



# 2019 *River Grove*

David B. Guerin Mayor  
Marjorie A. Manchen Clerk  
Tracy D. Aller Trustee  
Lynn Bjorvik Trustee  
Roger V. Sewell Trustee  
Bob Thomas Trustee  
Michele M. Obaya Trustee  
Michael L. Konwinski Trustee

## Dear Friendly Neighbors,

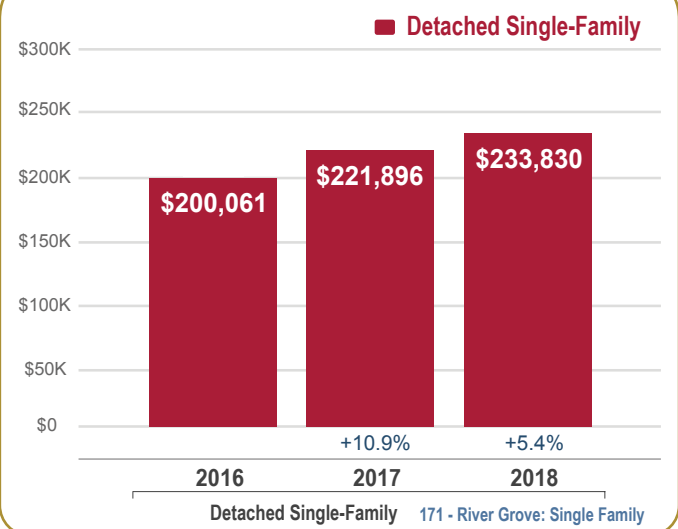
It has been a great honor to serve as your Village President for the last year and a half. Stepping into the public life and running for public office is a big decision. I would not be able to do it without the strong support of my family and friends. I have surrounded myself with a strong TEAM, and we continue to work diligently to make our community an even better place to live. The trust the community has put in me is not something I take lightly. Although it is part-time position, I treat it as a full-time job with plenty of overtime—committing myself to the advancement of our community 24/7/365. I have owned and operated successful businesses for more than half of my life, and I have committed to taking a business approach to municipal government. I have always felt that River Grove is in prime position to be a premier neighborhood. It is in a great location between two major highways, access to city by rail, bus, or bike, and proximity to O'Hare airport make our homes very desirable. Our homes have experienced a significant raise of 5.4% in value over the past year, with the average sale price of a single-family home at \$233,830. I have made it my mission to put River Grove back on the map with multiple visits to Springfield, a trip to Washington D.C., as well as maintaining a constant presence at local events. I have continued to strengthen our relationship with State, County and local representatives. I am a firm believer that fostering strong and trusting relationships is the key to success.

**Transparency and communication** are two key elements in any successful organization. As your Village President, I continue to support that belief and practice it in my administration. I also expect it from the people who work for me. That being said, we have a Communications Director who works to develop ways to educate our village with the most up-to-date information that is available to us. We have partnered with Civic Plus to bring a modern webpage to River Grove. If you have not visited it, I would encourage all of you to do so: [www.rivergroveil.gov](http://www.rivergroveil.gov). It can provide residents with many sources of information, including: upcoming events, online payments, recreation programs and links to a number of local services, community, township, civic, state and local organizations. You can also find out more about our town's elected officials by reading their bios—all of which contain their email addresses for you to contact with your concerns. In an age of misinformation and internet trolls it is important to go to the official site for accurate information.

Additionally, our improved website allows you to sign up for various alerts: emergency, recreation, public works and more. You can customize the alert to the information you find important and want to receive. The village has a presence on social media through Facebook and other social media platforms. We are also providing monthly newsletters in our water bills that are available at the Village Hall, on our website and Facebook page. These newsletters always have a message from me and highlight village activities. I love meeting our residents and value finding out what is important to you. I make myself available to all residents and you can contact me at [mayor@rivergroveil.gov](mailto:mayor@rivergroveil.gov). We have also hosted multiple town-hall meetings in regards to health care, property taxes, future developments, and neighborhood watch programs. Everyone is welcome to our board meetings on the first and third Thursday of the month, but can also review the minutes online if you are unable to attend.

Being that River Grove is such a small community, I appreciate the rich history and traditions that come with it. It was very important for me to bring back the River Front Fest this past year, and we will continue to build on that event with the help of your input. In 2019, not only will you see the River Front Fest expanded, we are also bringing back October Fest and will continue to enhance community events. In the busy world we now live in, these events give us an opportunity to meet with our neighbors and make our great community even stronger.

## December Average Sales Price - By Property Type



Each data point is 12 months of activity. Data is from January 20, 2019.

