

2026



STATE OF THE VILLAGE

MAYOR THOMAS HOOD



Dear Gurnee Resident,

With 2025 now in the books, this is a moment to review our progress, celebrate our successes and look ahead to the future. Before we do that, I want to give full credit to God for every good thing we have experienced together as a community this past year. Gurnee has achieved a great deal over the years including 25 consecutive years without a Village property tax levy, all made possible by visitors, innovation and strong community partnerships.

As you might imagine, overseeing the operation of a Village is a complex undertaking with many moving parts: more than 250 employees, 30,000 residents, 23 million annual visitors, 1,260 businesses and 13.5 square miles of land area. The following pages offer a snapshot of what we have accomplished together and where we are going next. Thank you for your continued commitment to the Village of Gurnee. Without your support, these achievements would not be possible.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom Hood



MAYOR'S OFFICE & ADMINISTRATION

- **Balanced Budget:** Continued to pass a balanced budget without a property tax levy for the 25th consecutive year, ultimately saving residents approximately \$6,500 over 10 years.
- **Minimized Debt and Maintained AAA Bond Rating:** Continued maintaining the highest bond rating and lowest debt burden of any Illinois community with a population over 25,000.
- **Executed Strategic Plan Priorities:** Completed 11 of the 24 initiatives in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.
- **Increased Diversity in Village Workforce:** From 13% diverse in 2021 to 26% in 2026.
- **Launched New Emergency Notification System:** To deliver messages faster and more reliably.
- **Conducted Resident and Business Surveys:** Made improvements based on community feedback.

Connecting and Celebrating Community

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

- Honored 54 Hometown Heroes Banner Recipients
- Awarded the 2nd Annual Gurnee Youth Scholarship
- Awarded the 2025 Teachers/Staff Members of the Year
- Presented 4 Pinnacle Performance Business Awards
- Honored Medal of Honor Recipient Allen J. Lynch
- Presented "Special Needs Champion" Business Award
- Provided 30 "Neighbor Up" Block Party Grants
- Established Gurnee Arts and Cares Commissions



Making Gurnee Greener for All

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

- 27th Consecutive Year as a Tree City USA Community
- Hosted a Record Number of Sustainability Events: Styrofoam/Paper/Electronics Recycling and Composting
- County Leader in Waste Diversion Programs
 - #1 in the County for Clothing and Textile Recycling
 - Near the Top for Sharps Safe Disposal
 - Near the Top for Reuse-A-Shoe Recycling





POLICE DEPARTMENT

- **Added a School Resource Officer:** Strengthened commitment to school safety by adding a sixth school resource officer to Gurnee schools, increasing daytime presence, enhancing partnerships with students, staff and families and expanding proactive classroom support and safety education across all districts.
- **Launched Drone as a First Responder (DFR) Program:** This program deploys drones to priority calls to provide officers with real-time information before they arrive on scene. This innovative use of technology enhances officer safety, improves response times and helps the department better serve the community.
- **Launched Police Apprenticeship Program:** The Gurnee Police Apprenticeship Program gives CLC students hands-on law enforcement experience while supporting daily operations and building a strong pipeline of future officers through focused recruitment, mentoring and professional development.

Introduced Gurnee CARE Team

This year marked the introduction of the Gurnee CARE Team, a new co-response model pairing a licensed social worker with a patrol officer. This team provides on-scene support during mental health crises, assists residents experiencing homelessness or addiction and connects individuals and families with vital social services. This CARE Team has already made a meaningful impact by reducing repeat calls for service and ensuring residents receive compassionate and specialized care.



Welcomed Comfort Canine Mira Joy

The Department welcomed Mira Joy, a Labrador Retriever donated by Partners with Paws Service Dogs to serve as its comfort canine. Named through a department-wide survey, Mira completed 16 weeks of training and earned her Canine Good Citizen certification before assisting during traumatic incidents, visiting local schools and supporting community outreach. Her handler, Public Education Specialist and former Gurnee Police Officer Chad Smits, has guided her successful first year with the department.





