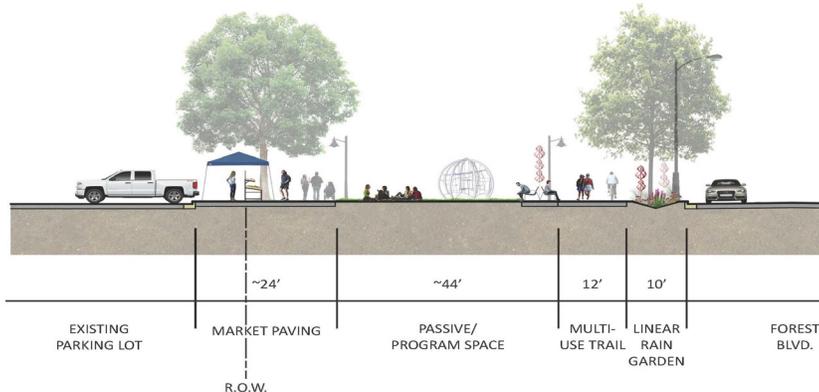
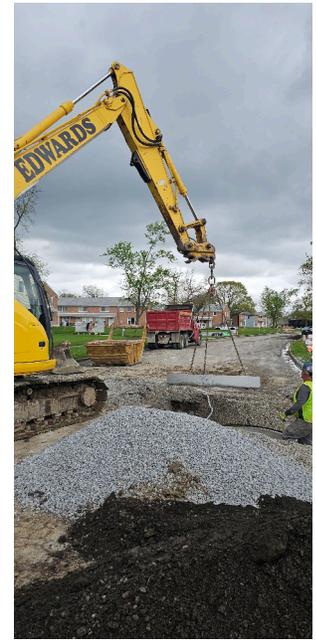
The reconstruction of Forest Boulevard is a significant financial investment. With estimates exceeding \$6 million, it was clear that Village Staff had to find alternate sources to pay for the improvement. However, Forest Boulevard is classified as a local road and is ineligible for most State and Federal funding sources. A concept was then developed to transform Forest Boulevard into a complete street project. At the time, there were several funding opportunities for complete street projects. A complete street is a roadway that is designed and operated to be safe and accessible for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. Public Works decided to eliminate the western two lanes of Forest Boulevard, from Indianwood to Lakewood, and transform it into a linear park with

a multi-use path. The path will extend all the way to Westwood Drive, with plans to extend east to Allegheny Street in the future. The idea for a linear park and multi-use path were conceived as great amenities for residents, but also with hopes of attracting additional funding sources.

In 2020, the Village again requested funds from Cook County to design the reconstruction of Forest Boulevard, including the linear park and multi-use trail. The Village was again awarded \$480,000 in “Invest in Cook” Funding for a Phase 2 Engineering design. Additionally, the concept the linear park and multi-use path were submitted to the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) seeking funding. The Village was elated to be awarded \$3 million in ITEP funds for this project, making it financially feasible to move forward.

In 2025, Residents can expect a new roadway complete with new curb and gutter, ADA modernization, and drainage improvements. A multi-use path will be installed on the west side of the right of way, replacing the existing sidewalk. The linear park will replace the west lanes from Lakewood to Indianwood Boulevard, and will create lots of additional usable space for community assets in the future. Furthermore, additional parking will also be provided on both sides of Forest Boulevard for the use of Park Forest's Co-Op Communities.

The Village is very excited for the Forest Boulevard reconstruction project to begin in the spring of 2025. Cook County is also very excited for this project to be brought to construction and has awarded the Village a third grant of \$480,000 in “Invest in Cook” Funds for construction engineering. In total,



A rendering of what the new Forest Boulevard will look like

the Village has been awarded just over \$4.2 million in grants for the Forest Boulevard Reconstruction Project.



Neola Street Water Main Replacement

Most of the Village's water mains are approximately 70 years old and are in need of replacement. The Village experiences over a hundred water main breaks a year on average, which creates a huge inconvenience for residents in the Village. The Department of Public Works has been seeking funding for water main replacement for over 20 years and has replaced over eighteen miles since 2004. In 2025, the Village will collaborate with the Army Corps of Engineers to replace the water main on Neola Street. The Army Corps is supporting this project with a \$750,000 grant. Improvements will include new water main and fire hydrants that should eliminate water main breaks and create additional fire protection on Neola Street for the next 50 years. Additionally, the Village is currently working with the IEPA on a plan to replace an additional four miles of water main in 2025 and 2026 utilizing Inflation Reduction Act funding. The Village hopes to be able to provide more details on that project in the spring of 2025.

