

# Hometown TIMES

*"Downers Grove Preserves the Balance Between Tradition and Progress"*

## Success Comes in Threes

2015 was a great year for the Village's Police, Fire and Public Works Departments. Both the Police and Fire Departments achieved high rankings for service excellence and Public Works reached an important milestone as it completed a multiyear plan for street reconstruction and maintenance that began in 2010. These accomplishments support the goals of Exceptional Municipal Services and Top Quality Infrastructure found in the Long Range Plan.

### Police Department

The Police Department received Accreditation with Excellence from The Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). Only about 4% of CALEA accredited agencies meet the criteria for the Excellence award, which is about .25% of all police agencies in the nation. The professionalism of department personnel, the high quality of service provided to the community, and the well organized and thorough condition of the policy files reviewed during an on-site audit resulted in a very successful accreditation outcome.



### Fire Department



In April, the Fire Department was awarded the highest Public Protection Classification by the Insurance Service Organization (ISO). This Class 1 designation places the department in the top 1% of fire departments nationwide. A community's Public Protection Classification is based on a community's fire suppression system, emergency communications, fire department operations, and water supply. Community efforts to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education, and fire investigation are also recognized. Property and business owners in communities with an excellent ISO rating, like Downers Grove, benefit from lower insurance rates.

### Public Works Department

The Village owns and maintains approximately 167 miles of streets. Based on the 2010 pavement assessment, the Village issued \$25 million in bonds to finance reconstruction projects and used existing funding for increased maintenance activities. Since 2011, the Village has reconstructed 12 miles of streets in 11 neighborhoods, resurfaced 43 miles of streets, and completed regular crack filling and patching on the remainder of streets. In 2015, the Village will finish the construction projects and approximately 99% of all streets will be in Maintainable (good) condition.

## Issue III 2015

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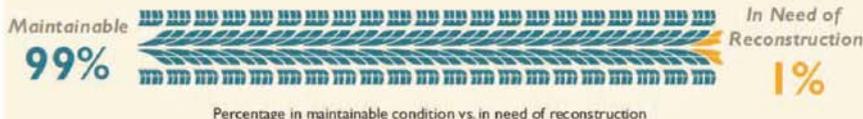
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### Street Condition in 2015



# MAYOR'S MESSAGE



Happy Holidays, Downers Grove!

The last quarter of each year not only ushers in the holiday season, but it is also the pinnacle of the Village's financial season. On Tuesday, November 3, 2015, the FY2016 Municipal Budget (FY16 Budget) was adopted following a very open, transparent and participative process. The adopted budget is consistent with the Village's strategic goals, specifically the goal of our local government to be a Steward of Financial Sustainability.

Although the first budget workshop was held in early October, the process really began in June with the first of four Long Range Plan (LRP) meetings. The LRP process is used to identify and address issues affecting the long-term future of the Village. The plan establishes the Village's goals and priority actions that guide annual budgets, daily operations and service delivery. It's one of many strong management practices that led Standard & Poor's to grant the Village their highest bond rating of AAA.

As discussed during Long Range planning, most existing Village revenues do not increase at the same rate as expenses, particularly personnel expenses, which typically increase by 4% to 5% annually. Like all municipalities, we face ongoing uncertainty due to the State budget impasse, which threatens several Village revenues, including the state shared income tax and motor fuel tax funding.

Here are the key points of the FY16 Budget:

**Balanced General Fund:** The Village's General Fund is financially sound, with expenses and revenues balanced at \$46.3 million.

**Fund Balance Maintained at the Recommended Level:** The General Fund balance will continue to be an amount equal to approximately 38% of annual expenses. This balance is consistent with Standard & Poor's guidelines to maintain the Village's AAA bond rating.

**No Increase in the Property Tax Levy for Village Operations:** For the fourth time in five years, the budget does not increase the property tax levy for Village operations, which include the critical services that our residents depend upon every day, such as police, fire, public works, and code services.

**Property Tax Levy Increase for Required Contributions to Public Safety Employee Pensions:** The budget does, however, include an increase in the levy solely for State-mandated contributions for public safety employee (police and fire) pensions in the amount of \$893,291. This is a 19.5% increase in this portion of the tax levy. The Village's required funding level for pensions is set by state statute. The increase for FY16 is related to new accounting standards and lower than expected investment returns in the police and fire pension funds.

