



2024 *River Grove*

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Marjorie A. Manchen Clerk
Lynn M. Bjorvik Trustee
Robert C. Thomas Trustee
Christopher J. Lilly Trustee
Lora M. Lantgen Trustee
Benjamin E. Ramirez Trustee
Frank J. Obaya Trustee

Dear Friendly Neighbors,

First and foremost, thank you for taking the time to read our *State of the Village*. The fact that you are reading this shows me that you care about our community. Secondly, thank you for allowing me to represent you as your Village President; other than being a proud father to my two kids, having been given the opportunity to work on behalf of the residents of River Grove has been the greatest honor of my life. My team and I continue to work diligently on behalf of this community. Every decision is given careful thought, and with the betterment of the village as whole in mind.

When I first ran for office in 2017, having a small business background, I had a vision for our village. My team and I continue to turn that vision in to reality. Safety, economic development, and transparency have always been my top priorities. Through strong financial management we have presented a balanced budget since year one of this administration, with no staff or service cuts. My department heads, trustees and I have worked extremely hard at elevating our bond rating four notches to an *A+ stable* which is the equivalent of having a personal credit score of *800*.

We have aimed to increase the quality of life for our residents, young and old, enhancing our parks to some of the finest in the area. By the end of 2024 we will have paved 100 percent of our alleys, many with permeable pavers to help keep water out of our basements. We have aggressively pursued grants at a county, state and federal level. The most recent is \$525,000 to reengineer our portion of the Des Plaines River Trail system. Additionally, in 2023 we collaborated with the Village of Franklin Park and after many conversations with representatives on a local and federal level, we brought to River Grove the Quiet Zone. This allows trains to pass through town with zero horn noise, unless presented with an emergency. We have been working hard at removing blighted properties and have replaced them with parks, green space or additional parking for our downtown area.

Economic development has remained strong, providing new housing options ranging from luxury units with roof top amenities for Metra commuters to a gated townhome community complete with swimming pool and clubhouse. New retail, medical and restaurant options have emerged, most recently La Provincia, offering a Columbian food menu at Clinton and Grand, which will be open soon. Also, Boba Heaven will be opening soon in the Thatcher Woods Shopping Center. They specialize in bubble tea, and also offer milk tea, flavored tea, frozen fruit drinks, and more.

We have come a long way, but we have much more to accomplish. Here are some highlights from our different departments.

Finance

The financial activities of the Village in 2023 were eventful and continued to reflect the great strides the Village has made to ensure that it remains financially stable and improves its fiscal conditions to provide the best services possible to our residents and businesses. After grappling with the effects of the global pandemic over these past several years, River Grove emerged with a healthy fiscal condition in all its funds. This, in turn, allows it to continue to provide the highest level of services to our residents and businesses for 2024. Going into 2024, the Village has passed six consecutive balanced budgets that provided for increased expenditures to capital improvements and for the Village's fleet. In addition, the Village saw a continued improvement throughout 2023 in its economically sensitive revenues like sales and utility taxes. Combined with the Village Board and staff's financial oversight over expenditures during the year, the ending general fund balance is estimated to end December 31, 2023 with a fund balance increasing \$1.7 million to approximately \$12.6 million dollars. For comparison purposes, the Village's general operating fund balance on December 31, 2017, was \$4,814,392.

Projected 2024 revenues for the Village for all funds are approximately \$1.5 million dollars larger than projected for 2023, with the General Fund projected to receive \$1 million more than budgeted in 2023.

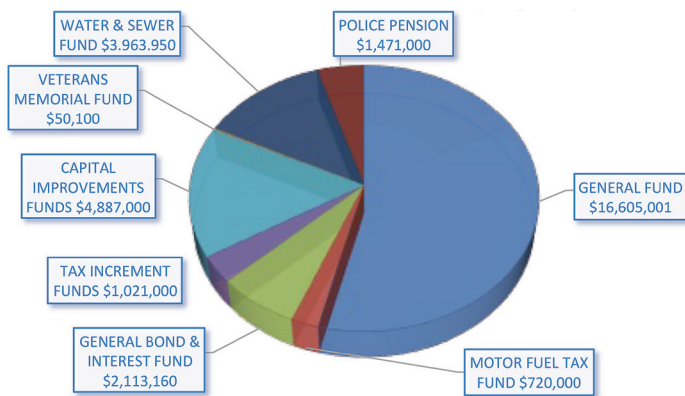


The 2024 expenditure budget for all funds totals \$39,995,573, with the General Operating Fund totaling \$16,535,957, a \$1,152,312 increase over 2023's budgeted expenditures. The majority of the increase in 2024 spending is dedicated to capital improvements including the reconstruction and refurbishment to the Fire Department building on Thatcher Avenue that originally housed the old Village Hall and Police Department, acquisition of several properties for additional parking and park space and the Village's continuing scheduled resurfacing of Village streets and sidewalk replacement.