Local Neighborhood Street Reconstruction

While work on the Village's main roads is warranted and needed, the Public Works Department does not want to ignore the needs of Park Forest's local neighborhood streets. In the past three years, the Village has reconstructed over eight miles of local neighborhood roads. In 2025, the Village is preparing to reconstruct another two and a half miles of local roads. Streets are selected for reconstruction based upon roadway condition, drainage, and previous utility work. Public Works prioritizes these

roads that are in poor condition that have already had previous water main or sewer replacement work done. In 2025, roadway improvements plan to include:

- Talala Street
- Tomahawk Road
- Towanda Court
- Topeka Street
- Nauvoo Street (Shabbona Drive to Tomahawk Street)
- Somonauk Street (Central Park Avenue to Shabbona Drive)
- Seneca Street
- Onarga Street
- Marquette Road (Orchard Drive to Oswego Street)
- New Salem Street (Gentry Street to Indiana Street)
- Herndon Street
- Gentry Street
- Monitor Street

Please note that this list is subject to change.



Understanding the Sidewalk Replacement Program

Is your sidewalk in need of repair?

Park Forest's Department of Public Works (DPW) offers a 50/50 Sidewalk Replacement Program that assists homeowners with the cost of sidewalk replacement. Funds are currently available, and residents interested in participating in the program are urged to contact the Department of Public Works, at 708-503-7702.

Sidewalk/Curb at new driveway replacement

If a resident wishes to replace the sidewalk within the right-of-way, the Village will pay 50% of the replacement cost (until funds are exhausted).

Suppose you would like to replace your driveway but the curb is in poor condition. In that case, the Village will pay 100% of the cost of removing and replacing the curb in order to make smooth transition to the street.

Eligibility

The Park Forest Sidewalk Program will be administered in the order in which applications are received. Funds are allocated every fiscal year. An application may be postponed to the following year if funds are no longer available for the current fiscal year.

How to apply?

A resident interested in applying for the program should contact DPW to complete an application before construction. A sketch of what should be done with approximate dimensions should be



provided.

Reimbursement limits

Funds available to residents through the sidewalk reimbursement program will be limited to the unit costs in the separate yearly Public Works concrete contract. A resident may choose a contractor whose fees are more than that of the Public Works contract, but the resident will be responsible for the difference in cost.

How do I obtain my reimbursement?

There are two options in this program for residents:

Option 1: A resident can work with a licensed Village contractor to replace any concrete work they wish to have done. Residents then pay the contractor the entire fee and request to be reimbursed by the Village.

Note: The DPW will

verify the work was completed to the Village standards. If the work is accepted, the Village will pay the homeowner for the approved amount. The homeowner should only pay the contractor once DPW has approved the work. Any damages done in the right-of-way by the contractor will be deducted from the reimbursement amount.

Option 2: A resident can contact the DPW to perform the work. DPW will replace any sidewalk, curb, or driveway in the public right of way. The homeowner is responsible for 100% of the driveway cost and 50% of the sidewalk cost. The homeowner share shall be paid prior to any work being performed.



For questions regarding Public Works projects, contact Director Roderick Ysaguirre at 708-503-7702 or email rysaguirre@vopf.com

Salt Smart and You

By being *Salt Smart* this winter, we can have safe surfaces and protect the environment



What is Salt Smart?

Salt Smart is a collaboration of people and organizations in Illinois working to reduce the amount of salt, or chlorides, reaching our local rivers and streams. The Salt Smart Collaborative shares information and resources on best practices, organizes workshops, and creates outreach materials. Together, we can be smart about the salt we use for safe winter surfaces and reduce our impact on the built and natural environments.

How Can You Be Salt Smart?

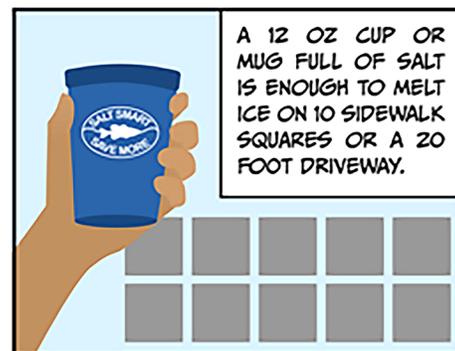
Be Salt Smart at Home - Clear snow and ice with a shovel, snow blower, ice scraper, or broom. Only apply salt if you need it, where people walk or cars drive. More salt isn't always better!