**Staffing Reductions:** The budget reduces total Village staffing from 329.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to 325.6 FTE, a decline of 3.7 FTE positions. Several positions which became vacant in 2015 and were not filled on a temporary basis following the reductions in state shared revenue will remain vacant in 2016. However, the budget includes funding for an additional Planner in the Community Development Department, bringing the staffing to the 2014 level and providing resources to address increased workload in this department.

**Continued Investment in Infrastructure:** The Village will continue to make major improvements in infrastructure, including \$6.9 million in streets, \$4.3 million in stormwater and \$4.1 million for water. The improvements are designed to reduce the total life cycle cost of owning and operating the infrastructure systems.



**Stormwater Improvements  
\$4.3 Million**



**Street Improvements  
\$6.9 Million**



**Water Improvements  
\$4.3 Million**

## Mayor's Message continued from page 2

**No Increase in the Stormwater Utility Fee:** Based on direction provided during Long Range planning, the budget does not include an increase in the stormwater utility fee. The revenues in the Stormwater Fund will be supplemented by \$300,000 previously budgeted for new sidewalks in the Capital Fund. This will allow continued adherence to the plan for stormwater system maintenance with no increase in fees for 2016 while future changes to the stormwater utility are being considered.

**Funding Sources for Priority Action Items:** This budget includes funding to support the Village's top and high priority action items for 2016.

The FY16 Municipal Budget was prepared with the assumption that the State of Illinois budget will not significantly change the Village's revenues. If actions (or inactions) by the General Assembly result in a reduction of Village revenues, the Village will implement short term cost reduction efforts such as filling only essential staff vacancies, and deferring all but the most essential purchases. Also, as was the case in 2009 in response to rapidly declining revenues, we will engage the community in a policy oriented discussion to effectively prioritize services and address revenue reductions in a responsible and sustainable manner.

Turning to a more festive subject, it was my pleasure to once again engage everyone at the inaugural "Cookies with Council" event prior to welcoming Santa and the community at this year's annual Tree Lighting ceremony at the Main Street Station. I hope this message finds you and your family in good health and cheer this holiday season.

Here's wishing a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to one and all.



Martin T. Tully,  
Mayor

## Welcome Our Police Chief



Deputy Police Chief Kurt Bluder was sworn in on December 1, 2015, as the Chief of Police for the Village of Downers Grove. Bluder has 27 years of law enforcement experience with the Village and holds an M.S. in Public Safety from Lewis University and a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Governors State University. He has also completed Executive Leadership Training at the F.B.I. National Academy at Quantico, VA and Northwestern University Center for Public Safety.

Chief Bluder began his career with the Police Department in January 1989. Since then, he has moved up through the ranks assuming increased responsibilities and progressive management experience within every facet of the Police Department. The positions he has held include Patrol Sergeant, Training Sergeant, Administrative Lieutenant, Operations Deputy Chief and Administrative Deputy Chief. During this time, he has participated in the negotiation of many union contracts, prepared and managed department budgets and served as Project Manager on the successful consolidation of the Downers Grove and Westmont dispatch centers.

"Chief Bluder's commitment to professional law enforcement is visible on a daily basis. He has the experience needed to lead the men and women of the Downers Grove Police Department and continue its strong tradition of providing excellent service to the community," stated Village Manager Fieldman.

"As a lifelong resident, I believe our community is exceptional. I look forward to serving the citizens of Downers Grove and continuing the legacy of leadership that has built the department into one of the best in the county," Chief Bluder said.

