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2024 YEAR IN REVIEW: CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT

TO THE VILLAGE OF HAWTHORN WOODS
PREPARED BY: PAMELA O. NEWTON, COO

JANUARY 27, 2025

VILLAGE HALL
2 LAGOON DRIVE
HAWTHORN WOODS, IL 60047



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The Village of Hawthorn Woods is pleased to report to the community that the 2024 operational year finished in a fiscally strong position with a balanced budget and increased reserved funds.

It is a tremendous accomplishment to celebrate our strong municipal position with the residents of Hawthorn Woods. We have been assertive in our grant writing efforts and our receipt of grant awards to bring in non-tax revenue sources to supplement our municipal budget. We witnessed a healthy return to outdoor programs, like summer camps, concerts in the park, and swim classes. Our sponsorship program produced additional corporate funds to expand our special events at no cost to the taxpayers. We saw record revenues in Summer Camp and our second highest Golf Outing fundraiser in 2024. This year brought in more sponsorship funding than any year previously, allowing the Village to provide more amenities to Village residents without utilizing taxpayers' dollars.

2024 saw movement forward in growth and expansion of Village services, especially in the Parks Department with the installation of video surveillance cameras in designated parks. We have also invested in fully staffing the Public Works Department, to keep pace with our population growth and growing needs of our infrastructure.

Our Community Development Department was busy issuing permits, plan reviews, and inspections. Residents and developers have invested in building projects and our Community Development Department is expanding to meet the needs of the number of permit and service requests coming from our growing population. The final quarter of the year produced new development applications for non-residential commercial developments, with new commercial and business growth anticipated for 2025.

- With the successful passage of the road referendum in 2022, and the collection of partial taxes in 2023 with our “*Paving the Way*” street maintenance program, 2024 was the first year of the major program roll out, collecting approximately \$900,000 in annual dedicated funds. This amount will increase as our Village grows with more residents to support our road maintenance program. We are very pleased with the results that also provided a new concrete ribbon along these streets in the original part of town that had not been updated in the last referendum program. Residents along these newly paved streets expressed appreciation and support as several residential streets received new pavement and concrete ribbons for the first time in the design of our roadway network. Streets completed in the first year of our program included:
 - Squire Road
 - Foxtail Road
 - Cattail Court
 - Lancelot Lane
 - Arthur Court
 - Glen Road
 - Indian Creek Road

In total, we invested over \$2 million dollars into our road program in 2024. We are off to a very strong start leveraging grant funding to supplement the \$900,000 we collect annually.

In 2024, Village resources were dedicated to the defeat of a solar plant proposal that would have built an energy power production and delivery plant on the property lines of some of our estate neighborhoods. As a community, we allow solar power on rooftops of homes as an alternative power source, and generally support environmental efforts on less fossil fuel dependency. However, the property and zoning rights of hundreds of our residents were at risk without the local zoning authority in place to protect our residents from these intrusive land use decisions that were being allowed on an unincorporated parcel adjacent to three Hawthorn Woods neighborhoods. Noise, ground water quality, destruction of woodlands, property values, and safety were all considerations brought forward by the residents. The victory to halt the destruction of the intended parcel of farmland will go down as a highlight for 2024, as we halted a real threat to our rural by design lifestyle.

The Village also welcomed new home construction in the Hawthorn Woods Country Club, with 100 new homes planned to be built as in-fill in the neighborhood, as well as other in-fill single family custom construction throughout town. In the fall of 2024, we welcomed the first suburban expansion of PAWS, a Chicago-based pet adoption center and veterinary clinic. The project was approved as an opportunity to upcycle an already built equestrian center and veterinary clinic pre-existing on the site located in the Northern area of our municipal boundaries. Additionally, the Hawthorn Woods Community Bank opened its doors to serve our community with the addition of a beautiful new construction bank building at the corner of Quentin Road and Route 22.

With the resurgence of planned activities and programs in 2024, the Village progressed forward with new accolades and accomplishments, grant awards, innovative programs, new special event gatherings, and holiday celebrations, drawing large outdoor crowds. The Village conducted tours of our community several times in 2024, and renewed the coveted designation as an Audubon International Certified Sustainable Community, the first municipality in the State of Illinois to receive this prestigious environmental honor. Hawthorn Woods also hosted an on-site visit from the America in Bloom advisors and their Executive Director. The Village earned national designations, including the first-place national Community Champion Award in the under 10,000 population category. We were also recognized for our community involvement, and received a plaque designating our community as one of the best places to live in America.

During July of 2024, Hawthorn Woods hit the news media as we experienced another water main break within the Aqua Illinois owned and operated water system. This was the second situation of a water main break in two years resulting in a boil water advisory for 1900 homes on the Aqua water system.

As a result of consistent concern with water viability, the Village of Hawthorn Woods began an historical undertaking working with The Central Lake County Joint Water Action Agency (CLCJAWA) to attain a water allocation for future water security within the Village boundaries. With the CLCJAWA water main needing to be constructed through the Village to serve other municipalities, an allocation was negotiated for the first time in the Village's history. The Village is continuing to work with Lake County Government and CLCJAWA towards the goal of providing a Lake Michigan water supply for those not on individual wells, putting the Village in a secure position for the accessibility of safe drinking water distribution in the future.

We also concluded several environmental initiatives and grant projects with the planting of dozens of additional trees as we have exceeded our goal of 31% tree canopy in our reforestation efforts. Hawthorn Woods can now boast a 32.84% tree canopy statistic, ensuring we are among the most committed to urban forestry and our Tree City USA designation.

Another notable highlight of the year was the placement of our first entrance sign to welcome home our residents and greet guests as they enter our municipality. The sculptural tree design framed by the historical barn silhouette is a homage to our past with a contemporary design as we plan our future together.

2024 brought us three very important grants.

1. We received funding for the construction of the Public Works cold storage building that boasts three new bays at the Public Works facility. This was the first expansion of any building in over 20 years and will protect our investment of plows and trucks that currently sit out in the elements all year long.
2. We also received State of Illinois grant funds for the renovation of our Community Park parking lot. This project funded our municipal parking lot, improving safety and aesthetics for the public park goes at our most active Village park.

3. We received a grant to reconstruct Indian Creek Road and replace the culvert in the fall of 2024. This was a major milestone and a welcome relief to the motoring public that improved safety for all drivers.

In this report, readers will also notice photos accompanying the highlights of 2024, so that residents can easily identify with the location or project that I reference. I have also included, in my annual report, an end section highlighting a look ahead into our 2025 initiatives. Our municipal staff consistently works in harmony with our legislative team of elected officials, and our collective efforts have been recognized locally, statewide, and nationally. Hawthorn Woods has become a leader in environmental efforts, and we are consistently awarded for our sustainable initiatives in this endeavor. We are leaders in the State of Illinois with our environmental designations as the first Audubon International Sustainable Community in the state, the second International Dark Sky Community in Illinois, and an America in Bloom National Champion for Urban Forestry and Environmental Efforts. We continue to honor our rural by design motto, also having been recognized in the past by Governor Pritzker as the most Environmental Municipality in Illinois.

We are proud to present to the community of Hawthorn Woods our annual report for the calendar year of 2024. As we look ahead, the budget is balanced for the approaching year of 2025, initiatives and programs are expanding to service our growing community, and we are placing a focus on commercial developments that bring supplemental resources for our residents. Our investment in public safety is increasing, and our financial resources are being allocated in areas of greatest infrastructure needs that service all municipal streets in ice and snow removal operations.

In summary, the state of the municipality is financially secure and service needs are expanding to accommodate our growing community. It is an honor to serve alongside our elected and appointed officials, as I recognize and appreciate the collective talents of the team assembled with the common desire to serve others.

Onward to a successful new year for the Hawthorn Woods community!