INFRASTRUCTURE & TRANSPORTATION

- **Improved Street Conditions:** Increased the average pavement condition rating by 16% in 3 years.
- **Rehabilitated 9.5 Miles of Roadways:** As the largest street resurfacing program in the Village's history, this work included 8.8 miles of roadway resurfacing and just under 1 mile of full street reconstruction.
- **Continued Sidewalk Improvements:** Maintained a full cycle of the 5-year rotation throughout the entire distance of sidewalk in the Village and replaced roughly 19,400 sq. ft.
- **Improved Water Mains:** Replaced over 6,600 ft. of water main along First, Delany Rd., Stoney Island Ave., Lake Park Ave. and Bennett Ave. and along Glen Flora Ave., Ferndale St. and Blackburn St. north of Rte. 41.
- **Improved Drainage:** Made significant drainage improvements in the Village replacing storm sewers.

Increasing Walkability and Safety

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:

- Annual Sidewalk Inspections and Replacement
- Dilley's Road Pedestrian Path
- Depot Road Retaining Wall Replacement



Improving Water and Sewer Systems

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

- Glen Flora Ave., Ferndale St. and Blackburn St. Water Main Replacement
- Stoney Island Ave. Water Main Replacement
- Quality Acres Sanitary Sewer Extension
- Various Storm Sewer Drainage Projects





ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- **Welcomed 22.7 Million Visitors:** Top destinations include Gurnee Mills, Six Flags and Great Wolf Lodge.
- **Licensed 1,260 Businesses & 120 New Businesses:** Texas Roadhouse, Ashley, Primark and more.
- **Permitted \$13.6M in New Commercial and \$9.2M in New Residential Construction:** During 2025.
- **Processed \$78.3M in Building Permits:** Increasing the Village's assessed value by 4% in just one year, bringing the total assessed valuation of the Village to \$1.94B.
- **Processed 45 Zoning Requests:** Ranging from rezoning of a property to special use permits.
- **Improved Code Enforcement:** Added a 2nd Code Enforcement officer and completed 1,150+ inspections.

Recognizing Gurnee Businesses

The Village, in partnership with the Gurnee Chamber of Commerce continued to recognize local businesses through Tom's Tours, ribbon cuttings and social media campaigns. There were 29 ribbon cuttings in 2025 including Midway Staffing, Wordup Bible Bookstore, E&O Therapeutic Services, Texas Roadhouse, El Paisano, Within Holistic Counseling, True Neutral, Ashley, The UPS Store, Riverside Cafe (5th Anniv.), Janelle Rominski Photography, TLC Massage & Spa, Buona Beef & Rainbow Cone, Riverside Management, Ruffcutt Fitness, Advia Credit Union, Boot Barn, Limoncello Cafe, Stan's Donuts, CarWise, Gurnee Farmers Market (5th Anniv.), Alleviating Minds Therapy Services, Gashapon Bandai Official Shop, Amenity Legal, Off the Rax, Primark, Labcorp, The Graphics Co. (20th Anniv.) and the Gurnee Glen Clubhouse. Additionally, Mayor Hood recognized Great Wolf Lodge as the 2025 Special Needs Champion and Herchenbach Mechanical and McClure's Garage as the 2025 Best of Gurnee awardees.

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 in recouping capital expenses on a 50/50 cost-share basis. The program has been expanded to award grants of up to \$50,000. To date, a total of \$1M has been awarded resulting in \$5,423,000 in community improvements.





- **Responded to 7,975 Calls for Service:** With 5,819 being EMS calls and the remainder fire service calls.
- **Conducted 3,908 Life Safety Inspections:** Completed by the Fire Prevention Bureau making Gurnee safer.
- **Modernized Apparatus:** Secured new vehicles including an advanced life support ambulance, a fire engine and an incident command vehicle.
- **Advanced Emergency Medical Equipment:** Upgraded from the LIFEPAK 15 to the LIFEPAK 35 cardiac monitors, which improves CPR quality and has enhanced early identification of heart attacks. Gurnee is the only fire department in Lake County that utilizes this advanced level of cardiac technology.
- **Improved Staffing Levels:** The Department hired 5 new firefighters in 2025 and continues recruiting.

LakeComm Consolidated Dispatch

In late 2025, the Village successfully transitioned its emergency dispatch services to LakeComm 9-1-1, a regional communications center serving 30 agencies in Lake County communities. This move enhances coordination between police, fire and medical services and leverages updated technology to ensure help is dispatched quickly and efficiently. Gurnee remains committed to providing the highest level of public safety service, now with an even stronger foundation behind the scenes.



