



W E S T C H I C A G O  
**CITY BULLETIN**

WINTER 2025



## ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE

At its November 18, 2024 meeting, the City Council approved a Preliminary Planned Unit Development for 139 townhome-style units by Redwood USA LLC along North Avenue, north of Atlantic Drive. This project, featuring commercial uses fronting Route 64, is designed to provide rental units targeted at seniors, with monthly rents starting around \$3,000. Aligned with City planning documents, this valuable development would add much needed population density to attract quality commercial while imposing minimal burden on the school districts.

However, the very next day, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County Board directed its staff to pursue acquiring this land, and in December, the Board authorized the use of eminent domain if a negotiated sale fails. The motivation? Preserving 150+ year-old oak trees on the property, some of which would need to be removed to make room for housing. Importantly, the development is designed to retain many of these trees as part of the wetlands and buffer zone.

Even more concerning, the Forest Preserve District is eyeing the last three remaining areas in West Chicago suitable for quality residential and commercial development including this Redwood Townhome Development, the farmed portion of St. Andrews Golf Course (Klein/Smith Roads) and the former Kuhn/Cascade property. Losing any of these sites could significantly impact our future tax base and alarmingly, all three are under threat.

West Chicago already has a tremendous amount of open space within and around its borders including the DuPage Airport, West Chicago Park District land, Federally-owned Fermi Lab, as well as existing holdings of the DuPage County Forest Preserve District. While open space contributes to community livability, there is a tipping point. Excessive open space, which generates no tax revenue, strains the resources needed to serve our residents through schools, parks, fire protection, and other services. This imbalance also deters commercial development, which depends on population density to thrive. Adding to this challenge, our population is nearing the critical threshold of 25,000 residents needed to maintain home rule status. Dropping below this number could jeopardize our ability to provide essential services and meet the expectations of residents and businesses.

West Chicago is a majority-minority, economically disadvantaged community with a poverty rate three times higher than DuPage County overall. Our teachers are among the lowest paid in the County, and more than half of our students come from low- to moderate-income families. Despite this, our community bears a disproportionate share of the County's open space burden—much of which remains inaccessible for our residents to enjoy. Why should West Chicago shoulder this responsibility for affluent DuPage County? Why are we being blocked from determining our own economic future?

These questions deeply concern me and the Senior Leadership Team. Together with the City Council, we would like to work on a strategy to partner with the Forest Preserve District on alternative approaches. If collaboration fails, we will vigorously oppose these actions to protect our community's interests.

At our recent "Ask the Administrator" session, Tia and I had a meaningful discussion with attendees about our roles in the organization, City challenges, and economic development efforts past and future. It was a rewarding dialogue and exchange of ideas, and we greatly appreciate everyone who participated.

Our next session is scheduled for February 18th at City Hall from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. Tia and I will be available to answer questions, discuss current City developments, and hear your thoughts. Specifically, we'd like your input on the Forest Preserve District's plans. Do you think the City should actively oppose these acquisitions? Are there groups you know that could help advocate for keeping these properties available for development?

We look forward to seeing you on February 18th.

Michael Guttman



## QUARTERLY QUOTABLES

**Your own  
positive future  
begins in this  
moment. All  
you have is  
right now.  
Every goal  
is possible  
from here.**

Lao Tzu



## EMPLOYEE MILESTONES

Please extend a warm welcome or offer congratulations to the following employees who have achieved a significant milestone with the City this season.

### Promotions

- Kelley Chriss promoted to Director of Business and Community Relations (10/21/2024)
- Jonathan Jones promoted to Police Sergeant (12/02/2024)

### New Employees

- Mark Gaul, Water Treatment Plant Operator (10/14/2024)

### Work Anniversaries

- 20 Years of Service*
  - Albert Abad, Water Treatment Plant Operator (12/13/2004)
- 1 Year of Service*
  - Sofia Gonzalez, Social Service Worker (10/02/2023)





## New Department Launched to Enhance Economic Vitality & Community Engagement

The City is pleased to announce the creation of its new Business and Community Relations Department, which will focus on improving community engagement and promoting local economic growth. By aligning key functions under one department, the City aims to better target its resources and maximize West Chicago's potential.