The positive annual trend of the Village in maintaining its percentage of expenditure to the General Fund's fund balance has also continued. The current projections are that the December 31, 2023, percentage will be 89% and the projected December 31, 2024, percentage will be 76%. Rating agencies recommend that general-purpose governments maintain at least 20% or greater. The Village has minimally maintained that measurement at no less than 40% for the past six (6) fiscal years.

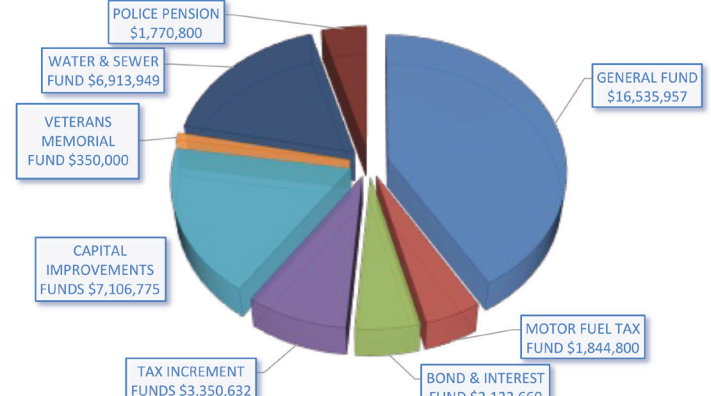
This pie chart presents the Village's estimated revenues for each Village fund in 2024:

2024 TOTAL REVENUES - \$30,831,211



This pie chart presents the Village's estimated expenditures, by fund, in 2024:

2024 TOTAL EXPENDITURES - \$39,995,573



Continuing our trend since 2016, the Village's operating fund balances that are comprised of its General Operating and Development funds have improved. Additionally, while costs have increased due to personnel and material costs, the Village continues to maintain a lower-than-average tax rate per \$100 of assessed value as compared to other communities in our neighborhood, thus continuing to maintain a lower property tax burden on residents and businesses compared to our peers.

In other finance-related events, the Village was notified in May 2023 that its Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (audit) for its fiscal year ending December 31, 2021, received the Government Finance Officers Association's award for outstanding financial reporting of the Village's finances for that year. The report's format needs to meet rigid standards for disclosure and financial transparency and ease of understanding for the reader. The result is a document that anyone with an interest in the Village's financial condition can review and comprehend. Additionally, the report includes a major section that provides various financial trends and comparisons from the past ten (10) years. This award is reviewed annually, and it is the Village's intention to maintain this award status in future annual reports. This report, as well as other financial documents, are available for viewing on the Village's website at <https://www.rivergroveil.gov/214/Annual-Financial-Reports>.

Finally, in November 2023, the Village administration received exciting news from **Standard and Poor's Global Ratings**, a company that rates credit worthiness on municipal debt and risk. S&P analyzed the Village's financial reports as well as interviewing myself and the finance staff and determined that the Village's financial condition had significantly improved since the last time it was reviewed in 2021 (when the Village issued bonds to finance the alley construction project).

2022 Tax Rate Impact Comparisons - Neighboring Municipalities

Municipality	2022 Municipal Tax Rate	Levy Per Capita
Rosemont	2.880	\$ 5,156.19
Hillside	5.259	\$ 1,536.30
Maywood	10.733	\$ 1,155.73
Franklin Park	1.632	\$ 945.01
Bellwood	6.895	\$ 932.87
Schiller Park	2.227	\$ 880.34
River Grove	3.154	\$ 801.88
Elmwood Park	2.874	\$ 736.94
Melrose Park	2.403	\$ 732.88

Levy per Capita is based on a ratio of the government's extended tax levy divided by the official population of the municipality. Communities with a higher percentage of industrial properties generally have a lower tax rate due to their higher assessed valuation.