Pamela O. Newton
Chief Operating Officer
Village of Hawthorn Woods



**Village of Hawthorn Woods
Awards and Certifications
2017-2024**

Awards:

America in Bloom – Outstanding Achievement Award in Urban Forestry	2024
America in Bloom Champion – Population Category 9,000 – 14,000	2024
America in Bloom Champion – Population Category 5,000 – 10,000	2023
America in Bloom – Community Involvement Recognition	2023
Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting FY2021	2023
Lake County Municipal League Municipal Innovation Award	2022
Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting FY2020	2022
Tree City USA Growth Award	2022
America in Bloom – Outstanding Achievement Award in Landscaped Areas	2022
America in Bloom – Landscaped Areas Community Recognition	2022
America in Bloom – Outstanding Achievement Award in Environmental Efforts	2021
America in Bloom – Coolest Place for Kids	2021
America in Bloom – Innovation in Action- Most Impressive New Program	2021
America in Bloom – Overall Impression Community Recognition	2021
Tree City USA Growth Award	2021
2020 Governor’s Hometown Award	2021
Audubon International Sustainable Planning Award	2020

America in Bloom Best Ecological Preservation Project - Meadowlark Park and Arboretum and Brierwoods Preserve	2020
America in Bloom Community Champion Pamela O. Newton, Village of Hawthorn Woods COO	2020
America in Bloom - Environmental Efforts Community Recognition	2020
Audubon International Green Infrastructure Award	2020
America in Bloom Champion – Population Category 5,000 – 10,000	2019
America in Bloom Outstanding Achievement Award in Environmental Efforts	2019
America in Bloom Cultivating Inspiration – Community Mentoring Award	2019
America in Bloom – Landscaped Areas Community Recognition	2019
America in Bloom Champion – Population Category 5,000 – 10,000	2018
America in Bloom – Community Vitality Community Recognition	2018
SolSmart Solar Energy Silver Designation	2018
Morton Arboretum Chicago Region Trees Initiative Urban Forestry	2018
Midwest Sustainable Group Mayoral Excellence in Environmental Achievement	2018
Lake County Municipal League Honorable Mention for Innovation	2018
National Public Works Volunteer of the Year: Matthew Bartlett	2018
Certifications:	
Audubon International Sustainable Community	2022
Safewise 2 nd Safest City in the State of Illinois	2021
International Dark-Sky Association International Dark Sky Community	2020
Tree City USA Affiliate	2020
Bee City USA Affiliate	2020
BarBend.com Third Best City for Fit Lifestyles in Illinois	2020
Budda #17 Most Popular Small Towns to Relocate	2019

HomeSnacks.net #2 Safest Cities in Illinois	2018
HomeSnacks.net #5 Richest Cities in Illinois	2018
Arbor Day Foundation Tree City USA	2017
National Council for Home Safety and Security #4 Safest City in Illinois	2017

Grant Awards

- 2017 - \$122,463.47
- 2018 - \$152,756.63
- 2019 - \$148,389.72
- 2020 - \$512,273.12 (includes CARES Act dollars)
- 2021 - \$1,787,020.00 (includes ARPA dollars)
- 2022 - \$2,458,402.00 (awaiting decisions on an additional \$74,837.00)
- 2023 - \$4,282,550.00
- 2024 - \$796,130.48

2017-2024

Total Grant Dollars: \$10,259,985.42

The synergy between the elected officials and the appointed staff is a major key to our financial success.



Mayor Dominick DiMaggio’s steady leadership and support of innovative operations this year has kept the Village ever increasing its services for our Hawthorn Woods residents. Excellence in Action is recognized every day in this community, as there are no “government workers” on our payroll.

Instead, we have an innovative, service-driven team of professionals who choose to serve others before self, working alongside a team of elected Village Trustees who volunteered their time in 2024 to serve the residents of Hawthorn Woods.

This consistent leadership has proven to be a valuable factor in the amount of grant funding we receive and accolades bestowed upon the Hawthorn Woods community. Working in partnership with citizen volunteers, the Village of Hawthorn Woods continues its successful trajectory as one of the most desired places to live in Lake County.

Year in Review 2024 Initiatives

Innovating Excellence of Service and Public Engagement for the Village of Hawthorn Woods

- **Hawthorn Woods Still Paving the Way**

The Village of Hawthorn Woods is paving the way! Road construction on **Squire Road, Foxtail Road, Cattail Court, Arthur Court, Lancelot Court, and Glen Road** is now complete. The street program this year included the resurfacing of roads and the installation of concrete ribbon. The Village utilized Road Referendum funds to finance this effort.



Pavement patching was performed on **Pheasant Run, Thornfield Lane, Mooregate Trail, and Bixtone Path**. Funding was not available to address all areas. However, the patching work performed was a significant improvement to the condition of these roads.

Indian Creek Road was resurfaced, within Village limits, utilizing 80% Surface Transportation Project funding distributed through the Lake County Council of Mayors, with the remaining 20% utilizing the Village's Road Referendum funding. The **Indian Creek large diameter culvert** was replaced utilizing Road Referendum funds. Stabilization of the **Indian Creek bank** also took place utilizing the Stormwater Infrastructure Repair Fund (SIRF).



The **Community Park parking lot** was resurfaced utilizing Quick Build Illinois funds.

Next year's road program in 2025 is expected to include the resurfacing of **Acorn Drive to Bruce Circle** utilizing 80% Surface Transportation Project funding, with the remaining 20% utilizing the Village's Road Referendum funding.



- **Public Works Cold Storage Building**

The construction of a new Public Works Cold Storage Building is now complete! The Village is grateful to Senator Dan McConchie for securing funding to assist with the construction of this building. The Public Works Cold Storage Building will house Village equipment and vehicles, thereby extending the life of these Village assets utilized to serve residents.



- **Enhanced Amenities at Heritage Oaks Park**

The Village of Hawthorn Woods Parks & Recreation Department recently completed a refurbishment of the outdoor basketball court at Heritage Oaks Park. The original 15-year-old sport court was removed and replaced with new asphalt and court lines.



The two tennis courts have also been resurfaced, and are now composed of one tennis court and two pickleball courts.

All courts will open in the Spring of 2025.



America in Bloom Community Champion Award

The Village of Hawthorn Woods is proud to have recently received the Community Champion National Award in our population category by America in Bloom. This marks the fourth time the Village has received this prestigious recognition.



America in Bloom (AIB) is a nonprofit organization which promotes, recognizes, and celebrates community enhancement programs throughout the United States.

This past June, the Village conducted an extensive two-day tour of our community for two AIB national advisors. Hawthorn Woods was judged on cultural heritage, community vitality, environmental leadership, beautification efforts, citizen engagement, and urban forestry. Over 150 evaluation metrics were scored, and in the under 14,000 population category, we accumulated the most overall points of all participating cities across the nation!

Outstanding Achievement in Urban Forestry Award

The Village of Hawthorn Woods is also proud to have recently received the Outstanding Achievement Award in Urban Forestry by America in Bloom. This marks the first time the Village has ever received an award in this particular category with the planting of 935 diverse, native trees in 2023 and 2024 to increase our canopy cover from 26.7% to a



whopping 32.84%! This planting initiative was made possible, in large part, through the 2023 Chicago Region Earmark Urban and Community Forestry funding opportunity.

- **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting**

In 2024, the Village of Hawthorn Woods is proud to have received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for our annual financial report for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2023. The GFOA advances excellence in government finance by providing best practices, professional development, resources, and practical research for more than 21,000 members and the communities they serve. This is the 17th consecutive year in earning this national award.



The Village of Hawthorn Woods Annual Financial Report was judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive “spirit of full disclosure” to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate individuals and groups to read the report.

- **Financial Reserves Grow**

Because of our conservative approach to spending our ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds, the Village has achieved its goal of retaining acquired savings of over 50% of the annual Budget. This is an increase from the previous goal of 35% of Budget in retained savings. This represents the largest financial policy gain for the Village’s financial stability goals in the last decade.



- **Arbor Day Tree Giveaway**

The Village of Hawthorn Woods Sustainability Committee hosted their 9th annual FREE Tree Sapling Giveaway on May 4, 2024. This event took place at the Aquatic Center as part of our commitment to the continued stewardship of our natural environment. Information about proper tree planting techniques and ongoing care was made available. All tree saplings were provided for **free** to area residents. The species of trees offered consisted of American Plum; Black Cherry; Butternut Hickory; Jack Pine; Norway Spruce; and Sycamore. Free native pollinator seed packets, provided by the Save the Monarch Group in Buffalo Grove, were also handed out. A total of 650 tree saplings and seed packets were distributed to residents that day.



