



RIVER FOREST TOWNSHIP

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RIVER FOREST TOWNSHIP EFFICIENCY REPORT 2024

IN COMPLIANCE WITH
THE DECENNIAL COMMITTEES ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY ACT
<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=4329&ChapterID=11>

I. UNIT OF GOVERNMENT SUBMITTING THIS REPORT

River Forest Township (“RFT”)

8020 Madison St. 2nd Floor

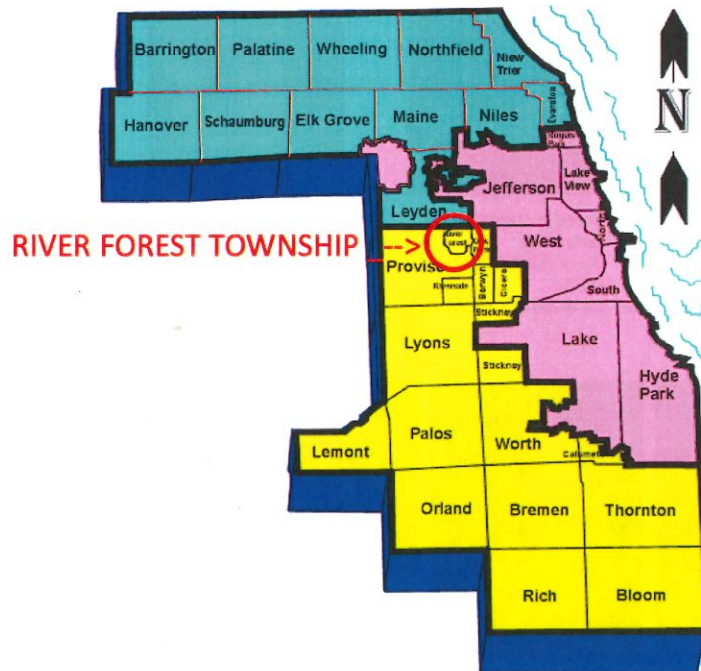
River Forest, IL 60305

Main 708-366-2029

Assessor 708-366-2787

www.RiverForestTownship.org

COOK COUNTY TOWNSHIPS, ILLINOIS



II. INFORMATION ABOUT OUR TOWNSHIP

River Forest Township was founded in 1917 when the residents (population 3,000) voted by referendum to create their own township, thereby separating from Proviso Township. Since 1917, River Forest Township has increasingly supported and funded human services in the River Forest community, through a separate and dedicated property tax levy. The Township celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 2017 and continues to serve seniors, youth, those with mental health challenges and disabilities, and those in financial need, plus property owners via the Assessor's office.

- a. **LOCATION:** River Forest Township (RFT) is located in Cook County, Illinois. There are 29 townships in Cook County, and RFT is one of the smallest Townships in Illinois by area (2.5 square miles). RFT is coterminous with the Village of River Forest, a suburban village located directly west of Chicago. Two universities make their home in River Forest: Dominican University and Concordia University Chicago. River Forest is closely tied to its larger neighbor to the east, Oak Park; the two communities share a high school and River Forest Township works in close partnership with Oak Park Township.
- b. **POPULATION:** Per the 2020 census, the population of River Forest / River Forest Township was 11,717. There are 4,040 households out of which 35.4% had children under the age of 18 living with them. 17.3% of residents were 65 years of age or older.
- c. **ELECTED OFFICIALS:** RFT has seven (7) elected officials: Supervisor, Assessor, Clerk, and 4 Trustees. The Township Supervisor is also a member of the Board of Trustees. The Supervisor and Clerk are the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Open Meeting Act (OMA) Officers for the organization. The Trustees are elected to their positions and are volunteers.



Township Assessor
Pamela Kende
Phone: 708.366.2787
Email:

Assessor@RiverForestTownship.org



Township Supervisor
Carla Sloan
Phone: 708.366.2029 x11
Email:

Supervisor@RiverForestTownship.org



Township Clerk
John Becvar
Phone: 708.366.2029 x12
Email:

Clerk@RiverForestTownship.org



Helene Connolly



Keith Strom



Deana Herrman



Karen Taubman

- d. **EMPLOYEES:** RFT has no full-time and 6 part-time employees (three remunerated, elected officials plus Deputy Assessor, Mental Health Administrator, and Senior Outreach Coordinator).



Deputy Assessor
Kathy Elliott
Phone: 708.366.2787
Email: Assessor@RiverForestTownship.org

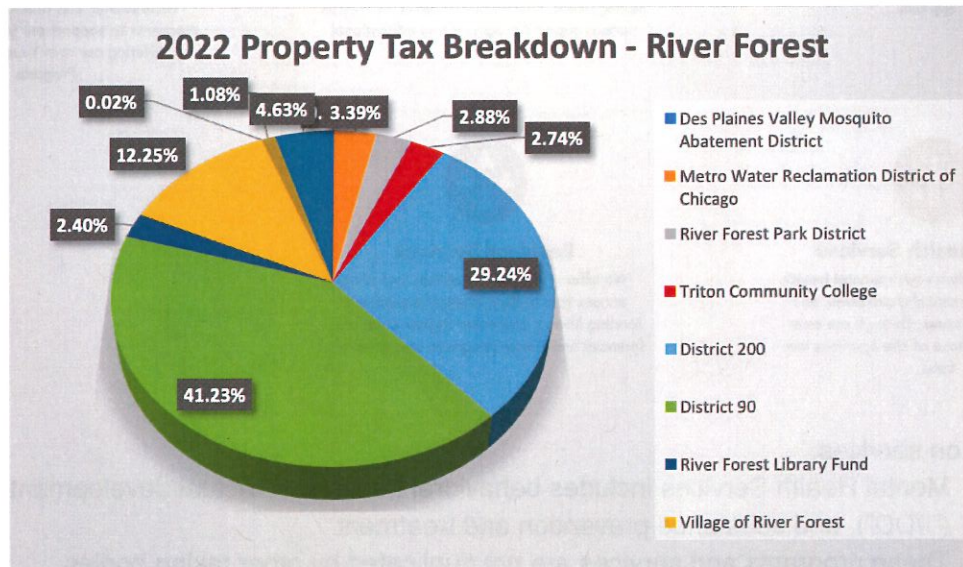


Mental Health Services Administrator
Sarah Schwarting
Phone: 708.366.2029 x14
Email: SSchwarting.rftownship@gmail.com