Help Our Plow Drivers Do Their Job Better

- Don't Crowd the Plow – give snow plows extra space on the road and do not pass
- When There is Snow, Go Slow – leave yourself extra time to get where you need to go safely
- Keep the Streets Clear for Snow Plows – parked cars and garbage bins in the street slow down plows making it harder to clear the streets

Winter Clean-Up Tip: Help emergency responders keep your community safe by clearing snow around fire hydrants.

Thank you for doing your part to be Salt Smart and keep our neighborhoods safe this winter!



Learn More at
[SaltSmart.org](https://saltsmart.org)



Understanding how Public Works prepares for winter

The Village is an active Chicago Area Waterway Chloride Work Group member. The group's main goal is to use Best Management Practices (BMPs) to effectively manage road salt/chloride use, to reduce the amount of chlorides that pollute our region's waterways and restore water quality. Public Works is responsible for 72 miles of roadway, and plowing all streets can take some time, especially during long or heavy storm events. Below is the current approach to snow and ice control.



1. Prior to a snow and/or ice event, the Department of Public Works (DPW) will apply salt brine (a mixture of salt and water) to the main roads throughout the community. The approach of using salt brine, a day before a snow event, is known as Anti-icing. Salt brine liquid that has dried on the roadway prohibits the freezing/bonding of snow/ice to the pavement. The salt brine "barrier" allows for easier removal of snow and ice from roads, resulting in cleaner pavement and a significant reduction in the amount of salt that was used previously to melt the snow/ice after it has bonded to the pavement. As time and resources allow, salt brine will be applied to local roads.

2. Plowing begins when there is an accumulation of two inches or more of snow. Three two and half ton snow plows are assigned to plow in tandem, the Village's two main salt/plow routes. Upon completing these two main snow routes, the six trucks pair up into three groups of two to start plowing the secondary/local streets/remaining streets Village-wide. Two plow-equipped one-ton dump trucks (one on North side and one on the South side) will clear cul-de-sacs and courts. One pass on main routes can take hours. One pass along local routes is another three hours. Therefore, clearing all Village roads once can take more than six hours. This process will repeat to keep up with the snow event, and additional salt will be spread as needed. Sometimes, the snow event is

heavy enough that DPW may need to plow the main routes a second time before the local roads. The goal is to manage accordingly during a snow event, with tangible progress made only when the snow ceases to fall. Any follow-up plowing will commence the next day.

3. Next-day clearing will consist of plows clearing the road towards the curb line. Residents and businesses must be mindful that when clearing their respective driveways, roadway snow may still need to be cleared and will eventually be cleared to the side across the driveway space again. This is an unfortunate part of the plowing process. Residents should remove vehicles

parked on the street during and after snow events to allow for better clearing during and after a snow event. The Village's main routes consist of Orchard Drive, Blackhawk Drive, Indianwood Boulevard, Westwood Drive, Wildwood Drive, Indiana Street, Illinois Street, Shabbona Drive, Lakewood Blvd, North Street, Dogwood Street, Alleghany Street, and Algonquin Street.

Residents that live in multi-family areas, co-ops, condos, townhomes, and rentals or are part of a Homeowners Association (HOA), have contracts with outside companies for snow and ice removal. Contact your respective Management Office or HOA for details.