- **Solar Production Plant Successively Blocked from Construction in Neighborhoods**

The Village of Hawthorn Woods was successful in blocking the zoning designation for a solar energy production plant to be constructed on unincorporated farmland adjacent to our municipal boundaries and nestled among single family homes. The Village expended sizable resources to protect property values, ground water resources, noise emissions, energy frequencies, transmission lines in backyards, and production plant fencing that would have changed the quality of lives of those neighborhoods that share a property line with an energy plant. A large volume of time and talent went into this 2024 project, with a successful outcome for the residents of the community. While the Village is supportive of alternative energy sources, the location of such production sources should fit into the aesthetic and environmental values of the Hawthorn Woods community.



- **OMX: Old McHenry Crossings Project**

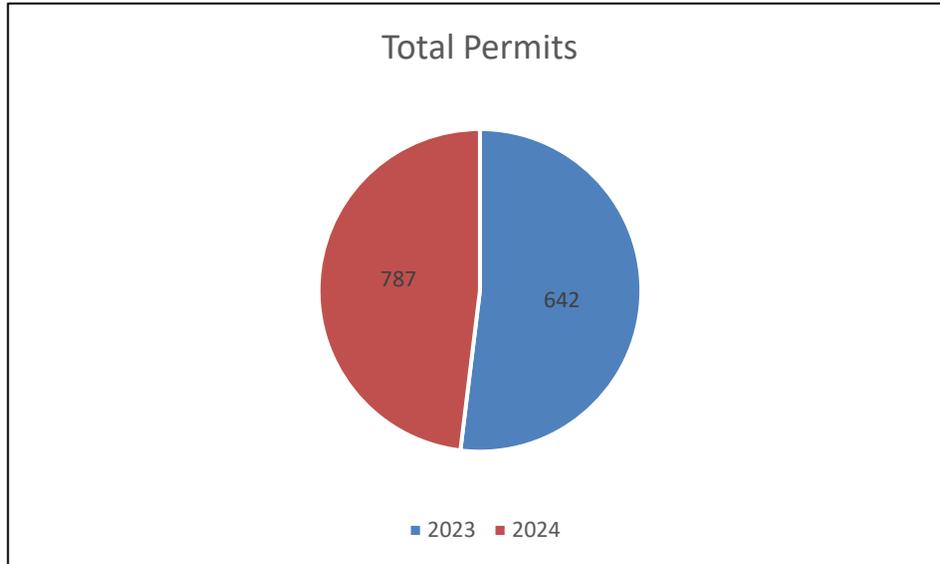
I have been working closely with Erika Frable, PE, Director of Public Works, and Chris Heinen, Community Development Director, in meeting with Lake County on the CN railroad grade separation project currently under phase one engineering with the Lake County Department of Transportation. The project is located on Old McHenry Road near St. Matthew Church and includes several roadway sections that lead to Old McHenry Road, including Midlothian, Fairfield, and Quentin Roads.



The Village has been assisting the OMX team with information about traffic accident history, historical sites, and important environmental features in town. We have met with the OMX team of engineers on several occasions behind the scenes and have an open line of communication with the project team and affected properties. We have reviewed a concept plan for design work for an underpass and will continue to update the Village Board as plans materialize. Another negotiated benefit will be the additional land that may be donated to the Village along the corridor to enlarge the Public Works facility to accommodate our growing fleet and salt storage capabilities.

- **Building Permits**

In 2024, the Village of Hawthorn Woods experienced a significant increase in local building permits from 642 permits in 2023 to 787 permits in 2024. This increase is due primarily to a surge in roof replacements following a hail storm and solar panel installations on rooftops.



- Party in the Park**

At the suggestion of Mayor Dominick DiMaggio, the Village hosted the third annual “Party in the Park” on Saturday, September 7, 2024. This free special event took place at Community Park and consisted of live music; seven food truck vendors; beer and bourbon tent; live petting zoo; train rides; and additional activities for both children and adults. This year, the event finale consisted of our first-ever illuminated Drone Show! This community event was a



tremendous success with over 1000 community members in attendance! Initially, we estimated to financially break even with this first-time event. However, we are pleased to report that the revenue for “Party in the Park” totaled over \$28,000 for 2024!

- Lake County Symphony Orchestra Holiday Concert**

On December 15, 2024, a sold-out holiday concert was hosted by the Village of Hawthorn Woods in partnership with the Lake County Symphony Orchestra in our Village Barn. This event marked the third time the entire symphony orchestra has performed within our community. This holiday event drew a full house, with the Village Barn filled with joyful, festive music!



- **Hawthorn Woods Community Bank Dedication Ceremony**

On March 12, 2024, Mayor Dominick DiMaggio and the Village Board of Trustees were pleased to participate in the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the brand-new Hawthorn Woods Community Bank, a branch of the Barrington Bank & Trust Company and a Wintrust Community Bank.



The bank is located at 107 Roman Lane in Hawthorn Woods at the northeast corner of Quentin Road and Route 22.

- **\$1.5 Million in Community Project Funding**

On December 23, 2022, U.S. Congressman Sean Casten announced \$15,804,200 in Community Project Funding for the 6th District. Representative Casten championed funding for fourteen projects that will directly benefit Illinois's 6th District residents. This includes \$1.5 million for the Village of Hawthorn Woods to fund a utilities extension to accommodate an underserved population currently on well and septic systems. We are still awaiting the Congressional release of those funds in 2024-25.



- **Aurora Borealis Visits Hawthorn Woods**

As a designated International Dark Sky Community since 2020, the Village of Hawthorn Woods witnessed a spectacular aurora borealis display during the weekend of May 11th and again in October. This phenomenon dazzled many of our resident sky watchers and visitors who came to watch the Northern Lights from our sled hill. Many visitors shared the photographs they had taken with the Village!



- **Hawthorn Woods Police Support Fund**

In 2024, the Village has appreciated a great response to the Hawthorn Woods Police Support Fund. This permanent fund was created as an option for our residents to demonstrate their appreciation for the men and women of the Hawthorn Woods Police Department (HWPD).

All donations to the HWPD will fund the necessary safety gear for our officers, who consistently serve others before self, professionally and courteously. Purchases will include state-of-the-art equipment, such as new ballistic gear. In 2024, the HWPD received over \$15,220 in residential and commercial donations.



- **Audubon International names Hawthorn Woods as the first city in Illinois to earn the highly prestigious Audubon International Certified Sustainable Community designation. In 2024, we remain the only Illinois city to receive designation.**

The Village was awarded the Audubon International Sustainable Planning Award and the Audubon International Green Infrastructure Award in 2020 as a precursor to earning the highly regarded Audubon International Certified Sustainable Community designation. At the end of 2021, the Village of Hawthorn Woods was notified that we had earned this designation, which took three years of work to attain.



Hawthorn Woods celebrated this certification in 2023. We are the first municipality or organization in the State of Illinois to attain this very prestigious standard. In 2024, we remain the only Audubon International city in the State of Illinois.

This highly coveted designation is achieved through a three-year-long process addressing each of the fifteen policy focus areas to sustainability for the future. The program focuses on a healthy local environment, quality of life for citizens, and economic vitality. The certification process guides communities through a customized journey to sustain healthy, vibrant places in which to live, work, and play.

- **ComEd Community Canopy and Energy-Saving Trees Arbor Day Foundation Program**

As we continue an on-going effort to increase our community’s urban tree canopy, the Village of Hawthorn Woods was the grateful recipient of 105 native, diverse trees through the ComEd Community Canopy and Energy-Saving Trees Arbor Day Foundation Program.



The 105 donated trees consisted of the following species: Sweetbay; American Beech; Flowering Dogwood; Emerald Green Arborvitae; Pagoda Dogwood; Northern Red Oak; White Spruce; Pin Oak; Shadblow Serviceberry; Colorado Blue Spruce; and Eastern Redbud.

In July, the trees were strategically planted throughout our many public parks and municipal building sites.