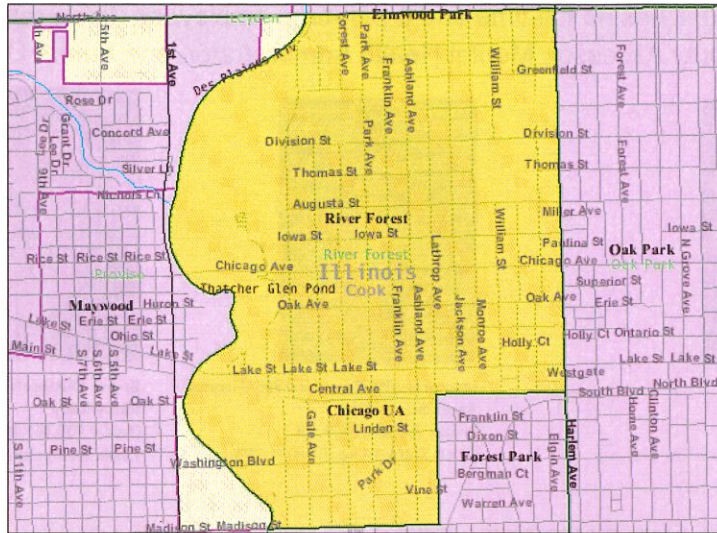


Senior Outreach Coordinator
Betsy Kelly
Phone: 708.366.2029 x13
Email: BKelly.rftownship@gmail.com

- e. **ROAD DISTRICT AND CEMETERY:** RFT does not have a Road District or a cemetery and therefore no Road District officials or employees.
- f. **BUDGET:** The annual budget for the Town Fund and the General Assistance Fund for fiscal year 2024 (ending March 31, 2024) is \$786,539.
- g. **ASSESSED VALUE:** The Township's equalized assessed valuation for 2023 is \$286.50M
- h. **LEVY:** RFT's levy comprises approximately 1.08% of a River Forest 2022 property tax bill.



- i. **AREA:** The area of River Forest is 2.5 square miles located 11 miles west of Chicago, Illinois. River Forest lies along the Des Plaines River to the west and is bordered by Illinois Route 43 to the east and Illinois Route 64 to the north. Along with the Des Plaines River, much of the western boundary of River Forest consists of the Thatcher Woods forest preserve of Cook County and the Des Plaines River Trail. According to the 2010 census, River Forest has a total area of 2.482 square miles (6.43 km²), of which 2.48 square miles (6.42 km²) (or 99.92%) is land and 0.002 square miles (0.01 km²) (or 0.08%) is water.



j. **SERVICES:** RFT funds Assessor Services to property taxpayers; RFT also funds and delivers Human Services in the following areas:



Assessor Services

We are available to help with your property tax inquiries, including exemptions and appeals.



Senior Services

We provide a full array of services to older adults, such as meals, transportation, care management, information/referral, as well as various support programs and educational events.



Youth & Family Services

We contract with local agencies to provide an array of educational, mentoring, recreational, and financial assistance programs to support our youth, in addition to offering our own Youth Engagement Program.



Mental Health Services

We support residents with mental health needs, developmental disabilities, and substance use issues, through our own programs and those of the agencies we fund.



Resident Services

We offer a variety of services including access to a notary, medical equipment lending library, and voter registration, plus financial assistance programs and referrals.

- Notes on services:
 - Mental Health Services includes behavioral health, intellectual/developmental disabilities (“I/DD”), and substance prevention and treatment
 - These programs and services are not duplicated by other taxing bodies.
 - Many are provided in partnership and collaboration with other taxing bodies and organizations.
- RFT utilizes a *hybrid model* to deliver services and programs.

HOW RFT DELIVERS PROGRAMS and SERVICES : HYBRID MODEL		
DIRECT DELIVERY (<i>see section IV</i>)		DELIVERY VIA OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS (<i>See Section V</i>)
Intergovernmental Agreements (<i>where RFT pays 20% of OPT admin and programs</i>)	Direct by RFT Employees and Elected Officials	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial Assistance ● Senior Services ● Youth & Family Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Financial Assistance ● Senior Services ● Assessor ● Resident Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mental Health ● Youth & Family Services

- k. **RESIDENT COMMITTEES:** RFT continuously seeks the input of the residents being served through four different committees who advise and make recommendations to the RFT Board of Trustees. RFT takes great care when spending residents' money. With the exception of the Ad Hoc Decennial Committee, River Forest residents are appointed to three-year terms on:
- Mental Health Committee (9 River Forest residents)
 - Senior Services Committee (7 residents) - meets jointly with Oak Park Township (OPT)
 - Youth & Family Services Committee (5 residents) - meets jointly with OPT
 - Ad Hoc Decennial Efficiency Report Committee (3 residents + Board of Trustees)

III. INFORMATION ABOUT OUR DECENNIAL EFFICIENCY REPORT AD HOC COMMITTEE

A. DECENNIAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Township Supervisor Carla Sloan
- Township Trustee Helene Connolly
- Township Trustee Karen Taubman
- Township Trustee Keith Strom
- Township Trustee Deana Herrman
- Township Resident Barb Hickey
- Township Resident Melinda Peterson
- Township Resident John Phelan
- Secretary of the Committee: John Becvar, Township Clerk

B. DATES OF DECENNIAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS (*50 ILCS 70/20*)

- First (Organizational) Meeting: June 6, 2023
- Second (Discussion) Meeting: January 29, 2024
- Third (Approval) Meeting: March 11, 2024

C. DATE OF EFFICIENCY REPORT APPROVAL BY RFT: March 19, 2024

D. COMMITTEE'S DEFINITION OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Although the statute mandating this Study did not define Efficiency, the Committee discussed what Efficiency means in relation to government services. We felt the following definition from the Federal Times was applicable to River Forest Township and our operating philosophy.

“Efficiency is producing the required outcome with the ... appropriate amount of resources, time, and cost.... Efficiency requires a clear goal, supported by a well-defined process, the right resources, and the ability to adapt as needed.”