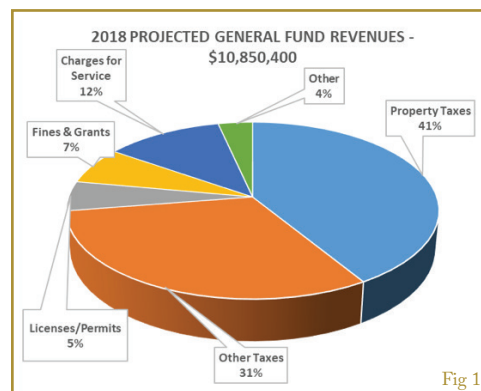


**Human Resources, compliance and village transparency have all been a critical focus of my administration.** We have brought on a human resource director and partnered with a human resource attorney so that the Village of River Grove and its employees are being treated fairly and given all the information that they need to provide a safe work environment. We have instituted a new personnel code, replacing the prior one that had not been updated since 1995. Our new personnel code defines rules and informs all village employees of their rights and benefits. The Village has partnered with Paycom: a payroll software solution company that helps municipalities manage the complete employment life cycle. It makes it easier for our employees to track their compensation, health care plan, insurance and savings plans. This is all managed through one computer application, which is personally customized to each employee, bringing our village up to date. Moving forward in 2019, we will increase customer service and safety training. A TEAM is only as strong as its players, and it is my goal to have the best TEAM on the field at all times.

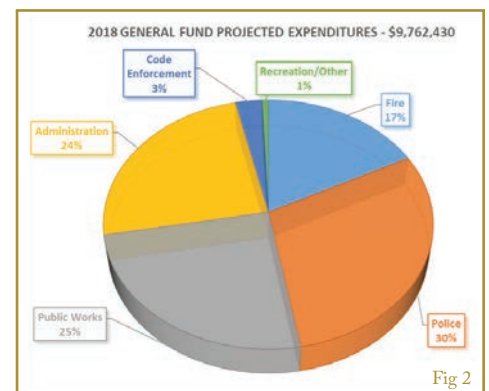
As the Village moves into 2019, I am happy to report that the Village has continued to improve its financial footing over the last several years. Many residents may remember that with the economic downturn beginning in 2008, several major businesses closed their doors that impacted the Village's receipt of vital sales tax dollars. With the addition of professional finance staff since late 2016, the Village's financial condition has continued to improve these past few years including the following highlights:

- The Village refunded most of its existing debt to realize future savings in payments thus making for additional funds available for operations. The Village also included in that bond issue additional funds totaling \$3 million dollars for cash flow purposes to be used only for emergencies and if accessed, would be paid back in future years. The ability to refund that debt at a lower interest cost hinged on the Village being able to maintain its existing bond rating by showing that significant improvements had been made in operational controls and funds management going forward.
- The Village retained a new auditing firm in 2017 that has reported a continuing improvement in the Village's cash positions in its operating funds. With those additional funds, the Village has embarked on improving its fleet in public works and in the police and fire departments. Going forward into 2019 and beyond, Village residents will see heightened street and alley improvements.
- Internally, the Village has made inroads in the Village's increasing cost of benefits for its employees without sacrificing quality or service delivery. This was accomplished by the Village entering into a municipal insurance pool comprised of over 150 other governmental entities throughout Northern and Central Illinois.

*With the Village on a more solid financial footing, look forward to continued improvements to the Village's infrastructure and fleet that will allow our dedicated employees to serve you even better in the future!*



**Fig 1.** Since 2016, the Village's operating budgets comprised of its general operating, water and development funds have improved. For example, the following chart illustrate the projected general fund revenues by category for the just-completed fiscal year that ended December 31, 2018. Overall, revenues increased by over \$850,000 from 2017.



**Fig 2.** The following chart illustrate the projected general fund expenditures, by function, for the same period that ended December 31, 2018. 2018 projected expenditure were approximately \$290,000 greater than 2017.

**Economic development has been at an all-time high in River Grove.** Although we are very limited with the space we have, being that a large portion of our land is untaxable, this includes land belonging to other taxing bodies with in our municipality such as schools and one library district, and the forest preserve.

The Village has demolished two residential structures on Spruce Street and Palmer Street, which have been blighted for many years, and is working on re-introducing these properties to active use either directly or indirectly. A third residential property on River Grove Avenue is slated for demolition this year, with the hope that a new single family will soon be added to this area of the community. Bringing these properties back into current use with fresh improvements will add to our community tax base and enhance property values in these areas.