## Winter Driving Tips

- Winter conditions call for different driving tactics. **Ice and snow, take it slow:** Slower speed, slower acceleration, slower steering, and slower braking.
- Slow down for wet, snowy, or icy conditions; when visibility is poor; or when conditions are changing or unpredictable.
- **Increase the car length between vehicles in front of you and give yourself plenty of room to stop.** Stopping on snow and ice requires extra time and distance. Even if you drive an SUV with four-wheel drive, you may not be able to stop any faster, or maintain control any better, once you lose traction. Four-wheel drive may get you going faster, but it won't help you stop any sooner. If you have anti-lock brakes, press the pedal down firmly and hold it. If you don't have anti-lock brakes, gently pump the pedal. Brake early, brake correctly, and never slam on the brakes.
- Slow down when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges, or shady spots. These are all candidates for developing black ice, a thin coating of clear ice that can form on the pavement surface and may be difficult to see.
- When driving in adverse road conditions, look farther ahead in traffic than you normally do. Actions by other vehicles will alert you to problems more quickly, and give you that split-second of extra time to react safely.
- Merge slowly into traffic, since sudden movements can cause your vehicle to slide.
- Avoid excessive actions while steering, braking or accelerating to lessen the chances of losing control of the vehicle.
- Don't take chances when pulling out in front of approaching vehicles. Remember, they may not be able to slow down and you may not be able to accelerate as quickly as on dry pavement.
- Remember to accelerate gradually.
- Avoid using cruise control in winter driving conditions. You need to be in control when your vehicle accelerates based on road conditions - don't let the cruise control make a bad decision for you.

## Safe Travel Around Snowplows

- **Don't crowd the plow.** Snowplows plow far and wide, sometimes VERY wide. The front plow extends several feet in front of the truck and may cross the centerline and shoulders during plowing operations.
- **Don't tailgate or stop too close behind snowplows.** Snow plows are usually spreading de-icing materials from the back of the truck and may need to stop or take evasive action to avoid stranded vehicles. If you find yourself behind a snow plow, stay behind it or use caution when passing. The road behind a snow plow will be safer to drive on.
- On multiple lane roads, watch for snow plows operating in either lane.
- Don't travel beside a plow for long periods. When plowing through a snowdrift or packed snow, the impact can move the truck sideways.
- Snow plows can throw up a cloud of snow that can reduce your visibility to zero in less time than you can react. Drive smart. Never drive into a snow cloud - it could conceal a snow plow.
- Snow plows travel much slower than the posted speed limits while removing snow and ice from the roads. When you spot a plow, allow plenty of time to slow down.
- A snow plow operator's field of vision is restricted. You may see them but they may not see you.
- Plows turn and exit the road frequently. Give them plenty of room.

More preparedness information can be found at [www.ReadyIllinois.gov](http://www.ReadyIllinois.gov).



## Water Seeping Into Your Basement?



One common cause of water entering basements is water being directed towards the foundation of a house. Small amounts of standing water can seep through cracks in the walls, and significant amounts can overload window well drains and enter through windows.

In order to keep this from happening, downspouts and sump pumps should be directed away and preferably, downhill from the house. In addition, you need to make sure the slope around the house is not working against you. Over time, patios, walkways, and the ground can move and settle, sometimes causing water to flow back towards the house. Changes can be subtle, so take note of standing water near the foundation after a heavier rain event.

Listen to your sump pump for clues. If your sump pump goes off every few minutes when the weather does not seem to warrant it, water may be directed towards the foundation and being recycled into your sump pump pit.

If you would like help with an assessment of your house, or suggestions for what to do, please call our Stormwater Administrator, Karen Daulton Lange, at 630-434-5489 to make an appointment. Sometimes little changes can make a big impact, so take a look around your house today!

## Village Receives Award For Financial Reporting Excellence



The Village has received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA).

“The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management,” according to a GFOA news release.

This award is issued following a review by an impartial panel of judges and recognizes the Village’s “spirit of full disclosure” in the telling of its financial story. The professional manner in which the CAFR is organized and presented were cited as motivating factors which encourage potential users to read the document.

The CAFR provides a detailed, audited account of all financial activity for the funds and departments in the Village organization. It is published within six months from the close of each fiscal year.

The Village’s financial team is headed by Finance Director Judy Buttny.

## Downers Grove is a Winner

The Village of Downers Grove has been the recipient of much recognition recently. Prominent national media and real estate firms have conducted research which ranks communities on quality of life and other factors.



Forbes Magazine led the way by naming Downers Grove the **8th Friendliest Town in America**. The Village of Downers Grove, the Downers Grove Park District, the Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation, and the Downtown Management Corporation collaborated on the design of a logo to promote the Forbes recognition. Many local businesses and government agencies proudly display the logo.

Another recent survey, this one conducted by Livability.com, named Downers Grove the **2nd Best Place in America to Raise Kids**. Only Boise, Idaho had a higher ranking. Downers Grove was the only municipality in Illinois to be included in these national surveys.