This new initiative builds on recent successes, including West Chicago's recognition on Fortune's list of the best places to live for families in 2022 and 2024. In response to recommendations from the City's Strategic and Comprehensive Plans, the new department consolidates

economic development, marketing and communications, special events, and the City's museum operations to create a more unified and efficient approach.

Leading the Department is Kelley Chrise, the City's former Economic Development Coordinator. Kelley is supported by Daniel Peck, Marketing and Communications Manager; Nicolette Stefan, Special Events Coordinator; and Sara Phalen, the City's contracted Museum Director.

The formation of this department represents a significant step forward for West Chicago, positioning the City to better serve residents, attract businesses, and continue its growth.

## Public Works Inspire Local Students

Recently, our Assistant Director of Public Works, Dave Shah, had the opportunity to engage with students at West Chicago Community High School. As part of the LEAD (Leadership Education and Academic Development) Program, Dave shared his journey in civil engineering and discussed the significant role his work plays in supporting the City's operations.

This valuable experience was coordinated by Puente del Pueblo, a local organization dedicated to uplifting West Chicago through community and educational initiatives. The LEAD Program, which focuses on empowering first-generation, college-bound students, provided a perfect platform for Dave to inspire and motivate students about the possibilities of higher education and career paths.



Rather than just focusing on civil engineering or city government, the conversation encouraged students to think about their futures and how they can shape their own paths toward success. It's a great reminder of the importance of community involvement and how the efforts of our City staff can contribute to the growth and empowerment of future generations.



## Officer Jonathan Jones Promoted to Sergeant

The City is pleased to announce the promotion of Officer Jonathan Jones to the rank of Sergeant. Sergeant Jones, a lifelong West Chicago resident and West Chicago High School graduate, was sworn in by Chief Fleury on December 3.

A lifelong resident of West Chicago, Sergeant Jones began his career with the Police Department in March 2012 after graduating from the Suburban Law Enforcement Academy at College of DuPage. Throughout his career, Sergeant Jones has demonstrated unwavering dedication to both the community and the Department.

Sergeant Jones spent the majority of his career serving as a Uniformed Patrol Officer, and for the past two years, has excelled in the role of the Department's Training Coordinator. In addition, he has contributed his expertise as a Field Training Officer, Evidence Technician, and Instructor in several critical areas, including Defensive Tactics, Rapid Deployment, OC Spray, and CPR/AED.

This well-deserved promotion highlights Sergeant Jones' dedication to public service and leadership. The City is proud of his accomplishments and looks forward to his continued positive impact in his new role.



# Local Street Artist Adds Splash of Color to the Downtown with Murals

If you've visited downtown West Chicago recently, you've likely noticed the colorful new murals that are adding vibrancy to the area. Thanks to a grant from the DuPage Foundation, the City launched a new mural program featuring seven stunning pieces of art along Main Street, Washington Street, and Turner Court. These murals were created by local street artist Giovanni Arellano and bring a fresh, artistic touch to the heart of the downtown area.

The murals celebrate the diversity of Illinois' prairies, with designs showcasing native butterflies, flowers, and birds—many inspired by the Illinois Prairie Path that runs through West Chicago. Each piece reflects the natural beauty of our local environment and offers a unique visual experience that connects the community to its natural surroundings.

To ensure the artwork remains dynamic, the murals are housed in frames to allow for future updates and new designs to be added over the years. This mural program is an integral part of a broader initiative in the City's Comprehensive



Plan, which aims to enhance downtown West Chicago, engage local artists, and create a more vibrant, walkable space for residents and visitors alike.

We encourage all staff to take a moment to check out these new murals when you have time. Enjoy the creative energy they bring to our downtown area and see how public art is helping to shape a more welcoming and engaging community.



## New Employee Intranet: A Go-To Resource for City Information

We're excited to announce the launch of the City's new intranet. This user-friendly platform is designed to provide easy access to important resources, announcements, and city-wide updates. Be sure to explore the intranet and take advantage of all it has to offer.