- **Independence Day, a huge success!**

I am happy to report that our 3rd of July Fireworks took place with a proud display of patriotism. This holiday event was well-attended and executed without any major incidents. We had a wonderful feeling of hometown pride as thousands gathered at Community Park. Thank you to the many elected officials who were able to join us from Hawthorn Woods. We acknowledge with gratitude our fireworks sponsors: Hawthorn Woods Community Bank; Waste Management; Apex Landscaping; and The Blackshaw Messel Real Estate Group.



- **Community Development Team takes proactive initiative with Weekly Staff Workshops**

We have organized a 4-person development team at the Village, comprised of Directors Chris Heinen, Donna Lobaito, Erika Frable, and myself, who meet weekly to examine development opportunities, as well as land use initiatives, in Hawthorn Woods. Each Thursday morning, we collaborate with potential developers or review marketing materials to promote our retail spaces in the marketplace. We are currently exploring a potential new housing development proposal and annexation of land, and various commercial developments.. We are also working to fill retail space for a restaurant and are working with retailers to bring additional commercial development to town. As with every new development proposal, the availability and affordability of bringing water and sewer to the property, including existing recapture fees, creates the most challenges during concept review.

- **America in Bloom Symposium & Awards Celebration**

On September 26-28, 2024, staff participated in the annual America in Bloom Symposium in Columbus, Ohio, where the national awards were announced. Hawthorn Woods enjoyed a strong representation as the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement in Urban Forestry Award and the Community Champion Award in the under 14,000 population category. I was honored to serve as the symposium committee chair for the second consecutive year.



- **Route 53 Corridor Reuse Committee**

Mayor Dominick DiMaggio has regularly attended, as our municipal representative, a series of meetings regarding the reuse opportunities for the platted Route 53 corridor. Mayor DiMaggio has received an appointment to represent the Village on that committee, and updates were reported to the Village Board throughout the year. The committee ultimately voted to transfer the land in the Route 53 corridor from IDOT (Illinois Department of Transportation) to IDNR (Illinois Department of Natural Resources) in order to formulate a Greenway Corridor reuse plan.



- **Trees Planted Through Lake County Tree Initiative ARPA Grant Award**

The Village of Hawthorn Woods was proudly chosen as a recipient of the Lake County Tree Initiative grant earlier this year, and in October of 2024, twenty-three native trees were planted within our community to take root to improve our urban tree canopy and enhance our natural environment. The species of trees received through this grant opportunity consist of the following: Swamp White Oak; American Sycamore; Shagbark Hickory; American Linden; Sugar Maple; White Oak; Ironwood; Musclemwood; American Beech; Kentucky Coffee; Black Walnut; and Hackberry. The trees were planted throughout our Indian Creek Preserve and the Circle Drive traffic island, located within the Hawthorn Woods Estates subdivision.



We were one of only six communities chosen to take part in this inaugural planting and have been chosen to participate, once again, in the 2025 Lake County Tree Planting Initiative.

The Village of Hawthorn Woods is proud to partner with Lake County to participate in a tree planting program that fosters community engagement to cultivate a sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility.

- **Senior Luncheon with a Thanksgiving Theme**

Mayor Dominick DiMaggio joined staff members to celebrate Thanksgiving with our seniors at the Hawthorn Woods County Club on November 13th. Those who attended were happy to hear about the happenings of the Village and meet with their Mayor for lunch. It was such a heart-warming day to bring fellowship and company to our senior population, and honor those veterans in attendance.



- **Meet and Greet with Congressman Mike Quigley Staff Members**

On November 18th, the Director of Grants and Special Projects Dana Fritz and Director of Community Outreach Jenny Herman, staff members for Representative Mike Quigley of Illinois' Fifth Congressional District, met with Mayor Dominick DiMaggio and Chief Operating Officer Pamela Newton to discuss potential funding opportunities and constituent assistance.



SPECIAL EVENTS

- **Holiday Craft Fair**

The Village hosted another successful craft fair held after Thanksgiving on **Saturday, November 30th**, in the Village Barn. The display vendor tables were completely sold out. We enjoyed a terrific crowd the entire day.



- **Hawthorn Woods: A Hometown Holiday in Community Park**

The Special Events Team and the Parks and Recreation Department produced another friendly welcome for Santa's arrival to the Village of Hawthorn Woods in December. Our Hometown Holiday took place on **Friday, December 6th**. We ushered in the holidays, listened to the Lake Zurich High School Choir, and flipped the switch to light the Village Holiday Tree. Although it was a bit chilly outside, the warmly decorated Public Works garage was a welcoming place for families with hot chocolate, cookies, and a bouncy house for children to enjoy. Our Community Park remained festive the entire season with holiday joy and lights the entire month of December.



We were able to enhance the celebration with additional cultural outdoor lighting displays including a lit kinara to celebrate Kwanzaa and a lit menorah to celebrate Hannukah, as we add to our diversity, inclusion, and multi-cultural welcome to all.



- **ComEd Powering the Holidays Grant Program**

In October, the Village of Hawthorn Woods became the proud recipient of the ComEd Powering the Holidays Grant Program, administered through the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. The funding amount of \$2,500 addressed two objectives to further elevate our annual Hometown Holiday community special event: the first is sustainability and the second is safety.



Many of our Hometown Holiday traditional and nondenominational light displays consist of incandescent bulbs. The Village replaced the incandescent bulbs with energy efficient LED bulbs, along with the required wiring. We also purchased over 200 LED candy cane pathway lights to safely illuminate the paved walking trail from the Community Park parking lot to the Public Works building, then to our 80-foot holiday tree.

- **Movies in the Barn Family Night**

The final Movie in the Village Barn for 2024 was held on **Friday, December 13th**, consisting of a cozy family fun night watching *Wonka* as our feature presentation. Snacks, crafts, and holiday cheer were in abundance. Families gathered in their loungewear, brought sleeping bags and blankets, and enjoyed a respite from the hustle and bustle of the holiday season.



- **Keeping connected through Strong Communication**

In 2022, the Village of Hawthorn Woods added **Instagram** to our media outlet portfolio. Using technology and communication media resources to stay connected as a community has been a successful accomplishment for 2024. We added Instagram and updated our Village website, our weekly E-Blast articles, Facebook page, and even YouTube, making our connection to our constituents stronger than ever. The Village of Hawthorn Woods continues to go above and beyond to encourage community engagement. We not only foster community spirit; we consistently strive to maintain and expand it! We showcase our efforts in the hope that other communities across the nation will catch the spirit of Hawthorn Woods.



- **Garden of the Month Club**

Each year, from June through October, the Village of Hawthorn Woods accepts nominations for our Excellence in Gardening Award. We are proud of the beauty in our community and want to celebrate our efforts with those who contribute to it. We recognize residents who take the time to enhance their homes with vegetable and flower gardens, trees, sculptures, water features, or any other hardscapes that integrate with their surroundings. All submissions included at least one photo in 2024.



Our Hawthorn Woods in Bloom Committee select three finalists each month. The members visit each garden to select the winner. Gardens are judged on the following criteria: design; maintenance; originality; color; plant diversity; and environmental contributions. Award recipients are then recognized on our Village website, in our weekly E-Blast, on our Facebook and Instagram page, and during our Village Board Meetings.

- **Annual Meeting with ComEd**

Each year, I conduct our annual municipal meeting with our ComEd representative. We reviewed, in detail, the Franchise Report and the Load Shed Plan, as required per our agreement.



The Village has been part of an infrastructure replacement plan of ComEd local lines, combined with smart meter technology and continued tree-trimming programs in town. While storms and strong winds are the number one cause of power outages in Hawthorn Woods, squirrels, downed tree limbs on wires, and vehicular accidents continue to be our top three impacts unrelated to weather outages.

- **Illinois City/County Management Association**

As a credentialed manager in Illinois, and a mentor coach for newly-appointed city managers, I am committed to maintaining my professional 40 hours of training each year to retain credentials for the Village of Hawthorn Woods. I earned continuing education credits through symposiums and workshops, digital conferences, and online training workshops to retain my credentialed status for 2024. Only 10% of City Managers/Village Administrators are credentialed in the United States, forming an elite group of professionals. This year, I served as Conference Chair of the National Symposium for America in Bloom and sit on their Board of Directors. This involvement earns me credit toward my ICMA credentialed manager status. I was notified in December, 2024, by the Board of Review that I am re-certified for 2025.