Livability.com has also named Downers Grove as one of the **Top 100 Places to Live in America**. Downers Grove was the only Illinois municipality named in the survey.

Movoto, one of the nation’s premier real estate blogs, recently named Downers Grove one of the **50 Happiest Small Cities in America**.

In addition, Movoto has recognized Downers Grove in several other surveys:

- **Top Ten Places to Live in Illinois**
- **Top Ten Chicago Suburbs for Families**
- **Top Ten Most Exciting Places to Live in Illinois**
- **Top Ten Best Places for Families in Illinois**

Downers Grove was also recently named the **16th Best Place to Start a Business in Illinois**, and the **56th Best Illinois Towns to Call Home**.

For more information, please contact the Downers Grove Economic Development Corporation at 630-729-0380, or visit [www.dgedc.com](http://www.dgedc.com).

## Preventing Wallet and Purse Theft

If you've ever been the victim of a theft of a wallet or purse, you know the anxiety it causes. The loss of cash and credit cards plus personal and financial information can be traumatic. When deciding who will be their victim, an offender looks for someone that is not paying attention to their property. Being distracted for just a moment is all it takes for the offender to seize the opportunity to steal a purse or wallet.



- When you are at the ATM, grocery store, restaurant, or pumping gas into your vehicle, make sure your purse or wallet is secure. Don't become so immersed in your activity that you don't keep track of valuables.
- When shopping, do not leave your wallet or purse unattended in the shopping cart. Offenders can easily remove your wallet from an unattended purse without your knowledge. You don't realize the wallet is gone until you get to the checkout. By that time, the offender is long gone and so is your wallet.
- When sitting in a restaurant, do not put your purse on the back of your chair. The offender will take a seat behind you and remove your wallet while you are not paying attention. This is a very common type of theft that is happening in our community. Keep your purse on your lap or on the floor between your feet.
- Minimize the potential for loss by only carrying a small amount of cash and/or the credit cards you will be using. Keep your house keys separate from your wallet so if your purse is taken, the offender does not have your house keys, too.

Your life is much more important than any property you have. If an offender attempts to take your property by force, give it to them. No item of property is more valuable than your life.

## Protecting Property in Your Car

The Downers Grove Police Department has responded to more than 125 incidents of car burglaries in 2015. Many of these incidents occurred when vehicles were left unlocked in the owner's driveway. Car burglaries occur in both residential areas and public parking lots.

Remember to always lock your vehicle upon exiting it, even when your vehicle is parked in your driveway. An unlocked vehicle is an easy target for a burglar, especially after dark. The quick entry and exit of a vehicle parked in the driveway with your valuables inside can easily go unnoticed, even if you are home.

Don't allow criminals to "window-shop" inside your car when it is parked in your driveway or in public parking lots. Place valuables in the vehicle trunk or take the items in the house. The incidents of car burglaries reported to police had items such as cell phones, laptops, purses, and wallets taken by the burglars.

While burglars prefer to target unlocked vehicles, if there are valuables inside, they will not hesitate to break a window. The Police Department urges you to lock your vehicle at all times and put valuables in the trunk.

## Do You Really Know What to do if you have a Fire?

The Downers Grove Fire Department has responded to several calls during the past year where the actions of the family made a difference in their survival. Remember these key reactions in times of fire:

- Get LOW under the smoke.
- Close as many doors as possible on the way out.
- Have emergency contact and insurance information accessible or in another location as a back-up.
- Never go back in the structure for anything. Firefighters will assist with looking for your belongings.

Wait for the Fire Department in the front of the house. Their first concern will be that everyone made it out safely. Have a family meeting place.

## Keep the Wreaths Red

Wreaths with red bulbs will be displayed at each of the Village's fire stations through January 1. If a holiday related fire occurs during this time, one of the red lights in each station's wreaths will be changed to white. The Downers Grove Fire Department asks that residents do their part to practice fire safety during the holiday months with the following tips:



### Around the Home

- Make sure you have a working smoke and/or carbon monoxide alarm on each level of the home, especially outside the sleeping areas.
- Electrical cords should not be run under rugs or past doorways.
- Use power strips in place of extension cords.
- Never leave candles unattended. If you are having a party, candles should only be lit in the attended rooms.
- Fireplaces should be cleaned annually, if used on a regular basis. Do not burn any foreign objects in fireplaces. A fireplace screen should always be in use.

