



RIVER FOREST

Proud Heritage • Bright Future

The Village of River Forest Newsletter | April, 2022



Forestry in River Forest

Since 1998, the Village has been named Tree City USA in honor of the Village's commitment to effective urban forest management. The Village achieves this recognition by meeting the program's four requirements: a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance, an annual community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation. The Village is also recognized as a Level 1 Accredited Arboretum by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and the Morton Arboretum, for achieving particular standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens.

The Forestry Division of Public Works includes four Certified Arborists, and the Division maintains over 8,000 trees from 90 species in the Village's parkway. The Division inspects, monitors, trims, removes, and plants trees throughout the Village year-round. They also monitor and, every other year, inoculate Ash parkway trees against Emerald Ash Borer, an invasive beetle that feeds on the Ash species and destroys the trees' ability

to transport water and nutrients.

The crew proactively trims Village trees on a four-year pruning cycle, which maintains the health of the trees, removes hazardous limbs, ensures fewer limbs fall during periods of high winds and improves traffic and pedestrian sightlines throughout Village streets. Residents can submit a service request online or call the Village to report work needed on parkway trees.

Each year in observance of Arbor Day, celebrated the last Friday in April, the Village plants a tree for a school or park in the community. In May each year, the Division begins planting new trees to replace diseased or damaged trees that have been removed. Click here to see the Village's tree inventory map, which identifies the species of trees in the parkway throughout the Village.

Visit ArborDay.org to learn more about trees and the Arbor Day tradition to plant a tree.

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From Village President Cathy Adduci

Dear River Forest residents,

I am proud to report that the Village's proposed Fiscal Year 2023 Budget is balanced once again. This budget is prepared with three guiding principles: public safety, quality of life, and stabilizing property taxes. To that end, the budget includes continued investment in maintaining critical infrastructure including our streets, water and sewer systems, and stormwater management projects. The FY23 Proposed Budget is available for the public to review at vrf.us/transparency, and discussion by the Village Board will begin at the April 11, 2022 special **Committee of the Whole meeting** followed by a **Public Hearing** on the Budget. I invite you to get involved and be a part of this important discussion, which will guide what we accomplish as a Village over the next year. Thank you to our Village staff for working so diligently, and for the guidance provided by the Village Board to meet this critical objective.

Lastly, on March 23, I attended the Illinois Municipal League Lobby Day at the State Capitol. I spent the day meeting with state leaders and legislators to discuss key issues and priorities affecting the Village.

I wish you all a warm and wonderful Passover and Easter.

Sincerely,

Cathy Adduci, Village President
Village of River Forest



VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST, ILLINOIS



**Annual Budget
Fiscal Year 2023**
400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois 60305
www.vrf.us

Village Board Trustees



Erika Bachner



Kathleen Brennan



Lisa Gillis



Ken Johnson



Robert O'Connell



Respicio F. Vazquez

Village Clerk



Jonathan Keller

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

Contact the Village Board

News Around Town



Celebrating Seniors Week is Back In-Person: May 12-19

Celebrating Seniors Week returns in-person, May 12-19! Older adults can come together for a community-wide scavenger hunt, the 60 Over 60 awards, free programs like pickleball, tai chi, Rules of the Road, housing forum, and healthy aging fair. For more info, visit www.celebratingseniors.net or contact Betsy Kelly at bkelly.rftownship@gmail.com or 708-366-2029 x13.

River Forest Library Special Programs

Saturday, 4/2, 2-3 PM, Raíces Gitanas Flamenco Ensemble, Adult
Raíces Gitanas tells the story of Flamenco in song, dance, and music. Join us at the Library for this musical and cultural event.

Saturday, 4/9, 2-3 PM, Meditation Sound Bath, Adult
Rhonda Fentry leads a form of meditation by tapping into your inner deep subconscious and awakening new energy. This is accomplished by using ambient overlapping sounds and vibrations from Crystal and Tibetan singing bowls. Registration is required.

Sunday, 4/10, 2-3:30 PM, Victory Gardens: Then and Now, Adult
Nina Koziol returns with a look at Victory Gardens stemming from the World Wars to the present day. In 1917, food shortages caused rioting in New York City.