(Source: Federal Times, "Defining and achieving efficiency in government" by Steve Goodrich, May 27, 2015)

IV. PROGRAMS OFFERED BY DIRECT DELIVERY

Direct program delivery is generally provided through Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs). The IGAs are split into Financial Assistance Programs, Senior Services Programs and Youth & Family Services (YFS) Programs. Additionally, the Township, including the Assessor's office, offers services directly to residents. Program descriptions are found below.

A. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

1. Financial Assistance Programs Offered through IGA

- RFT has an IGA with Oak Park Township (OPT) to administer General Assistance (GA) and Emergency Assistance (EA). RFT pays OPT for these administrative services, but the cost is much lower than if RFT assumed these costs on its own. RFT funds the actual GA and EA client payments.
 - **The General Assistance (GA) program** is mandatory for all Townships. GA provides temporary, financial support for Township residents in need who are seeking employment, but do not qualify for, or are waiting for a decision on unemployment, disability, or other government programs. Residents with financial need who are not receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other government-sponsored assistance and meet income and asset guidelines, can apply for GA grants.
 - **The Emergency Assistance (EA) program** is optional at the discretion of the Supervisor; RFT has opted to provide this financial assistance program. EA is a one-time award to alleviate a health and/or welfare crisis and can only be given once within a 12-month period. The amount available is limited and only granted if the crisis can be resolved.

2. Financial Assistance Programs Offered Directly to Residents by RFT

- **Cab Coupon Program:** for River Forest residents who are seniors (age 60+) or disabled. Residents pay \$6 for \$10 worth of cab coupons.
- **Financial Assistance Scholarships:** Youth scholarships are offered for those aged 5-17 with demonstrated financial need, so they can participate in after-school recreational, educational, sports and arts-related programs. (Scholarships may be available to children aged 3-4 on an exception basis.) Youth Scholarships generally ask families and the program to share in the cost of program fees.

B. SENIOR SERVICES PROGRAMS

Township Senior Services includes services such as meals, transportation, case management, information/referral, as well a variety of support programs. RFT funds a number of cultural, and enrichment programs in collaboration with the River Forest Public Library. We partner with local colleges, and community organizations, including our local village group, Arbor West Neighbors and the Celebrating Seniors Coalition to bring programming to residents. We work with the River Forest Park District to provide recreational programming. We are piloting a Home Sharing Program for older adults in River Forest. We work closely with the River Forest Township Assessor's Office to help residents with property tax questions.

1. Senior Services Programs Offered through IGA with Oak Park Township and the Senior Services Committee (resident volunteers from both River Forest and Oak Park who serve in an advisory capacity to Township Senior Services; seniors must comprise a majority of the membership).

- **Transportation Services:** curb-to-curb transportation for seniors and people with disabilities to Oak Park and River Forest locations.
- **Case Management:** social workers who assess seniors' needs and work with them on an ongoing basis.
- **Meal services**
 - Senior Lunch Program
 - Home Delivered Meals
 - Dine Out Program (coupons for local restaurants)
- **Caregiver and Grief Support**
 - Memory Café: support group and activities for those with memory issues and their caregivers
- **PEARLS mental health program**
- **Fitness and Wellness**
 - Yoga
 - Zumba Gold
 - Tai Chi
 - Line Dancing
- **Home Repair Program-** Handyperson service at a reduced rate for simple home maintenance repairs
- **CAPABLE (Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders) Project:**
 - handyperson coordinates with a nurse and occupational therapist to make the home
 - safer and enhance independent living.
- **Medical Lending Library:** Lending of gently used medical equipment such as walkers, wheelchairs, and shower chairs. Donations are also accepted.
- **Community volunteer opportunities**
- **Adult Protective Services: For older adults and those with disabilities**
- **Money Management Program**
- **Chore services**
- **Advance Directives Program**
- **Medicare (SHIP) and other benefits counseling**

2. Senior Services Programs Offered Directly to Residents by RFT

- **Home Sharing program**
 - Pilot program; mutually beneficial housing arrangement in which an older adult shares space in their home with another person, in return for minor chores and/or companionship.
- **Cultural, Educational and Recreational programming with other organizations**
 - Craft and Chat
 - Film Lover Fridays
 - Coffee Mondays
 - Celebrating Seniors All Year Long
 - Mahjong
 - Pickleball
 - Celebrating Seniors Week
- **Health and Safety with RF Fire and Police Departments**
 - Home Safety Inspection: public education and fire safety tips.
 - In Case of Emergency (ICE) Packets to store emergency contacts and medical info.
 - Residential Key Box Program for first responders to access property.
 - Crime Prevention Education
 - ID Bracelets for the safety of persons with disabilities, medical conditions, or memory changes

C. YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAMS

Youth & Family Services Committee: as part of RFT's IGA with Oak Park Township, both Townships participate in a joint Youth & Family Services Committee. This Committee is made up of resident volunteers from both River Forest and Oak Park. The Committee reviews the grant proposals from youth social services agencies and makes funding recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

1. Youth & Family Services Programs Offered through IGA

Township Youth & Family Services of Oak Park and River Forest provides several services through RFT's IGA with Oak Park Township:

- **Youth Engagement Program:** Specially trained staff assist youth aged 6-18 on a 1:1 basis or in groups to address mental health issues, trauma, bullying, substance dependence and other stressors.
- **Positive Youth Development (PYD):** Community partnership dedicated to addressing and preventing underage substance use and supporting youth and parents in making healthy choices.
- **Girls On the Rise:** Program after or during school which focuses on helping girls of color build leadership skills, including self-reflection, critical thinking, sound decision making, goal setting, clear communication and personal accountability.
- **Community Justice Program:** Specialized programming around issues which may have led youth to be referred to the adjudication process, such as restorative circles and peer meditations. Works with youth to complete volunteer service hours at local organizations and businesses.
- **Youth Hygiene Closet:** Personal care and hygiene products made available to youth free of charge. Donations accepted.