The result of the review is that the Village's rating increased from a **BBB+ (Positive Outlook)** to an **A+ (Stable Outlook)**. This is comparable to the Village now having an excellent credit rating of 800 that allows for the Village to receive more favorable interest rates on any future borrowings it may consider but just as importantly, indicates that its financial outlook, rated by an independent outside agency, remains strong and healthy. I applaud our entire team for achieving such tremendous results for our Village.

We as a Village look forward to the 2024 Capital Improvement Plan

2024 DCEO Street Improvements – The Village will reconstruct the pavement on the areas bounded by Grand Avenue, Indian Boundary Road, Arnold Street, and Thatcher Avenue. The Village will be utilizing a \$3.0 Million dollar grant from the State of Illinois as well as approximately \$835,000 in its MFT funds to complete the project. In addition to the roadway work, the Village will use \$1.0 million dollars of water funds to replace approximately 80 lead water service lines as part of its lead service line replacement program. The work is anticipated to start in May of 2024 and be completed by the end of October of 2024.

2024 CDBG O'Connor Drive Resurfacing Project – The Village was awarded a \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant from Cook County for the resurfacing of O'Connor Drive from Thatcher Avenue through to Paris Avenue. The work is expected to start in August of 2024 and be completed by mid-October 2024.

2024 Alley Project – The Village will wrap-up the replacement of all its public alleys with the completion of the two commercial alleys north and south of Walnut Avenue. These alleys serve as access to the apartments along the east side of Elm Street and the commercial business along the west side of River Road. The project is anticipated to start in May of 2024 and be completed by the end of July 2024.

2024 West Street Water Main Project – The Village will replace the deteriorated water main on West Street between Palmer Street and Fullerton Avenue. The work includes the installation of a water main under the west sidewalk and the replacement of 27 lead water services. The work is planned to Start in June of 2024 and be completed by the end of October.

2024 Grand Avenue Streetscape – The Village will be completing the streetscape work between Webster and Davisson. The work includes the placement of brick sidewalks, concrete parkways, placement of landscape planters and pedestrian lights. While the project was originally slated for 2023 the State of Illinois Grand Ave Resurfacing project schedule didn't allow for the Village project to be constructed. The work is planned to begin in July 2024 and be completed by the end of October.

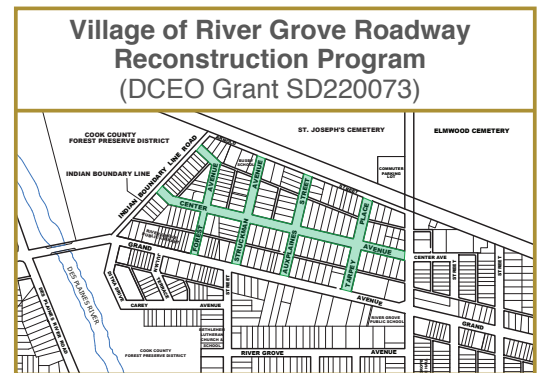
The 2024 Sidewalk Replacement Program – The Village has budgeted additional funds toward the replacement of our village's liable trip spots around town. Please contact the Public Works Department to let them know about any sidewalk squares you may be concerned about.

Belmont/Thatcher Entrance – The Village is in the process of securing the property at the southeast corner of Belmont and Thatcher Avenue so it may install an entry sign and landscaping. The improvements will give the north entrance into the village more of presence.

Veterans Memorial: The Village will be constructing a Veteran's Memorial in honor of all its veterans. It will be located at the northeast corner of Grand Avenue and Indian Boundary Road on property the Village acquired from the Cook County Forest Preserve. The Village has appointed a Veterans Memorial Commission to guide the fundraising and construction schedule. The project will be completed in time for Veterans Day 2024. The main monument will be engraved with *"All Gave Some, Some Gave All"*. There will be separate monuments for each branch of the military as well.