Annual Bike Exchange

As winter comes to a close, explore sustainable ways to enjoy the outdoors with the Annual River Forest Bike Exchange. Through the collaboration of the River Forest Sustainability Commission and D90 Green4Good, there is a new opportunity to practice sustainability in River Forest and surrounding communities. Residents can bring a used bike or bike accessory, trade a bike or bike gear with someone else, or donate at the **Roosevelt Middle School Playground** on Saturday, April 9, between 10 AM - 1 PM. [Click here for more information!](#)

Business Corner

Are you looking for a local and reliable dry cleaning service that handles all your dry cleaning needs with care?

Conveniently located at 7722 Madison Street, Breit and Clean Dry Cleaning is a family-owned and operated business that started in response to the need for a high quality and service-oriented dry cleaning service in the community. Mark and Dorene Breit are actively involved in every aspect, operating with the philosophy that each customer receives prompt and quality dry cleaning service at an affordable price. Visit breitandclean.com for more information, including hours of operation and monthly specials.



Village Department News

Police Department



April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2014, 3,179 people were killed, and approximately 431,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver.

- According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, drivers who use handheld devices are four times as likely to be involved in a severe crash.
- The percentage of drivers text-messaging or visibly manipulating handheld devices increased from 1.7 percent in 2013 to 2.2 percent in 2014. Since 2007, young drivers (age 16 to 24) have been observed using electronic devices at higher rates than older drivers.
- Ten percent of all drivers 15 to 19 years old involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the impact. This age group has the most significant proportion of drivers who were distracted at the time of the crashes.

While those numbers may sound like just statistics, they are not. They could be parents, children, neighbors, and friends from River Forest.

So, why do so many people participate in this dangerous behavior? With more technology than ever, driver distractions have risen to unprecedented levels. We live in a world where people expect instant, real-time information 24 hours a day, and those expectations don't stop just because someone gets behind the wheel. Drivers still do not realize – or choose to ignore – the danger they create when they take their eyes off the road, their hands off the wheel, and their focus off driving.

Yes, this is a national problem, but it also affects us in River Forest. No one is immune from the dangers of distracted driving. So please remember: One text or call could wreck it all.

Fire Department

Spring Cleaning

While spring cleaning allows you to get your home in order, you should also focus on tasks that improve your home's fire safety. Fires can occur when you least expect them. Still, you can prevent them by following these safety guidelines for your spring cleaning routine:

- **Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms:** Replace smoke and CO2 alarms with new extended-life units with sealed batteries. Test your alarms once a month by pushing the test button. Gently clean



the alarms, but follow the manufacturer's instructions first.

- **Kitchen:** Keep countertops and stovetops free of grease and clutter. Excess fat on the drip pan or stovetop can easily catch fire. Clean oils and food spills immediately after they occur and wait until the stove is cool to wipe away the spills. Keep items that can catch fire, such as oven mitts, towels, or wooden utensils, away from your stovetop.
- **Electrical Cords:** Inspect the electrical cords in your home and replace worn or tattered cords. Avoid running cords under carpets or across doorways to prevent them from being damaged. Use extension cords only temporarily and plug major appliances directly into wall sockets.
- **Clothes Dryers:** Excess lint in the dryer is the number one cause of clothes dryer fires—clean collected lint around the drum before or after each load of laundry. Always use a lint filter and clean it regularly. Move combustible items like boxes and clothing away from your dryer to a safer area.
- **Grilling:** Clean the grease or fat build-up after every use. Doing so decreases the risk of fire and helps the food cook better. Check the propane tank, hose, and all connection points for leaks. If you smell gas when the grill is on, turn off the tank and burners immediately. If you have a charcoal grill, use only charcoal starter fluid.
- **Escape Plan:** You should have an escape plan in case of a fire or other disaster. The plan should include a map of each home level with two escape routes in each room. Discuss and practice the plan with everyone in the household, including children and pets.

For more Spring Safety Tips, Call the River Forest Fire Prevention Bureau at 708-714-3562.

Does Your Project Need a Permit?

As the snow melts and the weather warms up, construction season gets into full swing. Are you planning renovations or other upgrades to your home? Check [here](#) to see if you need a building permit before starting work. Looking for a licensed contractor and not sure where to start? Click [here](#) and enter the type of contractor you need to view a list of contractors who are currently licensed with the Village. All contractors must be licensed to work in the Village, which protects both you and your property.



Applications for building permits can be filed online using the Village's building permit software LAMA (short for LAnd MAnagement), which can be accessed at riverforest.onlama.com or at www.vrf.us/permits. This software helps the Village maintain precise records of permit submittals and contractor licenses, and helps ensure a more efficient review process. By creating an account, you can also track the status of permit applications at your property in real time. All applications can be made online 24/7 and applicable documentation can be uploaded at any time. Review correspondence is completed through the software to ensure direct communication with those parties closely tied to each submittal. [Click here](#) for more information about building permits, plan review timelines, and videos to help those using the software for the first time.