Here's a look at some key features currently available:

- **2025 Pay Periods & Holidays:** Plan your timesheets and vacations with the Pay Periods and Holiday list. City and Union holidays are listed on separate pages for easy printing.
- **Email Signature Template:** Need a quick way to format your email signature? Use the template for a fast and easy solution—just copy and paste.
- **Benefit Logins:** Access all your benefits links in one spot. Use the "I want to learn more about" navigation bar to quickly find what you need.
- **RMA Forms:** Download fillable RMA forms and other HR and Finance documents. Be sure to send them to the appropriate parties.

Take a moment to explore these resources and make the most of the intranet to stay informed and organized.



# 'PI DAY' RETURNS MARCH 14TH

To round out this special day, we are once again hosting a PiDay luncheon and potluck at City Hall, Police Station, and Water Treatment Plant with a variety of sweet and savory options. Hope to see you there!

## 20 Tips to Maximize Your Insurance & Benefits in 2025

As we move into the new year, now is the perfect time to make sure you're getting the most out of your insurance and benefits. Whether you're looking to save money, take full advantage of available resources, or plan for the future, these 20 tips will help you navigate your benefits and ensure you're making the best choices for you and your family in 2025.

1. Plan medical or dental procedures strategically throughout the year to the extent possible.
2. Choose telehealth, urgent or convenient care over ER visits for non-life threatening care.
3. Stay in-network for your care. Out of pocket expenses rise when you go out-of-network.
4. Understand your plan, ask questions and eliminate surprises, which will reduce expenses.
5. Know when pre-authorizations are necessary by calling the carrier or reading the Summary of Benefits and Coverage (SBC).
6. Enroll in a 90-day mail-order service for your maintenance prescriptions and get three months for the price of one.
7. Use the BCBSIL Cost Estimator to compare prices for procedures, as they can vary greatly.
8. Buy FSA-eligible over-the-counter items with your FSA card to reduce taxable income and out-of-pocket expenses.
9. Choose the best plan during the open enrollment period for your family's needs.
10. BCBSIL PPO members can receive cash rebates when using a high-quality provider.
11. VSP vision members can use coupons, discounts and promotions on top of their benefits.
12. Have your dentist provide an estimate and verifications of benefits before your procedure.
13. Compare pricing for prescriptions using the Express Scripts app or on its website.
14. Compare your Explanation of Benefits (EOB) to the medical or dental bill before you pay it.
15. Use your preventative care and wellness benefits routinely!
16. Invest in your mental, emotional and spiritual health by exploring and using our ComPsych Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources.
17. Appeal denied claims when necessary by providing additional medical information, asking your health care provider to advocate for you and following the carrier's appeal procedure.
18. Make use of the new adult coverage and higher annual limit for orthodontia coverage.
19. Plan for your retirement with a long-term effort. Evaluate your needs and consider the 457(b) deferred compensation plan options, participating in a Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association (VEBA) if available, saving through IMRF Voluntary Additional Contribution Program, and using the financial planning tools in the ComPsych EAP portal.
20. Contact HR with questions or when assistance is needed.

# TIPS & TRICKS

## for Microsoft Office



## Maximizing Productivity with Microsoft Teams

As we continue diving into the many features of Office 365, let's take a deeper look at Microsoft Teams. Whether you're new to Teams or looking to get more out of its collaborative features, this guide will help you maximize productivity.

### Getting Started with Microsoft Teams

#### 1. Setting Up Teams and Channels

- **Teams:** Start by creating a team for your division or specific projects. For example, you might have separate teams for Training, Engagement, and Goals.
- **Channels:** Within each team, create channels to organize conversations by topics, projects, or tasks. Channels help keep discussions focused and relevant. For instance, the Engagement team could have channels for "Internal Communication," "Social Media," and "Special Events". \*Pro Tip\* Pin frequently used channels or chats and keep your channel naming structure clear and consistent.
- **Notifications:** Customize your notification settings to stay informed without being overwhelmed. You can choose

how and when you receive notifications for messages, mentions, and activities.

#### 2. Communicating Effectively

- **Chat:** Use this feature for quick, informal conversations with colleagues. You can chat one-on-one or in groups, share files, and even start video calls directly from the chat window.
- **@Mentions:** Use @mentions to get someone's attention in a channel. For example, typing @JohnDoe will notify John Doe that you need his input.
- **Posts and Announcements:** Use the "Posts" tab in each channel to start team conversations, ask questions, or make announcements. This keeps everyone in the loop and allows for organized discussions.