2. Youth & Family Services Programs Offered Directly by RFT

- **Financial Assistance Scholarships**- scholarships for young people aged 5-17 with demonstrated financial need, so they can participate in after-school recreational, educational, sports and arts-related programs. (Scholarships may be available to children aged 3-4 on an exception basis.) Youth Scholarships generally ask families and the program to share in the cost of program fees.
- *Additional Youth & Family Services contracted with social service agencies found in Section V.*

D. ASSESSOR SERVICES: Offered Directly by RFT

The Assessor and Deputy Assessor, in responding to questions about property taxes, engage in thousands of resident interactions each year. The Assessor's Office helps residents submit property tax payments and appeals, apply for exemptions (i.e., senior citizen, senior freeze, disabled and veterans), file Certificates of Error, and determine comparables. The Assessor's Office works closely with hundreds of older adults regarding their property tax needs. They also work with the Village of River Forest regarding permits, advise residents about new home purchases and sales, and conduct many other activities.

E. RESIDENTS SERVICES: Offered Directly by RFT

- **Notary public:** The Township office provides the services of a notary public. There is no charge for this service.
- **Temporary Disability Parking Placard:** Residents of River Forest with a temporary disability may apply for a temporary placard valid for 90 days.
- **Voter registration:** The Township Clerk, in addition to maintaining all Township records, conducts voter registration and assists with local elections.
- **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests:** All records in the custody or possession of a public body are presumed to be open to inspection or copying. Any individual person, group, association, or organization has the right to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to any state or local public body, including any city, township, or county office. FOIA provides that requests for public records must be made in writing. The Township responds to dozens of requests each year.
- **In-kind meeting and/or office space:** River Forest Township has offered meeting and/or office space free of charge to various groups and nonprofits in the community. For example, LOSS meets monthly in RFT's conference room. LOSS is a nondenominational support group for those who have lost loved ones to suicide, run by Catholic Charities.

F. BENEFITS OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Township efficiency has increased through intergovernmental cooperation, partnerships and collaboration.

- Our single source of revenue, constrained by a capped levy (not exceeding 5%), necessitates a strategic approach to stretching our tax dollars. Engaging in partnerships with other agencies becomes crucial in extending our capabilities. These collaborations not only enhance efficiency in resource utilization but also broaden the spectrum of programs we can offer. By avoiding duplicative services and minimizing overhead costs, we can efficiently provide essential

services without straining our limited resources. RFT can minimize administrative costs while maximizing program spending.

- For instance, a cost comparison reveals that allocating \$2,000 from our budget for the Senior Home Repair Program, done in partnership with others, is significantly more sustainable than the potential cost burden of carrying the program ourselves. This financial prudence ensures that we not only maintain our current offerings but also prevent the need to cut funds or compromise on the quality of services provided to our community. Through fostering positive relationships with external entities, we not only optimize our financial resources but also expand our capacity to meet diverse community needs.

G. WHAT OTHER SERVICES/PROGRAMS COULD RIVER FOREST TOWNSHIP PROVIDE, EITHER BY IGA OR DIRECTLY?

RFT is always looking to evolve our programming, especially as residents' needs change. However, revenue remains fairly fixed, given the community's desire to keep property taxes stable. New programs or enhancements would be possible only through creative partnerships and IGA where costs are shared. The committee suggested the following ideas should additional resources become available:

- More outdoor activities for seniors (such as a walking club), following the Blue Zone^(R) philosophy connecting outdoor activity with longevity
- Increased senior transportation in terms of evenings, weekends, geographic reach
- More structured middle school programming, as this appears to be a void in our community
- More early child development programming, to take advantage of existing funding between River Forest and Early Childhood organizations.

V. PROGRAMS DELIVERED THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS

A. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DELIVERED THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICES AGREEMENTS

River Forest Township works with local agency partners to fund a wide range of programs in the areas of behavioral health, intellectual/developmental disabilities, domestic violence, underage substance use and addiction recovery. For Fiscal Year 2023 (ending March 31, 2023), funding was given to 19 programs under 12 agencies. These agencies were then able to provide over 17,000 hours in supportive services; over 1,500 hours of treatment services; 60 hours of education & advocacy for mental health.

Services include case management, respite care, behavioral health treatment, early intervention, prevention, substance treatment, education, outreach and support groups. This continuum of community-based services is cost-effective, systematically evaluated and responsive to evolving mental health needs.

Mental Health encompasses behavioral health services, services for those with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD), and substance prevention/treatment programs.

RFT has a Mental Health Committee, made up of resident volunteers. The Committee reviews the grant proposals from mental health social services agencies and makes funding recommendations to the Board of Trustees. RFT Mental Health Committee Funded Partners include:

- **Opportunity Knocks**- after school and day program for adults with I/DD. RFT funds services.
- **Thrive**- services include a 24/7 crisis team, group services, and individual counseling services at low or reduced cost along with various mental health programs. Also does suicide prevention in schools. RFT funds Sibshops, counseling, and suicide prevention education.
- **Housing Forward**- offers emergency shelter, housing stability, interim housing, street outreach for those experiencing homelessness. RFT funds street outreach and emergency assistance
- **Sarah's Inn**- provides intervention services to those in domestic violence crisis situations; conducts domestic violence prevention education to area schools. RFT funds education, intervention services and case management.
- **UCP/Seguin**- life skills programming, case management, and respite services are provided for adults with I/DD. Employment and residential services for adults along with assistive technology and accessibility services are also available. RFT funds transitional services and respite.
- **Oak Leyden Developmental Services**- provides early intervention services for children birth to age 3 with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. RFT funds early intervention services.
- **NAMI Metro Suburban**- provides community advocacy, outreach, and education; also provides a drop-in center and multiple living rooms. RFT funds outreach and education.
- **Community Support Services (CSS)**- providing respite and case management services, as well as day programs and CILAs for adults with I/DD. RFT funds respite care and case management.
- **FRED Parent Support Group**- online parent support group and website for parents whose children have mental health conditions. RFT funds websites and other communication needs.
- **Infant Welfare Society**- Provides free/ low-cost medical, dental, and mental health services to children and young adults with financial need. RFT funds mental health screenings for children.
- **The Way Back Inn**- provides treatment programs for those recovering from alcohol, drug, or gambling addictions. RFT funds community outreach and services.
- **Progress Center for Independent Living**- services for those with disabilities relating to advocacy, outreach, disability aid search, and job training services. RFT funds community outreach and services

B. YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES DELIVERED THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICE AGREEMENTS