Des Plaines River Trail: The Village of River Grove has received a grant from Cook County to cover the cost of the design of the Des Plaines River Trail improvements starting at North Avenue and extending north to Fullerton Avenue. The design will follow the preliminary design study concepts that have been developed as part of the over system improvements. Additional information can be found at the following web sites:

<https://fpdcc.com/about/plans-projects/des-plaines-river-trail-improvements> and <https://activetrans.org/dprtr>



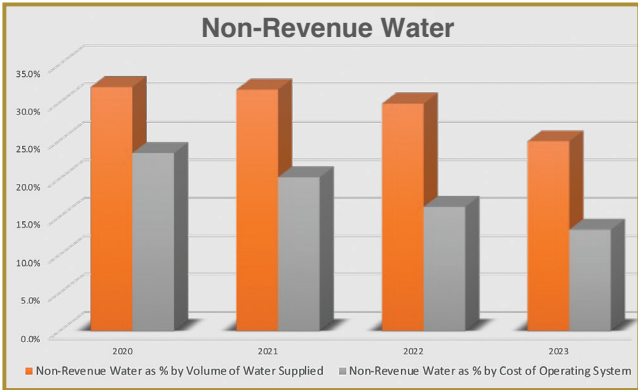
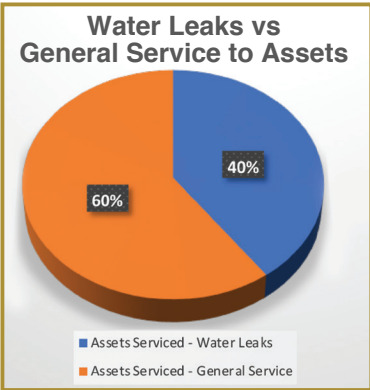
From The Public Works and Water Department

Our Public Works team is involved in everything the Village does. They continue their efforts in the maintenance and beautification of the village, keeping all of River Grove's parks and greenspaces clean and safe for everyone to enjoy. After every storm, you can count on the men and women of our Public Works and Water Departments to clean up the aftermath and repair services.

In 2023 the Village was awarded Tree City USA for the 28th year in a row, an honor which we are very proud of. We were also recognized with the Growth award for the last 9 years. These recognitions were bestowed on us by the Arbor Day Foundation. This past year brought a new garbage provider to our town. Flood Brothers was awarded the Village business because of their enhanced services to the Village, a lower cost to our residents and they offer senior services. The senior service are smaller cans at a reduced price.



In 2023 River Grove had 12 water main break repairs, 6 service replacements, 17 new services added, and 2 hydrants replaced/repared, along with the addition of 2 new water main sections and the replacement of 1 deteriorating section of water main. The Village's non-revenue water loss by volume of water supplied has seen reductions of 7% over the last 4 years. This is due in part, to the use of leak detection services and updates to the meter reading system.



From The River Grove Police Department

One of the top priorities of my administration is to have our residents feel safe in their community. Additionally, we want to continue to train and hire new officers so that will happen. The Chief is planning on hiring 2 new officers in 2024. Once they are hired, the full-time staff levels in the police department will be at the highest level in the history of the police department.

In 2023, the police department added in-car video recording systems in all of the patrol vehicles. In 2024, the police department intends to outfit all full-time and part-time police officers with body cameras. Doing so will add a level of transparency, and safety, for both the officers and those people officers interact with. In line with technological advances, additional License Plate Reading cameras (LPR) will be installed around town; it is important to know that those cameras will only be utilized to aid officers in criminal investigations. Additionally, in 2023, six more traffic radar signs will be ordered and installed in the village, and a remote video surveillance trailer will be added to the police toolbox.

In 2023, officers responded to just over 13,100 calls for service. In addition to responding to calls for service, officers are responsible for several other activities including monitoring and addressing traffic and parking issues throughout our village. Traffic enforcement is an important aspect of police work because it helps reduce accidents and injuries to operators and occupants of motor vehicles. In 2023, traffic enforcement realized an increase of approximately 11% in speeding citations issued, an increase of approximately 49% in distracted driving citations issued, and an increase of approximately 66.7% in child restraint violations issued. The number of citations issued to trucks violating no truck signs remained around the same, while seat belt violations issued decreased by approximately 12.3%.

As in previous years, our police administrators and officers work collaboratively to seek out and apply for law enforcement-related grant funding. It is important to know that most grants are awarded for a specific need. In 2023, the River Grove Police Department was awarded an Illinois Department of Transportation traffic grant totaling \$181,740.00 (continuing to be one of the largest awards in our area). That IDOT grant is dedicated to pay for STEP and IDPP claims. The Village also received a Department of Justice JAG grant, for \$32,000.00 which was dedicated to help pay the cost of in-car video camera systems. The Village also received the funds from a \$50,000.00 consolidation grant which was dedicated to police communication services. The police department is also hopeful to be the recipient of additional grant money that has not been awarded yet.



