

2025

GURNEE

STATE OF THE VILLAGE

MAYOR THOMAS HOOD



Dear Gurnee Resident,

With 2024 now in the books, it is time to review progress, celebrate our successes and plan for the future. Before we do that, I want to give full credit to God for every good thing that we have experienced as a community this past year. The statement “It takes a Village” could never be truer. My experience leading this community is that the employees and residents of Gurnee have repeatedly stepped up and made all the accomplishments possible.

As you might imagine, overseeing the operation of a Village is a complex undertaking with many moving parts including 250 Village employees, 30,000 residents, 22 million visitors, 1,231 businesses and 13.5 square miles of land area. The following pages provide a glimpse of we have done together and where we are going. Thank you for your continued commitment to the Village of Gurnee. Without your support, these achievements would not have been possible.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom Hood



MAYOR'S OFFICE & ADMINISTRATION

- **Balanced Budget:** Continued to pass a balanced budget without a property tax levy for the 24th consecutive year. Ultimately, saving residents approximately \$6,500 over 10 years.
- **Increased Diversity in Village Workforce:** From 13% diverse in 2021 to 23% in 2024.
- **Continued Low Cost of Water:** Second lowest water rate among CLC-JAWA communities.
- **Continued Senior Homeowner Water Rate:** Discounted rate for senior homeowners on first 7,000 gallons.
- **Minimized Debt:** The Village continues to pay down debt while maintaining the lowest debt burden of any community in Illinois over 25,000 population.
- **Maintained AAA Bond Rating:** Held the highest bond rating that a Village can receive since 2014.
- **Ensured Employee Wellness:** Competitive benefits and improved public safety wellness programs.

Connecting and Celebrating Community

The Mayor's Office continued to engage the community in events and honor well-deserving community members:

- Launched the Hometown Heroes Banner Program recognizing 24 veterans and service members
- Launched and awarded the first Gurnee Youth Scholarship
- Awarded and honored the 2024 Teachers of the Year
- Presented the "Special Needs Champion" Business Award
- Provided 21 "Neighbor Up" Block Party Grants in 2024
- Est. East Grand Commission and Property Tax Workforce



Making Gurnee Greener for All

The Mayor's Office continued to focus on improving the environment through the Environmental Sustainability Committee lead by Trustee Karen Thorstenson:

- 26th Consecutive Year as a Tree City USA Community
- Green Gurnee Business Award Program
- Ranked in the EPA's Top 100 Green Power Communities
- Hosted electronics, pumpkin composting, Styrofoam recycling and shredding events
- With Representative Mayfield, initiated a bill to require fenceline testing around non-sterilizer facilities (Vantage)
- Launched Hefty ReNew Orange Bag Program





POLICE DEPARTMENT

- **Increased Police Staffing:** Added 1 Commander, 2 Officers, 1 SRO Officer and a Community Service Officer.
- **Advanced Technology Improvements:** Installed 7 Flock Safety cameras at entry points, bringing the total to 20 cameras, and introduced a mobile surveillance trailer for events and retail corridors.
- **Speed Monitoring:** 12 new digital speed signs to be placed strategically across the Village based on data collection as well as resident and officer feedback, making a total of 23 signs throughout the Village.
- **Held Citizen and Youth Police Academies:** The department held fall and spring sessions of the Citizens Police Academy and the first Youth Police Academy this past summer.

Increased School Engagement

The Gurnee Police Department has been increasing focus and collaboration with our local schools over the past year. Here are just some of the programs and services they provide:

- 5 School Resource Officers, 2 at D121, 2 at D50 and 1 at D56, and added a Public Education Specialist to collaborate with the SROs
- Conducted over 2 dozen lockdown drills
- Presented safety talks and educational presentations on vaping, fentanyl, sexting and Halloween safety
- Partnered with D56 to revamp its safety protocols



Community Events and Outreach

The department continues to engage the community through a variety of events and programs:

- Cops and Bobbers
- Training in the Park
- Gurnee Days Open House
- Shop with a Cop
- Outrun the Cops
- Valentines for Seniors
- Safety Stars and Dilly Bars
- Child Safety Seat Events
- Retailer Awareness Meetings at Gurnee Mills





INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

- **Improved Street Conditions:** Increased the average pavement condition rating of streets by 6.5% in 4 years.
- **7.6 miles of Roadways Resurfaced:** The largest street resurfacing program in the Village's history.
- **Completed Full Cycle of Sidewalk Improvements:** Finished 5-year rotation throughout the entire Village.
- **Water Main Improvements:** Replaced over 5,000 feet of water main and added 1,500 feet.
- **Roadway Cracksealing:** Performed preventive cracksealing to extend the useful life of roadways.
- **Drainage Improvements:** Made significant drainage improvements in the Village to reduce flooding.
- **Floodplain Properties Mitigated:** Removed 173 buildings from floodplain designation since work begun.

Increasing Walkability and Safety

Over the past couple years, the Village has been making consistent progress on the pedestrian improvement plan in an effort to increase walkability. Here are some of the projects that have been completed:

- Dilley's Road Pedestrian Path to Stearns School Road
- O'Plaine Road and Kings Way North Crossing
- Sidewalk Inspections and Replacement



Ensuring Water Quality and Drainage

The Village continues to invest in water main and drainage improvements in order to deliver high-quality drinking water and sewer services. Some of the projects that have been completed over the past few years include:

- Route 21 Water Main Replacement
- Waveland and Grandville Water Main Project
- O'Plaine Road Water Main Replacement
- Large Diameter Culvert Replacement
- Various Drainage Projects throughout the Village





ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Welcomed 22.5 Million Visitors:** Top visits include Gurnee Mills, Six Flags and Great Wolf Lodge.
- **1,231 Licensed Businesses & 100 New Businesses:** Round1, McCullough Kubota, Olivia's, Destino's and more.
- **\$11.6M in Commercial and \$2M in Residential Construction:** Completed over the past couple years.
- **Processed \$75M in Building Permits in 2024:** Increasing the Village's assessed value by 5% in just one year, therefore making the total assessed valuation of the Village \$1.43 Billion.
- **Processed 46 Zoning Requests:** Ranging from rezoning property uses to special use permits.
- **Performed over 750 Code Inspections:** Bringing properties into compliance with the municipal code.

Recognizing Gurnee Businesses

The Village continued to recognize local businesses through Tom's Tours, ribbon cuttings and social media campaigns. There were 15 ribbon cuttings in 2024 including Hey Dude, Destino Ristorante, McCullough Kubota, Brittane's, Thai Essane, Deerfield Dermatology, Taylor's Stop & Shop, Forest Orthodontics, Round1, Bullfrog Spas, Aapril Tax Service, and Doctors of Physical Therapy. Additionally Mayor Hood, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, continued to recognize businesses with the Best of Gurnee awards.



Small Business Capital Grant Program

The Village continued funding the Small Business Capital Grant Program that began in 2021 to assist small retail, restaurant, and entertainment businesses recoup capital expenses on a 50/50 cost share basis. The program has been expanded to award improvements up to \$50,000. To date, a total of \$781,340 has been awarded with a total value of \$4,172,000 in community improvements.





FIRE DEPARTMENT

- **Fire and EMS Response:** Responded to 8,142 calls for service in 2024, with 5,856 being EMS calls.
- **Life Safety Inspections:** The Fire Prevention Bureau conducted 3,987 life safety inspections in 2024.
- **Modernized New Equipment:** Secured a new 2024 Road Rescue Advanced Life Support (ALS) Ambulance and new 2024 Emergency-One (E-One), 1,500 gallon per minute fire engine.
- **Transitioned Business Community to Advanced Fire Alarm Monitoring:** The Fire Department worked with businesses to relocate 520 fire alarms to a new fire alarm monitoring system. FSS-Technologies monitors all the department's fire alarms utilizing advanced technology. Ultimately, this transition provided a higher level of service to the business community at a lower cost.

LakeComm Consolidated Dispatch

The new LakeComm Dispatch Facility is set to go live in 2025, enhancing emergency response services across the region. This state-of-the-art center streamlines communication between police, fire and emergency medical services, ensuring faster response times during critical incidents. Equipped with advanced technology, the facility is designed to handle increased call volumes and improve public safety.