As discussed earlier, RFT and Oak Park Township have a joint Youth & Family Services Committee, made up of resident volunteers. The Committee reviews the grant proposals from youth & family social services agencies and makes funding recommendations to the Board of Trustees. RFT Youth & Family Services Funded Partners include:

- **I-Search** - personal safety program in partnership with the River Forest Police Department for Grades K, 2, 4, 6 and 8 in River Forest Schools on topics such as "stranger danger", cyber safety, and safe relationships.
- **Connections** - after school program for Roosevelt Middle School students, held at the River Forest Library.
- **Robotics** - STEM Camp in partnership with Concordia University.
- **Belongings & Inclusion Committee at Lincoln School** – curriculum and community events to promote belonging and inclusion in River Forest.
- **Intramurals** – after school sports and homework program at OPRF High School.
- **Wonder Works Children's Museum**- special event activities at the museum.
- **Clean Up Give Back** - teen group focused on cleaning up our environment.

C. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL SERVICES AGREEMENTS

Social Service Agreements with not-for-profit agencies are the result of formal grant processes in Mental Health Services and Youth & Family Services. A Request for Proposal (RFP) is posted and sent out to potential mental health and youth & family grantees each year. Grant proposals are submitted to the RFT Mental Health Committee and the Oak Park and River Forest Township Youth & Family Services Committee, respectively. These committees are made up of resident volunteers serving three-year terms and are approved by the Board of Trustees.

These committees review the RFP's and make funding recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The committee members also do site visits to the applicant programs. The Board of Trustees make the final funding decisions. Grantees complete quarterly reports to ensure they are meeting deliverables. The result is a transparent, formal and structured grant process based on integrity, informed decision-making, resident input, and accountability.

Robust programming is offered through these social service organizations. Partner organizations have specific expertise in working with the populations described and the capacity to deliver high quality programs to River Forest residents. As a result of these partnerships and agreements, River Forest residents have choices for programming providers and can engage with a wide variety of programming and services to meet their needs.

For example, for just \$700 per year, RFT funds the communications efforts of FRED, a local support group for parents of children and young adults with mental health needs. This includes FRED's website, newsletter and remote meetings, all of which reach hundreds of parents in need. FRED is a valuable free resource for parents and hence has no other revenue source. With just a small grant from the Township, FRED is able to help many families address large challenges.

RFT dedicates a high percentage of the budget to the actual programming and services provided by these organizations. Without these partnerships, RFT could not afford to offer the variety and quality of services directly, as RFT would have to absorb the administrative and overhead costs of program delivery.

D. WHAT OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES COULD WE PROVIDE THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICES AGENCIES?

RFT is always looking to evolve our programming. Using the resources available to RFT currently, the Township primarily relies on the resident committees' recommendations on which grants to fund. Township officials and staff are always looking at additional social services agencies who serve our community to see how they can meet our residents' needs.

VI. SAMPLE OF PROGRAM STATISTICS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023 (ENDING 3/31/2023)

Mental Health Services

- Over 17,000 hours of mental health and I/DD services are provided to River Forest residents.
- 12 agencies contracted for mental health and I/DD Services to RF residents.
- 19 programs supported by RF Township grants.

Youth & Family Services

- 17 RF youth participated in the Youth Engagement Program.
- 25 RF girls enrolled in Girls on the Rise.
- Average of 100 RF students attended each I-Search Program session.
- Average of 12 RF middle school students per day attend the after-school Connections Program.
- 12 programs supported by Township grants.

Senior Services

- 4900 delivered or take-out meals to RF seniors.
- Almost 900 hours of case management are provided to RF seniors.
- 800 contacts for information and referrals to RF seniors.
- 400 hours of programs such as Money Management and Medicare
- Counseling for RF residents.

Assessor Services:

- Over 5,000 phone calls incoming and outgoing per year
- 754 appeal packets created for residents.
- 43 exemptions filed for residents.
- 52 Certificates of Error filed for residents with missing exemptions.

VII. TOWNSHIP AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

River Forest Township has received the following awards, distinctions, and recognitions:

- International City/County Management Association (ICMA) - Program Excellence Award Home Repair Program, 2023
- Township Officials of Cook County - Outstanding Service Award - Carla Sloan, 2023
- ITASCSC - Innovative Senior Program of the Year - Genealogy and Meaningful Memoirs, 2020
- Illinois Township Association of Senior Citizens Services Committees (ITASCSC) Township of the Year (Oak Park and River Forest Townships), 2019
- Oak Park Community Mental Health Board Community Partnership Award, 2019
- Lt Governor/Journal of Local Government Shared Service Best Practices - Best Shared Service Practice Youth Interventionist Program, 2018
- Township Officials of Cook County - 2018 T.O.C.C. Outstanding Leadership Award - Carla Sloan, 2018
- Thrive Counseling Center - Outstanding and Dedicated Mental Health Services River Forest Township Mental Health Committee, 2015

VIII. INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENTS (IGA)

RFT has IGAs, which renew every two years, with the following taxing bodies:

IGA WITH	NAME OF PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
Oak Park Township	OPRF Home Repair Program	Home repair program for seniors aged 60 and older. Work performed is general home repairs and minimal accessibility upgrades (grab bars, rails, etc.) Not emergency home repairs.
	General Assistance Program	Administers flat grant to financially eligible River Forest residents
	Emergency Assistance Program	One-time award to alleviate a health and/or welfare crisis and can only be given once within a 12-month period.
	Senior Services	Includes but not limited to: Care coordination, food pantry, transportation, respite, memory café, senior health planning. <i>Please see Section IV for programming descriptions</i>
	Youth and Family Services	Develop and administer programming that mentors youth and promotes positive identity development as well as connects families with resources. Fund programming related to youth and family that encourage participation in the community, promote academic achievement, supports programming in school districts to enhance student learning of community organizations and facilitate inclusion and belonging. <i>Please see Sections IV and V for programming descriptions.</i>
Oak Park Township, School Districts 90, 97 & 200, Oak Park District, River Forest Park District	Youth Engagement Program	Counseling services, direct intervention for mental health issues, substance use, gang involvement, bullying, etc.; connects youth and families to additional resources.