### Enhancing Collaboration

#### 1. File Sharing and Collaboration

- **Sharing Files:** Each team has a Files tab where all shared documents are stored, making it easy to find and collaborate on them. \*Remember from our File Sharing article that Teams is particularly great for collaborating

and sharing documents over extended periods of time.

- **Co-Authoring:** Work on documents in real-time with your colleagues. Multiple team members can edit a Word document, Excel spreadsheet, or PowerPoint presentation at the same time.

#### 2. Integrated Applications

- **Tabs:** Add tabs to your channels for quick access to frequently used files, websites, or apps. For example, you can add a Planner tab for task management or a SharePoint tab for department-specific documents.
- **Applications:** Enhance your Teams experience with apps like Trello or Planner for project management or Polls for surveys. Applications can help automate tasks, designate workflows, integrate other tools, and more.

By taking advantage of the collaborative features of Microsoft Teams, we can enhance communication, streamline workflows, and boost productivity across the City of West Chicago as we continue to serve our community effectively.



# Winter Safety: Fire & Carbon Monoxide Risks

As we settle into the colder months of January and February, it's crucial to be aware of winter's unique safety hazards. In addition to checking your smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors, here are some essential tips to help you stay safe and warm this winter season.

## Winter Fire Safety

The risk of house fires increases during the winter months due to the use of heating equipment and seasonal decorations. Here are some key tips to prevent winter fires:

- **Space Heaters:** Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn, such as curtains, furniture, and bedding. Always turn off space heaters when you leave the room or go to bed.
- **Fireplaces:** Have your chimney inspected and cleaned annually. Use a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room, and only burn dry, seasoned wood.
- **Furnaces:** Have your furnace inspected and serviced by a professional each year. Ensure the area around your furnace is clear of flammable materials.
- **Lights:** Inspect seasonal lights for frayed wires or broken sockets before use. Avoid overloading electrical outlets and use surge protectors when necessary.
- **Never Leave Cooking Unattended:** The kitchen is one of the most

common places for house fires to start. Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food.

## Carbon Monoxide Safety

During cold weather, some methods of keeping warm can unintentionally cause carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is a colorless, odorless gas known as the "silent killer" and it sends more than 100,000 people in the U.S. to the emergency room each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is produced by burning fuel in vehicles, small engines, stoves, lanterns, grills, fireplaces, gas ranges, or furnaces. Here are some tips to protect yourself from CO poisoning:

### 1. Install CO Detectors:

- **Placement:** Install CO detectors on every level of your home, especially near sleeping areas. Test the detectors monthly and replace the batteries at least once a year.
- **Combination Units:** Consider using combination smoke and CO detectors for added convenience and safety.

### 2. Know CO Poisoning Symptoms:

- **Common Symptoms:** CO poisoning symptoms can be mistaken for the flu or a common cold, such as fatigue, headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and shortness of breath.
- **Other Symptoms:** Symptoms like mild confusion, impaired

vision, memory problems, irregular emotions, feeling intoxicated, and difficulty concentrating may stand out more.

- **React to Symptoms:** If you believe you have carbon monoxide poisoning, evacuate yourself, pets, and others to fresh air and call 911. Seek medical care and confirm your home is safe before returning. If you're unsure about exposure to CO, please talk to a local poison center agent at 800-222-1222, available 24 hours every day.

### 3. Follow Heating Safety:

- **Ventilation:** Ensure all fuel-burning appliances are properly vented, this includes checking your exterior vents for obstructions like snow. Never use gas ovens or ranges to heat your home.
- **Portable Generators:** If using a portable generator, use extreme caution as its improper use is attributed to a significant number of CO deaths. Place portable generators outside at least 20 feet from your home, away from windows and doors.
- **Warming Up Vehicles:** Never run your car or truck inside a garage that is attached to your house, even with the garage door open. If you need to warm up your vehicle, move it outside first.

By taking these precautions, you can help ensure a safe and cozy winter for you and your family. Stay warm, stay safe, and enjoy the season!