Commission Spotlight

River Forest Sustainability



Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) consists of seven members, who the Village President appoints with the advice and consent of the Village Board. Members are residents of the Village and serve five-year terms. The mission of the Zoning Board of Appeals is to hold hearings and make recommendations to the Village Board regarding rezoning, zoning code amendments, appeals, and special use permits. The Board also examines zoning variation applications from property owners. Variations permit the Village to provide relief to property owners from the strict application of the Zoning Ordinance when strict compliance with the rules presents a “practical difficulty” or “particular hardship.” When making a determination, the Zoning Board of Appeals considers each application on a case by case basis for relief from specific zoning regulations by recognizing, isolating, and evaluating the unique practical difficulties or particular hardships in each application presented, and considering the legitimacy of the claimed difficulty or hardship of the applicant. The Zoning Board of Appeals often approves variations where unique site conditions such as peculiar site dimensions or configurations, unique topography, unusual terrain, and/or unique soil compositions render the property less usable due to no fault of the property owner. [Click here](#) for more information about the ZBA and upcoming meetings.

When an entire community gardens for wildlife, it multiplies the benefits of each individual garden and helps stitch together much needed, interconnected living spaces for the movement of all sorts of animals, such as migrating butterflies and song birds. The familiar mammals of forest and field are certainly part of this mosaic, but it also includes smaller things that are invisible to us, such as the enormous number of microorganisms and small invertebrates living in healthy soil. This universe of invisible organisms thrives where native plant diversity is greatest, and is crucial for such large-scale processes as storm water retention and carbon sequestration.



As gardening season approaches, the Sustainability Commission hopes you will consider devoting a part of your yard to supporting habitat for Monarch butterflies, endangered bumble bees, and a host of pollinator insects and local wildlife.

A few simple steps allow you to create and self-certify your yard as a certified wildlife habitat with the National Wildlife Federation, and receive a nifty sign for your efforts. You may have already taken similar steps through the Healthy Yard, Healthy Families initiative or the Parkways for Pollinators program. The NWF program builds off of both of these, and provides a collective goal: when enough homes, schools, and other areas certify their gardens, the entire Village of River Forest will attain designation as a Community Wildlife Habitat.

Cook County has a proud tradition of conservation in the adjacent Forest Preserves and is home to numerous local organizations helping to establish habitat corridors through our ecologically important area. By certifying a part of your yard or green space as a community wildlife habitat, you will know that you have put a portion of your land to work for conservation at a time when doing so couldn't be more important.

Someone to Know

Trustee Bachner has been serving as Co-Chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Group (DEI) since its inception in April 2021. Ms. Bachner views the most important thing about the DEI Advisory Group is that it will help River Forest understand how the community can break down barriers of inequity to make it easier for all who are connected with the Village to thrive.

Ms. Bachner has lived in River Forest with her husband and child since 2009. She works at Adler University with the Accreditation, Admissions, and Communications teams.

Her favorite aspects of the Village are that it is surrounded by wonderful and diverse communities and has a suburban landscape with a beautiful forest preserve close to the city of Chicago.

Trustee Bachner has a passion for volunteering. She is a facilitator for Race-Conscious Dialogues, a non-profit that puts on local workshops examining identities in the larger conversation of race and the complexity of identity. Trustee Bachner has also previously been a Board Member and Treasurer of PASO, a community-based social justice organization, an executive board of the Willard School PTO, and a past co-chair of the IMPACT/Parent Enrichment committee at Roosevelt Middle School.



Trustee Erika Bachner

Organizations Serving River Forest



Township



Many Township services and programs are returning to meeting in-person. To learn more, visit [RiverForestTownship.org](https://www.RiverForestTownship.org), the River Forest community calendar at [rfhappenings.com](https://www.rfhappenings.com), or email Supervisor Carla Sloan at supervisor@riverforesttownship.org.

Senior Freeze and Disabled Homeowner Exemptions

Due to COVID, the 2021 Senior Freeze Exemption will automatically renew for most qualifying seniors who had qualified for the Senior Freeze Exemption last year. The same rules apply to the 2021 Disabled Homeowner Exemption. There are some circumstances when exemptions will not automatically renew, such as when a property has been sold, if the property owner owns multiple properties, or if the property is held in trust.