IX. REVIEW OF LAWS, TOWNSHIP POLICIES, TOWNSHIP RULES AND PROCEDURES, TOWNSHIP TRAINING MATERIALS, AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

We have reviewed the following, non-exhaustive list of laws, policies, training materials, and other documents applicable to the Township to evaluate our compliance and to determine if any of the foregoing should be amended.

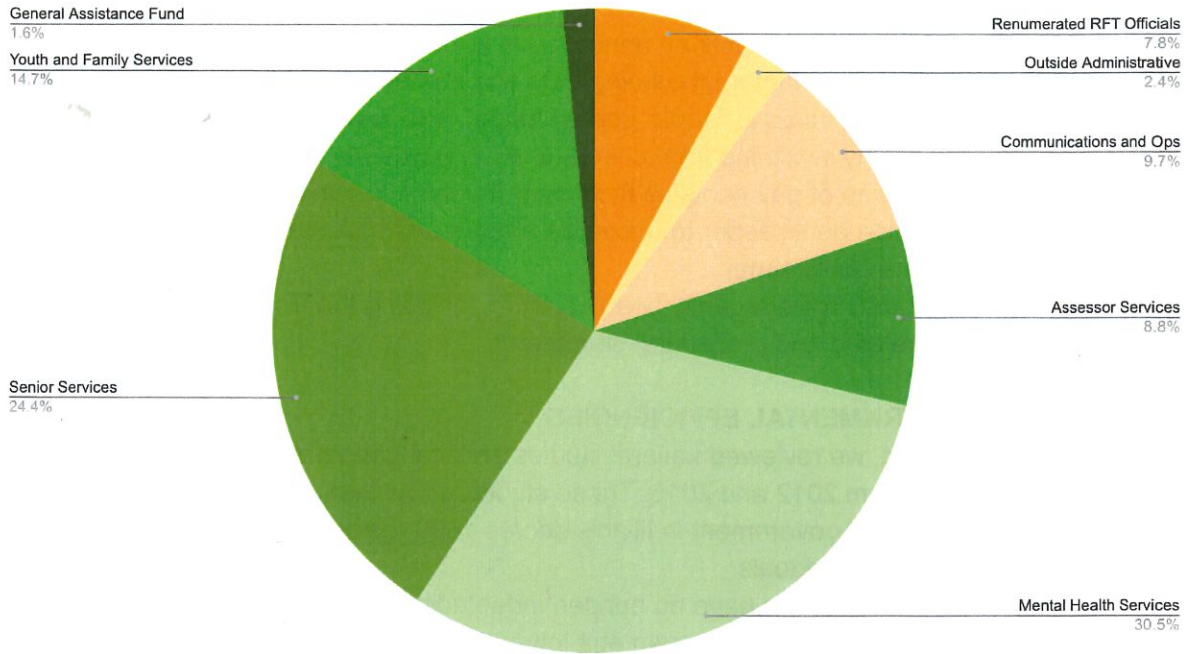
DONE	ITEM	NOTES
✓	State laws applicable to Townships, including, but not limited to the Township Code (60 ILCS)	
✓	Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120)	
✓	Policy on public comment	Posted on Website Posted outside and inside Office
✓	Designation of OMA officer (5 ILCS 120/1.05(a))	Township Clerk Township Supervisor
✓	All of Elected Officials have completed OMA Training (5 ILCS 120/1.05(b))	Staff also completed On file with Township Clerk
✓	Schedule of All Township Regular Meetings for Calendar or Fiscal Year (5 ILCS 120/2.03)	2024 Posted in the Wednesday Journal in January
✓	Illinois Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140)	
✓	Designation of FOIA officer (5 ILCS 140/3.5(a))	Township Clerk Township Supervisor
✓	FOIA Officer Training (5 ILCS 140/3.5(b))	Completed in 2023
✓	Computation and Retention of FOIA Requests (5 ILCS 140/3.5(a))	
✓	Posting Other Required FOIA Information (5 ILCS 140/4(a); 5 ILCS 140/4(b))	Posted on Website Posted outside and inside Office
✓	List of Types or Categories of FOIA Records under Township's Control (5 ILCS 140/5)	Posted on Website Posted outside and inside Office
✓	Periodic Meetings to Review Closed Meeting Minutes (5 ILCS 120/2.06(d))	Last reviewed November 2023
n/a	IMRF Total Compensation Postings (5 ILCS 120/7.3)	RFT has no employees earning +\$75K/yr so not applicable

✓	Designation of Whistleblower Auditing Official (50 ILCS 105/4.1)	RFT Resolution (2023-05)
✓	All of our Elected Officials have filed statement of economic interests (5 ILCS 420/4A-101; 5 ILCS 420/4A-101.5)	
✓	Sexual harassment prevention training (775 ILCS 5/2-109(c))	
✓	Our Intergovernmental Agreements	See Section VII
✓	Our Social Service Agreements or Contracts	See Section V
✓	Our budget and financial documents	
✓	State Ethics Laws, including, but not limited to the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (5 ILCS 430/1-1)	RFT also passed Ethics Ordinance (2023-02) and signed by all Officials and Employees
✓	Our budget and financial documents	
✓	Reports on government efficiency	“Local Government Efficiency and Size in Illinois: Counting Tax Revenues, Not Governments” by Wendell Cox (2016); “Local Democracy and Townships in the Chicagoland Area,” by Wendell Cox, (January 2012).
Others (List Below or Attach):		
✓	RFT Civility Pledge	RFT Resolution 2023-06 Signed by all Elected Officials
✓	Remote Meeting Attendance Policy	RFT Resolution 2023-04 Signed by all Elected Officials

X. WHAT HAS RIVER FOREST TOWNSHIP DONE WELL?

Despite being only 1% of the resident’s tax bill, RFT prioritizes efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This is evident in our decision to maintain low overhead costs (20% of the 2023 Fiscal Year) by employing part-time staff without additional benefits, except for the required IMRF. The updated policy and procedure handbook is a useful resource for those working in the Township. Per one participant in Township programming, RFT “runs like a well-oiled machine.” In essence, RFT’s organizational structure and collaborative approach enable us to achieve significant outcomes with limited resources, making us a key player in providing services to the River Forest community.