- **Golf Outing 2024**

Even amid a rainstorm, the Village of Hawthorn Woods held our annual golf outing at the Hawthorn Woods Country Club. Profits from the golf outing are utilized for our community events to keep our Concerts in the Park, Independence Day, Party in the Park, and Hometown Holiday festivities free to the public through use of non-tax dollars. We raised over \$41,390 from the 2024 golf event, an amazing record-setting result for our community!



- **Adopt-A-Highway Volunteer Event**

On April 21, 2024, in celebration of Earth Day, the Village of Hawthorn Woods Sustainability Committee hosted an Adopt-A-Highway volunteer event by clearing the north and south sides of Old McHenry Road between Lagoon Drive and Darlington Drive of roadside debris. The Village has proudly maintained this portion of Old McHenry Road since 2010.



- **License Plate Recognition Cameras**

The Village of Hawthorn Woods Police Department has begun to invest in License Plate Recognition (LPR) cameras by installing cameras strategically placed in public locations within our community to upgrade policing and law enforcement activities.



LPR cameras are advanced traffic sensors used to capture and digitalize images from license plates with precision in real time.

This technical security advancement will drive insights to generate leads to help solve and prevent criminal activity. The safety and protection of our residents and visitors has and will always be a high priority in the Village of Hawthorn Woods. Additionally, motion sensor security cameras have been implemented throughout our park properties for additional security measures.

- **Aqua Illinois Breaks Ground on Second Water Treatment Plant**

Aqua Illinois announced the construction of a second water treatment plant in Hawthorn Woods. This state-of-the-art facility will double the current capacity, ensuring reliable service and supporting future growth in the community.



Additionally, the plant will utilize ion exchange filtration for treating the ground water. The new water plant will be located near the existing water storage tank along Schwerman Road. It is expected to be in service by Spring 2025.

- **Hawthorn Woods increases resources in the Police Department in 2024 to continue its designation among the Safest Cities in Illinois**

Hawthorn Woods is consistently named among the safest cities in the State of Illinois by online data trackers. Using various crime and reportable statistics from the FBI annual report, the top ten communities with the lowest crime statistics and the highest law enforcement efforts are selected and recognized. Hawthorn Woods is proud to be recognized as one of the safest places to live in Illinois.



In 2024, the Village of Hawthorn Woods expanded our resources in the Police Department with the purchase of body cameras as mandated by the State of Illinois, as well as ballistic shields and security cameras to add to our safety portfolio. This new investment in the Police Department renews the Village’s commitment to ensure a safe and secure community for our residents.

- **Municipal Aggregation with Illinois Aggregation Consultants Renewed for 2024-26**

Hawthorn Woods left First Energy Solutions in 2020 and contracted with MC Squared as our municipal energy aggregation supplier. With competitors’ rates in alignment with the supply rates from ComEd, the Village opted into a program that not only guarantees competitive rates, but also mandates that green energy be tapped as part of our energy portfolio. We are proud that our efforts over the years have resulted in over \$1.7 million dollars in savings for our residents since its inception.



Our energy consultant, Sharon Durling, has formed her own business entitled Illinois Aggregation Consultants (IAC), and after going to bid in the commodities market, the Village Board approved a three-year price matching contract in November of 2024 with MC2 to ensure our energy costs are never higher than the Com Ed rate.

- **Transparency and Communications**

In the past year the Village created, designed, and expanded a new template for the quarterly Village newsletter, the Hawthorn Woods Happenings. All departments are now represented in each edition. Additionally, the Village E-Blast online electronic weekly newsletter realized an increase to 6,604 active subscribers in 2024.



The Village partners with other agencies to offer a multitude of activities, programs, and events throughout each season. We use a variety of media outlets to reach our diverse population, including e-blasts, printed quarterly newsletters, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Village website, postcard notices, and emergency telephone calling to home and cell phone numbers in order to stay connected to our constituents.

- **Modernization investment improves efficiency**

The Village is proud to report to the community that we have invested significant resources this year in our Public Works Department. We purchased a new 2.5-ton snow plow truck to improve efficiency in our ice and snow removal operations and it was delivered in the summer of 2023 and first utilized for our 2024 snow season. It is important for the public to understand that because of supply chain difficulties, squad cars and municipal trucks have at least a 12-month lag between placing the order and receiving shipment and delivery of a new vehicle.



We also completed our seventh full-year of fueling our vehicles in town at the Village gasoline pump, saving time and money by having a fueling station at the Public Works building. Snow operations also improved as a result of our fleet remaining in town for gasoline and fill-ups, instead of driving to another town's facility. Our trucks were able to refuel in record time and continue with snow and ice operations due to this operational investment.

- **New Village software implemented to improve efficiency for residents**

The Village has completed its conversion of software, leaving antiquated MSI behind and transitioning to BS&A programming. Over the past few years, the Village has experienced difficulties with our previous software, leaving room for error in record-keeping and experiencing the loss of MSI program support as it was phased out of municipal services. After a year-long study, the Village signed a contract to utilize BS&A software to modernize every department and allow for interdepartmental shared information.



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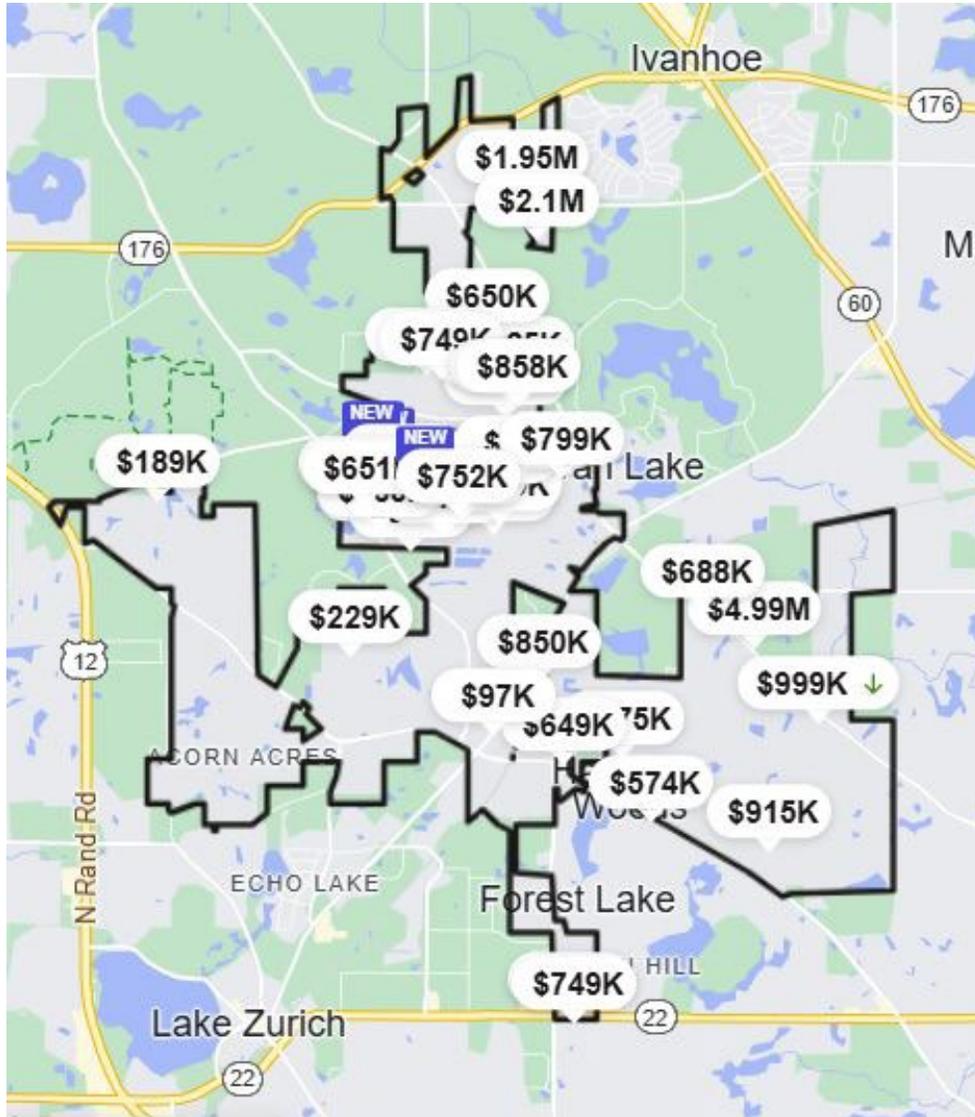
The conversion project was implemented in all departments and in all facilities. We spent several days in training, and now appreciate the amount of time invested in order to move our Village forward in accuracy, customer service, and new applications. Already, some of the new features have increased efficiency, as purchase order requests now must be entered with the line-item match already approved in the Budget. The system will alert the requester if the request exceeds the permitted allotment as approved by the Village Board. This is a great improvement to control spending requests before end-of-month numbers are shared. There is immediate shared knowledge of itemized balances in real time.