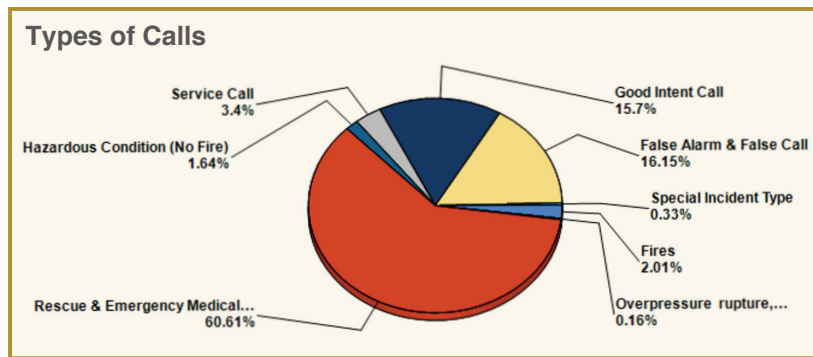
I am confident when I say that the Police Chief, the administrators and police officers, working for the River Grove Police Department, remain dedicated to providing the highest level of public safety to all in our community.

From The River Grove Fire Department

The River Grove Fire Department had a busy 2023. For a part-time department, I am proud to say that it is one of the most efficient in the state. We can always count on our first responders to be the first ones there when help is needed. In 2023 alone, our department responded to 1479 EMS (ambulance) calls and 961 fire calls.

The chart below reflects the types of calls neighboring towns were called in on to aid RGFD. This occurred 77 times in 2023.

The 2024 budget allows for the remodeling of the entire Fire House. The Fire House is one of the cornerstones of our town and while we want to be respectful of its history and character, this remodel will create a functional and dynamic work environment. It will provide new sleeping quarters, kitchen, showers, office space and more. We already have the architectural designs and will be starting this project in the very near future.



From The River Grove Building Department

The Building Department has a key role in the Village of River Grove. Our residents rely on the building inspectors and other building department personnel to put their safety first. We depend on our inspectors and building personnel to make sure all safety codes are being followed. Once again the building department has surpassed last year's number of permits issued and inspections scheduled. These numbers indicate how River Grove continues to build for the future. In 2023 we issued a total of 589 building permits, 141 roofing permits, 126 plumbing permits and 114 electrical permits. This supports the data that River Grove residents like to live in this town and want to improve their homes and stay around for a while.

2023 brought with it the biggest development project in River Grove since the construction of Triton College in 1964. The Belmont and 80th project is a 22.5 acre site of land that is the former Holy Cross and Mother Guerin High School properties. This gated community includes 85 townhomes, 17 luxurious apartment buildings with garages and 120 age-restricted living units. This development will include a clubhouse, outdoor pool and many other amenities.

River Grove Recreation

Our Recreation Department is starting the new year with several great events planned for kids as well as seniors! This year the Village's annual Easter Egg Hunt will be at the newly renovated Trumbull Park.

We are gearing up for spring sports programs; our baseball and softball programs continue to flourish. The River Grove Baseball Program has teams ranging from t-ball (4 years) through 12U. The Rockets Fastpitch Softball Program has teams from 8U through 14U. This includes our 12U hybrid travel team, back for its third season, following their league championship last fall. This program offers our players exposure to a higher level of competition than they saw in their recreational league without the demands of a full-time travel program. Our fall flag football league continues to grow every year, and resumes in September. In addition, we will offer instructional soccer and basketball programs throughout the year. My goal is to provide a safe, fun, inclusive and positive learning environment that fosters growth and serves as a vehicle for young athletes by providing seasonal activities. For being a small community, we try to offer the best programs possible with the facilities we have.

Mayors Closing Remarks

Thank you for reading the State of the Village. I do believe with your input and the team I have put together that anything is possible. We will continue to do our best for our residents and continue to keep moving River Grove forward. Please feel free to contact me with any concerns you have or just to introduce yourself. I am always available by email at mayor@rivergroveil.gov or phone at (708) 453-8000.

Dave Guerin Village President



NEW IMPROVED WATER BILL PAYMENTS

Our new and improved bill pay service will be available to pay your water bill on February 14th. You can pay online, by phone or even by text with a credit/debit card or e-check. Auto-pay is available; save time and avoid late payment fees. Also, you can go paperless and receive bills, reminders and receipts via email. Go to rivergroveil.gov and click on **Pay My Water Bill** for more information and payment link.