Public Education and Outreach

The Fire Department continues to engage the community through events and programs such as blood drives, the Gurnee Days Open House, educational outreach and the Training in the Park series that included representatives from the Mayor's Office, Police and Public Works. The Department also launched its first Junior Fire Academy, a seven-week program that introduced students to the fire service through hands-on experiences, allowing participants to gain real-world exposure while building skills, friendships and lasting memories that may inspire future careers in public safety.





- **Delivered 1.3 Billion Gallons of Water:** Reliable delivery of high-quality drinking water to the community.
- **Maintained Water System:** Inspected 150 water valves and flushed even-numbered/dead-end fire hydrants. Repaired 30 main breaks, 40 water valves, 250 fire hydrants and replaced 10 aging hydrants.
- **Responded to 15 Snow & Ice Control Events:** During the past season, the Department managed 20.35 inches of snowfall, keeping roads, sidewalks and facilities safe and accessible throughout the winter.
- **Upgraded Lift Station Cabinets:** Replaced rusting control cabinets at four of eight sanitary lift stations with new stainless steel units, integrating them into the SCADA system for remote monitoring and control.
- **Upgraded Streetlight Wiring:** Installed more than 4,250 ft. of new conduit and wiring to improve reliability.

Community Events and Outreach

The Department actively supports community engagement and public safety through:

- Events such as Bonfires & Brews, Gurnee Get-Togethers, Gurnee Days Open House & Parade and Holiday Lights Display Design.
- Touch-a-Truck entertainment at Safety Stars & Dilly Bars, Training in the Park, Outrun the Cops, The Learning Experience and Action Behavior Center.
- Traffic control assistance at Gurnee Days Fireworks & Parade, Warren Township HS Homecoming Parade, Six Flags Fright Fest, Holiday Lights, Turkey Trot and Holiday Train.
- Participated in outreach and educational events including WTHS Career Fair, Waukegan HS Career Fair, Lake County Tech Campus Career Event and Navig8 Lake County Career Fair at the Lake County Fairgrounds.



Postal Patron



WHAT'S NEXT FOR GURNEE

As we look to 2026, the focus remains on continuing to make Gurnee a welcoming, safe and thriving community. I am grateful for our community and excited about the opportunities ahead. Here are just some of the exciting goals and activities planned for this year:

- **The Village will embark on a \$27.6M Capital Improvement Program, the largest in the Village's history, some major projects include:**
 - \$3.7M in street resurfacing (5.5 miles) - Quality Acres & parts of South Ridge Subdivision
 - \$5.5M in street reconstruction (1.25 miles) - Fuller Rd. from Stearns School to Rte. 132
 - \$5.3M in buildings and improvements - building updates and Bittersweet irrigation
 - \$3.3M in water main replacement (2 miles) - Estes area & Fuller Rd.
 - \$950K in sidewalk rehabilitation - Fuller Rd. and Grandville Ave.
 - \$910K in technology - software, cybersecurity and upgrades
 - \$150K for drainage improvements
- **Increased Pedestrian Mobility Improvements:** The Village will be making meaningful investments in walkability with the Gages Lake & Route 21 sidewalk and the Grandville sidewalk installation as well as the Fuller Road Pedestrian Improvement, which are designed to create safer and more connected routes for people walking throughout the community.
- **Improved Public Safety:** The Gurnee Police Department is developing a new program to welcome new residents and share community and public safety resources.
- **New Village Website:** The Village will launch a new and improved website this spring, designed to make it easier for residents, businesses and visitors to complete online services and find useful information.
- **Arts Commission and Cares Commission:** The Arts Commission will unveil more art-related programs and initiatives in 2026, while the Cares Commission will focus on awarding grants to nonprofits through its newly established Gurnee Cares Grant Program.
- **New Businesses and Developments:** Muller Honda and Gurnee Hyundai (Renovations/Expansions), SkyZone and a new global home furnishings retailer at Gurnee Mills, Beef-A-Roo, Haraz Coffee House, Seasons at Gurnee Apartments, Paintball Explosion and Tuf-Tite/Inpres/TufTile.

These initiatives reflect our commitment to smart investment, responsive services and a high quality of life for all who call Gurnee home. Thank you for your continued support as we move Gurnee forward.

Sincerely,

Mayor Tom Hood