### Trees and Lights

- Do not allow trees to block any exit paths in the home.
- Live trees should be kept at least three feet from any heat source.
- Check the water level daily on live trees. All live trees and boughs should be disposed of immediately after the holiday, before they dry out.
- No more than three strings of lights should be connected together for use on trees.
- Make sure outdoor decorations and lights are approved for outdoor use.

## Pluggie's Pals Fire Hydrant Program for Kids!



If this winter is anything like last year, our fire hydrants are going to be buried by snow! Firefighters need immediate access to the hydrants to be able to get plenty of water on a fire quickly. It takes firefighters extra minutes to shovel the hydrants out of the snow and chip ice away from the ports. During this time the fire continues to grow at a very significant rate. Your child can help the firefighters by taking care of the hydrant near your home. Scout troops can handle an entire block or the hydrant in front of their school.

Sign up for the Pluggie's Pals Program on the Village website, [www.downers.us](http://www.downers.us); search for "Pluggie's Pals." Questions may be directed to the Downers Grove Fire Department's Administrative Secretary, Gina Barr at [gbarr@downers.us](mailto:gbarr@downers.us).

# REMINDERS AND OTHER NEWS

## REGISTER TODAY FOR DIRECT DEBIT!

It's the secure easy way to pay your Village utility bill. A simple, easy to follow video is available on our website: [www.downers.us/res/water](http://www.downers.us/res/water).

## Coat Drive

Through January 15, 2016, the Village will be collecting gently used coats and winter accessories for all ages. Drop boxes are located in the lobbies of the Village Hall, 801 Burlington Avenue, the Police Station, 825 Burlington Avenue, and Public Works, 5101 Walnut Avenue. All items collected will be donated to Sharing Connections to benefit those in need in the community.

## Holiday Closings

Most Village offices will be closed on December 24 and 25, 2015, and on January 1, 2016.

## Garbage Schedule

Friday, December 25, 2015, and Friday, January 1, 2016, are holidays for Republic Services. Residents with a regular collection day of Friday will be delayed by one day.

## Curbside Christmas Tree Collection

Free collection of live Christmas trees only will be offered by Republic Services from January 4-15, 2016. Trees must be free of tinsel, ornaments and hooks and should not be placed in bags.

## Holiday Light Recycling

Recycle unwanted or broken holiday lights instead of throwing them away. Residents may drop off lights during business hours through February 13, 2016 at the following locations:

- Public Works Facility, 5101 Walnut Avenue
- Village Hall, 801 Burlington Avenue
- Police Department, 825 Burlington Avenue

## Make a Date on the Village Calendar

The Village is accepting event information from DuPage County non-profit organizations to be posted on the Events Calendar on the Village website. Questions and event information may be forwarded to [events@downers.us](mailto:events@downers.us).



**[www.downers.us](http://www.downers.us)**

801 Burlington Avenue  
Downers Grove, IL 60515

Mayor Martin T. Tully  
Commissioners  
Robert T. Barnett, David S. Olsen,  
Greg Hosé, Gina Vattimo,  
William "Bill" White, William Waldack  
Village Manager David Fieldman

### Contact information

(630) 434-5500 or [mayorcouncil@downers.us](mailto:mayorcouncil@downers.us)  
Council Meetings 1st, 2nd & 3rd Tues.-7:00 p.m.  
Fire, Medical or Police Emergency 9-1-1  
Village Hall (630) 434.5500  
Community Response Center (630) 434-CALL(2255)

### Village Hall Hours

Tues. 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Mon. and Wed. through Fri. 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Published by the Village of Downers Grove

## Civic Minded Teens Needed



Applications are now being accepted for Youth in Government - Boards and Commissions positions. Please forward this information to students you think might be interested in participating in their local government.

Serving on a board or commission offers a great opportunity for residents in their junior or senior years of high school to gain hands-on experience working in local government while gaining critical communication and collaboration skills. Successful applicants will be appointed to one of these commissions: Environmental Concerns Commission, Community Events Commission, or the Transportation and Parking Commission.

Those interested should complete and return the Youth In Government Application found on the Village website, [www.downers.us](http://www.downers.us).