Also, Police record software has improved over the past year, digitizing what were once manually written reports now replaced by electronic record keeping, creating greater efficiency and providing quicker results and communication opportunities in law enforcement.

Additionally, the Village has implemented a new phone system to improve communications with fewer outages. Our antiquated systems were no longer available for replacement or tech support. This upgrade in technology and phone systems has improved efficiency and response times for our residents.

2024 VILLAGE STATISTICS

Homes for sale in Hawthorn Woods as of January 10, 2025



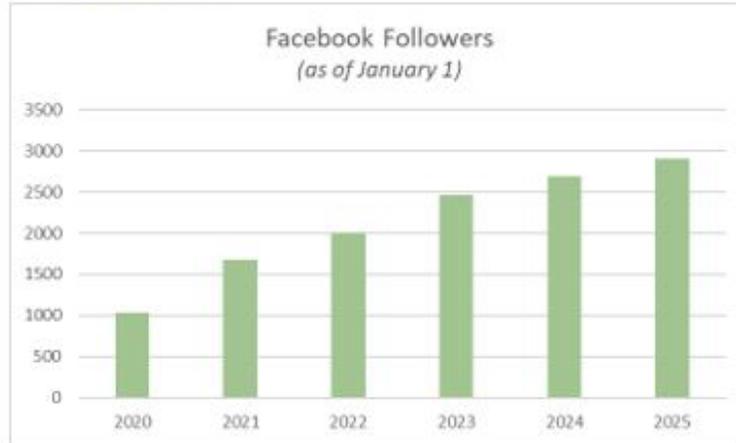
Overview of Hawthorn Woods Real Estate Market Trends*
*Calculated using the last 30 days of data as of January 10, 2025
(Source: realtor.com)

Homes Reported for Sale: 44

Median List Price: \$699,900
Median List \$/Sq Ft: \$216
Median Sold Price: \$685,000

Village of Hawthorn Woods Media Outlets

Social Media



Number of Facebook Followers: 2,906 (+8.2%)

Number of Instagram Followers: 204 (+61.9%)

Number of Social Media Posts: 366

Constant Contact

Total Contacts 6,076 (+6.5%)

New Contacts 628

Unsubscribed Contacts 253

Number of E-Blasts 125

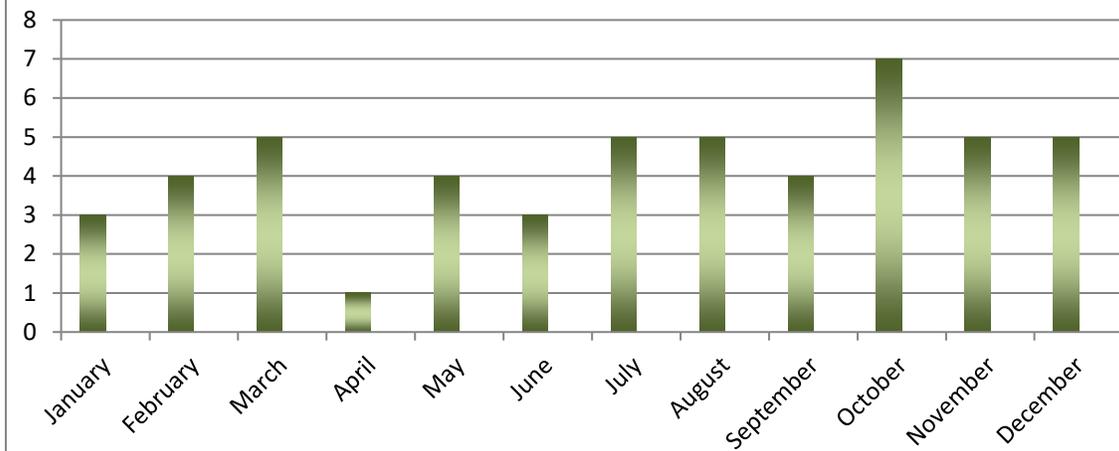
Open Rate 61% *Industry average = 36%*

Click Rate 3% *Industry average = 5%*

The Village of Hawthorn Woods maintains a Facebook page and an Instagram page to communicate happenings and alerts to our community. The Village also circulates a weekly E-Blast electronic newsletter through the Constant Contact media platform. Every Thursday via email, information such as Village news, meeting notices, road closures, recycling events, recreational programs, and special events are sent directly to the recipient's email.

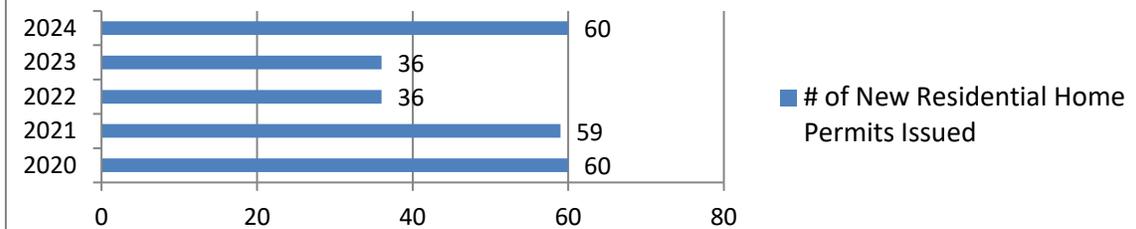
The Village realized an 8.2% increase in Facebook followers and a 61.9% increase in Instagram followers this past year, along with a 6.5% increase in contacts (subscribers) to our weekly E-Blast.

New Hawthorn Woods Move-Ins

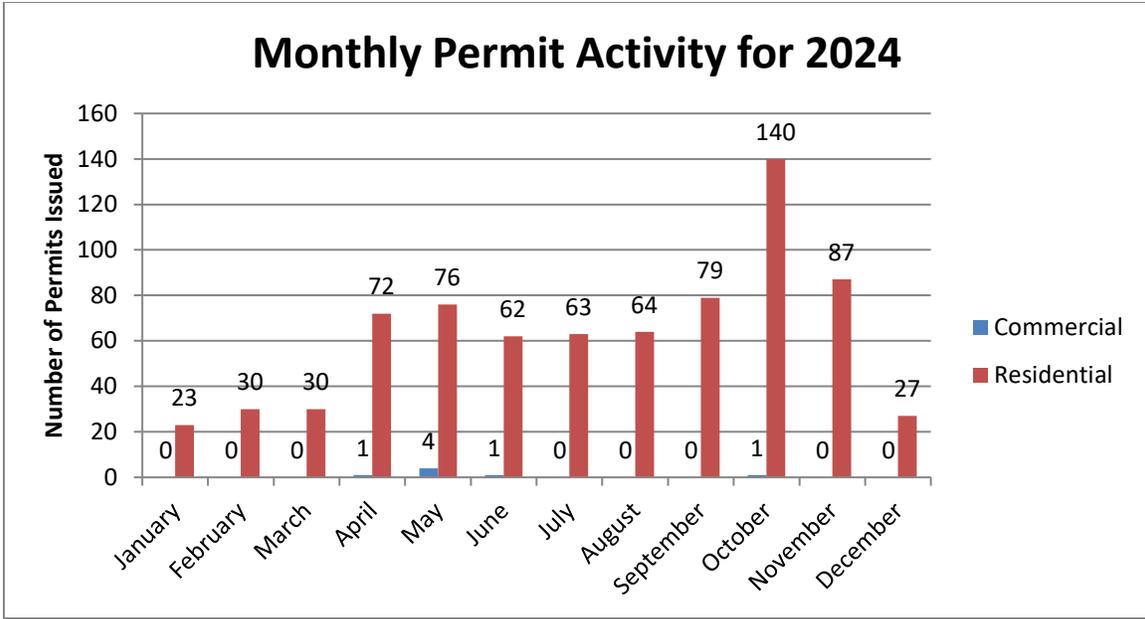


This metric tracks the number of new single-family residential homes within the Village. In 2024, 51 Certificates of Occupancy were issued. New residents can access valuable resources on the Village website at www.vhw.org, including information about the Hawthorn Woods Village government, public safety services, local ordinances, a staff directory, a move-in checklist, and more.