RFT Audited Actual Expenses Year Ending March 2023



Maximizing programming through collaborative relationships

- By strategically collaborating with other entities, we maximize the impact of our tax dollars while avoiding duplicative services. Actively seeking out innovative programming further demonstrates our dedication to enhancing the well-being of our community. Yearly outside audits reveal RFT spends allocated tax dollars with a ratio of 80% of dollars spent on programming and delivery of services (including assessor services) and 20% spent on administrative costs (including elected officials, auditing, insurance, and marketing).

Innovating with new programs

- The Township seeks input from residents, taxing bodies and agencies about what they want and need from the Township. RFT, in conjunction with our community partners, takes that feedback and develops new programs in response. For example, the ICE packets were developed with the River Forest Fire Department after it was discovered that emergency medical information was not present when paramedics responded to calls. The Home Repair Program was established two years ago after seniors indicated in surveys that this was a strongly needed service. Seniors indicated that they wanted to start a mahjong group, as well as pickleball; we have started those programs in the last year.

Enhancing communications

- The Township offers many services, but residents have indicated they are unaware of these programs. In response, RFT is constantly working to improve its communication with residents. RFT's website was just redone making it easier for residents to receive info from us and to reach us. Through Constant Contact and other media outlets, the Assessor's Office is now able to let residents know events that affect their property in a timely manner. Senior Services now has two newsletters; a general Township newsletter is in development. RFT engages in all social media on a regular basis. RFT uses other organizations' communications vehicles to promote Township programs. The Township has just completed two River Forest-wide mailings: a Mental Health Resource Guide and an information flier for seniors.

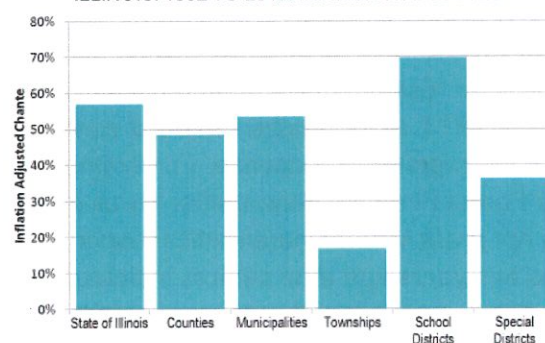
Stewarding transparency, effective financial management and strong organization

- Transparency is of utmost importance to RFT. Yearly audits are not required given RFT's revenue levels, but RFT still conducts an annual audit to be transparent to our taxpayers. RFT has recently consolidated non-interest earning CDs and money market funds to interest bearing accounts, while protecting funds in "public pooled funds". The Township is also further protecting our finances by switching from checks to ACH payments and implementing a requirement of verification of payments as they clear the bank to avoid check fraud. The Township has an outside bookkeeper to maximize checks and balances between the Supervisor, Board, and bookkeeper.
- Key Township documents have recently been updated, including the Employee Policy Manual and required ethics-related and procedural documents.

XI. STUDIES ON GOVERNMENTAL EFFICIENCIES

- In preparing this report, we reviewed several studies on local government efficiency, including Wendall Cox reports from 2012 and 2016. These studies show that:
 - The average local government in Illinois serves 1800 residents compared to the national median of 2850 individuals.
 - Most townships in Illinois have no bonded indebtedness.
 - Township expenditures have grown at a lower rate than those of any other level of government since 1992. (See table)
 - Townships have lower labor costs and employ mostly part time employees.
 - Bigger government is not necessarily better government; smaller units of government can operate more efficiently, be closer to the people, and deliver better government than larger units of government.

Expenditure Increase by Type of Government
ILLINOIS: 1992 TO 2012: INFLATION ADJUSTED



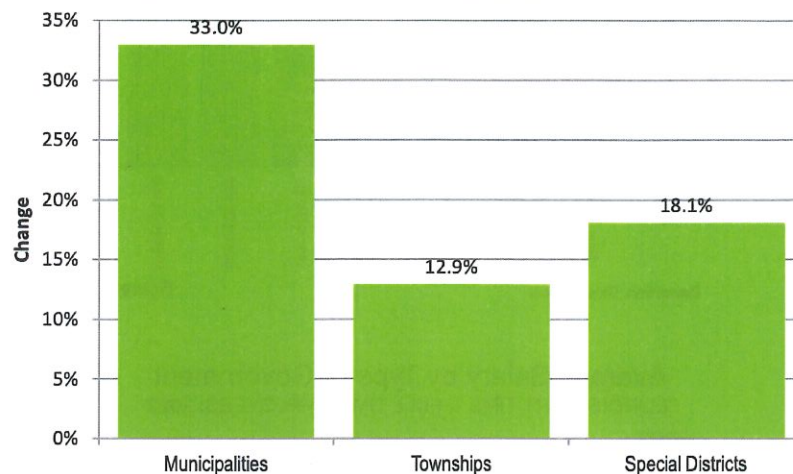
From: Census Bureau Financial Data

Figure 15

- The 2024 Wendell Cox report on *Local Government in Illinois: A Comparison of Township Government* available on March 1, 2024 stated:
 - Township property tax revenues have increased at a slower rate than other local governments. From 2016 (the previous Demographia report) to 2021, township property tax revenues increased by 12.9 percent, compared to a 33.0 percent increase in municipalities and an 18.1 percent increase in special districts. Townships generally incur lower labor costs per employee than other types of local governments in Illinois. The salaries per employee in townships are the lowest among Illinois government types, partly due to greater use of part-time labor. This approach leads to savings in wages,

salaries, and employer-paid benefit costs, ultimately resulting in lower tax rates for taxpayers, all else being equal.

Property Tax Revenue Trend: 2014-2021 ILLINOIS: BY TYPE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

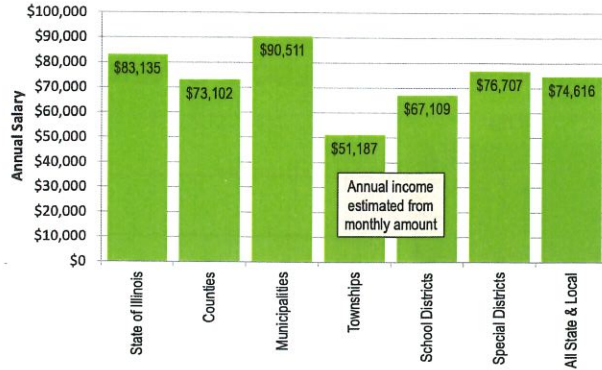


From: Illinois Comptroller data.