Homeowner and Regular Senior Exemptions

Homeowners who purchased their homes in 2020 and turned 65 in 2021 can file their Homeowner and Senior Exemptions beginning March 2022. For those needing to apply for 2021 property tax exemptions, new and easier to use applications are now available on the Cook County Assessor's Website at www.CookCountyAssessor.com/Exemptions.

For any additional questions, contact Assessor Pamela Kende at 708-366-2787 or assessor@riverforesttownship.org.

Seniors: Time for Spring Home Repairs!

Need home repairs this spring? Call the Senior Home Repair Program, available to River Forest and Oak Park residents age 60+. Fees are \$20-\$40 per hour, depending on income. Eligible work includes grab bar installation, hanging pictures, sink/faucet repair—no emergency repairs.



Contact Michelle at North West Housing Partnership at 847-969-0561 or michellehill@nwHP.net with questions or to set up an appointment.

[riverforesttownship.org](https://www.riverforesttownship.org) - 708-366-2029 x11

Park District



River Forest Park District

Eggstravaganza: Egg Hunt

The River Forest Park District is celebrating the arrival of the spring season with Eggstravaganza: Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 16. Join us in Keystone Park West at 11:00 AM! The event will be held in designated areas for ages 2-10. Children will hunt for hundreds of candy and sticker-filled eggs with kids their age. Be on the lookout for special golden eggs that are redeemable for prizes. Bring a basket to collect eggs and don't be late!

The River Forest Park District will be offering vouchers to River Forest residents for discounts on the 2022 non-resident rate for individual or family pool passes at either the Park District of Forest Park Aquatic Center or the Park District of Oak Park at Rehm/Ridgeland Commons pools. Vouchers will be available for pickup only at The Depot, 401 Thatcher Avenue, beginning Tuesday, April 5, 2022, at 8:30 AM. For details, click [here](#).

The Summer Fun Guide will be available on [rfparks.com](https://www.rfparks.com) on Monday, April 25, showcasing all of our summer programs. Summer Camp registration is underway, so don't wait for the summer guide. For Park district news and updates, join the [Park Bench](#) to stay up to date on Park District happenings.

[rfparks.com](https://www.rfparks.com) | 708-366-6660

Library

Library welcomes new Children's Services Manager

The Library is excited to welcome Melaina Maraldi as the new Children's Services Manager. Melaina comes to the Library with nearly ten years of library experience, most recently at Highland Park Public Library, where she was a children's librarian. She holds a Masters in Library and Information Sciences from San Jose State University and a BA in English from Kalamazoo College. Melaina is passionate about libraries and is excited to be working with the community's youngest patrons and their families.



In Person Programs are Back!

In April, almost all of our programs will be back in person. Programs returning include our adult film programs, LEGO Club, crafting programs, and storytimes. Visit the [library calendar](#) to see the most up-to-date schedule and registration information.

[riverforestlibrary.org](https://www.riverforestlibrary.org) | 708-366-5205

Organizations Serving River Forest



Oak Park and River Forest High School



Roosevelt Middle School



Willard Elementary School



Lincoln Elementary School

District 200

Launching Leaders, Transforming School Culture

In its seventh year, the Oak Park River Forest High School Leadership and Launch course have become an important, popular way for upperclassmen to develop leadership skills while helping freshmen establish a sense of belonging in their new school.

Junior and senior students must apply and interview for a leadership spot in the program. This year, we have 126 leaders working together in small squads to plan and facilitate activities. Leaders spend three days a week mentoring more than 600 freshmen during study halls, Pre-Algebra, World Studies, Adapted PE, Academic Enrichment, and other courses.

The leaders support the freshmen in various ways, including identifying activities and athletics, promoting social-emotional health, tutoring, and developing executive functioning, organizational, and social skills. Notably, the demographics of the mentors mirror the diversity of the larger freshman group. This allows students, particularly those from marginalized groups, to play a vital role in creating an environment that prizes their cultural wealth and values.

The confidence the leaders gain from assisting the freshmen, and their pride for those they mentor are remarkable. The freshmen, in turn, find a safe place in their day and learn to advocate for themselves. Many have become leaders in the program, helping to transform the culture of our school into one of shared responsibility, care, and respect for all.



Leadership and Launch members kicked off the school year with team-building activities

oprfrhs.org | 708-383-0700

District 90

Registration is Open for District 90 Summer School

Summer will be here before we know it. It's time to start planning for summer activities your children can pursue. To help keep your students engaged, District 90 will be hosting summer school for grades K-4 at Lincoln Elementary and grades 5-8 at Roosevelt Middle School. Registration for Summer School is now open and will close on April 15, 2022.