5-Year Home Start Trend



In 2024, the Village saw a significant increase in residential construction starts, with activity levels comparable to those in 2020 and 2021. This upward trend is expected to continue as M/I Homes progresses with development in the Hawthorn Woods Country Club and as individual vacant lots across the Village are developed.



This graph illustrates monthly permit activity for 2024, categorized into two primary types: (1) commercial and (2) residential permits. The spring, summer, and fall seasons were the most active for permit processing, with October recording the highest volume. This spike was largely driven by increased roofing permits as companies canvassed local neighborhoods.



HWPD Year to Date Comparison Report

Printed On: 01/03/2025

Page 1 of 2

Beginning Date: 01/01/2024

Ending Date: 12/31/2024

Offenses Known to Police

Agency: HAWTHORN WOODS

Classification of Offenses	Offenses Reported	Offenses Cleared	Projected Rate/1000	Last YTD Reported	Percent Change
Animal Cruelty, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Arson, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Assault Offenses, Total	6	3	0.69	1	500.00%
Aggravated Assault	0	0	0.00	0	-
Intimidation	2	0	0.23	1	100.00%
Simple Assault	4	3	0.46	0	-
Bribery, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Burglary/Breaking and Entering, Total	2	0	0.23	1	100.00%
Counterfeiting/Forgery, Total	2	0	0.23	1	100.00%
Destruction/Damage/Vandalism of Property, Total	7	0	0.81	7	0.00%
Drug/Narcotic Offenses, Total	21	14	2.43	5	320.00%
Drug Equipment Violations	4	3	0.46	1	300.00%
Drug/Narcotic Violations	17	11	1.97	4	325.00%
Embezzlement, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Extortion/Blackmail, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Fraud Offenses, Total	24	1	2.77	30	-20.00%
False Pretense/Swindle/Confidence Game	7	0	0.81	4	75.00%
Credit Card/Automatic Teller Machine Fraud	2	0	0.23	2	0.00%
Welfare Fraud	0	0	0.00	0	-
Wire Fraud	5	0	0.58	7	-28.57%
Hacking/Computer Invasion	0	0	0.00	0	-
Identity Theft	7	0	0.81	16	-56.25%
Impersonation	3	1	0.35	1	200.00%
Gambling Offenses, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Betting/Wagering	0	0	0.00	0	-
Operating/Promoting/Assisting Gambling	0	0	0.00	0	-
Sports Tampering	0	0	0.00	0	-
Gambling Equipment Violations	0	0	0.00	0	-
Homicide Offenses, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Murder and Nonnegligent Manslaughter	0	0	0.00	0	-
Negligent Manslaughter	0	0	0.00	0	-
Human Trafficking, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts	0	0	0.00	0	-
Human Trafficking, Involuntary Servitude	0	0	0.00	0	-
Kidnapping/Abduction, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Larceny/Theft Offenses, Total	4	0	0.46	9	-55.56%
Motor Vehicle Theft, Total	2	0	0.23	0	-



HWPD Year to Date Comparison Report

Printed On: 01/03/2025

Page 2 of 2

Beginning Date: 01/01/2024

Ending Date: 12/31/2024

Classification of Offenses	Offenses Reported	Offenses Cleared	Projected Rate/1000	Last YTD Reported	Percent Change
Pornography/Obscene Material, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Prostitution Offenses, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Assisting or Promoting Prostitution	0	0	0.00	0	-
Prostitution	0	0	0.00	0	-
Purchasing Prostitution	0	0	0.00	0	-
Robbery, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Sex Offenses, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Fondling	0	0	0.00	0	-
Rape	0	0	0.00	0	-
Sexual Assault with an Object	0	0	0.00	0	-
Sodomy	0	0	0.00	0	-
Sex Offenses, Non-Forcible, Total	0	0	0.00	0	-
Statutory Rape	0	0	0.00	0	-
Incest	0	0	0.00	0	-
Stolen Property Offenses, Total	1	0	0.12	1	0.00%
Weapons Law Violations, Total	2	1	0.23	0	-
Group A Offense, Total	71	19	8.21	55	29.09%
Crimes Against Person, Total	6	3	0.69	1	500.00%
Crimes Against Property, Total	42	1	4.85	49	-14.29%
Crimes Against Society, Total	23	15	2.66	5	360.00%
Officers Killed or Assaulted YTD	0			0	-

2024 Grant Summary				
Name of Grant	Grant Type	Rejected/ Accepted	Funding Received	Comments
FY 2025 Community Project Funding - Representative Jan Shakowsky	Federal	Awaiting Decision	\$90,000.00	Funding in conjunction with Fremont Township, patching of Owens Drive and Milton Road, VHW will receive a portion of grant award.
MMC EV Charging Infrastructure Aggregate Resubmission	Federal	Awaiting Decision	\$500,000.00	Funding awarded to strategically deploy electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, local group application.
ComEd Powering Safe Communities Grant Program	Corporate	Rejected	\$7,343.00	Purchase of 9 custom bulletproof vests. This is a 50% match.
2024 T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program	Corporate	Rejected	\$50,000.00	Purchase of one entry monument sign.
Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Partnership	Federal	Awaiting Decision	\$3,962.48	Requested \$3,962.48 to provide 5 custom bulletproof vests. This is a 50% match.
2024 Lake County Tree Planting Program	County	Accepted	\$23,000.00	Stormwater management allocation of 11 trees for Circle Drive and 12 trees for Indian Creek Preserve.
ComEd Powering the Holidays Grant Program	Corporate	Accepted	\$2,500.00	Purchase of 222 - 36" LED candy cane safety pathway lights and light display C7 LED bulbs and wire for Hometown Holiday. This is a 20% match.
2025 Lake County Tree Planting Program	County	Accepted	\$30,000.00	Stormwater management allocation of 15 trees for Lagoon Drive and 15 trees for Brierwoods Preserve.
Stormwater Infrastructure Repair Fund (SIRF)	County	Accepted	\$64,325.00	Funding for stabilization of Indian Creek bank. This is a 50% match.
2024-2026 Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program	Federal	Awaiting Decision	\$25,000.00	Funding for invasive species removal and tree replacement at Brierwoods Preserve and Woodland Park.
Total			\$796,130.48	

Detailed above is a listing of the 2024 grant applications and the status of those requested funds.

2025 Initiatives: A Look Ahead

- **A Look Ahead to 2025**

As we look ahead to 2025, the Village is in stride with its twelfth year of the Priority Based Budget document, leading the municipal community with innovative zero-based budgeting and prioritization of limited expenditures. The Budget is balanced and the Hawthorn Woods community is in a strong financial position.



- **Lake Michigan Water Allocation**

The Village of Hawthorn Woods has received, for the first time in the history of its incorporation, an allocation for the future Lake Michigan water allocation opportunity. As we look ahead to 2025 initiatives, the distribution of clean, reliable and safe drinking water will be a priority project for the Village, an historical undertaking working with The Central Lake County Joint Water Action Agency (CLCJAWA) to attain a water allocation for future water security within the Village boundaries. With the CLCJAWA water main needing to be constructed through the Village to serve other municipalities, an allocation was negotiated for the first time in the Village's history. The Village is continuing to work with Lake County Government and CLCJAWA towards the goal of providing a Lake Michigan water supply for those not on individual wells, putting the Village in a secure position for the accessibility of safe drinking water distribution in the future.