Figure 3

- Townships have generally lower labor costs than other categories of Illinois local governments. In 2022, the highest average full-time salaries were in municipalities, at an annual rate of \$90,500 followed by the state, at \$83,100. Municipal full-time salaries were 77 percent higher than that of townships, which were the lowest, at \$51,200. County full-time salaries were approximately 30 percent higher than township salaries, at \$73,100. Special District average full-time salaries were \$76,700, 50 percent above township salaries. School district salaries were about 30 percent higher than township full-time salaries, with an average of \$67,100 (Figure 4). Townships have the lowest average salaries per employee (full-time and part-time) among the types of Illinois governments (Figure 5). This lower township figure is driven by the greater use of part-time labor. This not only results in savings on wages and salaries but also reduces employer paid fringe benefit costs. Wherever costs are minimized, in capital, materials or labor, taxpayers are best served, all else equal (Figure 6).
- Smaller local governments, while inherently more efficient, owe their effectiveness to being more under the direct influence of their local electorate. By definition, smaller local governments are closer to the people, which results in greater voter access, all else equal. The accessibility of these governments to taxpayers acts as a check against undue influence from special interests seeking elevated spending levels. Officials in smaller jurisdictions can oversee financial performance and public service delivery more directly, minimizing reliance on professional staff not directly accountable to voters.

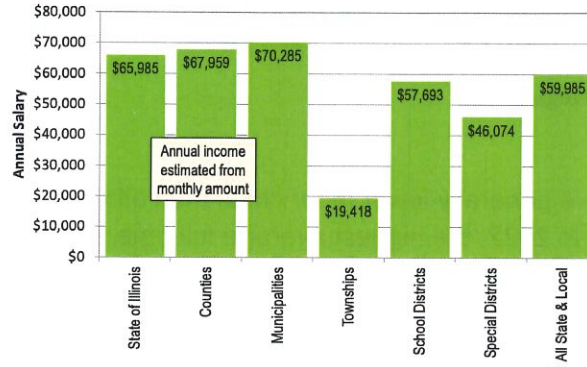
Average Salary by Type of Government ILLINOIS: FULL TIME EMPLOYEES: 2022



Derived from: Census Bureau

Figure 4

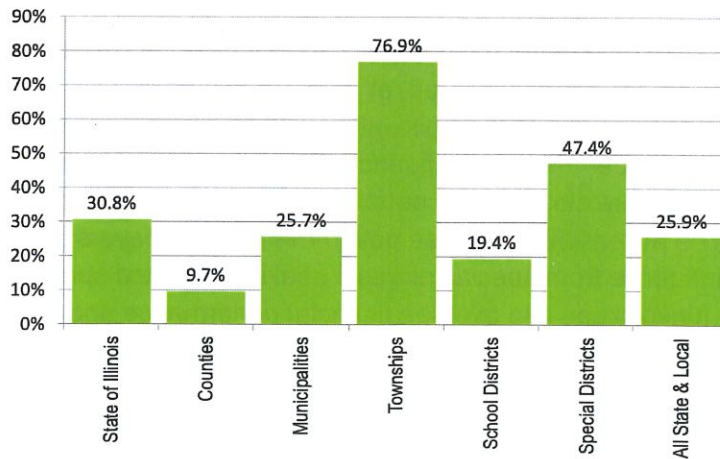
Average Salary by Type of Government ILLINOIS: PART TIME & FULL TIME EMPLOYEES: 2022



Derived from: Census Bureau

Figure 5

Part Time Employment SHARE OF TOTAL EMPLOYMENT: 2022



From: Census Bureau Financial Data.

Figure 6

XII. WHAT INEFFICIENCIES DID WE IDENTIFY?

- The Township still relies on paper for many things including for meetings. There is an opportunity to be more green and move more internal processes to electronic ones. Included in this is the plan to move many paper checks (historically mailed out) to ACH payments in 2024 and to move processing of hours worked to an online solution.

XIII. WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER OR MORE EFFICIENTLY? WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- One River Forest community member reported that we are a “resource rich community” and reported a need to identify the gaps in where our resources are going. Although there have been numerous studies on senior needs, there is an opportunity to better engage with other groups such as parents, persons with disabilities, and new residents on how we can better serve them. In general, we should increase time spent in front of residents.
- Although we have improved communications (new website, regular e-newsletters, increased social media, printed guides on Mental Health and Senior Services), more awareness of the Township is always needed. The plan is to conduct focus groups and survey residents to solicit their feedback and to develop a “Welcome Wagon” campaign to new residents.
- For Seniors, we can explore increasing transportation to include evenings, weekends and locations outside of OPRF (subject to budget) and creating more outdoor activities like walking clubs and Blue Zone philosophy for seniors.
- For Youth & Family, we can explore increasing programming for middle school kids and developing programming with Early Childhood Collaboration (given 25% of D200 funds paid to support ECC are paid by RF residents).
- For Mental Health, we can explore expanding Sibshops, support for single parents, creating a Living Room or Teen Loft in OPRF and Addiction Recovery Team (ART) (subject to budget).


XIV. SUMMARY: COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING INCREASED EFFICIENCY

- The Committee was impressed with the efficiency of River Forest Township and their ability to adapt and respond to the needs of the constituency. The Committee agrees there is little to no duplication in services provided with any other taxing body in River Forest. The Township has a very low cost structure and accomplishes numerous benefits for the public good. In the last 12 months the Township has managed to really increase its communications with residents and has a clear goal for what to do in the upcoming year.

The Committee wants to especially thank Trustee Deana Herrman, NIU graduate student Kennedy Glover and Township Clerk John Becvar in preparing this report.

This Report was approved by the Decennial Committee on March 11, 2024, the Board of Trustees on March 19, 2024 and was filed with Cook County on March 20, 2024, no later than 18 months after the first Decennial Committee meeting (deadline January 6, 2025).

Submitted by: Carla Sloan
Chairman, Decennial Efficiency Committee of River Forest Township

Signature: 

Date: March 19, 2024