The village has procured agreements for the redevelopment of the former River Grove Bowl property and the former Mobil station, bringing to the community 48 luxury unit transit-oriented properties and a Starbucks retail coffee shop. Construction of the 48 luxury units is nearing completion, while the village anticipates the Starbucks opening for business this fall. An additional redevelopment agreement has been entered for the development of an 18-unit luxury residential building on Center Street, which advances the transit-oriented development offered the community by its Metra rail depot. Finally, the Go To Logistics development on West Street is nearing completion, and returning this property (and the other properties mentioned above) to the tax rolls should bring needed tax revenues to our village and the other tax districts serving our community. The village has assembled surveys, environmental reports, and other documents and information on the former Quasthoff's and Public Works Facility at Center Street and Thatcher Avenue, as this group of parcels is one of the largest areas available for redevelopment in the community. The legal, engineering, and building departments are continuing efforts to seek an appropriate development project for this site and the community.

### ✓ **We as a Village have completed the following Capital Projects in 2018:**

- ***The Village worked with the Illinois Department of Transportation*** to complete the resurfacing of Thatcher Avenue from First Avenue south and Fullerton Avenue east of First Avenue. These projects had languished on IDOT's Five-Year priority list for multiple years. While capital infrastructure funding from the state has been difficult, the Village met with IDOT and discussed the roadways that are under their jurisdiction that need to be addressed. The Village will continue to meet with IDOT on completing the work.
- ***Lyndale Street – Leyden to Fifth*** - The village applied for and received \$200,000 in Community Development Block Grant from its 2017 application to Cook County. The village used these funds and \$226,000 of Village funds to replace the curb and gutter, widen the roadway to better accommodate emergency and public works vehicles, and resurface the roadway, which was last improved in 1992.
- ***Salt Dome*** - The village completed the construction of 2,600-ton storage facility at public works which will be used primarily for salt storage.

### ✓ **We have also had the following Capital Grants Success:**

- ***The Village was successful in obtaining an Invest in Cook Grant*** for the Fullerton Avenue Improvements from Maple Street to First Avenue. The grant was for \$265,000 and covers 50% of the cost for roadway improvements, which will include the new curb and gutter drainage improvements and new sidewalk. The Village will also be replacing the water main on the street using its Water Fund resources. The total cost of the project is \$1,080,00. The improvements will address a roadway that has not been improved in over 35 years.
- ***The Village also received a notice that it was awarded an alleys Infrastructure grant*** with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. The grant amount was for up to \$385,000 of the construction of three new "green alleys" in the Village. The Village is matching these funds with \$525,000 of Village sources. The alleys will be constructed in the area south of Roosevelt Lane and east of Wood Street. The Village has been integrating "Best Management Practices" in its infrastructure for the last 8-years. These improvements will remove approximately 150,000 gallons of runoff that currently enters the village combined sewer system. The elimination will mitigate the frequency and duration of sewer back up in area base easements.
- ***The Village has implemented a four-year commercial meter replacement program.*** Commercial meters represent 20% of the total number meters in the Village but register 55% of the metered usage. The meters have not been replaced in over 20-Years and based on recent testing of a sample are underreporting the volume of water used. The cost of the replacement and monitoring of the meters has been built into the new commercial water rate, making the program self-supporting. As the accuracy of the water being used the amount of water loss which is equivalent to \$1.49 per 1000 gallons of the water rate, will be reduced and reflected in future water rates. New meters are not only important environmentally but financially. Water funds provide upgrades to our aging infrastructure, especially our water mains to ensure safe drinking water for years to come, while providing new resurfacing on our streets.
- ***The Village will be completing the installation of additional permitted parking spaces on Tarpey Lane.***

### **Looking at Capital Planning for the future of River Grove:**

- ***The Village has been working on its 2019 5-Year Capital Infrastructure Plan.*** The planning started with reviewing the costs of the infrastructure the village needs to address roadways, alleys, water mains and sewer. The village is completing a facilities management review in early 2019 to determine the extent and priority of the work to be completed on its buildings as well. The village is using the plan to prioritize improvements and allocate its resources to address these needs. The village also looks to leverage its resources through grant programs such as Invest in Cook, Cook County CDBG Program, and the MWRDGC's Green Infrastructure Program.

**The Village and Veterans Park District** have agreed to jointly develop and maintain certain parcels of The Village. These parcels have either not been used for any particular purpose or have a need for updated equipment and maintenance. These improvements will provide additional or enhanced green space and park settings for The Village. The Elm Street property off of Palmer Street is the first parcel that the parties will address under the intergovernmental agreement (IGA). We continue to look for more ways to update and enrich our green space.

**The Village has continued to pursue titles to various properties** that have been abandoned and no longer contribute to our community's tax base. These properties include the former Marmor Auto properties on Thatcher Avenue, and the former Foley's Tap property on Grand Avenue. The Village anticipates acquiring title to these properties this summer and using these properties for public parking or other public needs in the community, like greenspace. In addition to these two areas of town, The Village has commenced no cash bid proceedings concerning an additional six parcels of property along River Road. The objective is to incorporate these properties so they better serve the community through either public purpose, such as parking, greenspace, etc., or residential or commercial development of these parcels.