Summer School provides a variety of academic and enrichment courses designed to be fun yet educational. Math Club and Book Club help reinforce your student's academic skills and prepare them for the next grade. Classes for incoming Kindergarteners introduce young students to the classroom experience with a captivating approach.

Classes start on Thursday, June 16, and run through Friday, July 15. There will be two days of no student attendance during summer school. Juneteenth will be observed on Monday, June 20, and Independence Day on Monday, July 4. The Summer School Brochures with all course offerings and descriptions are available on the [District 90 website](http://District90.org).



Non-Attendance Days

There will be two non-attendance days in April for District 90. Friday, April 15, will be a non-attendance day for students and teachers. Students will not be attending school on Friday, April 22, with teachers participating in professional development activities on April 22.

district90.org | 708-771-8282

Community Solar = Lower Costs and Lower Carbon Emissions

Join fellow residents who have already signed up to get solar power for their homes through a community solar subscription with the Village's program administrator MC Squared Energy Services. It will save you money and help reduce carbon emissions. Visit vrf.us/CommunitySolar to learn how it works.

To sign up:

1. **Reserve your spot**, using the account and meter number on your ComEd bill.
2. Complete your enrollment when MC Squared notifies you (via email) that a spot is open in a community solar project.
3. The subscription fee will equal 80% of what you will save from the credit ComEd will give you for the electricity supply part of your bill. You will save 20% of that part of your bill. You can cancel your subscription at any time.
4. Watch for a credit on your next ComEd bill for the electricity supply cost. The cost of electricity distribution and other charges on your ComEd bill will remain the same.

You might not receive an enrollment notice right away. Each community solar project will have capacity for approximately 300 subscribers. If there is availability in a project, residents can expect to receive the enrollment notice 3-5 days after filling out the reservation form. However, if there is no availability, you may need to wait until an account drops from a project or a new solar project becomes active. Another project is anticipated to become available this summer. Look out for an email from MC2 Community Solar with the words Enrollment Notice at the top. To check your reservation status, simply call 833-970-3552 or email solar@mc2energyservices.com.

Enrollment Notice

Dear <YOUR NAME>,

You can reduce your energy costs and support community solar resources.

Multiple community solar projects have been fully subscribed, but we have a subscription opportunity for the next available community solar project! Don't wait! Act now before this new project is fully subscribed!

We've completed our analysis based on your historic electricity usage, and we're excited to report that if your account is served by ComEd's bundled electricity supply service, we have determined that you are eligible to **save money** and participate in the community solar project with a customized subscription size of kW (kilo-Watts) for your account ending in .

Based on this subscription size, we estimate that you would receive annual net metering credits based on kWh (kilo-Watt hours) of electricity generated by the community solar project in the first year of the community solar program.*

Sample Monthly Savings Calculation	
Community Solar Supply Credit	\$50
Payment to mc ² (80%)	-\$40
Your Net Savings (20%)	\$10

Further, if you were on the community solar program for the last year, based on the monthly published rates for the net metering credits from ComEd and the estimated production of kWh based on your customized subscription size, your portion of the net metering credits at the 20% guaranteed savings level would have generated a net savings of \$ to you with no upfront or monthly minimum requirements.*

Enroll Today. Don't Wait. Limited-Time Offer.

If you would like to start saving money and participate in the Community Solar Program as a subscriber, click on the link below to complete the enrollment process. The enrollment process is secure, customized for your account, and will only be available for 5 business days after which your link will expire, and we will select the next eligible person on the waitlist.

[Click Here to Enroll](#)

If you have any questions about the program or the enrollment process, please email us at solar@mc2energyservices.com for assistance.

*Sample enrollment notice email



Follow the Village on Social Media



Sign Up For Email and Alerts



River Forest Events



Village Contact Information

Village Administration
708-714-3520

Village Administrator
Brian Murphy

Finance Department
708-714-3524

Director Rosemary McAdams

Fire Department
708-714-3560

Chief Tom Gaertner

Public Works and Development Services
708-714-3551

Director Jeff Loster

Police Department
708-714-3540

Chief James O'Shea

Emergency Services
Dial 911

400 Park Avenue River Forest, IL 60305

708-366-8500

708-366-3702 (fax)

Monday 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Tuesday- Friday 8a.m. – 4:30 p.m.