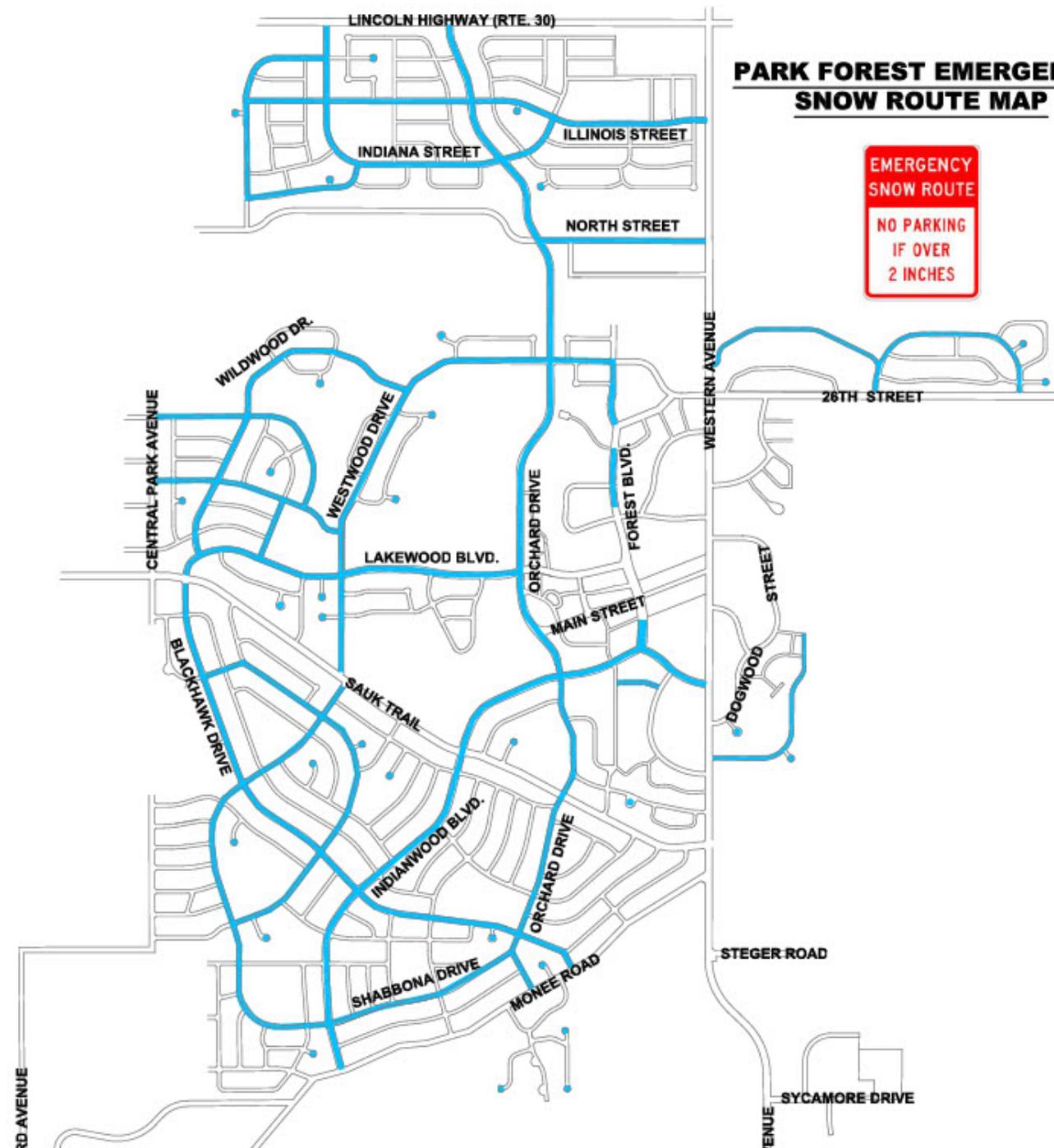
Snow Route Parking Ban

Per Village Resolution, there is **NO PARKING** on designated "Snow Route" streets at any time there is an accumulation of two (2) inches or more of snow and ice on the roadway. The ban allows Public Works crews to clear the road and parking area more effectively. This ban remains in effect until the storm event and accumulation of snow and ice have been removed.

While not required by ordinance on streets not designated as snow routes, no parking on side streets during heavy snowfall greatly assists crews in plowing and aids first responders in responding to emergencies.

PARK FOREST EMERGENCY SNOW ROUTE MAP

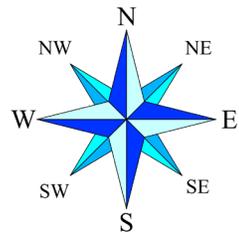
EMERGENCY SNOW ROUTE
NO PARKING IF OVER 2 INCHES



LEGEND

THE BLUE HIGHLIGHTED STREETS DESIGNATE THE VILLAGE'S EMERGENCY SNOW ROUTES. NO PARKING IS PERMITTED ON THESE STREETS WHEN THERE IS OVER TWO INCHES OF SNOW. CARS IN VIOLATION ARE SUBJECT TO BEING TICKETED AND TOWED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VILLAGE'S ORDINANCE.