**Being a small business owner myself, I am very aware of the hurdles contractors and business owners face. In our building department,** we have committed to making it easier for residents and business owners alike to conduct transactions. Providing quick permit turnaround from 3-5 days to 1-3 days. It is important to me that our staff treats everyone fairly and with a positive attitude.

**We have:** Implemented a back-flow testing program through BSI, which ensures safe-drinking water to our residents and slim lined the real estate and exempt transfers applications to make it easier for the home owners and agents to obtain a transfer stamp. Designed pamphlets are available at the building department counter of common ordinances for resident information on projects such as decks, driveways, pools, fences, etc. We have ongoing, continued training of building department staff on all aspects of the department to provide better information to residents, business owners and investors in our community.



**The River Grove Police Department is continually working to ensure that River Grove is the safest community in the area.** The hiring of one full-time officer, two additional full-time officers slated for the police academy in April 2019 and three additional certified part-time officers has greatly increased our efforts to serve our citizens. The recent purchase and deployment of three brand new SUV police vehicles has greatly improved our fleet while increasing our patrol coverage. Through the use of traffic-safety grants, we will continue to strictly enforce drunk driving, seat belt compliance, cell phone usage and speeding/stop sign enforcement throughout The Village. We continually strive to improve our positive relationship with all our residents, especially our children, with programs such as our Neighborhood Watch, National Night Out and Cone with a Cop programs. We live in a very safe community, and we were recognized by the Illinois State Crime Commission this past year. I am proud of our men and women in blue, and I look forward to working with them to continually keep our town safe and a great place to raise a family.



**On the fire side of public safety,** we have increased our community outreach with a free smoke detector program, pet safety stickers for your doors, flu shots and other senior programs. Our Santa stop food drive was a big success. We have committed to expanded and more comprehensive inspections on rental properties and commercial properties. We have expanded our internal training for our EMS and firefighters. I can say with great confidence we have some of the best firefighters around. The highlight of the year was the purchase of a new engine. We are committed to the professional care of our vehicles to expand the life of our equipment. I am personally overseeing that our residents get the most for their tax dollar.



**River Grove Public Works** has been burdened with limited staff and failing equipment over the past decades, but they have done a fantastic job keeping up and prioritizing the important jobs. We are happy to announce that through strong financial management, we were able to upgrade old and unsafe vehicles. We are restructuring the department to better serve our residents, liquidating old vehicles and equipment. We are investing in our dated parks and working on beautification projects, all of which help maintain and increase the value of your homes and properties. Also, it makes our community even more attractive to investors.



As a father of three children and in talking with new, young families, we saw the need to increase our recreational programs. Bringing on a full-time recreation director has greatly increased our recreational opportunities, along with flag football, Rockets Softball and other Holiday staples. The Recreation Department is starting off 2019 with a new Youth Basketball League this program is for boys and girls ages 6-14 and is held at River Grove School. Additionally, an introduction to Basketball/Soccer Combo Class for ages 3-10 will begin this winter. Kids will learn the basics of soccer and basketball through fun games including dribbling, passing and kicking. We feel this will help parents get out of the house and keep their children active through the winter months.

The Village has taken on a bigger role with our River Grove Baseball League. Moving forward, we will be working closely with the newly elected Little League Board members to help anywhere we are needed. River Grove is going to be involved with the restoration of Scheltens Field and have our concession stand ready and stocked for opening day.

Our Recreation Department will continue to offer free events, such as craft days and movie nights throughout the year. We will be adding new toddler-friendly programs, such as Mom & Tots, Early Music development classes and toddler sports programs to our spring/summer lineup. Please visit our website at [www.rivergroveil.gov](http://www.rivergroveil.gov) for the most up to date information on our programs. Also, sign up for recreation alerts on our site. We are always happy to hear from residents with suggestions for added programs and ideas.

We are involved in the Des Plaines River Trail System update talks with surrounding communities. The forest preserve is a great asset and selling point in an urban area such as ours. Very few communities with such big city access have the opportunity to access such wonderful green space.

After working hard to build a strong financial base, 2019 will be the year of increased service bringing back programs like the 50/50 sidewalk program, Pace Dial-A-Bus programs for our seniors and disabled, and implementing the train quiet zone in which we have partnered with our neighboring towns to accomplish.

I appreciate your confidence in my TEAM and myself. Remember I am not only an elected official, but I am also your neighbor, a dad, and a friend. I have a great love for our community and would ask that you hold me accountable for the decisions I make for this community. We have come a long way in the past year and a half, but I know there is much more work to do. Together we will make it happen. Please feel free to reach out to myself or anyone of my directors to address any questions or concerns.

Thank you for taking the time to read the State of the Village.

We will continue to work hard for our residents and move our town forward.

**Dave Guerin** *Village President*