- **Road Program expands in 2025**

We will continue to share *HW Paves the Way* details with the community as we roll out of our second full year of our street renovation and maintenance program. Streets currently without concrete ribbon borders in the original part of town are prioritized. Sequoia, Blackhawk, Shenandoah, and Rutgers Roads highlight the roadwork plans for 2024.



- **Federal and State grants take priority**

Our Grants Team will continue to seek alternative funding sources for operations and capital needs, including state and federal funding opportunities. We will also continue to focus on a controlled growth trajectory, as Hawthorn Woods continues to be an attractive and desirable place to live, work, and play.

We will continue our work with our local, county, state, and federal elected officials to seek partnerships in funding and in advancing our legislative agenda. Thanks to Representative Casten's office, we anticipate the Village receiving \$1.5 million in funding for extending utilities. The expansion of potable water and sewer services is critical to attract commercial development in town.

- **Attract Compatible Business and Commercial Developments**

The Village staff continues to prioritize attracting commercial development and non-residential opportunities, like annexations of land, a retail component in town, and building opportunities that create tax distributions to supplement the tax burden from the residents to also include additional commercial and business properties to supplement Village finances. Some of the past barriers to retail development result from the lack of water and sewer to the desired parcels for developments. Therefore, the Village will work on prioritizing utility diversity, working to renew our service agreements with Lake County for sewer service, and seeking alternative sources for dependable, affordable, and safe drinking water for our residents with our newly acquired allocation of Lake Michigan drinking water and Aqua Illinois's new well pump station located near the Hawthorn Woods Country Club.

- **Investment in Professional Talent for 2025**

Reflecting the new developmental growth of neighborhoods in town, the Village is planning to add an additional employee to our Community Development Department to keep up with the demand of resident services, permits, inspections, development review, subdivision improvement agreements, and code enforcement. The community will experience excellent service opportunities at the counter, by phone, and online and quicker response times to meet the needs of our growing population.

- **Aging in Place Initiatives**

We will continue to prioritize aging in place amenities, where Hawthorn Woods becomes recognizable as a place where seniors wish to retire and find supportive resources in their own hometown. In order to accomplish those goals, we will continue to seek diversified housing choices for our aging population who may want to stay in town, but desire more maintenance-free landscape options. We also will work to expand services and activities to our seniors, including growing our monthly senior lunch gathering, paving grass trails for easier wheeled mobility, and renovating park recreational structures for less tripping hazards and safer accessibility for all ages.



- **Bike Path/Walking Trails**

The Village is working on our comprehensive municipal trail expansion with the approval of an 80% : 20% cost-sharing split with grant partnerships involving the Lake County Department of Transportation. Work is in the planning stages for additional bike and walking trails at the OMX Old McHenry Road and Midlothian rail crossing project through the Lake County Division of Transportation. This is a major infrastructure investment that will bring us closer to our multi-modal transportation goals to provide safe routes throughout town on bicycle, for walking pedestrians, or those with strollers, and for persons with wheeled mobility needs. We also anticipate trail expansion opportunities along Route 22 and Gilmer Road when that project is designed with the State of Illinois.

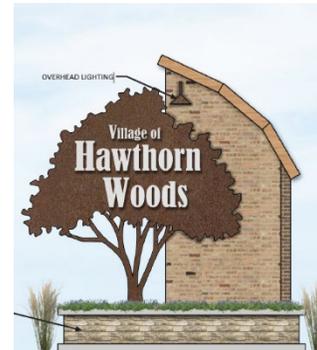


- **2025 Introduces a New Integrated Police Dispatch System**

One of the largest changes in the 2025 Budget is the addition of our membership into a new Regional 911 consolidation dispatch consortium with other Lake County Public Safety entities, including police and fire dispatch systems. The Village entered into an IGA with the consortium, which is expected to become fully staffed and operational by the summer of 2025. While improving efficiency and public safety, this new membership will require a significant investment to fund the new center and its operations.

- **Hawthorn Woods to Advance Entry Monument Sign Program**

The Village is embarking on a new placemaking initiative with the implementation of two entry sign monuments to be placed at the north and south entry points to our community. The first sign is nearing completion at the corner of Route 22 and Quentin Road.



The design of the entry sign monument was centered around the Village's "rural by design" motto and was envisioned by the team at Kimley-Horn, our engineering, planning, and design consultants. This concept draws inspiration from the natural surroundings of our Village, featuring design elements of the Village Hall historic barn and our designated municipal Hawthorn tree. The sign will be dynamic rather than static, utilizing modern materials and techniques to create not only an entry sign monument, but a work of art.

The construction of this entry monument, tentatively scheduled for January 2025 completion, was constructed by Doyle Signs. They are responsible for implementing numerous municipal signs throughout the area and are familiar with the IDOT regulatory standards. We are planning the design, location, and funding for the second entrance sign in 2025.

- **Waste Management Contract Renewal**

On January 1, 2025, the Village begins a new 5-year contract for reuse and recycling services with Waste Management. There will be no disruption in services with this renewal contract. In the evaluation process, the major haulers submitted proposals for review, and the Waste Management proposal comprehensively provided consistent and reliable customer service and community dependability for the Hawthorn Woods community.

- **Lake County Old McHenry Crossing OMX Project/Transportation Initiatives**

2025 will see the advancement of a critical infrastructure project in town that will impact all motoring public that currently cross the CN railroad tracks on Old McHenry Road. A study, public comment, and design engineering are underway for a grade separation project that will allow for traffic to move under the tracks through



town, where motorists currently wait in traffic for approximately 23 trains daily to cross the intersection. Police and emergency service vehicles, as well as other public services, are often delayed in their response due to a passing or stalled train. Once completed, this multi-year initiative will become a critical transportation improvement for all residents of Hawthorn Woods that will include new traffic lanes, new signalization, and new bike paths. A new entrance to the Hawthorn Woods Public Works facility is planned and will be aligned with the businesses and church across the street (Hawthorn Gardens and St. Matthew Lutheran Church) and will include a lighted intersection, allowing for our trucks to safely ingress and egress the Public Works facility with a lighted traffic control signal.

In summary, the Village of Hawthorn Woods has presented a balanced budget to the community and continues to remain in a healthy fiscal position, especially considering the economic challenges and delayed supply chain for municipal services still recovering from the global pandemic. We continue our trend to underspend our Budget allocation, so there are funds remaining year-end to transfer to the Capital Budget to fund our larger infrastructure projects. We continue to prioritize our expenditures based off of projected revenues, but do not initiate projects or programs until the revenues are actually realized.

We are taking our Village to new levels of accrued savings, surpassing our financial goal of half of an annual operating budget in accrued savings. We paid off and retired the Aquatic Center debt, and self-funded the balance of that debt to save on interest for the Village. We also set a new goal of increasing reserved savings, and have grown our reserves to exceed 50% of the Annual Budget. All of our vehicles are paid for in cash savings, a complete reversal of past practices where debt was incurred with vehicle loans. No new debt was incurred in 2024, and existing inherited debt from the Aquatic Center was paid down, saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in interest fees.

Our Budget reflects a zero-based practice, where each year any departmental expenditure must be requested and defended before a Budget Review Panel. A three-quote vendor comparison is then analyzed to ensure the price quote is the lowest, most responsible bid in the market. Hawthorn Woods continues to receive awards for our fiscal budgeting practices and Balanced Budget. The 2024 fiscal year was no exception, as the Government Finance Officers Association presented their Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the Village of Hawthorn Woods. We will be submitting our nomination to the GFOA for the fiscal year ending 2024 and anticipate another award-winning designation.

It is an honor to serve the citizens of Hawthorn Woods alongside our professional Village employees and distinguished Mayor and Board of Trustees. I am proud to present to you and the residents of Hawthorn Woods our 2024 Year in Review. One of our greatest strengths we initiate as a municipal team are the collaborative efforts we share with our community in turning our goals into achievements.

Together, along with our elected officials and residents, we have achieved remarkable accomplishments and innovative advancements in municipal governance.



Pamela O. Newton
Chief Operating Officer