ALL CUL-DE-SACS ARE DESIGNATED AS EMERGENCY SNOW ROUTES TO ALLOW VILLAGE CREWS SNOW PLOW ACCESS



Park Forest continues its overseas adventures

The Department of Recreation, Parks, & Community Health (RPCH) has a long-standing reputation for organizing unforgettable trips for the Park Forest community.

They have been arranging day trips to Chicago to watch plays and attend concerts for over a decade. In an expedition last year, RPCH Supervisor Adina McCollough led a group of 26 area residents on a 12-day journey to the West African country of Ghana. During their time in Ghana, the group immersed themselves in the nation's history and participated in various informative tours.

Continuing the tradition of experiences, this October, McCollough and a group of 10 embarked on an international adventure. She offered group packages that averaged around \$3000, which included roundtrip airfare, lodging, and game tickets to watch the Chicago Bears face off against the Jacksonville Jaguars.

"I'm a Bears fan through and through," McCollough said. "We're very passionate people. So, when I saw the Bears were playing in Europe in what would only be their fourth time, I thought this would be a great opportunity for me to get a group together and take on London."

During their four-day stay in London, the group participated in three tours, including the Royal Walk, The Jack the Ripper, and the Tales of London. McCollough said each tour was captivating, and there was never a dull moment.

McCollough said these trips aren't just beneficial to those who participate but also generate revenue to help fund free events like Fall Fest and Main Street Nights.

"It's a win-win for everyone," McCollough said. "We're able to take trips and give people memorable moments. At the same time, these excursions help finance free events hosted right here in Park Forest."

McCollough said if you're interested in joining the mailing list, call the Department of Recreation, Parks & Community Health at 708-748-2005.



Tennis & Health Club underwent a \$50,000 invest, more additions coming in 2025

This fall, the Park Forest Tennis and Health Club underwent a \$50,000 refurbishment to enhance its appeal and functionality. Looking ahead to early 2025, Club Manager Chris Tudor aims to introduce new services, including upgraded exercise equipment and a modernized lobby. Tudor also hopes to hire a certified personal trainer and add a nail technician service.

"We want every resident to have the opportunity to come here and get an excellent workout," Tudor said.

Residents can currently access the facility for a daily fee of \$5, which allows them to use various fitness equipment and activities like pickleball. Additionally, party space rentals are available. Approved by the Park Forest Board of Trustees, the renovation has been completed.

The club is located at 290 Westwood Drive and operates on weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m., with varied weekend hours.



What's the best way to
make things better in
Park Forest?



Get Involved.



Cynthia Burton-Prete has lived in Park Forest for almost 30 years and has volunteered for the Planning and Zoning Commission since 2005. She says she became a commission member when she met former Mayor John Ostenburg at a meeting to discuss construction outside of her home. After sharing her thoughts and concerns, she was approached by the former mayor and asked directly to be on the Planning and Zoning Commission. The rest was history. The Planning and Zoning Commission advises the Village on zoning and building-related issues and approves development plans. The Planning and Zoning Commission meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m.

- Beautification Awards Committee
- Board of Fire and Police Commissioners
- Commission on Human Relations
- Economic Development Advisory Group
- Environment Commission
- Housing Authority
- Planning & Zoning Commission
- Police and Fire Advisory Council
- Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
- Senior Citizens Advisory Commission
- Veterans Commission
- Youth Commission

To apply, visit the Village Manager's Office at Village Hall
or go to villageofparkforest.com/volunteer



Mayor/Village President
Joseph A. Woods

Trustees
Tiffani Graham
Maya Hardy
John V. Moore
Theresa M. Settles
Erin I. Slone
Randall White

Manager
Tom Mick

Clerk
Sheila McGann

Please Recycle



The Village of Park Forest is in support of fair housing. Fair housing is the right for all people to live wherever they choose, to have access to housing (seek, purchase, sell, lease or rent) and enjoy the full use of their homes without unlawful discrimination, interference, coercion, threats, or intimidation by owners, landlords, real estate agents, or any other persons. Concerns or mediation needed? Call 708-283-5621.

PERMIT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 2
PARK FOREST, IL

WSS-CRT



YOU ARE INVITED TO THE
HOLIDAY MARKET

DECEMBER

14

10 A.M. - 3 P.M.

SANTA, REINDEER, AND FOOD

VILLAGE GREEN
DOWNTOWN PARK FOREST