The success of this project would not be possible without Lake County, Gurnee's leadership team and countless local officials throughout the county.



Public Education and Outreach

The Fire Department has also been committed to engaging the community through a variety of events and programs such as regular blood drives, Gurnee Days open house and other educational programs. Also, the department held six sessions of Training in the Park in its expanded format and included representatives from the Mayor's Office, Police and Public Works.





PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

- **Delivered 1.3 Billion Gallons of Water in 2024:** Delivered high-quality drinking water to the community.
- **26th Year as a Tree City USA Community:** Awarded due to Gurnee having a thriving urban forest.
- **Water Meter Reading Device Upgrade Program:** Completed replacement of all water meter reading devices in 2.5 years. Allows staff to receive consumption data frequently and identify leaks sooner to conserve water.
- **Water Distribution and Monitoring System:** By reviewing the Village's SCADA system, consultants have identified efficiencies and made recommendations to provide robust water distribution for decades.
- **Hydrant Maintenance:** Flushed all odd numbered hydrants and replaced 11 hydrants that were beyond repair.
- **Streetlight Wiring Upgrades:** Installed more than 5,100 feet of new conduit and wire to improve lighting.

26th Year Tree City USA

Due to the efforts of Public Works Forestry crew, the department was able to achieve the Tree City USA designation for the 26th consecutive year and has just applied for the 27th year. In 2023, the department achieved its 12th Tree City USA growth award for high levels of tree care and community engagement. A thriving urban forest offers many advantages to the community related to aesthetics, energy consumption, property values and physical and mental health. Just last year, crews planted 166 parkway trees throughout the Village.



Mulch Delivery Program

In 2023, the Public Works Department launched the mulch delivery program. Even though there is always a self-serve pile of mulch at the Public Works facility, many residents aren't able to pick up large quantities. Therefore, the Public Works Department launched a delivery program. The program was a huge success and returned for a second year. In 2024, Public Works fulfilled over 400 requests totaling more than 1,800 cubic yards in an effort to share this sustainable resource with the community.



Postal Patron



WHAT'S NEXT FOR GURNEE

As we look to 2025, the focus remains on making Gurnee a welcoming, safe, and thriving community. I am grateful for our community and am excited about the opportunities ahead. Here are just some of the exciting goals and activities planned for 2025:

- **The Village will embark on the largest Capital Improvement Program in the Village's history:**
 - \$6.4M in street resurfacing (7.45 miles)
 - \$1M in street reconstruction (0.35 miles)
 - \$3.5M in water main replacement (1.25 miles)
 - \$800K in sidewalk rehabilitation
 - \$150K for drainage improvements
- **Increased Pedestrian Mobility Improvements:** The pedestrian path on Washington Street east of Hunt Club Road is anticipated to be completed in 2025 as part of Lake County's intersection improvement, extending pedestrian access west along Washington Street to US Route 45.
- **Expanded Police and Fire Resources:** This includes 5 new police squads, an evidence technician vehicle, CSO vehicle, a K9 vehicle, additional Flock cameras, digital speed signs and transition to the state-of-the-art LakeComm Consolidated Emergency Communications Center. The Village will also take delivery of two new ambulances as well as advanced cardiac monitors.
- **Enhanced Resident Communication:** The Village will use the results of a resident and business survey to better serve the community, launch a new website and implement an advanced emergency notification system so all residents and visitors can be contacted in case of an emergency.
- **New Arts Commission and Care Commission:** These commissions will be formed in early 2025 with the Arts Commission focusing on theater, painting, music and more. The Care Commission will focus on assisting those in need in the Village of Gurnee.
- **New Businesses and Developments:** Texas Roadhouse, new rollercoaster at Six Flags: Wrath of Rakshasa, Buona Beef, Rainbow Cone and CarWise Gurnee to name a few.
- **Community Events:** Gurnee Days, Bonfires & Brews, Halloween Fall Fest, Holiday Train and more.

As always, feel free to reach out to me to discuss whatever you have on your mind. I pray that this upcoming year we enjoy all that God has gifted us and to especially appreciate those that He has placed in our lives.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom Hood